Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL
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Cabinet

Agenda

Date:
Thursday 16 July 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 - 14)

Cllr Clare Besford - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

6. Bright Minds Big Futures - Annual Update (Pages 15 - 20)

7. School Term and Holiday Dates 2027/2028 (Pages 21 - 26)

Cllr Richard Eglington - Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport

8. Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) (Pages 27 - 50)

Officers consider that the reports to the items include exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and that the public should be excluded from that part of the meeting where exempt information may be considered. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Cabinet is recommended to resolve to exclude the public from part of the meeting accordingly. At the time of the issuing of the agenda no objections had been made to the exclusion.

Ged Morton

Ged Morton
Director of Corporate Services
Wednesday 8 July 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

Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Key – Declarable interests are :-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

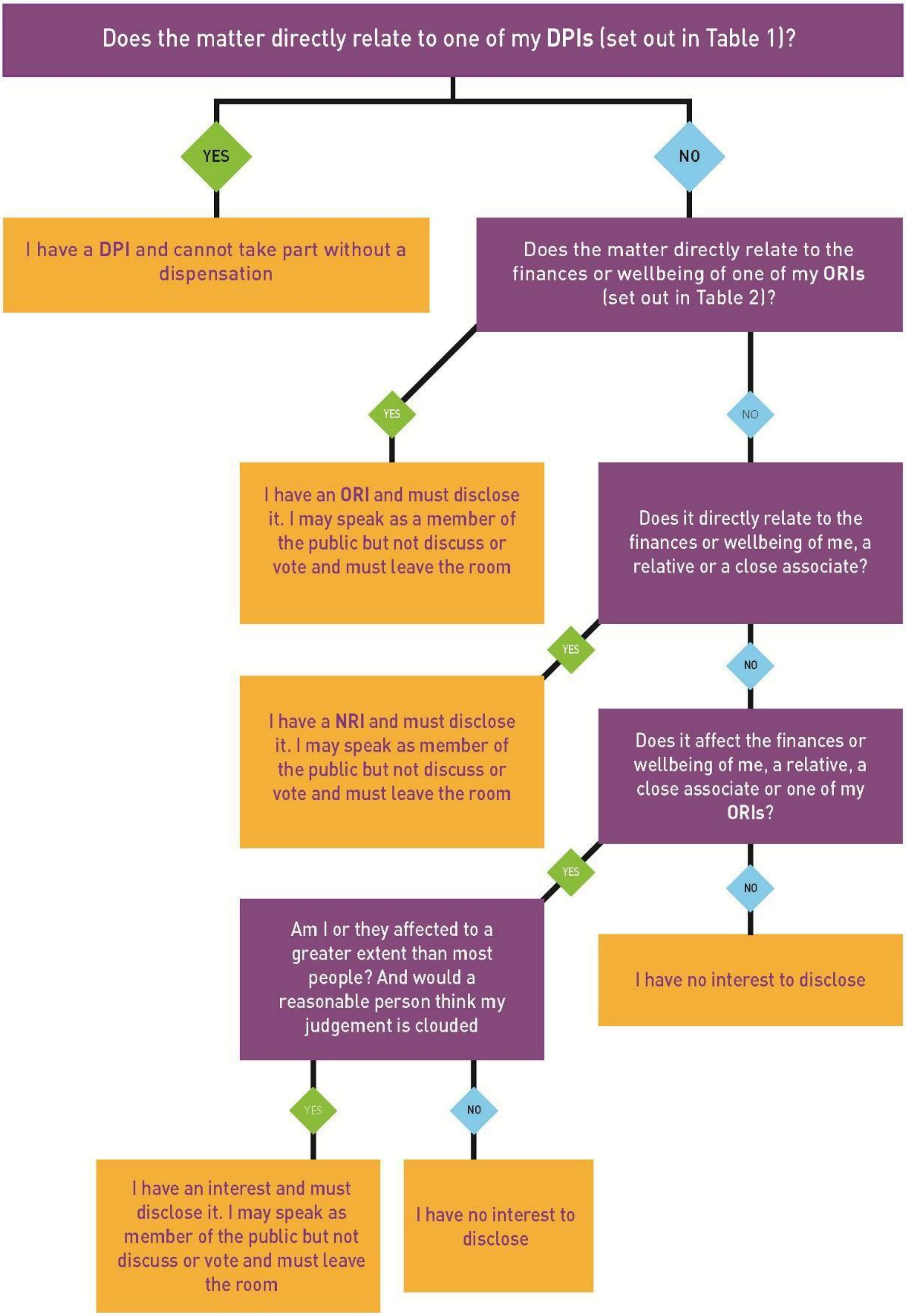


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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.

Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

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

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

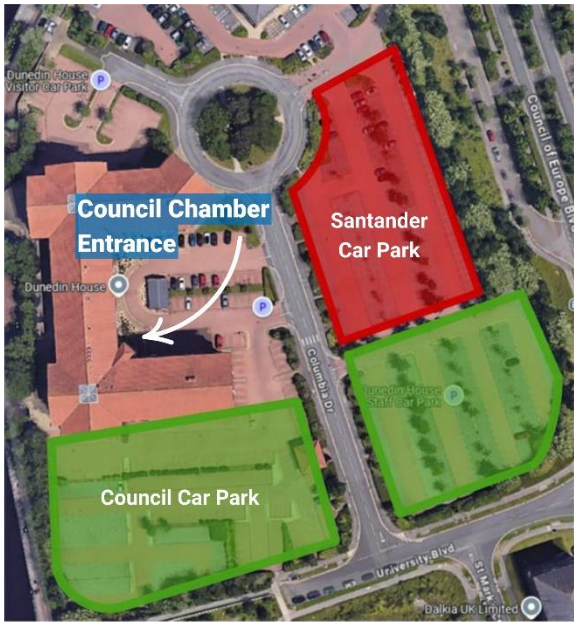
(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

Council Chamber, Dunedin House
Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

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



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

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

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

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

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

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

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

When the Alarm sounds:

1. **stop all activities immediately**. Even if you believe it is a false alarm or practice drill, you <u>MUST</u> 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 <u>immediately</u> - 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 18th June 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, Kirsty Grundy, Clare Harper, Majella McCarthy, Rob Papworth and Jane Smith.

Also in attendance: Cllr Carol Clark.

Apologies: None.

CAB/145/25 Live Streaming

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

CAB/146/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/147/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB/148/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2026 be approved.

CAB/149/25 Scrutiny Review of Children Not in School

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the findings and recommendations of the Children and Young People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Children Not in School (CNIS).

Children not in school covered a range of scenarios where a child was not accessing a full-time education. The range of reasons a child may not be accessing a full-time education at a school was vast and covered:

- All reasons for absence from school including authorised absence, unauthorised absence
- Pupils on reduced/part-time timetables
- Pupils who are accessing Alternative Provision (AP) not in a registered school (whether arranged by the school or the local authority)
- Pupils receiving Home and Hospital Provision (H&H)

- Pupils who are CME (Children Missing Education)
- Children who are EHE (Electively Home Educated)
- Children who have no school base and are EOTAS (Educated Other Than at School)
- Children who move into the borough and are waiting for a school place

RESOLVED:-

Home and Hospital (H&H)
1. That staffing capacity is reviewed to ensure provision remains, safe, responsive and broad enough in curriculum and that the staffing model adopted provides flexible and responsive provision in the most cost-effective way.
2. That opportunities are explored and expanded for peer social interaction.
3. That opportunities for partnership working to enhance both curriculum and enrichment are explored.
4. The re-integration pathways are explored.

Electively Home Educated (EHE)
5. That a more relational approach be strengthened with EHE families with identification of dedicated staffing resource to promote this.
6. That clearer information is provided to parents about:
   - Examination entry processes
   - Associated costs
   - Available support services
7. That work continues to prepare for legislative changes on compulsory registers and strengthened Local Authority powers.
8. That the range of support shared via EHE networks is broadened.
9. That opportunities for partnership working to strengthen intervention and support are explored.
10. That the capacity for schools to provide early intervention and support in response to emotional and mental health needs is reviewed.
11. That best practice identified at the Attendance Networks on re-integrating vulnerable learners into school is widely and regularly shared.
12. That the support available to children and their families experiencing Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is widely and regularly shared.
13. That the Team Around the School be fully appraised of the needs of previously Electively Home Educated pupils who are returning to mainstream education to support and nurture them back into school.

Children Missing from Education (CME)
14. That off roll audits are maintained and expanded to prevent inappropriate removal from school rolls.
15. That opportunities to work in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector are fully utilised to gather intelligence.
16. That consideration is given to how the social care reforms can be used to reduce the number of children missing from education.

Educated Other than at School (EOTAS)
17. That multi-agency working arrangements for children receiving EOTAS be strengthened, to ensure earlier, coordinated planning for children with complex needs, with education, health and social care partners jointly developing, owning and reviewing EOTAS packages to improve timeliness, quality and outcomes.

Alternative Provision (AP)
18. That the new QA framework is implemented fully with follow up action plans for providers needing improvement.

19. That AP networks continue to be expanded to promote consistent practice.
20. That action is taken to ensure that all AP placements have a clear education plan, regularly reviewed, with reintegration as a priority where appropriate.

Admissions

21. That processes and capacity for pupils with EHCPs who move into the Borough are reviewed to minimise time out of education.

Safeguarding

22. That caseworker training in professional curiosity is enhanced to seek to ensure that risks are spotted during educational monitoring visits.
23. That multi-agency information sharing for EHE and CME cohorts is strengthened, to compensate for restrictions on direct safeguarding checks.
24. That CME processes continue to involve agencies such as Border Force, Police, Health and Housing to track and protect high risk pupils.

CAB/150/25 Procurement of Temporary and Supported Accommodation Contracts

Consideration was given to a report on the Procurement of temporary and supported accommodation contracts.

The report sought approval to commence a procurement exercise to ensure that the Council had access to appropriate temporary emergency and supported accommodation for adults (singles, couples and families), children in Council care (over 16 years of age), care leavers and 16 and 17 year olds who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

As members were aware, significant cross cutting work was ongoing at the present time to improve access to affordable housing, particularly to increase the availability of 1-bed properties. In addition (and as detailed within the body of the report) work was ongoing to proactively prevent children entering care and to support the reunification of children with their birth families.

These key strands of work would have a positive impact on the demand for temporary and supported accommodation including reducing overall expenditure; however, they would take some time to deliver measurable outcomes. In the interim, it was essential that appropriate temporary and supported accommodation provision was maintained to meet the needs of adults (including singles, couples and families), children in Council care aged 16 and over, care leavers and 16–17-year-olds experiencing homeless. It was therefore proposed to proceed with the procurement approach outlined paragraphs 12 to 15 and 31 to 35 of the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposal be approved (as detailed in paragraph 12 to 15 of the report) to move forward with the procurement of new contracts for both Temporary and Supported Accommodation for adults (including singles, couples and families).

2. The proposal be approved (as detailed in paragraph 31 to 35 of the report) to move forward with the procurement of new contracts for Supported Accommodation for 16-year-old and over Children in Our Care, Care Leavers and 16 and 17 year-olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

3. 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.

CAB/151/25 Minutes of Various Bodies

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

TSAB – 11 March 2026
TVCA Cabinet – 24 April 2026
SSP – 18 March 2026

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

CAB/152/25 Powering our Future: Supporting People to Live Independently (Phase 2)

Consideration was given to a report on Powering our Future Supporting People to Live Independently - Phase 2.

In October 2024, the Council completed the Phase 1 of the Powering Our Future (POF) review with the decommissioning of contracted Discharge to Assess (D2A) service and the transfer of this capacity into the Council's reablement service. This was fully implemented in 2025/6 and (as illustrated in Figure 1 of the report), Phase 1 delivered significant growth in the numbers benefiting from reablement support.

Phase 2 was to consider what additional opportunities there were for further development. During 2025/26, the Council worked with Peopletoo (independent consultancy firm with expertise in Adult Social Care & Integrated Health) to look at opportunities for greater reach for the Reablement Service alongside supporting Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Scrutiny Committee (Appendix 1 of the report) who undertook a scrutiny review of reablement (published December 2025).

Consistent with the Council's design principles (reducing inequality and prioritise prevention, having efficient processes and use data and intelligence to inform the decision) the Council had reflected on the findings from Peopletoo and ASCH and, working with stakeholders (including the NHS) developed an outline plan for Phase 2 that would maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes and pathways to support people being discharged from hospital and those living in the community.

A key element of Phase 2 was expanding the scope for the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Reablement service alongside the commissioning of assessment beds. This was intended to strengthen alignment with One Call and commissioned services, reduce reliance on bed-based rehabilitation, and increase the ability to positively impact a greater number of people.

RESOLVED that the direction of travel be agreed for the proposed service improvements planned under Phase 2.

REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

Bright Minds Big Futures – Annual Update

Summary

The information report provides Cabinet with an update on Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF). As Cabinet will recall BMBF is a youth-led movement working together with the Council to make the Borough a great place to grow up.

The report is presented by representatives of the BMBF team.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

BMBF welcome the opportunity to present their progress made towards achieving their 2025-2026 Health & Wellbeing and Crime & Disorder objectives. Since March 2026, BMBF have focussed on their main objectives that came out of the 2026 Make Your Mark consultation which are Health & Wellbeing and Jobs, Training & Opportunities. The report also highlights areas of good practice and identifies future projects and opportunities. At the June 2025 update to Cabinet, BMBF posed a series of questions to Cabinet and responses received on these are at Appendix 1.

Recommendations

1. Progress made over the last 12 months by BMBF to be noted.

Detail

1. As you will hear from the presentation, excellent progress has made in the last 12 months. Some examples are detailed below:
    - 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.

2. These achievements will be expanded upon in the supporting presentation.

3. An ongoing recruitment campaign is in place to increase membership of BMBF. This activity seeks to ensure that BMBF is representative of our young people across the borough. Strong links have developed across Council services, including the Leaving Care Team and Home School Team as well as YUSA and other partners.

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

Looking ahead

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

6. BMBF are currently undergoing a recruitment process to form a Youth Council from which two members of Youth Parliament will be elected. The recruitment drive also

continues to ensure that BMBF is representative of our young people across the borough. It is hoped that the process for the Members of Youth Parliament will increase the number of young people on BMBF

7. BMBF will host a development day in September 2026 where the young people will 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 are 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.

