

Date:

Thursday 17 September 2026 at 5.00 pm

Venue:

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

Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader)

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 - 18)

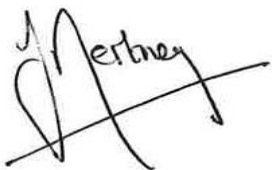
Cllr Clare Besford - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

6. People Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision (Pages 19 - 48)

7. Children and Young People Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision (Pages 49 - 74)

8. SEND Reform Programme – Education White Paper and Local Area Reform Plan Update (Pages 75 - 84)

- 9. Local Area Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Alternative Provision
OFSTED Inspection (ASEND)** (Pages 85 - 88)
- 10. Youth Justice Plan Stockton-on-Tees 2026-2027** (Pages 89 - 122)
- 11. Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031** (Pages 123 - 144)
- Cllr Paul Rowling - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for
Resources and Regeneration**
- 12. Financial Update and Medium-Term Financial Plan - 2026/2027 Quarter 1** (Pages
145 - 176)
- 13. Annual Ombudsman Report** (Pages 177 - 180)
- 14. Procurement Plan** (Pages 181 - 184)
- 15. Minutes of Various Bodies** (Pages 185 - 210)



Jonathan Nertney
Head of Democratic Services
Wednesday 9 September 2026

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

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

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

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

Key – Declarable interests are :-

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

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

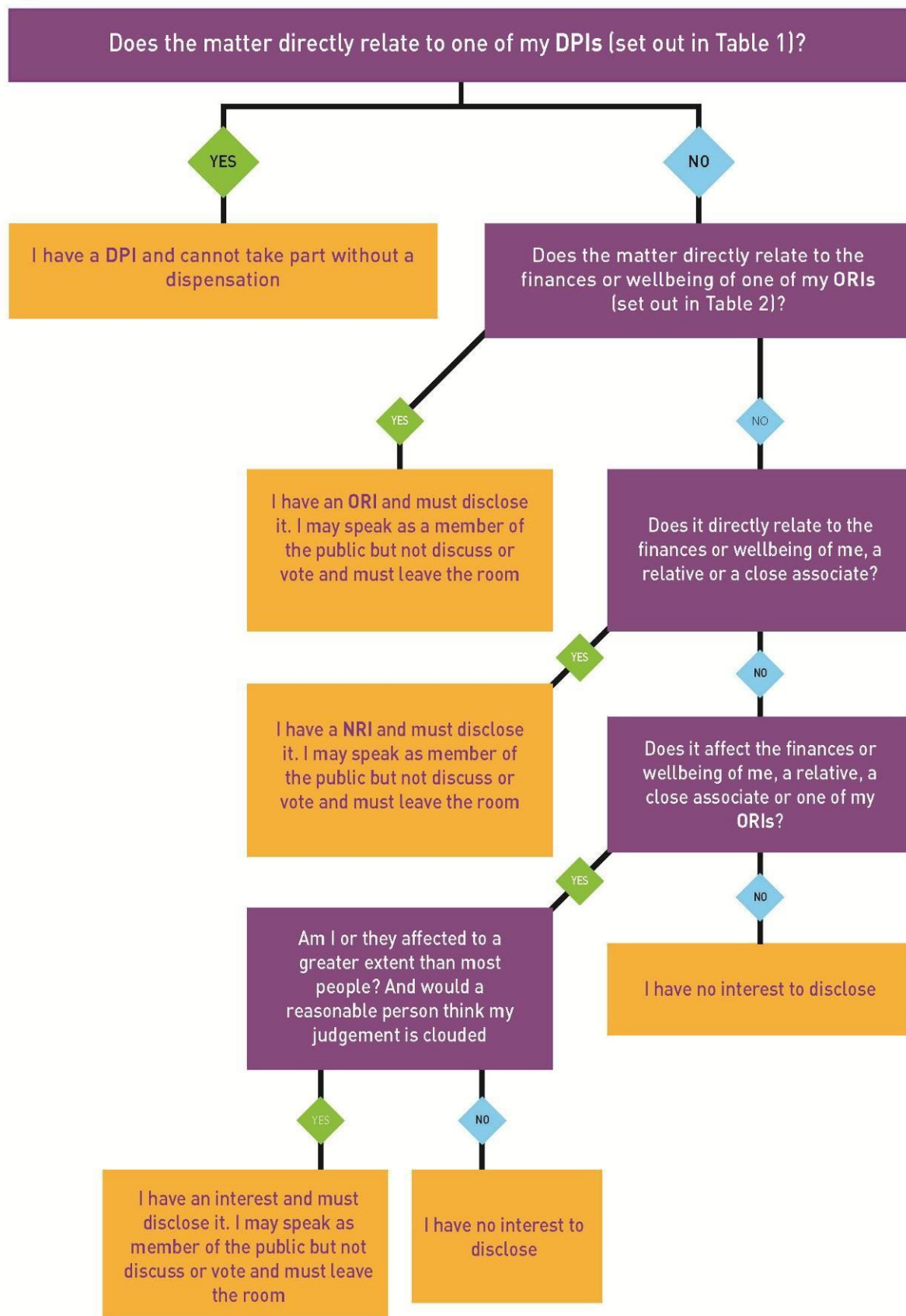


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

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

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

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



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

The emergency exits are located via the doors to the left of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber and the rear of the Council Chamber.

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

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

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

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



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

When the Alarm sounds:

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

5. await further instructions.

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

Toilets

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

Water Cooler

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

Microphones

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

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Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 16th July 2026.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Richard Eglington (Cabinet Member), Cllr Paul Rowling (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Ged Morton, Peter Bell, Haleem Ghafoor, Julie Butcher, Tara Connor, Clare Harper, Laura Kelsey, Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Majella McCarthy, Carolyn Nice, Sarah Robinson, Edwin Squire, Joy Swithenbank and Craig Willows.

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

Apologies: None.

CAB/153/25 Live Streaming

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

CAB/154/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/155/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB/156/25 Minutes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAB/158/25 School Term and Holiday Dates 2027/2028

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The proposed policy reinforced the commitment to:

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

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

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

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

No comments objecting to the proposed policy were received.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAB/163/25 Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts

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

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

RESOLVED that:-

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

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

CAB/164/25 Xentrall Annual Report

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

The report highlighted the following key areas:-

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

RESOLVED that:-

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

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

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

CAB/166/25 Billingham Town Centre

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT TO CABINET

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

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

Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision

Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Post 16 Provision.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

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

Recommendations:

The Committee recommend that:

1. Transition support is strengthened by developing a consistent borough-wide transition framework between schools and post-16 providers, including clear pre-enrolment guidance, earlier course matching, data sharing, and structured support during the first term/end of Year 12 when drop-out risk is highest.
2. Early warning systems for flagging declining attendance, behaviour, and attainment are embedded across all post-16 providers with clear escalation and intervention pathways are in place before disengagement reaches crisis point.
3. Collaborative initiatives that are showing signs of successfully assisting young people, such as Teach Meets, Skills for Success, and Business Mentor Support, are expanded to all providers and prioritising subjects with historically smaller student cohorts.
4. Communication between all providers and young people and their parents/carers regarding the Post-16 in-Borough offer is strengthened
5. Careers education is embedded in to the curriculum in all schools and post-16 providers to ensure young people choose the right pathways for them and reduce early withdrawal by:
 - ensuring careers advice and guidance/post 16 options are available from Year 9 (or earlier) to enable young people to build their knowledge

- developing resources and staff training to show how subject-specific knowledge and skills translate into employment, business and industry
 - give clear course expectations, progression routes and employment outcomes to reduce early withdrawal from and dissatisfaction with courses.
6. Labour-market intelligence and cohort growth data is utilised to plan academic, vocational and apprenticeship provision more strategically, to ensure capacity keeps pace with demand and competition between age groups does not disadvantage younger learners.
 7. Cross-provider enrichment opportunities are broadened to not only create a more competitive offer compared with regional competitors but also raise aspirations.
 8. Post-16 providers explore collaborative approaches and strategic networks to address transport barriers, highlighted as a significant influence on post-16 choice including connectivity to all in-Borough post-16 providers and cost, so young people can access efficient, cost effective in-borough provision.
 9. Post-16 providers ensure that vocational courses provide coherent pathways to meet industry requirements

Detail

1. There is a broad and high-quality post 16 offer for young people in Stockton-on-Tees, with five providers offering a range of courses and qualifications. However, enrolment figures have been impacted in recent years with students choosing to attend out of borough providers and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates are high. The review therefore aimed to consider the current position, challenges, and proposed solutions in the Stockton-on-Tees post 16 provision, and in doing so, assist in increasing attraction and retention of post 16 education, reduce the number of young people becoming NEET, and lead to better outcomes for the young people of the Borough.
2. A Post 16 Partnership has been established, with senior representative from all providers, Careers Service, School Support Economic Development and other relevant stakeholders. The Partnership seeks to enhance strategic collaboration and communication between providers as well as improve the quality of training in the borough, identify and address common challenges facing the sector, and promote the offer more widely. The Partnership had four work strands in 2025/26 to achieve their aims: Excellence for All, Communications and Marketing, Careers, and Transitions.
3. The review's recommendations therefore build on the strong foundations already in place, with a focus on continuing the collaborative work taking place to strengthen communications, careers education, data sharing, and transitions from school to post 16 education.
4. Contributions have been received from representatives leading the Post 16 Partnership work strands, including Egglecliffe School and Sixth Form College, Stockton Sixth Form College, the Education Training Collective, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Career

Service, and the Employment and Training Hub. Members of the Committee also attended a meeting of the Post 16 Partnership.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

5. A EPIA has been completed with the outcome that the recommendations will potentially have a positive impact on the protective characteristics age, poverty, and experience of care due to aim of the recommendations being to strengthen post-16 outcomes for young people.

Corporate Parenting Implications

6. There are no direct implications in the report.

Financial Implications

7. There are no direct financial implications in the report.

Legal Implications

8. There are no direct implications in the report.

Risk Assessment

9. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

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

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

Background Papers

11. None

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Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

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Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision

People Select Committee, July 2026

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Forward

Following the People Select Committee's review of Post-16 Provision, we are pleased to present the Committee's final report.

It is vital that young people have access to post-16 education to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and qualification that they need to enter the world of work and fulfil their ambitions and potential. There is a broad offer of post-16 education for young people in our borough, with a variety of courses and good academic results. However, data had suggested that young people in the borough were unsure of the current offer available to them and that the transition between school and college was a risk factor in them becoming not in education employment or training (NEET). The review therefore examined the collaborative work taking place via the Post-16 Partnership to address these issues and considered the challenges in attraction and retention of young people.

Our findings note that good progress has already been made to tackle these challenges. Our recommendations therefore seek to build on the work that has taken place via the Post-16 Partnership and further enhance post-16 education by strengthening data sharing, careers guidance, and communication with young people and their parents/carers. They also propose that initiatives which are seeing positive outcomes for young people in the borough are extended and that transport barriers are explored further.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Head of Education and Inclusion and Project Manager for their support throughout the review. We would also like to thank the Post-16 Work Group leads for their contributions to the review, namely the Careers Team Manager, Employment & Training Hub Manager, Head of School at Egglescliffe School & Sixth Form College, Head of Centre and Director of Business Development at Stockton Sixth Form College, and the Group Marketing & Business Engagement Director at Education Training Collective.

Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Chair



Councillor Marilyn Surtees

Chair – People Select Committee



Councillor Paul Weston

Vice-Chair – People Select Committee

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The topic of Post 16 Education directly addresses Priority one: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions Key Move Giving children and young people the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive, as it includes the action to work with Schools and Post-16 providers to increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training at ages 16 – 18 years, helping to grow their ambitions and meeting the needs of local employers.

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

There is a strong Post 16 offer in Stockton-on-Tees, with five providers offering a range of courses and qualifications to fulfil a variety of different passions and career aspirations. Achievement for young people at the end of their Post 16 Education is growing rapidly with a higher than national average A Level pass rate across the Borough of 97.7%.

However, enrolment figures for in Borough providers have been impacted in recent years with more Stockton-on-Tees students choosing to attend out of Borough providers in Middlesbrough and Darlington, who offer similar courses. Only one out of Borough provider beats In Borough A Level A*-B outcomes.

A survey of Young People approaching the end of Year 11 by the Careers team, asking about their readiness for leaving school, found that 13.1% of students had not had a careers discussion at all in advance of sitting their GCSEs. A further 18.1% of students surveyed said they had not made a clear decision about their next steps after school. These findings suggest that Stockton students are largely unaware of the current offer available to them and improvements are needed to the existing communications strategy to effectively reach the providers target audience.

While the number of students completing Post 16 Education is growing, with an increase of over 300 students over 5 years, statistics show that a small minority of 16-17 year olds in the Borough are at risk of or have become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) since beginning Key Stage 5. Economic inactivity significantly impacts upon an individual's economic growth potential and is often associated with an increased likelihood of involvement in antisocial behaviour and crime. During the 2022/23 academic year, 1.6% more students who attended a Post 16 provider IN BOROUGH (5.3%) dropped out in Year 12 than those OUT OF BOROUGH (3.7%) Overall, 7% of our Year 13 students, whether they attended a Post 16 provider in or out of Borough were NEET by the end of November 2024. These numbers are much too high.