Consultation and engagement

8. Ongoing consultation with young people through BMBF

Next Steps

9. BMBF ask that the report be noted and continue to receive ongoing support through Cabinet.

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Name of Contact Officer: Sarah Robinson
Post Title: Community Engagement Manager
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Appendix 1

Questions posed by BMBF to Cabinet at the June 2025 Annual Update

Question 1: Can we be involved with more events for young people in Stockton High Street?

Progress to date:

- A number of Second Dance Prom events have taken place in Wellington Square
- Here 2 Help Youth Event was held aimed specifically at young people with activities and organisations present
- BMBF invited to the High Street Forum meetings and have attended
- Here 2 Help Summer Event – volunteered in the pre loved uniform shop in July 2025. The event was aimed specifically at young people and their families.
- SIRF correspondents activity took place during August 2025
- Fundraising opportunity at Stockton Sparkles. Young people had the opportunity to have a market stall to raise money for BMBF in November 2025
- BMBF invited to a pre opening visit of the Waterfront Development in June 2026

Question 2: Young people to be represented on a regional basis

Progress to date:

- Working regionally with young people to increase the capacity of regional meetings
- BMBF have attended Have Your Say North East conferences
- BMBF looking to host a Have Your Say North East in Stockton
- BMBF are currently undergoing to process for recruitment of 2 Members of Youth Parliament which will give Stockton a local, regional and national voice.

Question 3: Can we have support to be able to promote BMBF to schools

Progress to date:

- Have attended 3 school assemblies to promote BMBF
- Attended governor meetings to promote BMBF and drive recruitment
- BMBF advertised in the headteachers newsletter
- Strong links formed with Home School Support team
- Strong relationship with Care Leavers team and 2 young people took part in the Take Over Day
- Have attended sessions in sixth forms and colleges to promote BMBF

Question 4: Can BMBF have a Tik Tok account?

Progress to date:

- Earlier this year the Government started a consultation in social media use for those under 16. Last month (19 June) the Government announced plans including a proposal for a ban for under 16s to use platforms and apps such as Tik Tok and Instagram.

- The Government’s proposals also state that 16 and 17 year olds will be able to access social media, but live streaming, and stranger communication including in gaming, will be switched off by default for these ages. We need to understand how the platforms respond to these proposals and will continue to monitor the guidance.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

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

SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES 2027/2028

SUMMARY

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

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

To inform all schools and interested parties of the school term and holiday dates for 2027/2028 academic year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the school term and holiday dates 2027/2028 shown at **Appendix 1** to this report, be agreed.

DETAIL

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

   - 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.

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

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

4. Attached as **Appendix 1** are the proposed dates for 2027/2028.

5. As part of the consultation process this 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 are provided at **Appendix 2.**

6. To date the neighbouring authorities that have published their dates have endorsed the proposed matrix for 2027/2028. This includes Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough. There is a slight difference to Darlington dates (two days) in that they return on 1 September 2027 and break up on 20 July 2028. It is proposed that Stockton on Tees will return on 2 September 2027 and break up on 21 July 2028 which is in line with all other

neighbouring authorities. This level of agreement between authorities will relieve many of the cross-boundary issues that some families have suffered in the past.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND EQUALITY AND POVERTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and has been judged to have a negative impact. This has been judged necessary because the pattern of school holidays around the christian festivals of Christmas and Easter and a long summer break between years is a national pattern that cannot be varied significantly locally or regionally. Exams and national tests together with School Teachers Pay and Conditions dictate the broad framework leaving only changes at the margins determined locally. Remedial actions have been identified and included in the EIA action plan.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

As outlined in paragraph 5, the joint agreement of the 2027/2028 matrices will ensure that, where children, families and carers live in one Borough, but the children attend school in another, there is a consistency across the area.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations comply with the requirements of the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 and the Education Act 2002 (Part 3, Chapter 1, Para 32)

RISK ASSESSMENT

The School Term and Holiday Dates 2027/2028 are 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

All schools and academies, Teacher Associations and Trade Unions, Neighbouring Local Authorities and Diocesan Authorities.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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DRAFT

School Holiday and Term Dates 2027 - 2028 Stockton on Tees

	AUGUST 2027					
Monday		2	9	16	23	30
Tuesday		3	10	17	24	31
Wednesday		4	11	18	25	
Thursday		5	12	19	26	
Friday		6	13	20	27	
Saturday		7	14	21	28	
Sunday	1	8	15	22	29	

	SEPTEMBER 2027				
Monday		6	13	20	27
Tuesday		7	14	21	28
Wednesday	1	8	15	22	29
Thursday	2	9	16	23	30
Friday	3	10	17	24	
Saturday	4	11	18	25	
Sunday	5	12	19	26	

	OCTOBER 2027				
Monday		4	11	18	25
Tuesday		5	12	19	26
Wednesday		6	13	20	27
Thursday		7	14	21	28
Friday	1	8	15	22	29
Saturday	2	9	16	23	30
Sunday	3	10	17	24	31

	NOVEMBER 2027				
Monday	1	8	15	22	29
Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30
Wednesday	3	10	17	24	
Thursday	4	11	18	25	
Friday	5	12	19	26	
Saturday	6	13	20	27	
Sunday	7	14	21	28	

	DECEMBER 2027				
Monday		6	13	20	27
Tuesday		7	14	21	28
Wednesday	1	8	15	22	29
Thursday	2	9	16	23	30
Friday	3	10	17	24	31
Saturday	4	11	18	25	
Sunday	5	12	19	26	

	JANUARY 2028				
Monday		3	10	17	24
Tuesday		4	11	18	25
Wednesday		5	12	19	26
Thursday		6	13	20	27
Friday		7	14	21	28
Saturday	1	8	15	22	29
Sunday	2	9	16	23	30

	FEBRUARY 2028				
Monday		7	14	21	28
Tuesday	1	8	15	22	29
Wednesday	2	9	16	23	
Thursday	3	10	17	24	
Friday	4	11	18	25	
Saturday	5	12	19	26	
Sunday	6	13	20	27	

	MARCH 2028				
Monday		6	13	20	27
Tuesday		7	14	21	28
Wednesday	1	8	15	22	29
Thursday	2	9	16	23	30
Friday	3	10	17	24	31
Saturday	4	11	18	25	
Sunday	5	12	19	26	

	APRIL 2028				
Monday		3	10	17	24
Tuesday		4	11	18	25
Wednesday		5	12	19	26
Thursday		6	13	20	27
Friday		7	14	21	28
Saturday	1	8	15	22	29
Sunday	2	9	16	23	30

	MAY 2028				
Monday	1	8	15	22	29
Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30
Wednesday	3	10	17	24	31
Thursday	4	11	18	25	
Friday	5	12	19	26	
Saturday	6	13	20	27	
Sunday	7	14	21	28	

	JUNE 2028				
Monday		5	12	19	26
Tuesday		6	13	20	27
Wednesday		7	14	21	28
Thursday	1	8	15	22	29
Friday	2	9	16	23	30
Saturday	3	10	17	24	
Sunday	4	11	18	25	

	JULY 2028				
Monday		3	10	17	24
Tuesday		4	11	18	25
Wednesday		5	12	19	26
Thursday		6	13	20	27
Friday		7	14	21	28
Saturday	1	8	15	22	29
Sunday	2	9	16	23	30

Bank Holiday	
School Holiday	
PD Days	

The number of term days shown is 195. Up to five of these will be used as professional development (PD) days for teaching staff, pupils will not attend these days. PD days are determined by the individual schools/trusts and parents should be informed accordingly.

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APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL TERM & HOLIDAY DATES 2027 - 2028
CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The following groups/representatives were included in the consultation process:

- 4 Diocesan Authorities – comprising of Durham & Newcastle, Hexham & Newcastle, Middlesbrough and York
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Trade Union Representatives – presented at Joint Consultative Committee
- Headteachers/Principals of Secondary, Primary, Special and Free Schools and Academies in Stockton

RESPONSES RECEIVED

Diocesan Authorities
No comments received.

Neighbouring Local Authorities
Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool local authorities have published a calendar for 2027/28 which is the same as the proposed calendar for Stockton. Feedback from colleagues was positive as the dates are all in line.

Trade Union Representatives
No comments received.

Secondary Schools/Academies
No comments received.

Primary Schools/Academies
'I think the dates look fine' Louise Peacock, Headteacher Kirklevington Primary

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REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Housing & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing)

Summary

The Renters Rights Act received Royal Assent on the 27 October 2025. It is 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 places new duties on Councils to enforce a broader range of landlord obligations. This includes additional compliance requirements, enhanced penalties for repeat or serious non-compliance, and clearer expectations that enforcement activity is carried out in a fair, consistent and proportionate manner. The Council's existing Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy v6 (published in 2024) no longer reflects the current legislative position. This report therefore seeks approval for the updated (and renamed) *Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing).*

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Updating our existing policy is essential to ensure that the Council can meet its new statutory obligations of the Renters Rights Act. Without an up-to-date Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) there is a risk of inconsistent enforcement, increased potential for legal challenge and a reduced ability to demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance and best practice.

Our work to improve standards and conditions in the private rented sector directly contributes to ambitions set out in the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, particularly the *Healthy and Resilient Communities* priority and *A great place to live, work and visit.*

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Agree the updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy V7 (Housing) copy attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Pending the approval of recommendation 1, note that 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. Delegate authority 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),** and/or any further updates made by Government to relevant powers or regulations available to Councils to address unsafe housing conditions and protect tenants.

Detail

Background

1. Stockton's rented sector represents 33% of the total housing stock. This equates to around 28,000 homes being rented either through social housing providers or private landlords (2021 census data).

2. The Renters Rights Act 2025 (The Act) represents the most significant reform of the private rented sector in a generation. It aims to improve security, fairness and standards for tenants while strengthening enforcement powers for local authorities. The key changes, intended to reinforce tenant rights, reduce retaliatory evictions, and promote long-term stability within the sector include:

   - *Section 21 abolished:* landlords can no longer evict tenants without a valid reason.
   - *No more fixed-term tenancies*: fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancies are replaced with a new standard Assured Periodic Tenancy (a rolling open-ended tenancy giving renters more flexibility; tenants can leave with two months' notice).
   - *Fairer rent increases*: rents can only be increased once a year and tenants can challenge unfair rises.
   - *Upfront rent capped:* landlords can request no more than one month's rent in advance.
   - *Discrimination banned: it* is illegal to refuse tenants because they receive benefits or have children.
   - *Pets more easily allowed*: tenants can require a pet, and landlords must consider requests reasonably.

3. The Act has important implications for local authorities and brings forward a number of key changes to the way housing enforcement will be delivered, in summary;

   i. *New statutory duties:* Local Authorities have additional legal obligations related to housing standards and to address tenancy mismanagement.
   ii. *Increased enforcement*: Local Authorities have a duty to act upon new offences requiring an increase in monitoring and compliance relating to both property standards.
   iii. *Introduction of offences:* Multiple new offences have been created, enforceable through civil penalties as an alternative to prosecution.
   iv. *Enforcement responsibilities:* Local Authorities must serve these penalties when offences occur.
   v. *Ring-fenced income:* Any revenue generated from civil penalties must be reinvested exclusively into private sector housing enforcement.

4. The Act will be implemented in phases as detailed in **Appendix 2**. In summary the key dates include:

27 December 2025:	New enforcement measure and investigatory powers
1 May 2026:	Tenancy Reform measures go live
Late 2026:	Private Rented Sector database goes live (regional roll out)
2027:	Tenancy Reform measures for Registered Provides go live
2028:	Private Rented Ombudsman goes live
TBC:	Awaab's Law Private Rented Sector goes live
TBC:	Decent Homes Standard for Private Rented sector goes live

5. The existing Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (v6) has to date demonstrated its effectiveness in providing a legal framework to support robust, fair, and proportionate regulation of housing standards, however as noted previously does not reflect The Act. In addition, enforcement of private rented sector legislation has varied significantly between local housing authorities. Differences in local policy frameworks, penalty setting mechanisms, and escalation have led to similar breaches resulting in different enforcement outcomes for private landlords across different authorities. This inconsistency can undermine tenant protections, reduce confidence in the regulatory system and create uncertainty for landlords operating across multiple areas. It may also increase the likelihood of challenge to enforcement decisions.

6. The Renters Rights Act (section 107) promotes joint working with other enforcement services within the Council, and regionally and nationally, to address joint or continuing offences by landlords who operate non-compliance as a business model and are not constrained by local authority boundaries. In response to these concerns, the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers in partnership with local authorities and Justice for Tenants (a not-for-profit advice organisation dedicated to raising standards for renters) have developed a suite of national model policies, including a Civil Penalty Policy and an Enforcement Policy. Our updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) has been updated to include the new elements of the Act and align the Council's policies to the nationally recognised framework and model enforcement policy. This will promote greater consistency, transparency and robustness in our policy, support joint working with our regional / national partners, whilst allowing for appropriate local discretion.

7. Members are asked to note that, subject to agreement, the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) will apply to offences from the point of adoption (the date of Cabinet approval) and will operate alongside the current Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (v6) for a transitional period. This will enable legacy cases to be concluded and to ensure the correct policy is applied (to be determined by the date on which the offence was committed). This approach ensures fairness and legal certainty for ongoing cases, avoids retrospective application of policy, and allows the Council to conclude enforcement activities initiated prior to the Renters Rights framework. Once legacy cases have resolved, the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (v6) will be formally withdrawn, leaving a single, updated policy framework in place.

8. Cabinet is asked to note, that as the Act also includes tenancy related reforms (summarised in paragraph 2) the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) will be utilised by both the Private Sector Housing and Homelessness Service Teams. This will support joint enforcement activity under a single, cohesive policy framework. Relevant officers across both service teams will be given appropriate delegated authority, in line with the Councils existing Scheme of Delegation, to exercise existing, amended and new powers.

9. As noted in paragraph 4 and in **Appendix 2**, the Act will be implemented in phases. As each phase is introduced and further Government guidance issued, it may be necessary

to make changes to the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing). On this basis, Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Adults, Health & Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Transport, to approve any necessary revisions or amendments to the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) arising from the phased implementation of the Act and/or any further updates made by Government to relevant powers or regulations available to Councils to address unsafe housing conditions and protect tenants. Given the evolving position, delegated authority will enable the Council to respond promptly to changes, rather than delaying until all updates and timelines are fully confirmed.

Next Steps

10. Members are asked to note that agreeing an updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) is one of the ways in which the Council is preparing for the introduction of the Act. To ensure a timely and appropriate response preparatory work has been ongoing on a cross-service basis. This includes 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 our monitoring systems to ensure we can provide the information required by Government, with the introduction of new mandatory returns, updating the Councils website to support tenants understand the key changes, and engagement with private sector landlords. Officers have and will continue to work closely with other LA's as part of a regional group and is a member of the Governments JIGSAW network. This network is funded by Government to support Local Authorities in preparing for the new legislation and promotes collaboration across PRS teams in England and supporting readiness for Renters' Rights reforms. This network allows LA's access to an online community, knowledge HUB and shares best practice.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

11. An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) has been completed to ensure that the council is following its legal duties and that we are promoting equality and divert within the Councils decision-making processes. The conclusion of the EPIA is the updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) will have a positive impact on children, older adults and people with chronic health conditions and those in low incomes who are most affected by poor housing conditions.

Corporate Parenting implications

12. There are no corporate parenting considerations arising from this report.

Financial Implications

13. New Burdens Funding has been provided to Local Authorities for period 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 to the value of £331,485 to support the implementation of the new legislation and capacity building. These monies will be managed within current approved budgets, with implementation activity aligned to enhancing staffing support and adding capacity to enforcement structures.

14. Going forward Government expects local Authorities to generate income from issuing civil penalties which must be ring-fenced for supporting housing enforcement.

Legal Implications

15. As set out in the body of the report and **Appendix 2**, the Renters Rights Act is transformational legislation, introducing significant legal changes and new responsibilities in relation to the Council's enforcement powers.

Risk Assessment

16. The adoption of the updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities will be undertaken to control and reduce risk.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors

17. Given the nature of the private rented housing sector (prevalent in all wards) the updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) may be used to support tenants in private rented housing in all areas of the borough.

18. To raise awareness of the Renters Rights Act a member briefing was held on the 26th of May 2026.

Background Papers

None

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Supporting Appendix Information:

Appendix 1	Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) v7
Appendix 2	Renters Rights Act, summary of implementation stages

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Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing)

July 2026

Document Control:

Version No.	Summary of Changes	Date of Approval	Decision Record No.
1.0	Policy Created	14.12.2017	14.12.2017
2.0	Update to include HMO Licensing	08.01.2019	
3.0	Addendum COVID-19 added	03.04.2020	
4.0	Addendum COVID-19 amended. Updated to include Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020	12.10.2020	
5.0	Addendum COVID-19 Removed Section 2 update for additional policies Section 3 update for additional legislation Section 5 update contravention mitigating circumstances Section 6 update for fees & charges, financial penalties and change to directorate.	01.09.2023	
6.0	Update to include Selective Licencing, Housing Act 2004 Part 3.	25.11.2024	
7.0	Update in line with Renters Rights Act 2025		

Contents

Housing Authority Enforcement Policy

1.0 Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's principles for enforcing and executing its duties as a Housing Authority under the relevant statute.

Section 3 Housing Act 2004 imposes a duty on Councils to keep housing conditions in their district under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them.

Section 107 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to enforce the Landlord Legislation. The Landlord Legislation is comprised of the following:

- Chapters 3 and 6 of Part 1 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, and
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988.

Section 110 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to report to the Secretary of State on the exercise of its functions under the Landlord Legislation.

In this policy, the term 'landlord' should be read as including letting agents, managing agents, licensors, property owners, directors of corporate landlords and any other person involved in the letting or management of privately rented accommodation.

In this policy, the terms 'House of Multiple Occupation' or 'HMO' are defined by the Housing Act 2004.

2.0 Aims of the Policy

The purpose of this enforcement policy is to provide guidance for Housing Authority officers to ensure enforcement action is taken in line with the provisions of the Renters' Rights Act 2025, the principles of the Regulators Code (Legislative and Regulatory Reform Order 2006) where applicable and mandatory guidance to local authorities.

The principles of the Regulators' Code apply to specified enforcement action, in particular, local authorities should ensure clear information, guidance and advice is available to help those they regulate meet their responsibilities to comply; and that their approach to their regulatory activities is transparent.

Those decisions include:

- Balancing the use of statutory duties and powers with that of working with the party against whom enforcement action is being taken. Those actions are not contradictory – authorities can build into their process the opportunity for landlords, for example, to work with them, although that may depend in individual cases on a range of factors.
- The effect of the tenure of the property.
- Considering the full range of statutory powers available to the local authority.
- Whether and how to work with appropriate statutory and other agencies and organisations.
- Recognising the significance and effects of enforcement action for all parties and considering their circumstances and views.

The Renters Rights Act 2025 and the 'Landlord Legislation' (as defined by S107) sit outside of the Regulators' Code, and its provisions do not apply. Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 is also outside of the code's scope.

Notwithstanding this, the following other relevant legislation and its enforcement does come within the Legislative and Regulatory Reform (Regulatory Functions) Order 2007 and is therefore within the scope of the Regulators Code and the principles of good regulation.

- Parts 8, 9 and 10 of the Housing Act 1985
- Part 8 of the Housing Act 1996
- Parts 2 to 5 of the Housing Act 2004

This policy document sets out what owners, landlords, their agents or any other person involved in the letting or management of privately rented accommodation, and tenants of private rented sector properties, can expect from officers when dealing with non-compliance.

All enforcement action taken will be in accordance with relevant statutory Codes of Practice, Council procedures and protocols, and official guidance from central and local government bodies.

As a public body under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Council will apply the principles of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

3.0 Approach to Enforcement

The Council wants to support responsible landlords to raise housing standards. However, the Council expects landlords to have a good understanding of the housing standards and management issues that should be met in privately rented accommodation.

Section 5 Housing Act 2004 places a duty on Councils to take appropriate enforcement action where a Category 1 hazard exists.

Section 7 Housing Act 2004 gives Councils a discretionary duty to take action where a Category 2 hazard exists. The Council will usually take action where a Category 2 hazard exists.

In addition, Council officers will often investigate and identify the need to take enforcement action through a range of routes, including (but not limited to): proactive inspections of dwellings through licensing provisions; in response to a complaint or request for assistance; and referrals from other public bodies. All investigations will be carried out in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements. The Council will ensure that appropriate governance is in place to ensure that action is taken in accordance with appropriate policies.

The Council may commence enforcement with formal action instead of informal action in the first instance. In deciding whether to do so, the circumstances of the case will be taken into account. Relevant factors may include, but are not limited to:

- Where there is a risk to public health
- Where there is a blatant or deliberate contravention of the law
- Where there is history of non-compliance

The Council will usually take formal action in the first instance if there has been:

- Non-compliance with previous formal or informal action
- Offences in relation to the licensing of HMOs

The Council will take formal enforcement action in the first instance for breaches of the Landlord Legislation.

4.0 Investigatory powers

In addition to the Council's informal and formal powers of enforcement, there are investigatory powers relating to the collection of information and relating to the entry of premises including, but not limited to, the powers detailed below.

4.1 Power to Investigate

Section 114 Renters' Rights Act 2025 gives the Council power to issue a notice to a relevant person to require the person to provide specified information to the Council.

This notice may be given to any person with an estate or interest in the land; the licensor; their agents; or a marketer of a property. It may be given in regard to any offence under the following Legislation:

- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977;
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988;
- Section 83(1) or 84(1) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013;
- Sections 21 to 23 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
- Chapter 3 of Part 1 and Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Failure to comply with a Section 114 notice is an offence under Section 131 Renters' Rights Act 2025, as is being obstructive and intentionally or recklessly making false or misleading statements in response to a Section 114 notice.

Section 115 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits the Council when it reasonably suspects a breach of the Rented Accommodation Legislation to issue a notice to any person requiring them to provide the information specified. This may only be done to investigate whether a breach has occurred under the Rented Accommodation Legislation, or to determine the amount of a penalty. For the purposes of this section, the Rented Accommodation Legislation means:

- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977;
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988;
- Parts 1 to 4 and 7 of the Housing Act 2004 ;
- Section 83(1) or 84(1) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013;
- Sections 21 to 23 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
- Chapter 3 of Part 1 and Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Where an individual has not complied with a section 115 notice, section 116 Renters' Rights Act 2025 enables the Council to make an application to the Court to enforce the provisions of the notice and seek reimbursement for the costs of the application.

Section 131 Renters' Rights Act provides that, in addition to the offence of non-compliance with a section 114 notice, it is an offence for an individual to obstruct a Council officer seeking to exercise their powers without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence to fail to give an officer any additional assistance or information which they reasonably require without reasonable excuse.

Section 235 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to issue a notice to relevant individuals, including occupiers, directing them to provide specified documents under their control for the purpose of investigating whether an offence has been committed under Parts 1 to 4 of the Housing Act 2004 or exercising the Council's functions under Parts 1 to 4 of the Housing Act 2004.

Section 16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 also permits the Council to issue a notice to an occupier, manager, or individual with an interest in the land to compel them to provide the Council with information on the nature of their interest and the names and addresses of current occupiers and of any others with an interest in the land.

4.2 Entry to Premises

Section 118 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits Council officers to enter business premises of relevant people (including landlords, letting agents, and marketers) if it is necessary for the production or seizure of documents under s122-s123 Renters' Rights Act 2025. This power will be exercised without a warrant.

Section 121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 allows a Council officer named in a warrant to enter premises used for a rental sector business which is not mainly accommodation if there are documents on the premises which the officer could require under s122 or seize under s123. In addition, for this power to be exercised, one of the following conditions must be met:

- That access to the premises has been or is likely to be refused, and the Council has provided notice of their intention to apply for a warrant to the occupier;
- Those documents on the premises would likely be concealed or interfered with if notice of entry were to be given;
- That no occupier is present, and waiting for their return might defeat the purpose of the entry.

Following a s118 or s121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 entry, s122 allows an officer at any reasonable time to require a relevant person on the premises to produce any documents relating to the business and to take copies of them. This may only be exercised to ascertain whether there has been a breach of the Rented Accommodation Legislation where an officer reasonably suspects there has been a breach or an offence; or to ascertain whether the documents may be required in evidence for proceedings regarding a breach or offence.

Following a s118 or s121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 entry, s123 authorises Council officers to seize and detain documents that the officer reasonably suspects may be required as evidence in proceedings relating to a breach of, or an offence under, the Rented Accommodation Legislation. When doing so, the officer will provide evidence of the officer's identity and authority if reasonably practicable. The officer will take reasonable steps to inform the person from whom documents have been seized that they have been seized and will provide that person with a written record of what has been taken.

Section 126 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits the Council to enter residential premises used for a tenancy at a reasonable time if the officer considers it necessary as part of an investigation into potential offences specified in subsection 1(b). Where required, the Council will give at least 24 hours' notice of this to the occupier and individuals with an interest in the property as per subsection 1(c), detailing in writing why the entry is necessary and the suspected offences. Where there are occupiers found on the premises, the officer will provide evidence of the officer's identity and authority to at least one of the occupiers if reasonably practicable.

In addition, section 239 Housing Act 2004 permits Council officers to enter, if necessary and at a reasonable time, a property in order to carry out a survey or examination. This may be done if any one of the following is met:

- to determine if any Part 1-4 enforcement functions should be exercised;
- the premises are part of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order;
- a management order is in force under Chapter 1 or 2 of Part 4 on the premises.

In certain circumstance the Council may obtain a warrant to enter, by force if necessary, under section 240 Housing Act 2004.

4.3 Shared enforcement roles

Where there is a shared enforcement role with other local authorities and/or enforcement agencies, the Council will ensure that effective liaison and consultation take place to ensure that the needs of all parties are considered and to help achieve the best outcome from formal enforcement action. The Council will aim to maximise its effectiveness by working with other authorities and other agencies to share intelligence and resources where it is lawful to do so. Where issues are identified that extend beyond the remit of one agency and into the role of another, then joint operations will be undertaken to maximise resources and improve any enforcement outcome.

Some examples of agencies that the Council might work with include:

- Police
- Fire Service
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Citizens Advice
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Registered providers of social housing
- Other Local Authorities
- Building Control
- Development Control
- Trading standards
- Border Force
- Other Agencies as Appropriate

4.4 Targeting

The decision to inspect specific premises may be taken due to complaints, problems reported at the premises that need to be inspected or to risk rating or licence requirement.

Enforcement will be targeted at those locations, person(s), premises and/or businesses whose activities give rise to the risks that are most serious or least well controlled. Officers therefore target enforcement action in the following three ways:

- Properties or activities with the highest hazards, greatest risks, poorest compliance and worst management will be inspected more frequently than those premises with low-risk activities.
- The second targeting mechanism is the investigation itself, where evidence, history, intelligence, experience, along with this policy are used to determine enforcement action.
- The third targeting mechanism is planned, special surveys/projects, multi-agency and other enforcement initiatives in response to national or regional concerns raised by the government, its agencies, identified by council officers or local concerns raised by members of the council and residents/businesses.

5.0 Informal action

Informal action taken by the Council may be written or verbal advice. Additionally, a visit may be made at the outset by Council Officers in cases where the initial complaint or contact indicates that an immediate investigation by a Council officer is warranted.

In cases where officers visit an address, whether this is a result of a landlord’s failure to adequately resolve a highlighted issue or as part of an audit or other investigation, written or verbal advice may be deemed sufficient should the inspection highlight only very minor deficiencies.

Where written advice is deemed appropriate by the Council and is provided, timescales will normally be included to undertake any specified work or actions.

While the Council will use its discretion on whether to carry out informal action for a Category 2 hazard, it does not need to provide written or verbal advice before commencing formal action.

6.0 Formal action

6.1 Housing Act 2004, Part 1

If formal action is considered appropriate, the following options are available to the Council.