A minority of students choose to dropout within the first three months of starting a Post 16 qualification, therefore a core focus of the Post 16 enrichment strategy is to improve transitional support. Post 16 education involves an increase in independence, greater difficulty of work and a new structure to the day. These factors are often responsible for dropouts, but it is also important to consider other external factors such as health and wellbeing, financial situation, and access to transport.

Transition from secondary school to Post 16 education need to be as seamless as possible, helping Young People to overcome some of these factors and avoid becoming NEET.

Therefore, areas that would benefit from development include:

- Attraction & Retention rates
- Current NEET statistics
- Internal awareness of strategic funding opportunities
- Communication & Marketing of our offer

The review aims to consider the current position, challenges, and proposed solutions in the Stockton-on-Tees post 16 provision. This will inform the Post 16 enrichment strategy currently in development.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How well are stakeholders collaborating to minimise any challenges?
- What careers advice do school leavers receive prior to applying for courses/apprenticeships?
- How do school leavers find out about Post-16 providers and courses available?
- What extra-curriculum activities do Post-16 providers provide and how are these marketed?
- Are there any extra benefits that can be offered to school leavers by Post-16 providers?
- What pastoral arrangements are in place at Post-16 provisions?
- What financial support is available for school leavers to apply for?
- Which courses/providers are young people dropping out from?

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

In considering the challenges and proposed solution to the current Post 16 offer the review will aim to assist in increasing attraction and retention of post-16 education, reduce the number of young people becoming NEET, and lead to better outcomes for the young people of the Borough.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Post-16 Provision.
- 1.2. There is a strong Post-16 offer in Stockton-on-Tees, with five providers offering a range of courses and qualifications to fulfil a variety of different passions and career aspirations, namely Conyers School and Sixth Form, Egglescliffe School and Sixth Form College, Stockton Sixth Form College, and The Education Training Collective (Etc), which has two site, Bede Sixth Form College, Stockton Riverside College. Etc also have the NETA site which has an engineering focus.
- 1.3. The review aimed to consider the current position, challenges and proposed solutions in Stockton-on-Tees' post-16 provision. In doing so, the review aimed to assist in increasing attraction and retention of post-16 education, reduce the number of young people becoming NEET, and lead to better outcomes for the young people of the Borough.
- 1.4. A Post-16 Partnership has been established to enhance strategic collaboration and communication between providers, improve the quality of education and training in the borough, share best practice and innovative approaches, identify and address common challenges facing the sector, and develop and implement strategies to promote the offer more widely. The partnership has senior representatives from all the providers, careers service, school support, education, economic development and other relevant stakeholders.

Excellence for All

- 1.5. While there is a natural competitiveness between the providers, who are seeking to recruit students to their courses, genuine collaboration is taking place via the Post-16 Partnership to improve outcomes across the borough. The Excellence for All Work Strand is focussing on ensuring there is a strong offer with good outcomes across the borough that encourage students to enrol at in-borough providers. Two trials have taken place to address the outcomes: Business Mentor Support – Excellence for All, which aims to support students fulfil their full potential and bridge the gap between education and work; and Teach Meets which aims to bring teachers together to share best practice, practical innovations, and personal insights.
- 1.6. Further collaboration taking place includes providers receiving monthly information on young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), information on funding opportunities as these arise, and local employer information and business intelligence in terms of gaps and areas of growth, with sectors now speaking directly to students which has proved to be more powerful than providers sharing the information with students. Partnerships are in place with providers to offer industry placements, provide the learning for apprenticeships, and co-create curriculum with employers in key growth sectors.

Communication and Marketing

- 1.7. The Committee heard how the different providers are communicating and marketing their courses to schools both within the Borough and the wider Tees Valley area through a range of engagement activities targeted at Years 9 – 11, however there are some activities regarding careers choices aimed at younger year groups. Engagement and recruitment activity begins in September and continues throughout the year.

- 1.8. The Post-16 Partnership Communication and Marketing Work Strand aims to work together to keep students local and has developed a communications and marketing initiative spanning industry engagement, careers provision, transitions, and enrichment programmes. Activities that have taken place include creating a framework to map current engagement activity and identifying growth sectors and businesses, producing a Post-16 brochure showcasing each provider as part of place brand messaging of Stockton-on-Tees being a place to study, live, work and play, and Mystery Shopper exercises.
- 1.9. The Work Strand is now building on this foundation by developing a school engagement toolkit available for all staff showcasing the local offer, Alumni success stories profiling local people who built careers in Stockton-on-Tees and Digital ambassadors advocating for Stockton-on-Tees. Postcards directing prospective students to the Post-16 Brochure and a glossary of terms making this easier to understand are also being developed and a Stockton Post Secondary Pre-Open Event is planned for September 2026, giving young people and parents a chance to get initial information on all providers in one convenient location
- 1.10. Providers have seen an increase in engagement from school leavers at events and this has resulted in a significant increase in the number of applications to all in-borough providers. It should be noted, however, that school leavers may apply for more than one course including at providers out of borough.

Careers Advice

- 1.11. Providing early advice and guidance is considered essential in supporting young people to choose the right post-16 pathway for their talents and ambitions and secondary schools and colleges have a duty to provide careers education to all their students in Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 5. Schools fulfil this duty either in-house by directly employing a qualified Careers Adviser, or by contracting with a Careers Guidance provider. SBC's Careers has contracts with five schools. It also currently provides targeted support to Year 11 residents in Stockton-on-Tees who require further support, with the demand and complexity increasing significantly over time.
- 1.12. Both universal and targeted Careers Guidance is also available in all colleges/Years 12 and 13. This include in-house staff and SBC Careers, who currently offer progressive tailored support. SBC Careers is aiming to develop systems across colleges where they are made aware of declining attendance, attainment, or behaviour early so that support can be offered before crisis or students leave.
- 1.13. A Phase 2 Transformation Outcome-based review regarding Opportunities for Young People in Employment (OYPE) has been taking place at the same time of the Scrutiny Review, with a focus on operational redesign of the SBC Careers Service current service model to improve NEET outcomes via early intervention and digital first as well as operating within a reduced budget. The review is ongoing and will be undertaken in alignment with, and complementary to, the Scrutiny Review of Post-16 Education, ensuring consistency and that Scrutiny recommendations are included. The findings and outputs from this review will be considered alongside the Scrutiny Review and will inform recommendations.
- 1.14. In addition to careers advice and guidance provided in schools and colleges, the Employment & Training Hub has also been delivering programmes for young people of the borough to raise their knowledge, ambitions, and personal skills. These include Skills for Success, Excellence for All, Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, Care Experience Young Person Recruitment Coordinator, and Industry Insights.

- 1.15. The Careers Network Work Strand supports colleges to identify gaps in career education, share good practice and highlight innovative and inspiring opportunities. This has included working with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), who are relaunching their Business Directory, and facilitating dialogue between schools and colleges and the TVCA Work Experience Coordinator. Roadshows activities are also being developed for Key Stage 3 Work Experience Week and “How To” guides shared for Key Stage 4 Work Experience Week. Finally, a Parent & Carer guide to careers has been developed.

Transitions from School to Post 16 Provision

- 1.16. The Committee were informed that the Transitions Work Strand aims to strengthen retention and progression as well as understand challenges faced by providers and how best to give advice and guidance to young people and parents/carers. A student survey has been conducted to find out what influences their decisions when applying for courses. There is a wide range of courses available, all providers are rated as Outstanding or Good by OFSTED, and outcomes are competitive. The survey results reiterated that the in-borough provision offer is competitive.
- 1.17. However, the survey highlighted that transport is an important factor, with young people choosing to attend providers that are quick and easy to get to. In some areas of the Borough it is easier to travel to out-of-borough providers, with direct and frequent bus routes, rather than travel across town which may take longer and require changing buses.
- 1.18. The survey also highlighted early engagement and awareness as being important when making post-16 choices. A shared language and messaging are important to help young people and parents/carers understand the different pathways, and a Jargon Buster has been proposed to simplify the process.
- 1.19. SBC teams are assisting in the transition to post-16 by ensuring providers have the information they need to support vulnerable learners in to the right provider/courses, and the multi-agency event Preparing for Adulthood Day proved to be effective. However, there are still challenges including late identification of non-attenders and inconsistent application systems, and a Borough-wide data framework using both school and college data management systems is being developed to strengthen this.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- 1.20. In April members were informed that NEET was 7.3%, a rise from 5% in 2020. The impact of additional staff resources in Leaving Care Team and Employment & Training Hub has not yet been seen in the national data for Care Experienced young people NEET rate, however smaller caseloads and increased proactive support for those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has had a positive impact on reducing the NEET rate.
- 1.21. The OYPE review that has taken place is proposing a new service model and operational redesign to improve awareness of opportunities, strengthen transitions, and influence a reduction in NEET rates.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- 1.22. The Committee recognises the importance of building on the strong foundations already in place for post-16 collaboration and improving outcomes. The Committee concludes that with sustained focus and collective commitment, there is significant opportunity to further enhance post-16 education in Stockton-on-Tees, improving participation, reducing NEET levels, and enabling more young people to achieve their potential while contributing to the borough's future economic growth.

1.23. The Committee recommends that:

1. Transition support is strengthened by developing a consistent borough-wide transition framework between schools and post-16 providers, including clear pre-enrolment guidance, earlier course matching, data sharing, and structured support during the first term/end of Year 12 when drop-out risk is highest.
2. Early warning systems for flagging declining attendance, behaviour, and attainment are embedded across all post-16 providers with clear escalation and intervention pathways are in place before disengagement reaches crisis point.
3. Collaborative initiatives that are showing signs of successfully assisting young people, such as Teach Meets, Skills for Success, and Business Mentor Support, are expanded to all providers and prioritising subjects with historically smaller student cohorts.
4. Communication between all providers and young people and their parents/carers regarding the Post-16 in-Borough offer is strengthened
5. Careers education is embedded in to the curriculum in all schools and post-16 providers to ensure young people choose the right pathways for them and reduce early withdrawal by:
 - ensuring careers advice and guidance/post 16 options are available from Year 9 (or earlier) to enable young people to build their knowledge
 - developing resources and staff training to show how subject-specific knowledge and skills translate into employment, business and industry
 - give clear course expectations, progression routes and employment outcomes to reduce early withdrawal from and dissatisfaction with courses.
6. Labour-market intelligence and cohort growth data is utilised to plan academic, vocational and apprenticeship provision more strategically, to ensure capacity keeps pace with demand and competition between age groups does not disadvantage younger learners.
7. Cross-provider enrichment opportunities are broadened to not only create a more competitive offer compared with regional competitors but also raise aspirations.
8. Post-16 providers explore collaborative approaches and strategic networks to address transport barriers, highlighted as a significant influence on post-16 choice including connectivity to all in-Borough post-16 providers and cost, so young people can access efficient, cost effective in-borough provision.
9. Post-16 providers ensure that vocational courses provide coherent pathways to meet industry requirements

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Post-16 Provision.
- 2.2. There is a strong post-16 offer in Stockton-on-Tees, with five providers offering a range of courses and qualifications to fulfil a variety of different passions and career aspirations. It is imperative that students choose courses that align best with their talents and ambitions to ensure successful outcomes for their future. While in some cases this may be a course at an out of Borough provider, for most students there should be a place in-borough for them.
- 2.3. The review aimed to consider the current position, challenges, and proposed solutions in the Stockton-on-Tees post 16 provision. In doing so, the review aimed to assist in increasing attraction and retention of post-16 education, reduce the number of young people becoming NEET, and lead to better outcomes for the young people of the Borough.
- 2.4. The Committee undertook the following key lines of enquiry:
 - [How well are stakeholders collaborating to minimise any challenges?](#)
 - [What careers advice do school leavers receive prior to applying for courses/apprenticeships?](#)
 - [How do school leavers find out about Post-16 providers and courses available?](#)
 - [What extra-curriculum activities do Post-16 providers provide and how are these marketed?](#)
 - [Are there any extra benefits that can be offered to school leavers by Post-16 providers?](#)
 - [What pastoral arrangements are in place at Post-16 provisions?](#)
 - [What financial support is available for school leavers to apply for?](#)
 - [Which courses/providers are young people dropping out from?](#)
- 2.5. Contributions were sought and subsequently received from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Education and Inclusion Service, Careers Service, and Employment & Training Hub. Contributions were also received from several partners leading on the work strands of the Post-16 Partnership, including Egglecliffe School and Sixth Form College, Stockton Sixth Form College, and Education Training Collective. The results of a student survey carried out by the Post-16 Partnership were also shared with the Committee.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 There are five providers of post-16 education within Stockton-on-Tees: Conyers School and Sixth Form, Eaglescliffe School and Sixth Form, Stockton Sixth Form College and The Education Training Collective (Etc) who have two sites, Bede Sixth Form College and Stockton Riverside College. Etc also have the NETA site which has an engineering focus. There is a higher than national average A Level pass rate across the Borough of 98% in 2025, however the rate of students achieving A*-B grades at A level is below the national average at 44.2% across the Borough.
- 3.2 Enrolment data for both 2024/25 and 2025/26 shows that over 40% of young people in Stockton-on-Tees are choosing to attend out-of-Borough providers, with the most popular of these being Middlesbrough College and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form.