Housing Act 2004 Part 1

- issue an Improvement Notice in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This requires the person to whom it is served to undertake the remedial action specified on the Notice within a given timeframe. The mandated work and the timeframe will be determined by the Council depending on the nature and scale of the work.
- issue a Prohibition Order in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This prevents occupation of whole or part of the property, or can be used to limit occupant numbers, within a specified time frame.
- issue a Hazard Awareness Notice in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This makes the owner and occupiers aware of the hazards identified; however, it does not require remedial action. As a result, and because it does not secure risk-reducing works within a specified timeframe, a Hazard Awareness Notice will not usually be the most appropriate course of action where remedial works are necessary to reduce the risk of harm to occupiers or potential occupiers.
- make an Emergency Prohibition Order. This immediately prohibits the use of all or part of a dwelling if there is an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of the occupants or others.
- Where there is a Category 1 hazard present, S40 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to undertake Emergency Remedial Action on the Category 1 hazard without prior notice.
- The Council also has the power to suspend action taken under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in situations where it has the power or duty to take enforcement action through the service of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order. This will be at the Council's discretion and will normally be considered for the purpose of minimising inconvenience to the current occupiers.
- Demolition and Clearance are options for both Category One or Category Two hazards.
- Section 30 Housing Act 2004 provides that failure to comply with a Improvement Notice is a criminal offence, which will normally be followed by prosecution or the issuing of a civil penalty.
- Section 32 Housing Act 2004 provides that failure to comply with a Prohibition Order is a criminal offence, which will normally be followed by prosecution.
- Other formal notices served by the Council may not relate to the landlord undertaking remedial works but may cover a range of other matters including, but not limited to, exercising a right of entry under s.239 of the Housing Act 2004 and a request to provide information or the need to abate or avoid overcrowding.

6.2 Work in default

The enforcement options for non-compliance with formal Notices or breach of licence conditions include the carrying out of works specified in the Notice. This power may be exercised in addition to other enforcement proceedings taken for non-compliance. The Council has no duty to undertake works in default and it will be at its discretion.

6.3 Emergency or suspended enforcement action

Where there is a Category 1 hazard present, section 43 Housing Act 2004 permits the Council to issue an Emergency Prohibition Order. This immediately prohibits the use of all or part of a dwelling if there is an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of the occupants or others.

Section 40 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to undertake Emergency Remedial Action on the Category 1 hazard without prior notice. The Council may then seek reimbursement of costs incurred on the work and the administration of the scheme.

The Council also has the power to suspend action taken under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in situations where it has the power or duty to take enforcement action through the service of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order. This will be at the Council's discretion and will normally be considered for the purpose of minimising inconvenience to the current occupiers.

6.4 HMO Licence Conditions

Conditions can be added to HMO licenses to require work to meet specified standards or to address HMO Management Regulation requirements. In general, authorities should seek to identify, remove or reduce category 1 or category 2 hazards in the house by the exercise of Part 1 functions and not by means of licence conditions however this does not prevent the authority from imposing licence conditions relating to the installation or maintenance of facilities or equipment even if the same result could be achieved by the exercise of Part 1 functions;

Failure to comply with these conditions is a is a criminal offence, which may result in prosecution or the issuing of a civil penalty.

6.5 Revocation, suspension and withdrawal of licenses.

Where the Council has issued a licence or other form of permission, removal of that permission in line with the relevant guidance or legislation can be considered as an enforcement remedy. This action does not preclude further parallel formal enforcement action by the Council for the same offence. When considering future licensing applications, the Council may take previous breaches and enforcement action into account.

7.0 Other Legislative alternatives

The majority of the time, Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 will be the appropriate means to deal with housing standards issues. However, there can be alternative ways of achieving the desired outcome(s), and the local authority officer ("the officer") shall consider all options available to them.

Details of relevant legislative powers can be found in Appendix 1.

7.1 Prosecution

Where a Civil Financial Penalty is an available alternative to prosecution, the Council will only consider using its power to prosecute under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in more serious cases.

The decision to prosecute will be determined by the evidential strength of the Council's case and the relevant public interest factors set down by the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

In many circumstances, where an offence is committed by a body corporate, legislation enables local authorities to pursue persons involved with the body corporate in addition to, or instead of, the body corporate. These include company officers and, where applicable, company members.

The Council will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether to take enforcement action against any person or persons that they consider fall within the scope of this category in addition to prosecuting the body corporate.

7.2 Civil Financial Penalties for specified offences

This section relates exclusively to Civil Financial Penalties issued by the Council for breaches of the below housing law.

The Council has the power to impose a Civil Financial Penalty for the following:

- Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupier as defined under the Protection from Eviction Act 1997
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30 Housing Act 2004]
- Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) [s72 Housing Act 2004]
- Offences in relation to the Selective Licensing of 'houses' [s95 Housing Act 2004]
- Failure to comply with an Overcrowding Notice [s139 Housing Act 2004]
- Failure to comply with a management regulation in respect of an HMO [s234 Housing Act 2004]
- Offences in relation to Regulation 3 of the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020
- Failure to comply with a banning order [s21 Housing and Planning Act 2016]
- Failure to give a written statement of terms under section 16D of the Housing Act 1988
- Failure to give an existing tenant information about changes made by the Renters' Rights Act under paragraph 7(2) of schedule 6 to the Renters' Rights Act 2025
- Attempting to let a property for a fixed term under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988
- Attempting to end a tenancy orally or by service of a notice to quit under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988
- Serving an eviction notice that attempts to end a tenancy outside the prescribed section 8 process under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988
- Relying on a ground where the person does not reasonably believe that the landlord is/will be able to obtain possession under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988
- Relying on a ground knowing the landlord would not be able to obtain possession or being reckless as to whether they would under section 16J of the Housing Act 1988
- Failing to provide a tenant with prior notice that a ground which requires it may be used under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988
- Reletting or remarketing a property before expiry of the 12 month no-let period after using the moving and selling grounds under sections 16E and 16J of the Housing Act 1988
- Discriminating against prospective tenants during the letting process on the grounds that those tenants are in receipt of benefits or have children under sections 33 and 34 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025
- Marketing a letting without stating the proposed rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025

- Inviting or encouraging any person to offer to pay an amount of rent under the proposed letting that exceeds the stated rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025
- Accepting an offer from any person to pay an amount of rent under the proposed letting that exceeds the stated rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025

Civil Financial Penalties in respect of these offences operate according to their own independent standalone policy.

7.3 Rent Repayment Orders

Part 2 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 permits the Council to seek a Rent Repayment Order at the First Tier Tribunal Property Chamber to require the landlord of the property where the offence(s) has been committed to refund rent to the tenants or the Council. Section 48 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 places a duty on the Council to consider applying for Rent Repayment Orders.

Where a landlord has been convicted or received a Civil Financial Penalty in respect of the offence, the Tribunal must award the maximum applicable amount, except in exceptional circumstances.

This power will be considered in response to all qualifying offences and where there is sufficient evidence for a successful application to the First Tier Tribunal.

The qualifying offences are:

- Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupier as defined under the Protection from Eviction Act 1997
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30 Housing Act 2004]
- Offences in relation to unlicensed HMOs [s72(1) Housing Act 2004]
- Offences in relation to unlicensed houses [s95(1) Housing Act 2004]
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30(1) Housing Act 2004]
- Failure to comply with a Prohibition Order [s32(1) Housing Act 2004]
- Breach of a Banning Order [s21 Housing and Planning Act 2016]
- Using Violence to secure entry [s6(1) Criminal Law Act 1977]
- Knowingly or recklessly misusing a possession ground [s16J(1) Housing Act 1988]
- Letting or marketing of a property within twelve months of using the 'moving in' or 'selling' ground of eviction [s16J(2) Housing Act 1988]
- Continuous breach of certain tenancy reform requirements [s16J(3) Housing Act 1988]

An application for an RRO may be in addition to other formal action, such as prosecution proceedings or the imposition of a Civil Penalty. Where the Council has issued a Civil Financial Penalty or pursued prosecution, it will usually apply for a Rent Repayment Order where public funds have been paid to a landlord who has committed a qualifying offence.

Section 49 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 enables the Council to assist tenants in applying for Rent Repayment Orders. The Council will usually assist tenants by referring or signposting them to a relevant organisation.

7.4 Banning Orders

Part 2, Chapter 2 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 permits a Council to apply for a Banning Order against a person who has been convicted of one or more of the relevant offences. This would prevent the landlord from:

- Letting housing in England;
- Engaging in English letting agency work;
- Engaging in English property management work; or
- Doing two or more of those things.

The Council may consider a Banning Order for the more serious offenders. It will take into account the seriousness of the offence(s), whether the landlord has committed other offences (or received any Civil Penalty in relation to a Banning Order offence) and any history of failing to comply with their obligations or legal responsibilities. It will also take into account other relevant factors, including but not limited to:

- The harm, or potential harm, caused to the tenant;
- The need to punish the offender;
- The need to deter the offender from repeating the offence;
- The need to deter others from committing similar offences.

8.0 Costs and Charges

The Council incurs costs in carrying out its functions. Where legislation allows, the Council will seek to recover reasonable costs and expenses associated with its enforcement, licensing and wider regulatory activity. This may include (non-exhaustively) costs arising from inspections, investigation, evidence gathering, notices and other statutory documentation, follow-up action, compliance monitoring, and works or other interventions.

Recovery may be pursued using all available lawful routes, which may include civil action, local land charges, and enforcement against the property.

Where permitted, interest may be applied to outstanding sums until paid.

This will be carried out in accordance with the Councils Debt Recovery Policy.

9.0 Service Delivery

9.1 What can you expect from your enforcing Officer/Council?

All Officers engaged in enforcement functions are appropriately trained and authorised in line with the provisions of the Stockton Borough Councils Scheme of Delegation.

Officers will always carry suitable identification and authorisation that can be checked and verified. Following all interactions, a contact name, telephone number or email will be provided to allow for verification or further contact to be made.

Authorised Officers will carry out their enforcement activities in accordance with the principles of this Policy and the requirements of the particular legislation and other Council Policy under which they are acting and any associated guidance or Codes of Practice.

The Council will endeavour to provide information and advice in plain language.

The Council will discuss general issues, individual compliance failures or problems with anyone experiencing difficulties should it be requested. To support this, the Council will identify a point of contact in any correspondence issued.

The Council will have regard to the challenges faced by individuals and businesses. It will ensure that any action it requires is proportionate and balanced against risk as guided by legislative requirements.

In accordance with legislation, the Council will take account of the individual circumstances of each case when considering action. This includes the seriousness of the offence, past history, confidence in management, the consequences of non-compliance and the likely effectiveness of the various enforcement options.

A business or individual will be notified of any intended enforcement action as soon as possible, unless this could undermine an investigation or pose a safety risk to those concerned, the environment or the general public. In cases where there is an imminent risk to health or the environment, enforcement action may be taken before any right of challenge can be heard.

The Council will provide information setting out how to challenge or appeal any enforcement decision as part of the enforcement action and where a statutory appeal process exists; where no statutory appeal process exists, guidance on how to challenge or make a representation is provided at the time the action is taken.

In certain circumstances the Council will seek to raise awareness and increase compliance levels by publicising unlawful trade practices or criminal activity. Where appropriate the results of specific court cases may also be published.

9.2 Complaints

A service user can still make a complaint in cases where the Council has instigated legal proceedings. However, making a complaint will not stop any impending legal action.

Where statutory notices have been served, making a complaint does not replace the statutory rights of appeal or the right to make representations. It also does not allow extra time to comply with any notice or order.

If a service user disagrees with a statutory notice, they should take action as specified in the notice or order to make an appeal, if applicable. Reference should be made to any notes that may accompany the notice or order for more detail.

Contact may be made with the Council about any matters listed here by email at:

PrivateSectorHousing@Stockton.gov.uk or by post at:

Private Sector Housing Team,

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council,

Dunedin House,

Colombia Drive,

Thornaby,

Stockton-on-Tees.

TS17 6BJ.

Tel: 01642 527797

10. Review of this Enforcement Policy.

This policy will be subject to a general review every five years. Where significant amendments are required i.e., if there is a significant change to our enforcement approach, those amendments will be subject to the formal approval process in place at that time.

Appendix 1: Available legislative powers.

Housing Act 2004

Housing Act 1985

Housing and Planning Act 2016

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Building Act 1984

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

Public Health Act 1961

Public Health Act 1936

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960

Mobile Homes Act 2013

Protection from Eviction Act 1977

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

The Energy Act 2013

The Energy Act 2011

The Renters Rights Act 2025

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Housing Act 1996

Housing Act 1988

Criminal Law Act 1977

and any amending or replacement legislation or Statutory Instruments, Regulations, Bylaws or Orders associated with or made under these enactments.

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Appendix 2:

Rents Rights Act 2025 – Summary of Implementation Stages

OPERATIONAL ISSUES Introduction of the Renters Rights Act 2025 and associated introductory stages:

Preparation phase – from the 27th December 2025 new powers for local Authorities to investigate landlords or agents.

Phase 1 will take effect from 1st May 2026 and includes the following elements:

- Abolish section 21 'no fault' evictions – landlords in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) will no longer be able to use section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 to evict their tenants.
- Introduces Assured Periodic Tenancies in the private rented sector – the vast majority of new tenancies and existing tenancies in the PRS will become Assured Periodic Tenancies. This means tenants will be able to stay in their property for as long as they want, or until a landlord serves a valid section 8 notice. Tenants will be able to end their tenancy by giving two months' notice.
- Reform possession grounds in the PRS so they are fair for both parties – landlords will only be able to evict tenants when they have a valid reason. Possession grounds will be extended to make it easier for landlords to evict tenants who commit anti-social behaviour, or who are in serious persistent rent arrears.
- Limit rent increases to once a year in the PRS – landlords will have to follow the revised section 13 procedure and provide the tenant with a notice detailing the proposed rent increase at least two months before it is due to take effect.
- Ban rental bidding and rent in advance – landlords and letting agents will not be able to ask for, encourage, or accept an offer that is higher than the advertised rent. Landlords and agents will also not be able to request more than one month's rent in advance.
- Make it illegal to discriminate against renters who have children or receive benefits – landlords and letting agents will not be able to do anything to make a tenant less likely to rent a property (or prevent them from renting it) because they have children or receive benefits. This includes withholding information about a property (including its availability), stopping someone from viewing it, or refusing to grant a tenancy.
- Require landlords in the PRS to consider tenant requests to rent with a pet – landlords will have an initial 28 days to consider their tenant's request, and they will have to provide valid reasons if they refuse it.
- Strengthen both local council enforcement and rent repayment orders - civil penalties will be expanded, and there will be a new requirement for local councils to report on enforcement activity. Rent repayment orders will be extended to superior landlords, the maximum penalty will be doubled, and repeat offenders required to pay the maximum amount.

Phase 2 will take effect from 2027 (specific dates to be confirmed) and includes the following elements across two stages:

Stage 1 involves the regional rollout of the database for Landlords and Local Councils. Signing up to the **PRS Database** will be mandatory for all PRS landlords and they will be required to pay an annual fee which will be confirmed closer to launch.

Regulations will mandate landlord registration, payment of a fee and the provision of key information by landlords including -

- The landlord's contact details. This will include capturing relevant information from all joint landlords.
- The property details including the full address, type of property (flat/ house), number of bedrooms, number of households/residents and confirming whether the property is occupied and furnished, etc.
- Safety information – Gas, Electric and Energy Performance Certificates – so tenants are assured about the safety and energy efficiency of the property.

Stage 2 involves the further roll out of the database and introduction of the **Ombudsman.** Public access and data sharing will be enabled following the launch of landlord registration.

The Ombudsman will provide a redress service for private rented sector tenants when things go wrong. It will also support landlords with tools, guidance and training on handling complaints from tenants early. The Ombudsman scheme will be mandatory for PRS landlords. Landlords will be required to fund the service through a fair and proportionate charging model which is due to be confirmed closer to launch.

Implementation of the Ombudsman will happen after the introduction of the database, and the government are exploring ways to share information between the database and the Ombudsman to minimise landlord sign-up burden.

The development of the Ombudsman will happen in stages:

Stage 1 will happen at least 12-18 months before implementation. The Secretary of State will choose a scheme administrator to run the new service, which will then need time to scale up.

Stage 2 will require landlords to be members of the new service, expected to be in 2028, when the Secretary of State is confident the service is ready for delivery. We will make sure landlords are given sufficient notice in advance of requiring them to be members of the scheme.

Phase 3 involves the introduction of a new **Decent Homes Standard (DHS)** in the PRS (dates of implementation to be confirmed following consultation but likely between 2035-2037).

A DHS will be introduced to the PRS for the first time. This will ensure that all PRS properties meet a minimum standard of housing quality and provide local councils with powers to take enforcement action if PRS properties fail to meet it.

While the deadline for implementation may be some years away, the expectation is that landlords should commence works earlier wherever feasible, remaining mindful of the effect of property conditions on tenants.

IN ADDITION to the above, the Government has consulted on plans to require all domestic privately rented properties in England and Wales to meet **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) of EPC C or equivalent by 2030** unless a valid exemption is in place. Further details will be set out surrounding this in due course.

As part of the pathway to applying the DHS to the PRS, the **Housing, Health & Safety Hazard Rating System (HHSRS**) will be reviewed and implemented from 23rd June 2026.

Awaab's Law will also be extended to the PRS, setting clear legally enforceable timeframes within which PRS landlords must make homes safe where they contain serious hazards. This will empower tenants to challenge dangerous conditions in their homes.

It should be noted that the Decent Homes Standard already applies to social housing and Awaab's law applies to social housing from 27th October 2025.

REPORT TO CABINET
16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION

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

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy Review 2026

Summary

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.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Under the Licensing Act 2003, full Council has the final decision making powers for the adoption of a Statement of Licensing Policy.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet members note the contents of this report
2. Cabinet members recommend to Council, to agree the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy.

Detail

1. A copy of the proposed Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Statement of Licensing Policy can be found at: Stockton Statement of Licensing Act Policy 2026
2. The proposed policy reflects legislation, best practice and integrates the recently published National Licensing Policy Framework which is a strategic vision for a modern, permissive licensing system that safeguards communities while enabling hospitality and leisure to thrive, and is aligned with the licensing objectives which are:
   - the prevention of crime and disorder
   - public safety
   - the prevention of public nuisance
   - the protection of children from harm

3. The proposed policy supports the Councils vision and priorities and includes information on:
   - Martyn's Law (Protect Duty)
   - Illegal employment practices
   - Local alcohol related harm

4. The proposed policy reinforces our 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

5. 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

6. 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.

7. No comments objecting to the proposed policy were received.

8. 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 are attached as Appendix 1.

9. 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.

History and Background

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

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

12. The table below shows the current number of licensed premises under the Licensing Act 2003:

Licensed Premises (Licensing Act 2003)	24-25	25-26	Difference
Total alcohol licensed premises	470	462	-8
Alcohol - authorised for on and off sales	221	217	-4
Alcohol - authorised on sales only	83	81	-2
Alcohol - authorised off sales only	166	164	-2
Late night refreshment only	65	64	-1

Regulated entertainment only	46	46	-
Total Number of Licensed Premises	**581**	**572**	**-9**

13. 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.

14. The current Statement of Licensing Policy can be found at: www.stockton.gov.uk/alcohol-and-entertainment-licences

Additional Information

15. During the consultation The Crime and Policing Act 2026 received Royal Assent, the Act is wide ranging and primarily police focused, but it does have several direct and indirect implications for local authorities, particularly across community and licensing related functions.

16. To ensure the policy document is relevant and up to date, officers may implement amendments or additions, in consultation with and subject to the agreement of the Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee, provided such changes do not result in any material alteration to the overall intent or scope.

17. The policy review has 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.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

18. The Licensing Act 2004 has been a statutory duty for local authorities since 2003, and effects the whole Borough. The proposed changes will bring benefits for the community, licensing service, the existing licensed trade and future licensed trade.

19. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and signed, reference: 0334. No major change is required because of the EPIA.

Corporate Parenting Implications

20. The report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

21. The fees associated with the Licensing Act 2003 are statutory set and have not been review since 2003, the fees do not form part of the Councils approved Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Legal Implications

22. The implementation and operation of the Statement of Licensing Policy will be done in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 and associated guidance.

Risk Assessment

23. The risks associated with the Statement of Licensing Policy are mitigated by the administration and enforcement provisions of The Licensing Act 2003 and associated guidance.

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

24. All members including the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety have been consulted.

Background Papers

Consultation response and proposed additional wording

Appendix 1 consultation responses and proposed policy wording.docx

The Licensing Act 2003

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/contents

Section 182 Guidance (February 2025)

Statutory guidance issued by the Home Office provides comprehensive direction on promoting the licensing objectives, handling applications, reviews, and enforcement.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/explanatory-memorandum-revised-guidance-issued-under-s-182-of-licensing-act-2003

National Licensing Policy Framework for the hospitality and leisure sectors

Strategic vision for a modern, permissive licensing system that safeguards communities while enabling hospitality and leisure to thrive.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-licensing-policy-framework-for-the-hospitality-and-leisure-sectors

The Crime & Policing Act 2026

Introduces a wide range of measures to strengthen the response to antisocial behaviour, retail crime, and serious violence. Increases expectations around partnership working, data sharing, and proactive enforcement, while providing stronger legal mechanisms to support community safety and protect town centres.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-and-policing-act-2026

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REPORT TO CABINET
16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

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

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) – OUTTURN MARCH 2025

Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an update on the financial performance and position as at 31 March 2026.

The overall financial position remains 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 reflects an overspend against budget of £3.865m.

During the financial year pressure has 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 are the focus of ongoing transformation reviews.

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

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

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

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To update Cabinet on the Medium-Term Financial Plan, including the outturn position for 2025/26

Recommendations

1. Note the outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2026 and the updated Capital Programme.

Detail

FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

GENERAL FUND

2. The following table sets out the financial position for each Directorate at 31 March 2026. The reasons for any significant variances from those previously reported are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Directorate	Annual Budget £'000	Actual Outturn £'000	Actual Variance Over/(Under) £'000	Projected Variance Q3 Over/(Under) £'000	Movement from Q3 £'000
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	107,384	107,391	7	716	(709)
Children's Services	63,735	67,858	4,123	3,141	982
Community Services, Environment & Culture	58,163	58,003	(160)	893	(1,053)
Finance, Transformation & Performance	14,407	13,396	(1,011)	(881)	(130)
Corporate Services	12,203	11,953	(249)	(256)	7
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	3,301	3,235	(66)	(60)	(6)
Corporate Items	7,449	5,637	(1,812)	(916)	(896)
Total	**266,641**	**267,474**	**833**	**2,637**	**(1,804)**
Pay Offer	0	632	632	600	32
Transformation Savings Shortfall	0	700	700	700	0
DSG 10% High Needs Stability Grant	0	1,700	1,700	0	1,700
Revised Total	**266,641**	**270,506**	**3,865**	**3,937**	**(72)**

Adults, Health and Wellbeing

3. Demand for residential services for older people, including those with mental health conditions has increased in the quarter, generating a further overspend of £587,000.

4. Costs associated with direct payments and care at home services for people with Mental Health conditions for were lower than forecast, generating an additional saving of (£478,000).

5. The previous MTFP report to Council in February, referenced additional income of £300,000 through the Better Care Fund pooled budget. The figure agreed with the North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board was £440,000, providing an additional amount of £140,000 used to fund increased social care pressures.

6. Use of Public Health grant has been reviewed at the year-end enabling a further £428,000 to be redirected, supporting wider Council activity in areas which improve health and wellbeing.

7. There are further savings within the Housing Service due to staffing vacancies and maximisation of grant funding (£400,000).

Children's Services

8. Members will be aware of the continued growth in demand relating to Children's Social Care and the escalation of costs for external residential provision. Alongside many other Council's across the country, this continues to be a major challenge for Children's Social care budgets. There has been an increase in children in external residential placements since December, as well as additional cost pressures on placements due to fee increases and greater support requirements, this has led to a further overspend at the year end of £1,300,000.

9. There has been a reduction in the number of children with disabilities requiring services, leading to reduction of (£200,000) against previously projected expenditure position.

10. Additional grant funding has been secured at the end of the year of (£140,000).

11. It should be noted that despite the financial challenges within the Directorate significant work continues to drive permanent recruitment and thus limit the dependency on agency staffing. This is borne out by the reduction in agency expenditure between financial years and critically delivering continuity of care and enhanced stability for some of our most vulnerable people.

Community Services, Environment & Culture

12. The expenditure on Home to School transport continued to increase by a further £139,000. This was driven by a combination of increased demand and the costs associated with placements, such as passenger assistants and general route costs from the supplier.

13. Additional income has been received in the Ground Maintenance service which accounts for an improvement in the position of (£195,000).

14. Transport and Highways have improved the position by (£315,000). This is due to ongoing work on reviewing charging into external grants, alongside a number of new cycleway schemes commencing through the design phase and as such officer time charged into the capital programme to reflect time spent on these emerging projects.

15. Due to a milder winter the Operational Highways were require to deliver a reduced number of gritting runs alongside some additional income leading to a movement of (£225,000).

16. Further income has been received within the Building Cleaning service relating to external work and this accounts for a movement of (£105,000).

17. There were a number of smaller savings across a range of services, primarily arising from staffing. This accounts for around (£200,000) movement between Q3 and year end.

Finance, Transformation & Performance

18. (£191,000) additional income received from the Hampton by Hilton Hotel dividend.

Corporate Services

19. There have been no significant movements in the position for Corporate Services.

Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

20. There have been no significant movements in the position for Regeneration and Inclusive Growth.

Corporate Items

21. Throughout the year, NNDR and grant reviews have been undertaken to maximise opportunities for identifying savings. This has included additional in-year NNDR income through Section 31 (S31) grants, reflecting compensation for business rates reliefs. These reviews have collectively enabled £900,000 of additional income to be offset against a range of wider council services.

Dedicated Schools Grant

22. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ringfenced grant received to deliver defined education services including Schools, Early Years and Special Educational Needs (High Needs). The grant is awarded by the Department for Education on an annual basis, and the amount is determined by a national formula. Members will recall in previous reports, that the Council is experiencing growing demand in services and costs for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEND). This is also true of many Councils across the Country.

23. The Dedicated Schools Grant is accounted for in a separate ring-fenced account and guidance states that any deficit should not be funded from the Council's General Fund. This deficit is therefore not currently included within the Council's overall budget. The deficit at 31 March 2025 was £6.72m. The forecast position in the February report was anticipated to be £13.62m by 31 March 2026.

24. The table below summarises the year-end financial position for the DSG budget. This shows and in-year overspend on the High Needs Block of £11.5m, partially offset by an underspend on the Early Years Block of (£847,000) and Schools Block of (£252,000), resulting in a net in-year overspend of £10.4m. The cumulative DSG deficit at 31 March 2026 is now £17.135m.

Dedicated Schools Grant	Annual Budget £'000	Actual Outturn £'000	Actual Variance Over/(Under) £'000	Projected Variance Q3 Over/(Under) £'000	Movement from Q3 £'000
DSG Expenditure					

Schools Block	178,410	178,158	(252)	(200)	(52)
Central Schools Block	1,205	1,198	(7)	0	(7)
Early Years Block	33,509	32,662	(847)	0	(847)
High Needs Block	45,060	56,575	11,515	7,099	4,416
Total DSG Expenditure	**258,184**	**268,593**	**10,409**	**6,899**	**3,510**
DSG Funding	(258,184)	(258,184)	0	0	0
In-year deficit	0	10,409	10,409	6,899	3,510
Unusable Reserve at 31/03/2025			6,725	6,725	0
Cumulative Unusable Reserve (DSG Deficit)			**17,134**	**13,624**	**3,510**

25. Details of any significant variances against budget incurred during the year 2025/2026 are:

- Increase in number and cost of placements in Independent Schools (£3.7m) and in other LA schools/academies (£2.3m).
- Increase in number of top-ups plus additional payments to SBC mainstream and special academies (£3m).
- Cost of providing high needs funding to new Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs)/SEND Units in SBC schools (£1.2m)
- Increased cost of Post-16 high needs support in specialist colleges (£426k).
- Increase in number of top-ups plus additional payments to SBC maintained mainstream schools (£475k).
- Increase in the cost of Alternative Provision for pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion (£238k).
- (£460,000) underspend against the Early Years budget relating to timing of the grant funding and its relationship to census points.
- (£290,000) underspend within the Schools Growth Fund due to marginally lower admission numbers in September 2024 for specific schools resulting from basic need requirements.