- 3.3 A Post-16 Partnership has been established to enhance strategic collaboration and communication between post-16 education providers, improve the quality of education and training in the borough, share best practice and innovative approaches, identify and address common challenges facing the sector, and develop and implement strategies to promote the offer more widely. The partnership has senior representatives from all the post-16 providers, Career Service, School Support, Education, Economic Development and other relevant stakeholders. Four work strands have been created to deliver tangible actions: Excellence for All, Communications and Marketing, Careers, and Transitions
- 3.4 In addition, the Children and Young People's Appreciative Inquiry in Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment made recommendations that impact on post-16 provision. These are regarding improving communication, extending the enrichment offer, strengthening understanding of career pathways, and strengthen transition arrangements. Each of the recommendations are being driven forward by senior officers.

4.0 Evidence

Excellence for All: Collaboration and Support

- 4.1. Challenges for recruitment to the in-borough providers include the curriculum offer, curriculum success, and the incentives that are being offered by some out-of-borough providers. While there is a natural competitiveness between the providers, who are seeking to recruit students to their courses, genuine collaboration is taking place via the Post-16 Partnership to improve outcomes across the borough. The Excellence for All Work Strand is focussing on ensuring there is a strong offer with good outcomes across the borough that encourage students to enrol at in-borough providers. Two trials have taken place to address the outcomes, business mentor support and teach meet.

Business Mentor Support – Excellence for All

- 4.2. Business Mentor Support is a collaboration between Bede Sixth Form College and Egglescliffe School and Sixth Form College initially to bring together business and education. It is being led by the Employment and Training Hub with senior staff in schools and colleges invited to contribute to the plan.
- 4.3. The colleges have identified students who are academically vulnerable, are not carrying on to university, or do not know what their next step will be, to take part in a series of interventions and masterclasses to improve their confidence, study skills, leadership skills, employability and knowledge of business sectors. Masterclasses have included communication skills, interviewing the mentor, and understanding business sectors where they were asked to research salaries, qualification, and interests in different sectors.
- 4.4. The initiative aims to support students to fulfil their full potential both academically and personally and bridge the gap between education and the world of work.

- 4.5. Feedback from the students taking part in the trial has been positive and it is planned to be extended to other schools and colleges in the future.

Teach Meet

- 4.6. Teach meets bring together teachers from different providers to share best practice, practical innovations, and personal insights on teaching. Two Teach Meets were held in November 2025 and February 2026, focussed on eight subject areas, to discuss, plan and implement a series of interventions to achieve stronger exam outcomes. The subjects chosen were those that are either underperforming or only had one class in a college with limited discussion with colleagues.
- 4.7. The focus of the November session included what do students enjoy and are successful in, what do students find challenging, which areas of the specification are challenging, and what can colleges do together to close the gaps. The February session planned masterclasses on exam skills, essay skills and question analysis to enable students to achieve B and above grades.
- 4.8. Staff feedback was positive, with them valuing the time spent collaborating with their colleagues.

Further collaboration

- 4.9. Providers are receiving monthly information on Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) as well as funding opportunities as these arise.
- 4.10. Providers are also receiving local employer information and business intelligence in terms of gaps and areas of growth. While providers previously shared this information with their students, the sectors are now speaking directly to students through the collaborations in place, e.g. Industry Speaker Programmes, and this has proved to be more powerful.
- 4.11. Employer demand is driving the balance between academic and vocational training that is available within the borough's providers. Stockton Sixth Form College has a number of partnerships with industry to offer placements in Aviation, Engineering and Health, giving real world experience and developing hands-on technical/clinical skills, while Etc provide the learning for apprenticeships. Stockton Sixth Form College co-create curriculum with employers in key growth sectors of Health & Care, Advanced Manufacturing, and Digital Sectors, to understand the skills and knowledge that they require and supporting the Tees Valley Local Skills Improvement Plan Alignment (LSIP).

Communication and Marketing

- 4.12. The Committee heard how the different providers are communicating and marketing their courses to schools both within the Borough and the wider Tees Valley area through a range of engagement activities. These include, but not limited to:
- [Presentations and Y10 – Y11 Assemblies](#)
 - [School Liaison Programmes, monthly newsletters to schools etc.](#)
 - [Lunch Drop-ins/Careers Corner](#)
 - [Parent Evenings & Advice Evenings](#)
 - [Open Evenings Series](#)

- Careers Fairs (in school and large events)
 - Campus Tours (1-1 and groups) and taster sessions
 - Explorer Days providing immersive experiences
 - Alumni Engagement with regular sessions connecting with successful graduates
 - Careers In... days and Y9 – Y10 Careers Guidance
 - Mock Interviews
 - Revision Support events
 - Preparing for work
 - Application Sessions and Workshops / Y10 – Y11 Transition Support
 - Digital Partnerships – websites social media and digital campaigns
- 4.13. Within the engagement activity, clarity is provided on the academic and technical pathways such as vocational/T-Level/apprenticeship routes, A-Level pathways, engineering and other industry pathways.
- 4.14. Engagement and recruitment activity begins in September and continues throughout the year. Recruitment activity is targeted at Years 9 – 11, however there is some engagement activity regarding career choices aimed at younger year groups. Providers such as Etc noted that they support young people throughout their decision-making journey – awareness, guidance, experience and transition.
- 4.15. Providers believe that it is imperative that the right learner is on the right course with the right provider and therefore give impartial advice and guidance. They will signpost to other providers, whether that be in-borough or outside of borough, when a school leaver has a specific interest that they do not cater for.

Work Strand Collaboration

- 4.16. The Post 16 Partnership Communication and Marketing Work Strand aims to work together to keep students local and has developed a communications and marketing initiative spanning industry engagement, careers provision, transitions, and enrichment programmes. It seeks to:
- Promote equitable access to local post-16 providers
 - Develop compelling messaging about the benefits of studying locally
 - Create a compelling case for school heads to support local providers
 - Showcase career opportunities aligned with growth sectors in the borough
- 4.17. The Work Strand has established the foundations for promoting local post-16 education and understanding choice factors. This has included creating a framework to map current engagement activity with parents and schools and identifying growth sectors and businesses.
- 4.18. Place brand messaging has been seen as a key factor, showcasing Stockton-on-Tees as a place not only to study but also “live, work, play”. A post-16 brochure has been produced and promoted via social media which showcases each of the providers within the Borough, highlighting the reasons to study at each and giving student testimony.

- 4.19. Mystery Shopper exercises have taken place at Middlesbrough College and Queen Elizabeth open event, via colleagues in in-borough providers attending these events with their own school leaving aged children and reporting back. The findings from these suggests that providers outside of the borough have similar offers to in-borough providers, and there is some duplication. Marketed goodie bags offered by some providers are seen as a simple incentive tool being used, as they act as a visual prompt when school leavers are making their decisions.
- 4.20. The Work Strand is now building on the foundation work already carried out by developing resources and evidence to make a compelling case for students to stay in-borough for their post-16 education. A school engagement toolkit has been developed which will be available for all staff within schools showcasing the local offer. This will enable all those working in schools to be aware of the opportunities and be able to give simple advice and suggestions. Other activities include:
- [Alumni success stories profiling local people who built careers in Stockton-on-Tees](#)
 - [Digital ambassadors advocating for Stockton-on-Tees](#)
 - [Postcards directing prospective students to the Post-16 Brochure and a glossary of terms making the Brochure easier to understand](#)
 - [A Stockton Post Secondary Pre-Open Event, which is planned for September 2026, giving young people and parents a chance to get initial information on all providers in one convenient location.](#)

Impact

- 4.21. Providers have seen an increase in engagement from school leavers at events. Etc reported in March 2026 that they have seen a 42% increase in attendance at open events from 2022/23, and Stockton Sixth Form College reported an 86% growth in open evening attendance. Stockton Sixth Form College also reported a 48.26% growth in website traffic.
- 4.22. The increase in engagement has resulted in a significant increase in the number of applications to in-borough providers:
- [Egglescliffe Sixth Form had received their target of 170 application by January 2026, 50 more applications at the same point in the previous academic year.](#)
 - [Stockton Sixth Form College reported in March they have had an 89.4% year-on-year increase in active applications](#)
 - [Etc reported in March that their year-to-date active application had increased 24.4% from the previous year, with a 6.64% increase from Stockton-on-Tees school leavers, and a 57% increase in active application over a four-year period. Etc. enrolments include 695 students from 'out of borough'](#)
- 4.23. This increase is encouraging, giving an indication of the number of students expected in the September 2026 intake and thereby the work streams initiatives success. It should be noted, however, that school leavers may apply for more than one course, in some cases as many as five providers including providers out of borough, therefore not all applications will result in enrolment.

Careers Advice

- 4.24. Providing early advice and guidance is considered essential in supporting young people to choose the right post-16 pathway for their talents and ambitions. Secondary schools and colleges have a duty to provide careers education to all their students in Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 5, typically including at least one career discussion per student, with additional support available depending on resources. The Gatsby Benchmarks provides a clear framework of how to deliver this duty, covering areas such as a stable careers programme, labour market information, personalised support, linking curriculum with careers, employer engagement, workplace experience, and encounters with further and higher education.
- 4.25. Schools fulfil this duty either in-house by directly employing a qualified Careers Adviser, or by contracting with a Careers Guidance provider. In Stockton-on-Tees Borough, four schools provide in-house provision, while the remaining schools contract one of three providers: CareerWave, Prospects, or SBC's Careers with this element of the Careers Service being a traded service receiving full cost recovery. SBC Career's has contracts with Egglecliffe, Ian Ramsey, Northfield, St Patrick's and Red House schools.
- 4.26. SBC Careers also currently provide targeted support to Year 11 residents in Stockton-on-Tees who require further support, with the demand and complexity increasing significantly over time, from 325 young people in 2013 to over 700 in 2026. The support provided is mainly 1:1 Careers Guidance discussion but can also include engaging with parents and carers, small groups work, home visits, tracking progress, supporting applications and visits to providers, identifying barriers to progression and offering support to overcome these. This activity can support all eight Gatsby Benchmarks; however the service is very focused on identification of needs to facilitate accurate targeting of support and providing destination data to schools and ensuring everyone has individual careers guidance by the end of Year 11. SBC Careers aims to ensure that young people know what they want to do after school by the end of February each year.
- 4.27. Both universal and targeted Careers Guidance is also available in colleges/Years 12 and 13. All colleges have Careers staff who work across the whole college, and they may also be involved in recruitment to the college as well as progression from college to another opportunity.
- 4.28. SBC Careers currently have Progression Advisers in all colleges, offering progressive support tailored to risk levels of drop out/leave to NEET. This could be working on a request basis or having a weekly presence in the college, however the service proactively offers support at the start of the Year 12 and towards the end of Year 12, which are the key transition points where a young person may leave to NEET. SBC is also contracted to provide guidance to complement the Stockton Sixth Form College in-house Careers support. The service is aiming to develop systems across colleges where they are made aware of declining attendance, attainment, or behaviour early so that support can be offered before crisis or the student leave.
- 4.29. During the review the Committee were aware that a Phase 2 Transformation Outcome-based review regarding Opportunities for Young People in Employment (OYPE) was taking place. The OYPE review focused on operational redesign of the current service model for the Careers Service to improve NEET outcomes via early intervention and digital first. It also had a clear remit to operate within a reduced budget, in accordance with the Medium-term Financial Plan (MTFP). This review therefore has direct links to the Committee's review, which is aiming to improve post-16 outcomes, and will consider the outcomes and recommendations from the Scrutiny Review.

Work experience

- 4.30. Work experience for both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are a priority for schools and colleges, particularly with the incoming Work Experience Guarantee legislation, which aims to ensure every young person completes two weeks of meaningful work experience during school or college. Work experience is seen as a useful tool in re-engaging students, demonstrating how focussing at school relates to future employment. SBC will be consulting with schools to choose whether to deliver work experience activities themselves, ask teams across SBC including Careers and Employment & Training Hub to deliver work experience activities, or ask SBC to broker businesses to deliver work experience.
- 4.31. Key Stage 3 Work Experience Week can be split over the different year groups, building on each year, and activities focus on the skills needed for different industries. Key Stage 4 Work Experience Week can also include activities rather than a full week placement. Some schools may arrange work placements for those students who have clear career goals but may also arrange a split week of work placement and activities such as visiting different employers, or a week of activities for young people who are uncertain of their career path.

Employment & Training Hub

- 4.32. The Employment & Training Hub delivers programmes and support for all residents and businesses in the Borough. Businesses are engaged with the programmes, and all delivery is designed to meet skills shortages, future skills requirements, and benefit businesses Social Value requirements.
- 4.33. The Hub utilises the Equalex framework, which is a comprehensive structured, and inclusive model for delivering modern, meaningful careers education. It ensures young people progressively gain the skills, knowledge, insight and confidence needed to make informed decisions and transition successfully into the world of work. Programmes for young people of the borough includes:

- **Skills for Success**

A programme for secondary school students targeted for disengaged young people facing barriers. It links education with industry by showcasing opportunities in key sectors and personal skills. It includes guidance and support from business mentors, industry visits, sharing business intelligence, and team building and individual activities. At the end of the course a celebration event is held where students give a pitch for themselves. The feedback from the programme has been very positive. Students complete a survey at the end of the programme and 100% state they have a clear aspiration for their chosen career based on the input and visits throughout the project. In addition, schools have reported that students who have completed the programme have an improved attitude and engagement resulting in improved learning and progress, with a 60% increase in positive behaviour points and 82% decrease in negative points, and 93% are now on their individual targets for English and 71% are on their targets in maths.