26. There is a statutory override in place until 31st March 2028, meaning that any deficit on the DSG is accounted for separately within an unusable reserve within the Council's accounts.

27. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement included some announcements on the approach to addressing DSG deficits, whilst the Government transitions to reform the SEND system, with further information published in spring. The initial phase will address historic deficits accrued up to 31 March 2026. All local authorities with a SEND deficit will be eligible to receive a High Needs Stability Grant, subject to approval of a Local SEND Reform Plan by the Department of Education, covering 90% of their High Needs-related DSG deficit accrued up to the end of 2025-26, which will be paid in 2026/27. Local authorities will need to plan to be able to meet the cost of the residual deficit 10%.

28. In preparing the year-end financial position, the positive movement across directorate budgets has enabled sufficient funding to be identified to set aside the required 10% (£1.7m) in reserves, avoiding the requirement to identify further savings.

29. The statutory override remains in place until 31st March 2028. Further information is anticipated from Government regarding potential future funding for further deficits which may accrue in 2026/2027 or future years.

Collection Fund

30. The Collection Fund is a ringfenced account which includes the actual amount collected for both Council Tax and Business Rates (NNDR). In line with statutory requirements the Council forecasts the overall surplus or deficit on the collection fund in January, which is used in budget setting for the following year. Actual performance of the amount of Council Tax and Business Rates collected is not known until the end of the financial year.

31. As the precepting authority, the Council's collection fund accounts for income on behalf of Parish and Town Councils within the borough, Cleveland Fire Brigade, Cleveland Police as well as the Council itself. The surplus or deficit positions on the collection fund therefore include income for partners as well as the Council.

32. Council Tax performance during the year has been positive, with a year-end surplus of £1.753m. The estimated surplus was declared in January 2026 and the SBC precepting share included within the MTFP Report in February 2026.

33. Business rates has closed the year with a deficit of £1.7m, of which SBC's share is £859,000. This compares to the forecast position of £567,000, so there is an overall movement of £292,000, which will be reflected within the budget setting for 2027/28. Business rates are accounted for one year in arrears due to the nature of the system. This reflects the timing differences, as projections are based on the most up-to-date information available at the time, aligned with government national return requirements, although these timelines do not fully align with the budget-setting process.

34. In addition, the authority has received Section 31 grant funding to compensate for national business rate reliefs provided to businesses. This funding has been included within corporate items in the revenue outturn position reported above.

35. As outlined in the budget report, significant changes to local government funding will be introduced from 2026/27, including a major review of how business rates are distributed among local authorities. As a result, a further reconciliation of business rates is anticipated during 2026/27.

36. The authority will continue to closely monitor local collection levels and any national policy changes throughout the year, with updates incorporated into regular Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) monitoring reports and the budget-setting process for 2027/28.

General Fund Balances and Earmarked Reserves

37. The Council is required to maintain adequate levels of reserves. Reserves are an important part of the Council's financial strategy and are held to create long-term budgetary stability. Reserves enable the Council to manage change without undue

impact on the Council Tax and are a key element of its strong financial standing and resilience.

38. The Council holds the following reserves:

- General Fund Balances – this is a working balance serving as a financial safety net for unseen expenses or fluctuations in revenue. This is the reserve of last resort.
- Earmarked reserves – are funds set aside for specific projects and initiatives.
- Ringfenced or Partnership reserves – use is subject to conditions for example school balances held on behalf of schools.

39. The total General Fund Balance at 31 March 2026 is £8m, in line with the agreed level and as outlined in the report to Cabinet in February 2026.

40. The Council's general fund balance has remained at £8m since 2022/23. Members will recall that the MTFP report in February includes an allocation of £1m per annum to increase General Fund Balances to £11m by 2028/29. Resources will need to increase beyond this £11m to ensure the general fund balances are reflective of the continually growing budget, but this is anticipated to be an achievable increase within the MTFP period. The level of general fund balances will be reviewed annually to assess the suitability. Given the current level of general fund balances the Council should aim to hold 5% of Net Revenue Expenditure in General Fund balances, this is estimated to be £15.6m by 2028/29 based on the current MTFP.

41. To fund the overspend in 25/26, as agreed in the budget report in February 2026, reserves amounting to £3.865m have been used. The earmarked reserves position has reduced from an opening position of £30.3m to £27.5m at the year-end.

42. Details of earmarked reserve balances at the year-end are presented in the table below:

Earmarked Reserves	**Opening Balance 25/26**	**Movement 25/26**	**Closing Balance 25/26**
	£'000	**£'000**	**£'000**
Capital Scheme Reserves	(6,693)	1,551	(5,142)
Insurance Fund	(5,193)	676	(4,517)
Service Development & Improvement	(3,457)	1,283	(2,174)
Partnership / Statutory Reserves	(2,474)	332	(2,142)
Transformation & Implementation	(2,207)	(2,552)	(4,759)
MTFP Support Reserve	(2,213)	1,150	(1,063)
Pooled Funds and Interest Rate Risk	(1,962)	962	(1,000)
PFI Scheme Liability	(1,547)	127	(1,420)
Public Health Reserve	(1,175)	419	(756)
DSG Deficit Support Reserve	0	(1,700)	(1,700)
Schools Related Reserves	(3,368)	573	(2,795)
Total	**(30,289)**	**2,820**	**(27,469)**

43. The year-end closing balance of earmarked reserves is higher than projected in the budget setting report in February. This is due to reprofiling the use of reserves and most reserve balances remain committed for specific purposes. This does not alter the reserves policy within the budget report to Council in February 2026.

44. Members will recall that the MTFP report included a provision of £3m per year to increase the MTFP Support Reserve, which is necessary to mitigate future financial risks, or negative performance against budget. The Council should aim to hold 5% of Net Revenue Expenditure in the MTFP Support Reserve, this is estimated to be £15.6m by 2028/29 based on the current MTFP numbers. The projected balance on this reserve at the end of 2028/2029 is £10m, subject to no further funding being required to mitigate future overspends.

45. Reserves are monitored as part of the Council's financial budgetary control processes. Throughout 2026/2027, reserves will continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis, with commitments and projections updated to update cashflow and planned usage forecasts.

Medium Term Financial Plan Outlook

46. The budget report to Council in February identified the ongoing financial pressures and growth in demand across many council services; within Children's and Adult's Social Care, Home to School Transport and educational support to children with special educational needs. These areas have been significant drivers in the year-end position.

47. Strengthened financial monitoring will be implemented throughout 2026/2027. In addition to the existing quarterly budget monitoring, there will be targeted oversight of more volatile budgets and key cost drivers. This enhanced monitoring will be reviewed regularly by the Corporate Management Team, enabling timely development and implementation of actions to address emerging financial pressures.

This approach will include focused updates on areas within the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), including:

- Demand-led pressures, particularly within Children's and Adult Social Care
- Delivery of Transformation Reviews and associated savings
- Inflationary impacts, including National Joint Council (NJC) pay award agreements
- Global economic uncertainty, such as fluctuations in energy and fuel costs
- Management of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits and future funding arrangements for SEND beyond current announcements
- Additional areas subject to transformation reviews, including Waste Collection and Disposal, and income generation through fees and charges

48. Members will recall there is an estimated budget gap of £6.7m in 2026/27, rising to £13.8m in 2027/28 and £18.4m in 2028/29. The Council is 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, focusing on day to-day efficiencies, alongside Service Reviews and cross-council transformation. This approach will continue to ensure services are fit for purpose to address the challenges faced, and that the Council continues to be a high-performing, sustainable council that does our best for communities.

49. There is a separate report on this meeting agenda titled 'Powering our Futures – Transformation Reviews Update' which provides an update on the progress of the reviews and the impact upon the MTFP.

CAPITAL

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

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2029	**Current Approved Programme £'000**	**Programme Revisions £'000**	**Completed Schemes 2025/26 £'000**	**Variances (Completed Schemes) £'000**	**New Approvals £'000**	**Revised Programme £'000**
School Investment Programme & Children's Services	21,354	486	(1,851)	(18)	8,483	28,454
Inclusive Growth	9,794	0	(1,248)	(2)	0	8,544
Regeneration	149,051	282	(6,338)	(268)	1,300	144,027
Transportation	26,041	211	(9,556)	(84)	916	17,529
Community & Environment, Culture & Leisure	27,552	413	(4,090)	(4,544)	1,561	20,891
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	6,808	0	(472)	3	0	6,341
Xentrall ICT	900	(242)	0	0	0	658
Council Wide	19,350	(734)	0	0	0	18,616
Total Approved Capital MTFP	**260,852**	**417**	**(23,555)**	**(4,913)**	**12,260**	**245,061**

51. Members will note that the programme has been updated to reflect the approvals contained within the 2026/27 Budget Report and to reflect changes to the programme resulting from the sourcing of external funding. The changes are summarised in **Appendix B.** The Programme has also been updated to reflect schemes which have completed in 2025/2026.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

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

Corporate Parenting Implications

53. None

Financial Implications

54. The report updates Members on the financial position at the year-end for 2025/26 and Capital Programme. Financial implications are covered in the main body of the report.

Legal Implications

55. There are no specific legal implications.

Risk Assessment

56. The report provides an update to Members on the year-end position as at 31 March 2026. The MTFP is included within the Council's Strategic Risk Register. The current approved MTFP identifies a large budget reduction required, with Transformation Plans in place via the Council's Powering our Futures Programme. Constant and frequent monitoring of the financial position will be ongoing to measure delivery of the plan and the risk level revised in line with this.

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

57. N/A

Background Papers

58. Medium Term Financial Plan Update & Strategy Report to Council 18 February 2026

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Appendix A

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2029	Current Approved Programme	Programme Revisions	Completed Schemes 2025/26	Variances (Completed Schemes)	New approvals	Revised Programme	Expenditure Apr 2018 - March 2026
SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME & CHILDRENS SERVICES							
School Investment Programme	20,545,580	(329,619)	(1,851,480)	(17,871)	7,749,556	26,096,166	9,048,230
Children Investment	809,162	816,092	0	0	733,570	2,358,824	448,212
SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME & CHILDRENS SERVICES	**21,354,742**	**486,473**	**(1,851,480)**	**(17,871)**	**8,483,126**	**28,454,990**	**9,496,442**
INCLUSIVE GROWTH							
Inclusive Growth & Development	7,044,564	0	0	0	0	7,044,564	4,824,256
Office Accommodation	2,750,000	0	(1,247,907)	(2,093)	0	1,500,000	228,261
INCLUSIVE GROWTH	**9,794,564**	**0**	**(1,247,907)**	**(2,093)**	**0**	**8,544,564**	**5,052,516**
REGENERATION							
Stockton Town Centre Schemes	18,785,032	853	0	0		18,785,885	1,828,478
Reshaping Town Centres	8,255,275	(5,027)	0	0	0	8,250,248	521,909
Billingham Town Centre	30,000,000	0	0	0	0	30,000,000	303,281
Thornaby Town Centre	34,210,923	78,856	(4,637,730)	(62,270)	1,300,000	30,889,779	12,667,554
Re-Development of Castlegate Site	30,881,638	205,409	205,409	(205,409)	0	31,087,047	27,835,626
Yarm & Eaglescliffe LUF	23,909,840	1,881	(876,096)	0	0	23,035,625	16,109,761
Asset Maintenance	2,716,284	0	(1,029,449)	0		1,686,835	1,029,450
Wayfinding	291,717	0	0	0	0	291,717	0
REGENERATION	**149,050,709**	**281,972**	**(6,337,866)**	**(267,679)**	**1,300,000**	**144,027,136**	**60,296,059**
TRANSPORTATION							
City Regional Sustainable Transport	13,222,198	79,762	(9,361,743)	(130,881)	746,636	4,555,973	6,647,659
Other Transport Schemes	11,147,245	110,056	(193,803)	46,803	0	11,110,301	2,992,395
Developer Agreements	1,671,647	20,759	0	0	169,785	1,862,190	1,314,707
TRANSPORTATION	**26,041,090**	**210,577**	**(9,555,546)**	**(84,078)**	**916,421**	**17,528,464**	**10,954,762**
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE & LEISURE							
Energy Efficiency Schemes	737,636	9,208	(625,512)	(34,488)	0	86,844	331,240
Environment and Green Infrastructure	10,551,863	(24,980)	(3,464,864)	(4,509,875)	309,059	2,861,202	2,173,436
Waste	8,125,939	428,903	0	0	0	8,554,842	5,812,430
Building Management & Asset Review	188,611	0	0	0	1,251,682	1,440,293	87,737
Vehicle Replacement	7,948,278	0	0	0		7,948,278	945,617
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE & LEISURE	**27,552,327**	**413,131**	**(4,090,376)**	**(4,544,363)**	**1,560,741**	**20,891,459**	**9,350,460**

ADULTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING							
Adults & Public Health Investment	202,000	10	0	0	0	202,010	45,459
Housing Regeneration	2,979,419	0	0	0	0	2,979,419	22,514
Private Sector Housing	3,626,960	0	(471,789)	3,299	0	3,158,470	1,996,455
ADULTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING	**6,808,379**	**10**	**(471,789)**	**3,299**	**0**	**6,339,899**	**2,064,428**
XENTRALL ICT							
Xentrall ICT Network	900,000	(242,085)	0	0	0	657,915	657,915
XENTRALL ICT	**900,000**	**(242,085)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**657,915**	**657,915**
COUNCIL WIDE							
Unallocated council wide invest to save	19,350,000	(733,570)	0	0	0	18,616,430	0
COUNCIL WIDE	**19,350,000**	**(733,570)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**18,616,430**	**0**
Total Approved Capital MTFP	**260,851,811**	**416,507**	**(23,554,963)**	**(4,912,786)**	**12,260,287**	**245,060,856**	**97,872,582**

Appendix B

Programme Revisions 2025/26

Children's Services

- £146,000 of revenue costs and associated funding removed from the capital programme for St John the Baptist temporary classrooms, in line with accounting regulations.

Regeneration

- £205,409 has been added to the Urban park budget. This relates to a saving of this amount made once all of the compensation events in respect of the demolition contract had been finalised.

Transport

- Yarm/Stockton Cycleway LUF2 (design), additional funding added in from TVCA LUF2, £129,206.

Community Services Environment and Culture

- £428,903 has been added the Capital Programme in respect of SBC share of the Joint Waste Management Strategy for Residual Municipal Waste Treatment, funded via loan from TVCA.

Finance, Transformation and Performance

- £242,085 of Xentrall's ICT Network works have been revised to reflect final delivery and costs attributed between capital and revenue in line with accounting regulations and removed from the capital programme along with the associated funding.

Council Wide

- £733,570 of the council wide borrowing approval has been moved into Children's Services to deliver the complex needs children's homes in line with the Cabinet approval.

Completed Schemes 2025/26

Children's Services

- Planned Maintenance Schemes on a range of schools have been delivered in 2025/26.

Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

- Several planned maintenance schemes have been delivered across a range of Council Buildings.
- The Council Chamber has been completed in 2025/26.
- Thornaby Towns Fund - Skills Development (NETA) has completed in 2025/26.
- Yarm Town Hall and toilets have completed and are closed out of the programme.

Transportation

- A number of transport schemes, including the annual City Regional Sustainable Transport programme for 2025/26 have been delivered and are closed out.

Community Services Environment and Leisure

- A number of energy efficiency schemes, the largest being Billingham Forum, completed in 2025-26.
- Flood Coastal Resilience Programme – Tees Tidelands planned project has been removed after the phase 2 project proposal was not deemed as viable following ongoing dialogue with the funder, the Environment Agency. A report providing greater detail on this scheme and the key lessons learned as a consequence of the work undertaken will be presented to a future Committee meeting in the coming months.

Adult Services

- The Local Authority Housing Fund scheme has completed and been closed out of the capital programme within private sector housing.

New approvals

Children's Services

- Additional £4.650m grant (AP Free school) from DfE added to the programme, to invest in High needs provision.

- Additional £3,088,428 grant (HNPCA) from DfE added to the programme, to invest in High needs provision

- Additional £733,570 grant from DfE added to the programme, to invest in Complex Needs Children's Homes. This is to be match funded by council contribution.

Regeneration

- Additional funding received from Sport England of £1,300,000, this has contributed to the Regeneration of the Town Centre, more specifically Thornaby pool.

Transportation

- 2026/27 City Regional Sustainable Transport allocation £699,836 has been added to the Capital Programme for Carriageway resurfacing.

- Developer agreement funding of £130,889 added for preliminary work on the Horse & Jockey Roundabout.

Community Services Environment and Leisure

- Worsall Road Culvert, additional funding received from the Environment Agency of £130,000.

- As per April cabinet report, a Depot provision has been added, which is to be funded by grant received from the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, of £1,096,682.

REPORT TO CABINET

16th July 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Resources and Regeneration – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Powering our Future – Transformation Reviews Update

Summary

This report provides 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 sets 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 has 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 continue to rise faster than funding. This has 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 is underway, focusing on efficiency measures, council-wide initiatives, and outcome-based service reviews. This report provides an update on progress, with a particular emphasis on front-loaded efficiency savings, while further detailed reports on outcome-based reviews will follow. Savings identified within Phase 2 so far are £5,220,000 in 2026/27 and £3,520,000 per annum in future years.

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 February 2026 budget report to Cabinet set out the significant and ongoing financial pressures facing the Council, particularly within Children's and Adult Social Care, Home to School Transport and educational support for children with special educational needs. Demand for these services continues to increase in both volume and complexity, alongside rising costs within the external provider market. Elsewhere on this agenda, the financial outturn report for the end of the financial year confirms that these pressures are continuing, with funding not keeping pace with demand and resulting in a projected budget gap over the medium term.

2. In response, the Council is delivering the Powering Our Future transformation programme, providing a clear and structured approach to securing improved outcomes for residents alongside long-term financial sustainability. Since the previous update in May, good progress has been made across both Phase 1 and Phase 2, with a number of transformation reviews now at an advanced stage, several moving into delivery, and further savings opportunities being identified.

3. Phase 1 of the programme continues to deliver tangible improvements across a range of service areas, including Community Transport, Waste Collection, support for people to live independently, Administration and Business Services, Fees and Charges, and Children in our Care, strengthening both service delivery and the Council's overall financial position.

4. Phase 2 of the programme is now firmly established, comprising three interrelated strands of work. Progress is being driven through robust programme management and governance arrangements, with individual reports being presented on outcome-based service reviews as they progress through the decision-making process:

   - Efficiency Reviews, focused on improving day-to-day service delivery, including vacancy management, income generation, digital enablement and the development of sustainable service models;
   - Council-wide initiatives, including data-led reviews of expenditure, procurement and purchasing arrangements, and changes to working practices to reduce avoidable costs and improve organisational efficiency; and
   - Outcome-based service reviews, covering a programme of priority service areas, with early findings emerging and opportunities being identified to both improve outcomes and reduce costs.

5. Performance against the programme continues to be closely monitored. Appendix A provides a summary of progress since the previous update in May, and Appendix B sets out the cumulative position against the programme. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet as delivery progresses, including updates on outcomes and savings achieved, alongside Community Impact Assessments and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments, where appropriate.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

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

Corporate Parenting Implications

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

Financial Implications

8. The tables at Appendices A and B set out the additional savings identified to date to help close the budget gap: £5.220m in 2026/27 and £3.520m per annum in future years. This reduces the forecast budget gaps across the Medium Term Financial Plan to £1.480m in 2026/27, £10.255m in 2027/28, and £14.845m in 2028/29.

9. While this represents good progress, the Council continues to face a particularly challenging financial position over the medium term. As outlined above, work continues to progress across the transformation programme reviews to further address these remaining gaps. Consideration has also been given to the wider and longer-term financial implications arising from each decision. Robust risk management arrangements are in place across the programme to support the early identification, monitoring and mitigation of delivery, financial and demand-related risks.

Legal Implications

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

Risk Assessment

11. Risks are considered as part of the decision making process for the individual decisions referenced in this report. These will be monitored through the overall project management governance overseeing the transformation reviews.

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

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

Background Papers

13. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update and Strategy report to Council 18th February 2026.

14. Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update report to Cabinet 14th May 2026

15. Yarm Levelling Up Fund – Reconsideration of Decision following Call-in report to Cabinet 14th May 2026

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Appendix A

Area of Saving	Description	Savings Identified 26/27 £	Savings Identified 27/28 £	Savings Identified 28/29 £
Visitor Information Centre	A review of the Visitor Information Centre, “Enjoy Stockton”, has been undertaken as part of the wider Libraries Service review and transformation programme. The review considered operational demand, financial performance and property-related risk. The VIC currently operates Monday to Saturday, 9.00am to 5.00pm, and records approximately 15,000 visits and around 700 telephone enquiries each year. The service provides visitor information, event bookings, town centre engagement and access to council information. However, much of this activity overlaps with services already provided through the Customer Contact Centre and the libraries network, particularly Stockton Central Library, which is within close proximity. The service has also taken on a number of informal and non-core activities over time, including bookings for external transport operators and support for bookings relating to venues such as The Globe. The review concluded that a number of these activities can cease, with core council-facing functions either transferring into existing service points or being managed through current council arrangements. There is a part year saving in 26/27 due to the VIC remaining open over the Spring and early summer period.	(50,000)	(75,000)	(75,000)
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.	(217,000)	(217,000)	(217,000)

Council wide	This report outlines a revised, strategic approach to various spend headings across the Council, focused on strengthening financial sustainability while enabling a more comprehensive review of current operating models. The review has considered key cross-cutting expenditure areas, including agency, overtime, casual labour, IR35, mileage, recruitment and training, standby, honorarium, room hire, print and stationery, travel, and callout. The approach prioritises enhanced governance, tighter control of discretionary spend, and more consistent decision-making across the organisation. It is underpinned by improved use of data and management information, including the development of intelligence dashboards, alongside a programme of deeper analysis into workforce structures and service delivery models.	(507,000)	(482,000)	(482,000)
Communication Methods	We have undertaken a comprehensive review of how we communicate with residents, with the aim of modernising our approach to be more effective, accessible, and environmentally sustainable. This includes a clear reduction in the volume of printed materials, supporting our commitment to lowering paper usage and minimising environmental impact. As part of this transformation, we are adopting a more digital-first approach to communication, enabling faster, more flexible, and more targeted engagement with residents. A key element of this change is the decision to cease publication of Stockton News, reducing reliance on large-scale print distribution. This approach will be supported by our existing communication channels, including digital platforms and social media, allowing us to share more timely, relevant, and accessible information in a more joined-up and responsive way.	(83,000)	(83,000)	(83,000)
Council wide	Enhance promotion of the annual leave purchasing scheme to drive increased employee awareness and uptake. We have an existing policy that allows employees to purchase additional leave on top of their annual holiday entitlement; increasing promotion will help ensure greater understanding and utilisation of this offer. This will support improved workforce flexibility, promote employee wellbeing, and contribute to higher levels of engagement and work–life balance.	(100,000)	(100,000)	(100,000)

Capital Programme	A review of earmarked reserves and capital budgets has identified opportunities to release funding to help support the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, while continuing to protect frontline service delivery. Following a detailed assessment of demand and repayment trends, £90,000 has been released from the Homeowner Improvement Loans Reserve. In addition, improved delivery arrangements have enabled a reduction of £50,000 in planned, one off capital spending on allotments. As both schemes were originally funded through Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO), these funds can now be redirected to support the General Fund revenue budget. In addition, £291,717 of capital receipts has been released from the town centre wayfinding programme, as the funding is no longer required. The associated costs have been met through other town centre regeneration budgets. Decisions on the future use of these capital receipts will be considered as part of upcoming Medium-Term Financial Plan reports. These changes ensure that funding is aligned to current priorities and need, while maintaining sufficient resources to meet existing commitments and support future priorities.	(140,000)		

Senior Management	The *Powering Our Future* programme continues to deliver transformation and financial sustainability across the Council. As it has matured, there is an opportunity to embed Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) within core service delivery, supporting a sustainable, whole-Council approach. EIP functions will therefore be integrated into mainstream services, and the Assistant Director Transformation Early Intervention & Prevention role will cease in its current form. The current post holder has been appointed to an existing Assistant Director vacancy, demonstrating the Council's commitment to retaining key organisational capability, maintaining leadership continuity, safeguarding organisational knowledge, and ensuring the effective use of council resources.	(134,000)	(134,000)	(134,000)
	Total	**(1,231,000)**	**(1,091,000)**	**(1,091,000)**

Appendix B

Committee	Date of Report	Title of Report	Savings Identified 26/27 £	Savings Identified 27/28 £	Savings Identified 28/29 £
Cabinet	14th May 2026	Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update	(2,974,000)	(2,364,000)	(2,364,000)
Cabinet	14th May 2026	Yarm Levelling Up Fund – Reconsideration of Decision following Call-in	(1,015,000)	(65,000)	(65,000)
Cabinet	16th July 2026	Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update	(1,231,000)	(1,091,000)	(1,091,000)
		Total	**(5,220,000)**	**(3,520,000)**	**(3,520,000)**

REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration – (Councillor Paul Rowling)

PROCUREMENT PLAN/ HIGHER VALUE CONTRACTS

Summary

This report seeks approval from Cabinet 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.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To enable Cabinet to exercise its strategic oversight of higher value planned procurement projects, in accordance with the constitution.

Recommendations

That Cabinet

1. approves the contract listed in Annex 1;
2. gives authority 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;

Detail

1. The constitution defines a range of decisions that require a specific Cabinet approval, the financial threshold for which is set at a level of £500k or more. Annex 1 lists contracts that exceeds the financial threshold and have not otherwise been delegated to officers.

2. Further Procurement Plan/ Higher Value Contracts Reports will be presented to Cabinet for approval during the year as details of new contracts needed to deliver capital schemes are developed or new revenue funded contracts are identified.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

3. N/A

Corporate Parenting Implications

4. N/A

Financial Implications

5. The report includes a higher value contracts to be awarded in the 2026/27 financial year. The expenditure committed as a result of these tenders/ quotes is planned and remains within the Council's approved budget/ MTFP/ Capital Programme or is subject to a bid for external funding which will ensure that at the point of contract award, funds are available within the MTFP/ Capital Programme.

Legal Implications

6. Notwithstanding Cabinet approval it remains the responsibility of officers to ensure that the correct processes within Contract Procedure Rules have been followed and that where applicable the Procurement Act 2023 or the Provider Selection Regime introduced by the Health and Care Bill (2022) is complied with.

7. Where the value of goods, services or works exceeds the threshold at which the procurement process must comply with the Procurement Act 2023, either a tender exercise or the use of a suitable framework agreement will comply with the Regulations.

Risk Assessment

8. There are several risks relating to procurement. Firstly, the Council spends a considerable amount of public money on goods, services and works. Having effective Contract Procedure Rules and ensuring compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 can help mitigate the risk of accusations of corruption and help demonstrate value for money and transparency. Secondly, effective tender/ quote processes and contract management also reduce the risk of poor supplier selection and subsequent performance which can impact service delivery.

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

9. N/A

Background Papers

10. N/A

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Annex 1

Contract Title: Purchase of 6 Coach Built Buses	
Contract Purpose The contract is required to replace the existing fleet of coach-built buses for the Community Transport Service. The current buses are now approaching the end of their efficient and reliable service life, leading to higher maintenance costs, more frequent breakdowns, and reduced fuel efficiency.	
Contract Term Not applicable – purchase of vehicles.	
Contract Value The total price for the buses is £657,912.	
Procurement Process The Council has undertaken a further competition via The Procurement Partnership Limited Bus & Coach Purchase/ Passenger Transport Services (PTS) Framework Agreement. Orders will be placed upon Cabinet approval.	
Key Decision: Yes	**Funding within MTFP/ Capital Programme**: Yes
Delegated Officer: Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services	
Checks and Balances: Decision in consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include Finance and Procurement. Legal for certain specified decisions.	