- **Excellence for All**

A targeted pilot programmed for Years 12/13 outlined in paragraphs 4.2 – 4.5

- **Youth Guarantee Trailblazer**

Access to six months (changing to five months from 2026/27 financial year) paid work experience for any NEET young person aged 16-21 in Tees Valley. It is targeted support to young people who are

disengaged or at risk, helping them overcome barriers and move towards education, employment, or training. SBC is the only Trailblazer programme in England that is offering paid work experience.

- **Care Experienced Young Person Recruitment Coordinator**

Supports young people to identify the most appropriate pathway for their needs and goals, receiving tailored guidance and access to opportunities that build skills, confidence, and clear progression routes. Since its launch in October 2025 over 50 young people have been supported and in April 2026 27 of those have found employment.

- **Industry Insights**

A programme for disengaged NEET young people, it offers clear understanding of the world of work and highlights local opportunities via business mentors and industry visits.

- 4.34. In addition to the programmes being delivered at the Hub, it has been highlighted that more students are asking for Maths and English courses, with colleges offering these as stand-alone courses. The Employment & Training Hub, working with the SBC Careers, have procured online provision which students welcomed and are well attended.

Careers Network – Work Strand Collaboration

- 4.35. SBC have been asked to support colleges to identify gaps, share good practice, and highlight innovative and inspiring opportunities so that schools and colleges can decide how it fits into their provision. Schools and colleges have highlighted five key priorities for the Careers Network:

- Build a directory of businesses who engage well with school aged young people and can deliver various engagement activities
- Key Stage 3 Work Experience Week activities to inspire and inform young people in Years 7 – 9
- Key Stage 4 Work Experience Week support including identification of duties, contact with businesses, potential coordination of weeks across schools.
- Parent & Carer guide to Careers with tips on how to prepare young people for life after school
- Careers into the Curriculum such as support in developing “off-the-shelf” resources, how do skills and qualities advanced by each subject translate into the world of work

- 4.36. Progress is being made on four of the five priorities, with the Committee being informed in May 2026 that:

- Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) are relaunching their Business Directory and the Network has been updated and discussed how school and colleges can influence this.
- Roadshows activities are being developed for Key Stage 3 Work Experience Week, utilising the Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone, Regeneration work at Tees Central, and building on Skills for Success.
- “How to” guides have been shared for Key Stage 4 Work Experience Week and the TVCA Work Experience Coordinator is due to meet with the Network.
- Content for Parent & Carer guide to careers has been agreed and at design stage.

- 4.37. Careers into the Curriculum is the lowest priority for schools and colleges and the Network had not started on tackling this. However, TVCA already provide support including resources through Tees Valley Careers website.

Transitions from School to Post 16 Provision

- 4.38. The Post 16 Partnership Transitions Work Strand aim to strengthen retention and progression as well as understand challenges faced by providers and how best to give advice and guidance to young people and parents/carers based on a collective understanding from all post-16 settings. There is a strong offer of post-16 provision within the Borough with a wide range of opportunities, all providers being rated as Outstanding and Good in their last OFSTED inspections, and outcomes competitive. While this is a great benefit for young people in the Borough, the amount of choice can be confusing for both young people and parents/carers. The academic language used can also be confusing, with different and changing types of courses available e.g. A Levels, T Levels, etc. A central Jagon Buster resource has been proposed to simplify the process.
- 4.39. The Work Strand conducted a survey of current students attending in-borough post-16 providers to find out what influenced their decisions when applying for courses, to which 340 students responded. The results reiterated that the in-borough provision was competitive, including different routes e.g. A level, vocational, and apprenticeships. Accessibility and convenience of transport as well as early engagement, including open events, were highlighted as the main drivers when making decisions.
- 4.40. Friendship groups are also considered to be an influence on young people's choices. This has an impact on retention as friendship groups can potentially change once attending college and may lead to students realising the course they chose is not for them. It is at this point that they may leave the provider and, if at an out of borough provider, return to in-borough provision.

Transport

- 4.41. When surveyed 82% of students said travel influenced their decision when considering and applying to post-16 providers, choosing to attend providers that are quick and easy to get to. It is also important for parents/carers to feel reassured their young person is safe travelling to their provider.
- 4.42. It has been found that if a young person lives within walking distance to a post-16 provider, that provider tends to be their destination of choice. For young people who do not have the option to walk to a provider, transport can be difficult. They may need to take two or three buses to get to a provider in a different part of the Borough from where they live, which can increase travel time. Issues can also arise when students or buses are running late, increasing the time it takes to get to their provider and making them either late for or miss the lesson.
- 4.43. In some areas of the Borough, it is easier to travel to out-of-borough providers on either provider or public transport, with direct bus routes, which may also be more frequent and/or take less time to get to their destination.
- 4.44. While details of bus timetables are shared at engagement events, some providers are providing free bus passes and putting on free buses to outlining parts of the Borough e.g. buses from Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick to Stockton Sixth Form College. There is, however, an economic challenge in doing so.

Early Engagement

- 4.45. As highlighted in paragraph 4.24 early awareness is key, using a shared language and messaging. This will help young people build their knowledge and understanding of the careers that they are interested in and the pathways available from when they choose their GCSE options in Year 9. It will then impact positively on their decisions at post-16, ensuring that they apply and enrol on the right course for them and reduce the likelihood of students dropping out and/or changing courses.
- 4.46. Early awareness and shared language/messaging is also key to helping parents better understand how GCSE outcomes can link to post-16 progression.
- 4.47. Work Experience is an important part of early engagement, helping young people to understand the industries and careers in the local area. Paragraph 4.30 notes how the SBC is developing borough-wide programmes to comply with the Work Experience Guarantee.
- 4.48. It is noted in paragraphs 4.12 – 4.20, that there is a wide range of events and engagement taking place for Years 9 – 11. The student survey carried out indicated that 73% of the 2025/6 in-borough cohort attended open evenings and 71% attended taster sessions. This illustrates the importance of these events in attracting applications. The proactiveness of the SBC in working with schools and colleges to promote post-16 provision in the previous two years has been acknowledge by the Post-16 Partnership.
- 4.49. The work of SBC to ensure providers have the information they need to support vulnerable learners into the right provider/course and build relationships has also been acknowledged. This assists in the transition to post-16 provision and retention. SBC Transitions Team has introduced person-centred planning from age 14 for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) and those involved with social care. The Preparing for Adulthood Day that has been held proved to be an effective way of multi-agency working for supporting vulnerable learners and is therefore planned to be repeated.

Data Sharing

- 4.50. Despite the work being carried out there are still challenges in the support of vulnerable learners, including late identification of non-attenders and inconsistent application systems. Greater data sharing and clarity between schools and colleges is therefore needed and this assists not just vulnerable learners, but all young people, in the transition to post-16 providers. It can ensure that young people are integrated into the provider quickly and remove any barriers.
- 4.51. The sharing of data must take into account General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), and providers only collect data that they need to enable a smooth transition. There will be some young people and parent/carers who may be reluctant to consent to sharing their data for differing reasons, including that they wish to have a 'fresh start' Providers are explaining the reasons why the data is needed to reassure young people and their parents/carers in these cases.
- 4.52. The Transitions Work Strand have agreed to work collaboratively to strengthen support and improve processes in these areas, and a Borough-wide data framework using both school and college data management systems is being developed.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- 4.53. NEET has risen in Stockton-on-Tees from 5.0% in 2020, 5.2% in 2023, to 7.4% in 2025. In April members were informed that NEET was 7.3%, and SBC was 127th of 151 Local Authorities. While the impact of additional staff resource in Leaving Care Team and Employment & Training Hub on the NEET rate for Care Experienced Young People is yet to be seen in the national data, there are early signs of impact at service level. However, smaller caseloads and increased proactive support in post-16 for those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) has impacted the NEET rate, with both reducing (SEN Support from 21.5% in 2024 to 17.4% in 2025/EHCP from 18.9% in 2024 to 16.5% in 2025).
- 4.54. While there are national issues influencing NEET, including attendance and mental health amongst others, it is suggested that the significant increase of the post-16 cohort in Stockton-on-Tees is having an impact on the level of NEET in the borough, with there not being enough post-16 opportunities available. This has resulted in 16/17-year-olds competing with 18/19-year-olds for apprenticeships and employment opportunities, with the older cohort being more successful.
- 4.55. The OYPE review, noted in paragraph 4.29 is proposing a new SBC Careers service model and operational redesign to improve opportunities, strengthen transitions, and influence a reduction in NEET rates.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. The Committee's review has noted that Stockton-on-Tees benefits from a broad and high-quality post-16 education offer, with a wide range of academic and vocational pathways available and a strong overall A-level pass rate.
- 5.2. The review found that the Post-16 Partnership has created an effective shared framework for strategic collaboration with four active work strands: Excellence for All, Communications & Marketing, Careers, and Transitions. Providers are now engaging in cross-college activity such as Teach Meets, Business Mentor/Excellence for All Programmes, industry speaker sessions, and shared employer intelligence. This has led to an emergence of a culture of genuine collaboration despite being competitors, and are already contributing to increased engagement, rising application numbers, and stronger alignment with local labour market needs.
- 5.3. The innovative practice taking place, e.g. Business Mentor Support and Skills for Success to improve confidence, employability skills and sector understanding, and Teach Meets to facilitate sharing of best practice to raise A*-B attainment, show early signs of strengthening outcomes and could be scaled borough-wide and subject-wide.
- 5.4. The Careers Network supports schools and colleges to meet statutory duties, reduce duplication and improve quality. It has made progress on four of the five priorities identified by schools and colleges: Creating a business directory, developing KS3 work experience activities, support KS4 work experience, create parent & carer career guidance.

- 5.5. SBC Careers targeted support, dedicated roles, smaller caseloads, person-centred planning from age 14 and programmes such as Youth Trailblazers are beginning to show positive outcomes.
- 5.6. The new school engagement toolkit aims to address inconsistencies in careers advice by ensuring all school staff can confidently promote the local offer. A central “jargon buster” is also being developed to assist with navigating the options available and avoid overwhelming students and parents.
- 5.7. Employer engagement has been strengthened, with providers receiving consistent labour-market intelligence and employers speaking directly to students to support real-world understanding and raise aspirations. Employer engagement is also shaping local provision, being involved in curriculum development and work placements.
- 5.8. Providers are engaging extensively with schools and there is a cohesive, collaborative, marketing approach in place-branding – e.g. Post 16 brochure, alumni stories and “live, work, play” messaging. Joint marketing efforts have begun to show impact, with significant increases in application and attendance at open days across in-borough providers.
- 5.9. However, the review highlighted that a number of challenges remain. Transition from secondary school to post-16 education is a risk point for retention, with a minority of pupils dropping out within the first three months of Year 12. Increased independence, academic challenge, transport issues (connectivity to all post-16 providers and cost), wellbeing, financial pressures and unmet expectations all contribute to disengagement. Poor course matching and unclear expectations increase the likelihood of early drop-out and NEET outcomes. There are inconsistent transition arrangements between schools and colleges and systems to flag declining attendance/engagement and prevent drop-out are not yet embedded consistently.
- 5.10. The Committee recognise that NEET levels are high with 7.5% of Year 12 and Year 13 students NEET or not known, placing Stockton-on-Tees among the highest level of NEET nationally. In addition, a growing post-16 cohort has increased competition for apprenticeships and entry-level jobs, especially between 16-17 and 18-19 year olds. Learners are increasingly choosing vocational pathways, which also have higher drop-out rates. Provider capacity and demand-led curriculum planning all require ongoing strategic oversight.
- 5.11. A major factor influencing post-16 destinations is transport with 82% of young people highlighting this when surveyed. Out of Borough providers can be more accessible in terms of public transport than in Borough providers, depending on where in the borough the young person resides. Friendship groups are another influencing factor in post-16 choices; however, these can change during the transition and impact retention. In addition, mystery shopper exercises indicate that while out of borough colleges offer similar provision, incentive-based marketing and branding strategies influence student choice.
- 5.12. Early awareness and guidance using a shared language and messaging are critical, enabling young people to build their knowledge and understanding of the pathways available from when choosing their GCSE options in Year 9. While the Careers Network has made progress on four of its priorities, the Network has not yet focused on careers into the curriculum e.g. developing resources to explain how skills and qualities of subjects translate into the world of work, which would assist in the understanding of career pathways.

- 5.13. To address the issues highlighted by the review, the Committee recognises the importance of building on the strong foundations already in place. Continued strengthening of collaborative working and accessible communications approach, earlier careers education, and improved transitions support will be key to improving outcomes. In particular, ensuring that young people and their families have a clear understanding of local opportunities – and are able to access them without practical barriers – will be essential to increasing retention within the borough.
- 5.14. Overall, the Committee concludes that with sustained focus and collective commitment, there is a significant opportunity to further enhance post-16 provision in Stockton-on-Tees, improving participation, reducing NEET levels, and enabling more young people to achieve their potential while contributing to the borough's future economic growth.

Recommendations

5.14 The Committee recommends that:

1. Transition support is strengthened by developing a consistent borough-wide transition framework between schools and post-16 providers, including clear pre-enrolment guidance, earlier course matching, data sharing, and structured support during the first term/end of Year 12 when drop-out risk is highest.
2. Early warning systems for flagging declining attendance, behaviour, and attainment are embedded across all post-16 providers with clear escalation and intervention pathways are in place before disengagement reaches crisis point.
3. Collaborative initiatives that are showing signs of successfully assisting young people, such as Teach Meets, Skills for Success, and Business Mentor Support, are expanded to all providers and prioritising subjects with historically smaller student cohorts.
4. Communication between all providers and young people and their parents/carers regarding the Post-16 in-Borough offer is strengthened.
5. Careers education is embedded in to the curriculum in all schools and post-16 providers to ensure young people choose the right pathways for them and reduce early withdrawal by:
 - ensuring careers advice and guidance/post 16 options are available from Year 9 (or earlier) to enable young people to build their knowledge
 - developing resources and staff training to show how subject-specific knowledge and skills translate into employment, business and industry
 - give clear course expectations, progression routes and employment outcomes to reduce early withdrawal from and dissatisfaction with courses.
6. Labour-market intelligence and cohort growth data is utilised to plan academic, vocational and apprenticeship provision more strategically, to ensure capacity keeps pace with demand and competition between age groups does not disadvantage younger learners.
7. Cross-provider enrichment opportunities are broadened to not only create a more competitive offer compared with regional competitors but also raise aspirations.

8. Post-16 providers explore collaborative approaches and strategic networks to address transport barriers, highlighted as a significant influence on post-16 choice including connectivity to all in-Borough post-16 providers and cost, so young people can access efficient, cost effective in-borough provision.
9. Post-16 providers ensure that vocational courses provide coherent pathways to meet industry requirements

Glossary of Terms

EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OYPE	Opportunities for Young People in Employment
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TVCA	Tees Valley Combined Authority

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REPORT TO CABINET

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

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

Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

Summary

The attached report presents the findings of the Children and Young People Select Committee's review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025-2026.

Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to note the report.

Detail

1. The purpose of the scrutiny was to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to encourage additional applications from the secondary sector. The Select Committee wanted to fully understand the barriers to schools becoming ARPs and identify ways that that these could be overcome to secure the provision required for children and young people in the Borough.
2. Early in the scrutiny review, the Government announced that it would be publishing a White Paper outlining the intended approach to SEND reform. The announcement came amid increasing calls for action regarding the rising number of registered SEND pupils and the associated challenges faced by councils. Following the announcement, the Select Committee decided to pause the review to await the detail of the White Paper.
3. In May 2026 the Select Committee received a presentation on the White Paper and considered the implications for their work. The Select Committee agreed to summarise the evidence collected and key findings and advise Cabinet that they would be

concluding their work given that the Government was now making plans to direct all schools to have Inclusion Hubs.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

4. Not applicable.

Corporate Parenting Implications

5. None arising from this report.

Financial Implications

6. None arising from this report.

Legal Implications

7. None arising from this report.

Risk Assessment

8. Not applicable.

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

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

Background Papers

10. None

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Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

Children and Young People Select Committee, September 2026

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Select Committee – Membership

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Councillor Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bob Cook

Councillor Ray Godwin

Councillor Jack Miller

Councillor Sufi Mubeen

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Acknowledgements

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

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Billingham South Primary

North Shore Academy

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Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

This work aligns with the Council's priorities to ensure that all children have a bright future and a sense of belonging and giving children the best possible start in life, this is greater achieved when our children are educated and build connections within the borough. It aligns with the council vision to have a sustainable community where everyone belongs and is valued.

The review supports Stockton on Tees Plan Priority One – The best start in life to achieve big ambitions and key move – Giving children and young people the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive.

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

Since 2017, Stockton on Tees have had an enhanced mainstream school (EMS) model in place which supports children who require additional support than normally available in mainstream when they have a particular area of need i.e. a cognition and learning difficulty. In recent years, these placements have been overpopulated (for example for children who have language and communication needs) and underutilised in other areas (HI/VI & Physical Needs), resulting in high levels of high needs funding been distributed to settings without the children in situ to receive support.

In October 2024, the Council began a consultation to repurpose it's EMS provision into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEND Units. This would allow for the flexibility to meet the demand for placement, give parents the right to choose these placements for their children and also bring the provision in Stockton on Tees in line with Department for Education guidance by registering the provisions as resourced provision.

Additionally resourced provisions in mainstream are designed to support children with SEND who require more tailored support but do not require a place in a special school.

In December 2024, the government requested that all Councils begin to consider creating resourced provision within their mainstream's schools, with an announcement of further funding awaiting in Spring 2025. This new funding can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children with SEND, and to create specialist facilities within mainstream schools that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils' needs and this coincides with the work already in development in Stockton.

It is anticipated that creation of these provisions will reduce the number of children who are attending schools out of the area to have their needs met, this reduces the reliance on community transport and ensures that our children can foster a peer group within the local community, also potentially reducing future reliance on social and welfare services, such as housing or adult social care. It is also anticipated that placing children in the right provision at the earliest opportunity will to some extent reduce suspensions and exclusions and increase attendance within the borough.

Sustainable investment in inclusive school facilities future proofs educational infrastructure, creating accessible environments that benefit not just children with SEND, but the wider school community, leading to more inclusive, economically resilience and sustainable educational settings.

The Council is currently spending £1.9m on EMS provisions for 209 places in Stockton schools. The agreed plan is to transfer these into SEN Units/ARPs and creating up to 100 additional places for children across the borough. There has been an agreement to invest £730k per year (assuming all placements are full) from high needs funding in addition to current spend. This will be in place from September 2025.

This will ultimately save £5.3m of High Needs funding per year (assuming all places are filled).

	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m
Unmitigated Cumulative DSG deficit	3.57	5.31	11.51	21.24	34.84
Increase capacity in SBC mainstream prim/sec schools (cumulative savings).		(1.29)	(6.55)	(13.35)	(23.64)
% of overall deficit					67.8%

Cost and savings based on an additional 100 places:

Financial Year	2025/26 (part yr)	2026/27 (full yr)	2027/28 (full yr)	Total
Cost of 100 places in Independent Special #	£3.5m	£6m	£6m	£15.5m
Additional cost of 100 places in SEN Units/ARPs	£430k	£730k	£730k	£1.89m
Annual saving against unmitigated forecast	£3.07m	£5.27m	£5.27m	£13.61m

Based on average £60k p.a.

** Assume all places filled from September 2025

In January 2025, Cabinet received a report detailing the outcome of consultation relating to increasing capacity in mainstream schools within Stockton-on-Tees, by transferring current Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) to Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEN Units. The consultation was largely positive and Cabinet:

1. Supported the recommendation to transfer Enhanced Mainstream Schools to ARP and SEN Units from September 2025.
2. Agreed to invest up to an additional £730,000 p.a. into these provisions from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
3. Agreed to allocate £85,000 from the High Needs provision capital allocations for investment in the SEND Unit at Preston Primary School to increase capacity from 8 to 16 places in September 2025.

A number of schools have applied to be additionally resourced provision. However, interest from the secondary sector has been disappointing and some secondary schools with EMS have chosen not to transfer into ARPS, meaning there are less secondary schools involved in the process.

The purpose of this scrutiny will be to receive update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to secure additional applications from the secondary sector and fully understand the barriers to the schools becoming ARPS, identifying ways in which we may overcome this to secure the provision required for children and young people in the borough.

Not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risks undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local SEND Strategy and means that there may be implications for children upon transition to secondary that there may not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
- How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
- What does DfE Guidance tell us?
- Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
- What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision?
- How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
- To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
- Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
- Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, schools, parents, other stakeholders.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

Five months:

Scope and Project Plan – 11 June 2025

Evidence gathering – June to October 2025

Draft Recommendations – 12 November 2025

Final Report – 17 December 2025

Submission to Cabinet – 15 January 2026

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

Legislative background

DfE Guidance – SEND Code of Practice 2015

Review of Enhanced Mainstream Schools – Consultation Document October 2024

Cabinet reports – September 2024 and January 2025

Consultation responses from parents, schools and partner agencies

ARP Policy May 2025

Service Level Agreement – ARP

Options Appraisal – December 2024

Local Area Inclusion Plan December 2024

New information:

Views of Headteachers, specifically those in secondary schools

Views of parents

Views of partner agencies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy

Records of monitoring

Comparisons from other local authority models.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report summarises the findings of the Children and Young People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision.
- 1.2. At the outset of the review a number of schools had applied to be additionally resourced provision. However, interest from the secondary sector had been disappointing and some secondary schools with Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) provision had chosen not to transfer into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs).
- 1.3. The purpose of the scrutiny was therefore to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to encourage additional applications from the secondary sector. The Select Committee wanted to fully understand the barriers to schools becoming ARPs and identify ways that that these could be overcome to secure the provision required for children and young people in the Borough.
- 1.4. The Committee were mindful that not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risked undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy and meant that there might be implications for children upon transition to secondary. For example, there might not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings.
- 1.5. The Committee agreed the following key lines of enquiry for their work:
 - How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
 - How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
 - What does DfE Guidance tell us?
 - Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
 - What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision?
 - How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
 - To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
 - Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
 - Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?
- 1.6. Contributions were obtained from Council Officers, Stockton Parent Carer Liaison Forum, North East and North Cumbria ICB and Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools.
- 1.7. Early in the scrutiny review, the Government announced that it would be publishing a White Paper outlining the intended approach to SEND reform. The announcement came amid increasing calls for action regarding the rising number of registered SEND pupils and the associated challenges faced by councils. Following the announcement, the Select Committee decided to pause the review to await the detail of the White Paper.
- 1.8. In May 2026 the Select Committee received a presentation on the White Paper and considered the implications for their work. The Select Committee agreed to summarise the evidence

collected and key findings and advise Cabinet that they would be concluding their work given that the Government was now making plans to direct all schools to have Inclusion Hubs.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- There has been a rise in demand for SEND provision, including increasing EHCP numbers, with a projected further 9% increase, placing ongoing pressure on the system
- Parents have low confidence in mainstream secondary provision, with 90% expressing concern that needs cannot be met without additional specialist support. Feedback from families highlights insufficient capacity, limited choice and gaps in provision, alongside practical barriers such as distance and transport. Parents report significant concerns about children's wellbeing, including anxiety, school refusal and risk of harm where needs are not adequately met, and strongly favour smaller, specialist or adapted environments. There is a consistent call from parents for a more flexible, needs-led system, with greater emphasis on tailored support, continuity, and meaningful parental involvement
- The ARP model significantly increased local capacity, with 155 additional places created across primary and secondary phases, improving the availability of SEND provision within mainstream settings
- The development of ARPs was strongly collaborative, involving the Council, schools, health partners and families
- Early evidence indicates that ARPs are enabling better outcomes for children and more inclusive practice
- Schools report that ARPs and inclusive approaches are having a positive impact on pupil outcomes, including improved attendance, engagement, independence and achievement
- Inclusive practice is also benefiting the wider school community, with improved staff skills, stronger school ethos and greater acceptance of diversity
- Site visits confirmed that inclusive, well-led school environments can deliver strong outcomes, even with high proportions of SEND and disadvantaged pupils
- The national SEND White Paper introduces significant future changes, including a shift away from ARPs and SEND units towards school-led inclusion hubs and a stronger universal offer. These reforms will require the Council to adapt its current model

1.9. Overall, the evidence shows that the move from EMS to ARPs and SEND Units has been a positive and necessary step in modernising SEND provision in Stockton-on-Tees. It has created additional capacity, improved local access to education, and strengthened inclusive practice within mainstream schools. Feedback from school visits and early indications suggest better outcomes for children and a more sustainable financial position for the local authority.

1.10. Looking ahead, the Council will need to adapt its current model to respond to national SEND reforms, which may require further transformation towards inclusion-focused approaches within mainstream schools. Ongoing focus on early intervention, workforce capacity, and co-production with families will be critical to ensuring that all children with SEND receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Recommended

1.11. That Cabinet note the contents of the report.

2.0 Summary of Evidence

Background

- 2.1. Since 2017, Stockton-on-Tees had an enhanced mainstream school (EMS) model in place which supported children who required additional assistance than normally available in mainstream schools when they had a particular area of need i.e. a cognition and learning difficulty. In recent years, these placements had been overpopulated (for example for children with language and communication needs) and underutilised in other areas (HI/VI & Physical Needs), resulting in high levels of high needs funding been distributed to settings without the children in situ to receive support. The EMS review confirmed that the EMS model was oversubscribed and revealed that the admissions criteria was not reflective of current cohort, funding was not enough to meet need, and the model was too rigid in meeting needs.
- 2.2. In October 2024, the Council began a consultation to repurpose its EMS provision into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEND Units. This was to allow for flexibility to meet the demand for placements, give parents the right to choose these placements for their children and also bring the provision in the Borough in line with Department for Education guidance by registering the provisions as resourced provision. The Council consulted with service users, with 64% of responses strongly agreeing with proposals and 19% agreeing. Comments received included:

Parent: "I strongly agree we that need this in Stockton; it is so important that my child attends a provision that meets their needs."