Contract Title: Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4
Contract Purpose To appoint North Star Housing Group (Registered Housing Provider) as the Councils delivery partner. Funding will be used to support the purchase of 6 properties to delivery affordable housing.
Contract Term 4 year (2026/27 to 2029/30).
Contract Value Up to £545,304 (max £538,500 capital and £6,804 revenue).
Procurement Process The Council carried out an Expression of Interest (advertised via the NEPO portal) to seek a delivery partner, the market engagement exercise generated interest from 1 organisation – North Star Housing. It is proposed to appoint North Star given their track record of delivery in Rounds 2 and 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund. A Grant Agreement will entered into following Cabinet approval.

Key Decision: Yes	**Funding within MTFP/ Capital Programme**: Yes
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults and Health	
Checks and Balances: Decision in consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include Finance and Procurement. Legal for certain specified decisions.	

REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Portfolio Title – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report 2025/26

Summary

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

Reasons for Recommendation

To allow Members to receive information about the progress of the partnership and acknowledge the continuing success of Xentrall and the savings it has achieved over the eighteen years since it was formed.

Recommendation

1. It is recommended that Cabinet note the report and acknowledge the continuing success of Xentrall over the eighteen years since it was formed.

Background

1. Xentrall Shared Services is a public sector partnership between Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Darlington Borough Council (DBC). Established in May 2008, Xentrall is now in its eighteenth year working jointly with both Councils supporting them in the delivery of their services.

2. The services delivered by the partnership are:
    a. Xentrall Design & Print (Printing Services, Design Services, Displays & Exhibitions)
    b. Xentrall Finance (Creditors, Debtors, Banking, Income, System Support & Development)
    c. Xentrall HR (Payroll, Pensions, Recruitment, System Support & Development)
    d. Xentrall ICT (Service Desk, End User Device Management, Platform, Applications, Architecture Strategy, Information & Cyber Security)

3. The initial aim of Xentrall was to improve service performance and reduce the cost of the functions it delivers by £7.4m over the original ten-year period of the partnership. Xentrall surpassed this financial expectation by delivering £14m savings across the same period as reported to Members over previous years.

4. The quality and performance of services have also improved over the lifetime of the partnership through a range of past and continuing service improvements and developments.

5. This is a significant achievement for a public/public partnership and it compares very well to other private sector partnerships many of which have failed over the same period or been brought back in-house for a variety of reasons.

6. In recognition of the on-going success of the partnership, in 2015 Members agreed to amend the original ten-year period into an on-going rolling agreement which continues to this day.

7. The partnership is governed by the Xentrall Executive Board, namely the Director of Corporate Services (SBC) and Executive Director – Resources and Governance (DBC), and is managed by the Assistant Director (Xentrall Shared Services).

Employees and staffing

8. Xentrall has approximately 150 full time equivalent employees based in Stockton and Darlington. All Xentrall services continue to have low sickness levels and high levels of staff satisfaction. Workforce planning and development is an ongoing process to ensure all services have the capacity and skills to effectively manage the daily challenges of such critical services, together with planning future service improvements and developments.

9. The last year has seen some changes in the focus and capacity of the Xentrall services to improve service resilience and meet changing service demands. Additional senior management and service improvement capacity has been created within Xentrall HR and a new cyber security team has been developed within Xentrall ICT.

Customers - internal

10. Each of the Xentrall services seek customer feedback and satisfaction levels as part of their daily service operations. This instant feedback drives immediate operational service improvement responses on an ongoing basis.

11. Wide-ranging customer satisfaction surveys have generally been undertaken in SBC and DBC every two years throughout the life of the partnership. These involve canvassing service users and managers across both Councils. The last main customer survey was undertaken during 2024, resulting in a score of 3.9 out of 5. This is lower than Xentrall's all-time peak scores in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic (4.5 out of 5) but is still relatively high and consistent with previous results.

12. Xentrall will continue to monitor customer satisfaction in both Councils in future surveys.

Customers - external

13. Xentrall continues to enjoy successful ongoing contractual relationships with a number of external customers. We also explore new opportunities for external business as and when these arise, which is in-line with the partnership's objective of tactically growing the business.

14. This continues to form a significant part of the overall Xentrall financial model and thereby reduces the funding required from both Councils. Xentrall generated external annual income of over £1.2m from external customers during 2025/26.

15. Existing services to external customers include:
    a. All Xentrall services to Tees Valley Combined Authority
    b. Design & Print services to a range of ad hoc external customers
    c. Finance and HR/Payroll services to SBC maintained schools
    d. Finance and HR/Payroll services to academies across the North East
    e. Finance and HR/Payroll services to South Tees Development Corporation
    f. HR/Payroll services to North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre
    g. HR/Payroll services to Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland schools
    h. HR/Payroll services to SBC Direct Payment Clients
    i. ICT and Finance services to Tees Active Leisure Ltd
    j. ICT services to Theatre Hullabaloo in Darlington
    k. ICT services to North East Purchasing Authority (NEPO)
    l. ICT services to Northumberland County Council

Finance and value for money

16. Since the formation of the partnership in 2008, the financial situation in both Councils has changed significantly as a result of reductions in local government funding and more recently with high levels of inflation. Throughout, Xentrall has continued to support both Councils in achieving balance in their respective Medium Term Financial Plans. This has mainly been achieved through staff savings resulting from more efficient ways of working across all service areas, as well as cost reductions arising from partnership joint procurement. The additional pressure of inflation and the increasing cost of technology software and hardware continues to be a concern, particularly at renewal points in contracts for goods and services.

17. In 2025/26 Xentrall's core net budget is approximately £7.5m, funded jointly by SBC and DBC. In addition, Xentrall manages approximately £2.9m in shared ICT costs on behalf of SBC and DBC.

18. To accompany previous cost reduction exercises, all of the Xentrall services used to take part in national benchmarking schemes to ensure that service quality was not compromised and to confirm that a balanced approach was used to measure improvements and success. At that time these comparators confirmed the low cost of the services provided by Xentrall. As reported previously, during the pandemic these activities were paused and now post-pandemic the national programmes have ceased. In the absence of this comparator, Xentrall services continue to monitor service performance and remain alert to any new benchmarking programmes, should they arise.

Performance

19. Xentrall uses a balanced scorecard approach to performance management. This incorporates performance indicators covering the four interconnecting perspectives of employees, customers, service efficiency and cost.

20. The service efficiency key performance indicators for both SBC and DBC are:
    a. Finance - Invoices paid within 30 days
    b. Finance - bank reconciliation completed within 5 days of month end
    c. HR - accuracy of payroll payments
    d. HR - employee contract issued on or before start date
    e. ICT - ICT incidents resolved within agreed service levels
    f. ICT - availability of ICT systems
    g. ICT - availability of ICT network

21. In 2025/26 all but two of the key performance indicators were at or above target. The timeliness of completing DBC's bank reconciliation was recovered in time for the financial year end and is subject to a range of ongoing improvements to ensure performance is within target in future. The timeliness of paying invoices slipped slightly in the first quarter of the year owing to some short-term staffing issues, the backlog was cleared in quarter 2 and performance returned to normal/target levels in quarters 3 and 4.

22. Xentrall is also subject to various internal and external audit regimes which also confirm the good performance and governance of its services. 97% of the Xentrall control checks undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team during the year have achieved a green assessment, those in exception are minor in nature and work is in progress to address them.

23. The Xentrall ICT service successfully maintained certification in ISO standards 27001 (Information Security Management) and 9001 (Quality Management) and was re-certified for continued access to the Government's Public Services Network (PSN).

24. The Xentrall Finance and Xentrall HR services successfully maintained the BACS Accredited Bureau status following a full audit by Pay UK.

SBC & DBC achievements

25. Xentrall continues to be a critical element in the continued effective functioning of both Councils. This covers a range of vital recurring tasks and services plus providing critical support to organisation-wide and service-based projects in. A snapshot of some of the Xentrall activities and achievements over the last year is shown for each of our services in the following paragraphs.

26. Xentrall Design & Print highlights - the production of digital graphics, operational print, marketing, promotional, advertising, report and signage materials for:
    a. Changes to waste and recycling (SBC & DBC)
    b. Stockton & Darlington 200 (S&DR 200) (SBC & DBC)
    c. Stockton-on-Tees News & One Darlington
    d. Developing Darlington, Darlington Hippodrome Theatre, Hopetown Darlington, Dolphin Centre (DBC)
    e. Learning & Skills, Library Services, Fostering Services (SBC & DBC)
    f. Stockton Crematorium and Register Offices (SBC)
    g. Support of Stockton's Powering our Future programme with the centralisation of outbound post, electoral packs and volume print for Revenues & Benefits (SBC)

h. Hoarding projects including Golden Eagle Demolition Thornaby (SBC), Riverside Businesses at Jewson's Yard (SBC) and Dolphin Centre Redevelopment (DBC)
i. A wide variety of campaigns across both Councils including Let's Talk (SBC), Oral Heath Darlington (DBC), Smoking Cessation (DBC) and Holidays Are Fun (SBC)
j. Recognition and award ceremonies including Stronger Communities Awards (DBC), Annual Colleague Awards (SBC), Stars Awards (SBC) and Social Worker of the year (DBC)
k. Events including Stockton International Riverside Festival (SBC), Destination STEM Darlington (DBC), La Voix Exhibition Preston Park (SBC), Love your local market (SBC), Armed Forces Day (SBC), Proms in the Park (DBC), Darlington 10k, 5k & Junior 3k runs, Rhythm & Tunes Weekender (DBC), Norton Advent Trail (SBC), Ice Sculpture Trail (DBC), Stockton Sparkles (SBC)
l. A whole range of other regular requests for digital graphics along with recurring high volume printing tasks such as school admissions correspondence, travel permits, resident parking permits, adult social care surveys, rent statements, landlord statements, green garden waste packs, food dietary/allergen information stickers and resident consultation packs etc (across both SBC & DBC)

27. Xentrall Finance highlights:
a. Processed and paid around 73,000 creditor invoices for SBC, DBC and Tees Valley Combined Authority
b. Over 11,000 sundry debtor invoices worth around £85 million issued
c. Over £1 billion in cash income transactions posted and reconciled
d. Working with SBC and DBC to implement the Supplier Incentive Programme
e. Expansion of Lingfield Academy, increasing Xentrall income
f. Successfully migrated BACS processing software to a cloud hosted environment

28. Xentrall HR highlights:
a. Maintained consistent payroll service delivery across more than 140 payrolls, supporting over 15,000 employees
b. Implemented car mileage claims via MyHR from November 2025, delivering cost savings by reducing reliance on additional finance system modules (SBC & DBC)
c. Introduced overtime payments on the MyHR self-service portal for SBC, following the DBC rollout in 2024/25
d. Developed recruitment dashboards to support workload management and provide visibility of active vacancies, onboarding timelines and recruitment trends
e. Improved a number of processes including the DBS renewals process through automation of proactive notifications to managers and employees ahead of expiry dates
f. Delivered three mandatory Payroll and HR system upgrades, including comprehensive user acceptance testing, ensuring security compliance and alignment with pay-related legislation.

29. Xentrall ICT highlights:
a. Resolved over 37,000 user incidents and requests, with 95% resolved within target and a happy customer satisfaction rating of 94%, 80% of all user incidents and requests were logged were via our self-service portal which is available 24/7 and accessible across a range of corporate devices
b. Successfully retained Cabinet Office certification for the PSN (Public Services Network).
c. Gained recertification for the ISO standards 27001 (Quality Management Systems) and 9001 (Information Security Management).
d. Continued the ongoing programme of device refresh, with 681 replacement laptops for SBC and 368 for DBC

e. Completed 36 separate ICT-related projects supporting a diverse range of service improvements in Xentrall, SBC and DBC including the introduction of Artificial Intelligence tools such as Magic Notes and Microsoft Copilot
f. Increased our cyber security capability through the creation of a new team with dedicated cyber security roles, implemented a new cyber security operations centre with a specialist cyber security partner delivering 24/7/365 monitoring, alerting and isolation of cyber threats
g. Completed a refresh of environmental management systems in the primary data centre in DBC's Town Hall including new resilient air conditioning and fire suppression systems
h. Implemented the new secondary data centre in SBC's Dunedin House, this state-of-the-art facility improves availability and reliability of Stockton and Darlington systems whilst reducing running costs and carbon footprint

Looking forward

30. As can be seen from the above, Xentrall continues to perform very well and deliver developmental projects alongside its day-to-day services to both Councils and external customers.

31. Looking forward, activities will include:
    ~~a.~~ Xentrall Design & Print will continue to support both Councils, working closely with their respective Communications Teams and other services to ensure they all receive the creative and technical support and solutions they need. The service continues to promote digital output options and (by using our specialist software) the centralisation of volume print in the hope that it will reduce printing volumes overall at both Councils.
    b. Xentrall Finance will continue to work with both Councils and have a number of projects planned or underway. These include implementing the migration of the main finance system and income management systems to cloud-hosted solutions and the introduction and development of the Supplier Incentive Scheme.
    c. Xentrall HR will continue to work with both Councils and external academy customers in the exploitation of the HR/Payroll system and the MyHR employee interface and app, legislative changes will continue to be applied to the system in a timely manner, as will the application of any pay awards as and when agreed.
    d. Xentrall ICT will continue to support both Councils and external customers, delivering information and technology solutions underpinned by a refreshed ICT Strategy. Major projects already in flight and on track including the refresh and upgrade of the network across all Darlington and Stockton sites, a review and refresh of the core server and storage infrastructure which supports over 400 applications as well as the design and development of our cloud infrastructure. There will also be an ongoing programme of further work to enhance our security posture as we look to counter the ever-evolving cyber threat.

32. In addition to the above programme and as with previous years, the continual service improvement mentality within Xentrall will be applied to leverage any further service improvements and/or savings for both Councils where possible. Outside of this programme, Xentrall will continue to assess new business opportunities should these arise as this approach aligns with the Xentrall business model of tactically growing the business, which in turn helps to support both Council's Medium Term Financial Plans.

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