Governor: "In my opinion, there is a significant shortage of provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children in the borough."

School: "Schools are really underfunded and overstretched. We want to support our children, but we don't have the environment, skills or resource to do so. Some children need more."
- 2.3. In December 2024, the Government requested that all Councils begin to consider creating resourced provision within their mainstream schools, with an announcement of further funding awaiting in Spring 2025. Additionally, the Department for Education (DfE) announced a £740 million investment to create 10,000 new specialist places for pupils with SEND, focusing on mainstream schools. This funding will help create more inclusive environments and address the gap in provision, with a particular focus on SEN units and resourced provisions within mainstream schools. This coincided with the work already in development across the Borough.
- 2.4. In January 2025, Cabinet received a report detailing the outcome of consultation relating to increasing capacity in mainstream schools within Stockton-on-Tees, by transferring current Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) to Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEN Units. Cabinet supported the recommendation to transfer Enhanced Mainstream Schools to ARP and SEN Units from September with an investment of up to an additional £730,000 per annum into these provisions from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

- 2.5. The Council was spending £1.9m on EMS provisions for 209 places in Stockton schools. The agreed plan was to transfer these into SEN Units/ARPs and create up to 100 additional places for children across the Borough, with an additional investment of £730,000 per year (assuming all placements were full) from high needs funding from September 2025. It was estimated that this would ultimately save £5.3m of High Needs funding per year (assuming all places were filled).
- 2.6. Additionally resourced provisions in mainstream were designed to support children with SEND who required more tailored support but did not require a place in a special school. It was anticipated that the creation of these provisions would reduce the number of children attending schools out of the area to have their needs met, thereby reducing reliance on community transport and ensuring that children could foster a peer group within the local community, also potentially reducing future reliance on social and welfare services such as housing or adult social care. It was also anticipated that placing children in the right provision at the earliest opportunity would to some extent reduce suspensions and exclusions and increase attendance within the Borough. Sustainable investment in inclusive school facilities would future proof educational infrastructure, creating accessible environments that benefit not just children with SEND, but the wider school community, leading to more inclusive, economically resilient and sustainable educational settings.
- 2.7. The Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) requires that all mainstream schools provide high quality provision, embedding inclusive practice throughout and that there will be sufficient educational placements to meet the current and future needs of children and young people in the local area.
- 2.8. At the time of the scrutiny review there were 4,216 children aged 3–16 registered as SEND Support in Stockton-on-Tees and 2,650 children had an EHC Plan aged 0–25.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Service

- 2.9. The service is responsible for executing the duties laid out in The Children and Families Act 2014 which states that councils are responsible for the following:
 - Identification, Assessment and Planning for Children and Young People 0-25 with SEND
 - Ensuring sufficient and suitable SEND and AP placements
 - Coordinate statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) Needs Assessments, ensuring compliance with legal duty
 - Working with health, social care and parents collaboratively to co-produce services that meet the needs of the local area
 - Ensuring that services are accessible to families, publishing a clear and informative local offer

ARPs and SEND Units – Primary

- 2.10. To access provision, children had to have an EHC Plan, places are additional to a school's PAN (Pupil Agreed Number) and parents are able to preference the provision. Funding is in additional to the recommended funding from DFE.
- 2.11. The Admissions criteria was co-produced with schools and placements opened September 2025.

Primary	SEND Unit	
Communication and Interaction & Cognition and Learning		64
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	SEND Unit	24
Preston Primary School	SEND Unit	16
Hardwick Green Primary Academy	SEND Unit	16
High Clarence Primary Academy	SEND Unit	8
Yarm Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Pentland Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Communication and Interaction & Social, Emotional and Mental Health.		16
Bowesfield Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Vacant		8

Primary	ARP	
Area of Need	Type of provision	Total Places
Communication and Interaction		60
Junction Farm Primary School	ARP	10
Rosebrook Primary School	ARP	10
Preston Primary School	ARP	10 (From January 2026)
Priors Mill CE Primary School	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	10
Cognition and Learning		50
Myton Park Primary School	ARP	10
Billingham South Community Primary School	ARP	15
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	ARP	20
Social, Emotional and Mental Health		30
St Marks CE Primary School	ARP	6
Pentland Primary School	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	10
Sensory and Physical		15
Billingham South Community Primary School	ARP	5
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	ARP	10
Speech and Language	ARP	
Mill Lane Primary School		10 (TBC)

ARPs and SEND Units Secondary

Secondary	ARP	
Area of Need	Type of provision	Total Places
Communication and Interaction		50
Northfield School	ARP	10
North Shore Academy	ARP	10
Thornaby Academy	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	20
Cognition and Learning	ARP	40
Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth	ARP	25
Vacant	ARP	15
Sensory and Physical	ARP	10
Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth	ARP	5
Northfield School - HI/VI	ARP	5

Evidence from North East and North Cumbria ICB on ARP Implementation

- 2.12. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council worked closely with schools, stakeholders, parents and carers to transform the existing Enhanced Mainstream School (EMS) model into Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs). This collaborative approach resulted in the creation of 155 additional school places, including 60 in secondary schools and the remainder in primary settings, complementing existing ARP provision across the borough.
- 2.13. The introduction of ARPs, implemented from September 2025, ensured that children and young people with SEND were supported in the right place, at the right time, and as close to home as possible. This expansion significantly increased the number of school places within the Borough to meet a wider range of needs and strengthened inclusive practice across mainstream education.
- 2.14. The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) was fully sighted on the development of the ARP programme, which was reflected in jointly produced strategic documents including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF). Strengths of the approach included earlier identification of need, particularly in primary settings, increased local provision for younger children, and improved pathways of support. Rising levels of need, including an increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the early years, meant that children's needs were met more effectively as they entered school, while established pathways into health services remained unaffected.
- 2.15. Partners maintained existing pathways into health provision, with continued oversight through the JSNA, SEND Development Group and SEND Strategic Group. Any emerging risks or issues identified by the ICB were escalated through these governance structures via the Strategic Lead for SEND, ensuring a coordinated and responsive approach.
- 2.16. Members noted the scale of the additional provision and expressed confidence that the ARP programme would be able to meet the needs of children with SEND more effectively within mainstream schools. However, it was recognised that a key challenge was ensuring that children

were placed on the most appropriate pathways at the right time so they received the support they needed as early as possible.

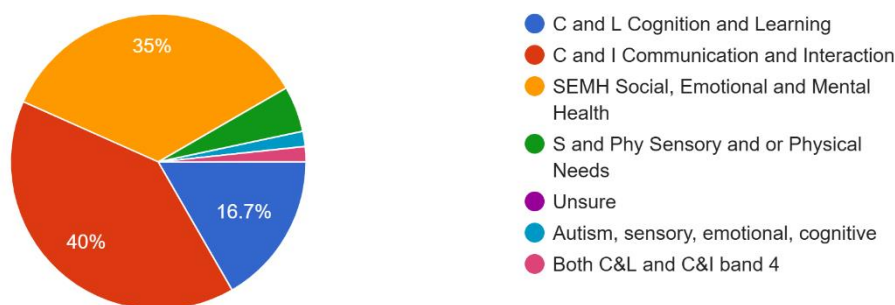
- 2.17. Officers highlighted that funding arrangements, including the £730,000 annual investment, had been co-produced with stakeholders to reflect the actual costs of delivery and would be kept under annual review. Robust performance measures were established, supported by dedicated capacity to monitor provision, including regular visits to schools. Members also noted an anticipated 9% increase in demand for places and emphasised the importance of continuing to support mainstream schools over the following 12–18 months, particularly as meeting needs earlier could reduce demand for more specialist provision later in a child’s educational journey.

Evidence from Stockton Parent/Carer Liaison Forum

- 2.18. Views were sought from parent carers on the current situation regarding secondary ARPs in Stockton. Sixty responses were received, of which 83% were from parents of children with an EHCP. Ninety percent of respondents expressed concerns that their child’s needs could not be met in a standard mainstream school. The child’s /young person’s need were identified as:

What is your child/young persons primary need

60 responses



- 2.19. In response to the question, “What are your current feelings about secondary education, thinking about your individual child’s needs being met?”, the feedback showed overwhelming concern and a lack of confidence in the secondary SEND system. Although examples of effective practice were cited, the dominant message was that mainstream provision was insufficient, specialist capacity was too limited, and families feared serious negative outcomes for their children without significant changes to provision, resourcing and approach.
- 2.20. Key themes from the comments received included a strong preference for specialist or small-scale provision, with many parents feeling that mainstream secondary schools could not meet needs. There were repeated calls for smaller class sizes, higher staff-to-pupil ratios, and specialist or SEN units (ARPs/bases). Respondents also highlighted insufficient local provision and limited availability, including too few SEND and SEMH placements, a limited number of schools offering ARPs or SEN bases, and geographical barriers such as distance and transport difficulties.
- 2.21. Parents reported high levels of anxiety, fear, and distress, with concerns focusing on deterioration in their child’s mental health, the risk of school refusal, anxiety or disengagement, and fears of

bullying, exploitation, or harm. Mainstream schools were seen as unsuitable or overwhelming, with a common perception that secondary schools were too large, busy, and overstimulating. Additional concerns included a lack of individualised support, one-size-fits-all approaches, gaps in SEND support and poor implementation, difficulties in transition from primary to secondary education, and concerns about inclusion in practice. Parents feared significant consequences if needs were not met.

- 2.22. In response to the question, “Why is having additional choice for your child’s education important?”, the feedback showed that additional choice was fundamentally about ensuring appropriate, needs-led education rather than increasing options for its own sake. Parents wanted a broader and more flexible system of provision that enabled children with SEND to access education safely, maintain wellbeing, and achieve their potential, rather than being placed in unsuitable settings with negative consequences.
- 2.23. Key themes included the need for provision that matched individual needs, the importance of tailored and flexible support, and a desire for children to thrive rather than simply cope. Parents emphasised mental health and wellbeing, equity and fairness, and the importance of avoiding negative outcomes such as exclusion or lost education. They also highlighted the value of specialist and smaller environments, the importance of parental insight and involvement, and the need for continuity of support. Additional comments highlighted significant dissatisfaction with the current SEND secondary system, particularly in relation to lack of provision, limited flexibility, and barriers to accessing support, with calls for a more inclusive, better planned, and needs-led system to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.24. Other comments invited highlighted significant dissatisfaction with the current SEND secondary system, particularly around lack of provision, limited flexibility, and barriers to support. Parent called for a better planned, more inclusive and needs-led system, with greater specialist capacity, improved mainstream support, and clearer guidance, to prevent poor outcomes for children and families.

School Presentations

- 2.25. Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary reported that the school had two ARPs with a total of 30 places, a 24-place SEND unit. It had also taken in children excluded or at risk of exclusion and ran a virtual school hub for 32 children who had been in care.
- 2.26. She challenged the narrative that some children were too difficult to include. The new provision had resulted in improved progress and attainment although the impact on overall school performance could be an issue for some schools, and for some children it could take a long time to see small progress.
- 2.27. Another barrier was that some children had multiple, overlapping and complex needs. However, barriers to learning needed to be removed and children with SEND needed to be able to access activities the same way as other pupils. Funding was not considered to be a barrier and schools were challenged to think more creatively about how they used their funding.
- 2.28. The presentation from Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary outlined:

Defining Our Moral Purpose as:

- Every decision is rooted in doing what’s best for children
- We are driven by equity, compassion, and ambition and most of all LOVE
- Education as a tool for transformation

- Inclusive practices in teaching and leadership
- Celebrating diversity and removing barriers

The strategy for Improving Outcomes included:

- High-quality teaching and learning
- Targeted support and interventions
- Data-informed decision making
- Staff development and wellbeing
- Parental involvement
- Multi-agency

Our Wider Officer: Inclusion in Action:

- Every child deserves access to enriching experiences — regardless of background or need.
- Trips and experiences are free or heavily subsidised
- ARP pupils are included in all mainstream opportunities
- Examples : ice skating, farm visits, theatre, sleepovers, residential

Impact so far:

- Improved progress and attainment for individuals
- Positive pupil voice and engagement
- Staff reflections on inclusive practice
- Strong parent feedback
- Positive impact on mainstream pupils

Barriers:

- Complexity - Many pupils present with multiple and overlapping needs, including often unmet SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health), which make daily school life a challenge — for them, staff, and peers
- Data vs. Humanity - These children may impact headline data, but they are not just numbers. Their stories matter. Their progress may not always be linear, but it is meaningful
- Beyond Categories - Pupils don't fit neatly into boxes. We must move beyond labels and see the whole child.
- We must challenge the narrative that some children are too difficult to include

Call to Action:

- Encouraging reflection and collaboration
- Identify and remove barriers
- Funding – to suit the needs of the child
- Invest in supporting parents
- Reaffirming collective responsibility

2.29. Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal at Northern Education Trust and former head of North Shore Academy which has a communication and interaction ARP, encouraged every school to have an ARP in their building as it added so much to school life. He advised that parents had reported a real difference in their relationships with their children at home and that children were succeeding under the new provision. It had also made a huge difference to the children that were not yet diagnosed but needed extra support. He commented that it was not just about GCSEs, but the life chances and making sure those children could communicate and add to society.

2.30. The presentation from Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal, North Shore Academy outlined:

- ARPs across the Northern Education Trust
- The ARP at North Shore was referred to as the “Hub” – a protected area of the school

Why we have said yes to an ARP?

- We recognised that we need to adapt in response to the levels of need coming through our doors
- We needed to have a provision that promotes inclusivity and can adapt to meet the needs of our complex EHCP students
- We wanted a space that bridges the gap between school and home. A mainstream school that caters for students who may have not been successful or be able to transition to secondary school
- A space that provides their key person and an opportunity to regulate in a safe space
- We wanted these students to be successful, to achieve GCSEs, to develop life skills and to be able to go to their local school
- We wanted the resources and funding to be able to develop expertise and provide appropriate ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) support working with Stockton Local Authority to develop and improve

What does it bring to our Academy and Trust?

- It brings inclusion
- It develops our CPD (Continuing Professional Development), our expertise, our experiences
- It promotes a school wide commitment to HQT (Highly Qualified Teachers), adaptive practice and meeting student's needs – being a core part of the school ethos
- It brings a richer, more diverse learning environment
- It allows NSA (North Shore Academy) students to fully accept inclusion and potential differences
- It upskills our staff to use expertise from our Hub into mainstream lessons

Opening the Hub doors...

- It allows the expertise we develop and space we have created to access other vulnerable students in our academy
- We promote social inclusion - so hub students regularly interact with other students

Enrichment/ PFA (Preparing for Adulthood)

- SEND / Hub specific enrichment
- Trips

The Impact

- One student had never attended a PE lesson at primary school – he now attends
- One student couldn't change himself – he now is independent in changing for PE
- One student refused technology lessons – it took a while, but he now goes
- One student refused to engage with other students – he now has friends
- One student hid under the table in transition – he finished year 7 at 98% attendance
- One student would bolt home to play on this play station – he now stays for enrichment twice a week
- One student never received praise in an educational setting but now floods the room with positive praise cards
- One student wouldn't leave the safety of the Hub but now goes to meet friends at social time
- One student would never give themselves credit but now is understanding he can overcome challenges he couldn't in the past
- One student will now attend 1:1 maths tutoring with a separate member of staff

Challenges – Things to consider

- NSA go through a formal EHCP consultation process for students being named in our ARP
- It is really important that we (NSA and Stockton LA) get the right students named
- Too complex needs “unsettles”, consumes resources, impacts on the success of other students
- Early intervention before barriers escalate
- Parent/ carers, LA and setting to work together
- Clarity and strong parental engagement from the start is crucial with a clear understanding of what our expectations are and what provision will be in place
- In the current “SEND crisis” the importance of innovation and shared success
- We constantly need to develop and evaluate our inclusive practice so it becomes a thread across everything that we do

Observations from Member site visits

North Shore Academy

- 2.31. The visit included a tour of SEND facilities, including The Bridge, ARP Hub and Abbey Hill classrooms, alongside observation of English lessons. Discussions with staff highlighted the strong benefits of collaborative working between specialist and mainstream provision, enabling pupils with additional needs to access inclusive education and aspire to GCSE outcomes. Conversations with pupils demonstrated improved attendance, resilience and pride in achievement. The Bridge was used to transition pupils back into the school in a non-threatening environment.
- 2.32. The school presented as calm, inclusive and well-structured, with pupils engaged and keen to learn. Inclusivity was clearly embedded, with SEND pupils fully integrated into mainstream classes and supported through tailored EHCPs and Individual Learning Plans. Practical approaches, such as the Red/Amber/Green system, effectively removed barriers to participation.
- 2.33. A strong culture of praise was evident across the school, with recognition systems encouraging confidence, motivation and a sense of achievement among pupils.
- 2.34. Despite a high proportion of SEND and disadvantaged pupils, the school maintained high expectations and strong outcomes. Leadership was clearly focused on a child-centred, outcomes-driven approach, with inclusive practices benefiting all pupils.
- 2.35. Educational attainment was extremely good given the high numbers of SEND and pupil premium students with 55% of pupils achieving a 4 and above in English and Maths.
- 2.36. Overall, the visit was highly positive, with the school providing an inspiring and supportive learning environment for its pupils. A strongly inclusive approach to integrating SEND pupils into school life was evident.

St John the Baptist Primary

- 2.37. The school demonstrated a strong culture of inclusivity, where all pupils were clearly valued equally. Children with complex needs were very well integrated into the school community and supported effectively.
- 2.38. The relatively large staff team (including part-time staff) enabled children with additional needs to be taught in smaller groups, ensuring they received more tailored support.

- 2.39. The outdoor provision was a significant strength. The school benefited from a large, well-equipped outdoor area, including gardens and trees, where children were actively encouraged to play and explore.
- 2.40. Pupils also benefited from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. These included educational visits and residential experiences, such as trips to Robinwood, where they were able to take part in outdoor activities and develop confidence and independence.
- 2.41. The school clearly went above and beyond in supporting its pupils.

Billingham South Primary

- 2.42. The visit included discussions with senior staff and a tour of the school, including two ARP units supporting pupils with physical/medical needs and cognition/learning needs. The school had a high proportion of SEND pupils, with around 100 identified and approximately 40 with EHCPs. Strong systems were in place to assess pupils prior to admission and ensure appropriate placement.
- 2.43. The ARP provision was well-integrated, with pupils accessing mainstream classes where appropriate, supported by tailored adaptations and access to on-site therapies such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. A satellite provision with Ash Trees further supported inclusion, allowing pupils to integrate socially and academically with their peers.
- 2.44. The school environment was highly nurturing and child-centred, with a clear focus on inclusion, belonging and positive outcomes. Individual programmes were developed for all pupils, with staff making informed adaptations without waiting for formal diagnoses. There was a strong emphasis on flexibility, with provision regularly reviewed to meet changing needs.
- 2.45. Outdoor provision was a notable strength, with extensive, well-adapted spaces supporting a range of abilities and offering opportunities for both active play and quieter, sensory experiences.
- 2.46. Leadership demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive practice, and the established ARP model was well embedded. Positive transition arrangements to secondary school were also evident, supported by close partnership working.
- 2.47. Overall, the school provided a highly supportive and inclusive learning environment, with strong leadership and a clear focus on meeting the diverse needs of its pupils.

Bishopsgarth Academy

- 2.48. The visit highlighted a school in transition from an Enhanced Mainstream School to an ARP, with increased SEND provision and plans to further align staffing and budgets in the following year. The ARP cohort had grown significantly, with a focus on Year 7 pupils who had experienced enhanced transition arrangements and gradual integration into mainstream school life. SEND pupils were supported effectively to access mainstream lessons, often with one-to-one assistance, and were able to make good progress, including working towards GCSE outcomes.
- 2.49. Discussions with staff demonstrated a strong commitment to pupil achievement and tailored support, particularly through targeted reading interventions and the use of varied learning resources to meet individual needs. Pupils were engaged and supported to develop confidence and independence, as reflected in conversations with both KS3 and KS4 students.

- 2.50. The school environment was welcoming and inclusive despite an increased pupil population. SEND pupils were well integrated while still able to access specialist provision when required. A strong emphasis was placed on balancing academic progress with life skills, enrichment activities and external opportunities, which contributed to positive outcomes, including apprenticeships and reduced exclusions.
- 2.51. The school responded proactively to its challenging catchment through family engagement and careers support, particularly for SEND pupils. While challenges remained around attainment measures and recruitment of teaching assistants, leadership had addressed needs through strategic staffing, including appointing specialist primary-trained teachers.
- 2.52. Overall, the visit presented a positive environment, with pupils appearing engaged and supported.

Schools White Paper – SEND Reform

- 2.53. The SEND White Paper “Every Child Achieving and Thriving” was published in February 2026 and set out the Government’s plan to overhaul support for children with special educational needs. The reforms are intended to create a system where help is provided earlier and easier to access. The White Paper also places strong emphasis on inclusion in mainstream schools and earlier intervention. A key impact on the review was that schools are to have their own inclusion hubs rather than SEND Units and ARPS.
- 2.54. The Select Committee received a presentation outlining:

White Paper Vision

- Inclusive Mainstream System
- Specialist Support for Children that need it
- Effective and efficient local delivery.
- Stretching, enriching and inclusive school experience for all.
- North East Mission – emphasis on disadvantaged, white working-class children

Curriculum

- Every teacher a teacher of SEND
- National curriculum refreshed for first teaching from 2028
- Updated GCSEs from 2029
- Changes include: integrating oracy, digital and media literacy, financial literacy
- Introduction of a new enrichment entitlement
- Reform of Progress 8 to place greater weight on creative, language, and humanities subjects alongside core academic subjects
- Investments: money to go in over three years to support up to 400 schools in deprived areas meeting enrichment benchmarks

Consultation Phase

- Strong universal offer for SEND
- Schools to produce inclusion strategies backed by national inclusion standards and changes to complaints process re: SEND Support.
- Updated 0-25 SEND Code of Practice and new primary areas of need.
- Universal – Targeted – Targeted Plus – Specialist
- Updated Tribunal Powers

- Experts at Hand
- SEND Practitioners in Family Hubs
- Schools to have their own inclusion hubs – no more SEND Units and ARPS as they will transition into specialist units commissioned by the council with schools.

Attendance and Suspensions

- Target: Improve overall attendance by 1.3 percentage points by 2028–29
- Introduction of pupil engagement framework measuring belonging and engagement
- Behaviour reforms include Reintegration Support Partnerships, Attendance and Behaviour Hubs, and new suspension supervision options

School Governance

- Gradual movement of all schools into trust structures, with new Trust Standards and systemic inspection
- Enhanced local authority role for strategic planning, admissions, SEND sufficiency, and attendance oversight
- LA or groups of un-academised schools can create trusts - but doesn't give a date of when this needs to happen by
- New independent school standards

What does this mean for the Council?

- Local area partnerships are to deliver LARPs
- Govt will use these plans (and from regular progress reviews) will support decision making
- When each LA has approval for their LARP from the SoS; investment will be put in place to clear 90% of SEND debt through a debt relief offer
- Local Area SEND Reform Plan must include Vision, Strategy, the Plan, Monitoring, Governance
- Plan to be jointly owned by the LA and the ICB but written by the LA
- Must be an ongoing and embedded plan deployed across all educational settings, EAH offer to be in place by 2028/29
- Key Expectations – EAH offer, Sufficiency and place planning, Universal offer, Effective partnerships, Effective co-production strategies
- Year One expectations – clear, testable workstreams, robust financial baseline, steps toward the experts at hand,; strengthened governance and partnership arrangements; workable system for monitoring and evaluation
- Experts at Hand - provide a defined route for mainstream settings to access specialist support (EPs, Ots, SALT); shifts away from 1:1 to group offers; build embedded capability within mainstream
- Health ICB role in developing plan: Joint vision and KPIs, Commissioning plan and funding approach, Workforce and Capacity plan, Pathways and access standards; Assessment and review participation

Key Dates:

- Response to consultation deadline – 18th May 2026
- LARP Deadline – 1st Draft – 14th June 2026
- Planning & Legislation Changes – 2026-2028
- Experts at Hand to commence - 2028/29
- Assessments under new framework to begin 2029
- ISP to be in place from 2030

Next Steps

- DFE Advisor - monthly
- Change of Governance and oversight arrangements i.e. SEND Operational Group.
- Briefings & Webinars
- High Needs Funding Deficit – Statutory Override
- Expert at Hand Guidance – expected late May
- High needs Capital Allocation – expected late May
- Guidance on Inclusion Bases – expected late May
- Submit Local Area SEND Reform Plan

Glossary of Terms

ARP	Additionally Resourced Provision - A specialist provision within a mainstream school offering targeted support for pupils with particular needs.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development - Ongoing training and learning activities for staff to maintain and improve professional skills.
DfE	Department for Education - The UK government department responsible for education policy and children's services.
EAH	Experts at Hand - A core element of SEND reform providing mainstream settings with access to specialist education and health professionals (e.g. EPs, SALT, OTs).
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan - A statutory plan for children and young people (0–25) with significant special educational needs, outlining required support.
EMS	Enhanced Mainstream School - A mainstream school with additional resources, expertise, and staffing to support pupils with more complex SEND needs while remaining in a mainstream setting.
EPs	Educational Psychologists - Specialists who assess children's learning, behaviour, and emotional needs, and advise on support.
HI&VI	Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment - Refers to specialist services or needs relating to pupils with hearing or vision impairments.
HQT	High Quality Teaching - An approach emphasising inclusive, effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners, including those with SEND.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - A local authority and NHS assessment identifying current and future health and wellbeing needs of a population.
LAIP	Local Area Inclusion Plan - A locally developed plan outlining how inclusion will be improved across education services in an area.
NENC ICB	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board - NHS body responsible for planning and commissioning health services in the North East and North Cumbria.
OTS	Occupational Therapy Service - Provides support to help children develop skills for daily living, sensory needs, and participation in school activities.
PFA	Preparing for Adulthood - A framework supporting young people with SEND to transition to adult life, focusing on employment, independence, health, and community inclusion.
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy - Specialist support for children with communication, speech, and language difficulties.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health - A category of SEND relating to difficulties in emotional regulation, behaviour, and mental wellbeing.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Refers to children and young people who need additional support due to learning difficulties or disabilities.

REPORT TO CABINET

September 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

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

SEND Reform Programme – Education White Paper and Local Area Reform Plan Update

Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an update on the Government's SEND Reform Programme and the local response to the reforms. The Council is working jointly with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), has submitted its Local Area Reform Plan (LARP) to the Department for Education (DfE). The local area is currently awaiting the outcome of the assessment process, expected in October 2026. Alongside this it seeks Cabinet approval for the allocation of capital funding to support three priority projects identified within the LARP as being critical to address the deficit within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and more specifically the High Need Block.

Reasons for Recommendation

The SEND Reform Programme represents the most significant reform of the SEND system for a generation and has substantial implications for local education, health and care services. Cabinet oversight is required given:

- the submission of Stockton-on-Tees' Local Area Reform Plan;
 - the significant financial implications for the High Needs Block;
 - the requirement to deliver the ambitious programme of reform set out within the Plan; and
- the potential write-off of approximately 90% of the cumulative DSG High Needs deficit, subject to Department for Education approval.

With regard to the Capital interventions Cabinet approval is required for the following reasons:

- All three projects involve significant capital expenditure. In accordance with Council governance procedures, Cabinet approval is necessary to authorise the approval and investment of the required funds.
- These investments are integral to the delivery of Stockton's LARP and driving down the pressure on the DSG, primarily through increasing capacity and delivering cost avoidance
- Approval at this stage will enable project teams to proceed with delivery, ensuring that works are completed in a timely manner.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the closure of the national SEND Reform consultation and the submission of the Local Area Reform Plan to the Department for Education.
2. Note that the Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board are awaiting the outcome of the assessment process, expected in October 2026.
3. Note the significant financial implications of approval of the Local Area Reform Plan, including the potential write-off of approximately 90% of the cumulative DSG High Needs deficit.
4. Endorse the continued delivery of the SEND Reform Programme and associated transformation activity set out within the Local Area Reform Plan
5. Agree to invest up to £2m of capital funding, to create a new 50 place SEMH school. This is to undertake necessary building work to adapt and expand an older building to create the required places.
6. Agree to invest £1.4m of capital funding to expand the existing Early Support Nursery to create up to 10 extra spaces. This is to undertake necessary building work to adapt the existing provision to create the required places.
7. Agree to invest £3.75m of capital funding to expand the Ash Trees Academy Special School in building onto the Sandown Road site to create up to 40 additional specialist primary spaces. This is to undertake necessary building work to adapt the existing provision to create the required places.
8. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to take all necessary steps to deliver the projects within the approved budgets.

9. Cabinet delegate the transfer of budget caused by cost variations within the approved programme to the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People.
10. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the S151 officer and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to allocate the contingency of £860,000 if required within the three schemes within the approved programme.
11. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director or Corporate Services to award the construction contract to deliver recommendation 1 to a value of £1.7m including variation, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision.

Detail

12. The national consultation "SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First" concluded in May 2026. The Government is currently considering responses received and has indicated that further detail regarding implementation arrangements and legislative changes will follow. Existing statutory SEND duties remain unchanged during the transition period.
13. As required by the Department for Education, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board jointly developed and submitted a Local Area Reform Plan in June 2026. The Plan sets out the borough's approach to:
 - a. strengthening inclusive practice within mainstream education;
 - b. improving early identification and intervention;
 - c. developing the Experts at Hand model;
 - d. increasing local sufficiency and reducing reliance on independent provision;
 - e. strengthening Alternative Provision pathways; and
 - f. improving partnership governance, quality assurance and co-production.
14. The Department for Education is currently reviewing submissions, and the outcome is expected in October 2026. If approved, Stockton-on-Tees would receive High Needs Stability Funding which would write off approximately 90% of the cumulative DSG High Needs deficit.
15. At the end of the last financial year, the cumulative DSG deficit stood at approximately £17.13m. Subject to approval of the Local Area Reform Plan, the Council expects to receive approximately £15.4m of High Needs Stability Funding.

16. Assuming the High Needs Stability Funding arrangements continue the same basis during 2026/27, the Council would be required to fund approximately 10% of the projected 2026/27 deficit, equivalent to approximately £1.52m. The Local Area Reform Plan therefore represents a significant opportunity to restore financial sustainability whilst delivering improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Consultation and engagement

17. The national consultation on SEND Reform has now concluded. Locally, the development of Stockton-on-Tees' Local Area Reform Plan was informed by a comprehensive programme of engagement and co-production involving children and young people, parents and carers, educational settings, school leaders, academy trusts, the Stockton Parent Carer Forum, health partners, social care services and wider stakeholders.
18. Engagement activity included workshops, briefings, listening events, existing governance forums, school networks, Parent Carer Forum discussions and youth participation activity. Feedback received through these processes directly informed the priorities, assumptions and delivery plans set out within the Local Area Reform Plan, particularly in relation to inclusion, early identification, sufficiency, alternative provision, co-production and preparation for adulthood.

Capital Interventions

19. In Spring 2026, following allocation of funding by the Department for Education and further funding being obtained, the Council currently have £8.01m of unallocated capital funding from a range of sources (a summary is provided below).
- £7.75m Unallocated High Needs Capital Funding
 - £0.26m of Developer Contributions

SEMH Special School

20. This proposal is to develop a 50 place SEMH special school in Stockton, delivered through partnership with Spark of Genius (who also run the King Edwin Specialist Provision). This joint venture approach supports long-term sustainability and is unique to Stockton on Tees.
21. This provision would directly support sufficiency, reduce pressure at transition points (particularly Year 6–7 where we are seeing the highest movement into independent placements), and contribute to financial sustainability of High Needs. It also links strongly to AP reduction and a reduction of children with no current school place.

22. This intervention is directly informed by local demand data, which clearly identifies SEMH as one of the most significant and fastest-growing areas of need within Stockton.
23. The current system is not able to meet need locally at the point where demand peaks most significantly. This has significant negative financial impact.
24. This provision would increase SEMH capacity and expertise, reduce reliance on independent placements, reduce exclusions and AP placements, lead to better outcomes and greater stability for young people and keep children closer to their families and community. All clear aims within the LARP.
25. This proposal would utilise the Skills Academy building in Billingham which is a council asset.
26. Design work has been completed RIBA Stage 2 and identified a budget requirement of £2m. At this stage of design, there is still a reasonable element of risk, as such a significant contingency of £400k has been built into this estimate.
27. This intervention is forecast to generate cost avoidance of £395,000 per annum. This is as a consequence of children taking up a place in the lower cost placement compared to the average agency cost of a child with SEMH needs as outlined in the table below.

	Per Place p.a.	50 Places p.a.
Revenue cost p.a. (average SEMH placement)	£67,116	£3,355,800
Revenue cost of additional joint venture placement	£59,219	£2,960,950
Potential annual cost avoidance	£7,897	£394,850

28. It should be noted that replicating the arrangement of King Edwin School the Council would also receive a rental income for the asset alongside a profit share from the Joint Venture.

Early Support Nursery expansion

29. Expand Early Support Nursery within Thornaby Family Hub to 30 places (from 20) building on an existing provision and footprint.

30. This project is about prevention and reducing inequality early. It supports children with the most complex needs at the earliest stage and improves long-term outcomes and ensures support is planned in a timely way.
31. This project directly supports early intervention and prevention, reduces escalation into EHCPs and specialist provision, and contributes to long-term sustainability.
32. This intervention is informed by evidence showing increasing demand across early years, particularly for children with ASD, SLCN and complex developmental needs.
33. Expanding the Early Support Nursery will deliver earlier identification and support, reduce escalation of need, improve school readiness which aligning with our duties in the Best Start in Life Plan and will help to reduced long-term specialist demand as per the plans in the LARP.
34. As the Early Support Nursery is Local Authority maintained, it also gives increased LA oversight of SEND support and EHCPs in the Early Years cohort to ensure effective transition planning and destinations.
35. Design work on this has been completed to RIBA stage 2. This has identified a budget requirement of £1.4m. At this stage of design, there is still a reasonable element of risk, as such a significant contingency of £300k has been built into this estimate.
36. For the first 2 years this intervention would cost the Council an additional £195,000 due to the costs of delivering the extended Early Support Nursery. However from year 3 onwards there will be a cost avoidance of £495,000 per annum as it is anticipated the first cohort of the extended Early Support Nursery would go to a provision within a special academy (E.g. Project 3 below) as opposed to being placed in an intendent special school. This is shown in the tables below:

Years 1 and 2

Years 1 and 2	Per Place p.a.	10 Places p.a.
Revenue staffing costs including on-costs (prior to 2026/27 pay award).	£23,500	£235,000
Estimated additional Early Years DSG funding **	(£4,000)	(£40,000)
Potential annual cost avoidance	£19,500	£195,000

Year 3 onwards

Year 3 onwards	Per Place p.a.	10 Places p.a.
Average Independent Special School placement (Speech, Language and Communication needs)	£69,000	£690,000
Revenue staffing costs including on-costs (prior to 2026/27 pay award).	£23,500	£235,000
Estimated additional Early Years DSG funding **	(£4,000)	(£40,000)
Potential annual cost avoidance	£49,500	£495,000

Expansion of Ash Trees Academy

37. The Expansion of Ash Trees Academy will provide 40 additional primary specialist places (approx. 5 classrooms).
38. This project will Increase local specialist provision and will support children to remain in Borough. It will also address a clear gap in primary sufficiency.
39. This provision will directly support improved transitions, particularly addressing the significant spike at Year 6 (63 children moving to independent placements). It will help stabilise need earlier.
40. In taking forward this project, the council will be increasing primary specialist capacity, ensuring better transition outcomes and reducing the number of independent placements which is a clear aim of the LARP. It will also provide greater stability for our children and young people.
41. Design work on this has been completed to RIBA stage 2. This has identified a budget requirement of £3.75m. At this stage of design, there is still a reasonable element of risk, as such a significant contingency of £500k has been built into this estimate.
42. This intervention is anticipated to avoid costs of £1.213m per annum. This is based on the cost differential between 30 places at a special academy compared to the current cost of an independent special school. It should be noted that the cost avoidance of the first 10 places at this provision have been accounted for in project 2 linked to the expansion of the Early Support Nursery above.

	Per Place p.a.	40 Places p.a.
Average Independent Special School placement (ASD/SLCN)	£69,000	£2,760,000
Current cost at Special academy	£26,300	£1,052,000
Less: saving identified in Project 2 relating to 10 additional ESN places	N/A	£495,000
Potential annual cost avoidance	N/A	£1,213,000

General Contingency

43. Whilst contingency and inflation are built into the project estimates above, for financial prudence it is suggested that the remaining available funding of £860,000 programme contingency be held for the interventions, with approval given by members for this to be allocated as required to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Finance Revenues, Benefits and Welfare, in line with cabinet's approved delegated responsibilities.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

44. EPIAs were undertaken as part of planning and no mitigating actions were required.

Corporate Parenting Implications

45. There are no implications on the corporate parenting role

Financial Implications

46. The £8.01m of costs identified in this report, are funded from the £8.01m of resources outlined in paragraph 19.
47. These interventions utilise all available funding. Any new interventions not covered within the current capital programme would require further funding to be identified.
48. The schemes covered within this report are summarised below:

SEMH Special School	£2,000,000
Early Support Nursery expansion	£1,400,000
Expansion of Ash Trees Academy	£3,750,000
Contingency on the above	£860,000
TOTAL	£8,010,000

Legal Implications

49. The Council as Local Education Authority has a duty under The Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure sufficiency of suitable educational placements for Children and Young People with SEND

50. Any failure to meet these duties can result in Judicial reviews brought by families or SEND Tribunal rulings against the council, requiring costly out-of-area placements or compensatory education being issued by the Local Ombudsman.

51. Cabinet must also consider any potential breach of rights under the following legislation if sufficient provision for children and young people cannot be allocated within the borough.

a. The Children and Families Act 2014.

b. The Equality Act 2010.

c. The Human Rights Act 1998.

Risk Assessment

52. These SEND investments linked to the LARP are categorised medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

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

53. No impact to wards noted.

Background Papers

54. No Background papers.

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REPORT TO CABINET

SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Portfolio Title – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

Local Area Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Alternative Provision OFSTED Inspection (ASEND)

Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the findings from the recent joint Area SEND Inspection undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in May 2026. The inspection reviewed the effectiveness of arrangements across Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, the Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and wider partners in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Reasons for Recommendations

The inspection findings are of strategic significance for the Council and its partners. Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the inspection report and endorse the proposed improvement plan to support continued improvement in outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.

Recommendations

1. Note the findings of the joint Area SEND Inspection undertaken in May 2026.
2. Note the requirement to submit the final improvement plan to the Department for Education by 30 September 2026.
3. Note that progress against the improvement plan will be monitored through regular Department for Education and NHS England review meetings and reported through existing governance arrangements.

Detail

1. The joint Area SEND Inspection took place between the 4th and 22 May 2026. Inspectors considered the effectiveness of local arrangements across education, health and care and the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

The inspection concluded that the local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and identified four areas for improvement. However, inspectors also recognised a significant number of strengths across the partnership and progress made since the last inspection.

2. A multi-agency improvement plan has been developed in response to the inspection findings and will be submitted to the Department for Education by 30 September 2026. Progress will be monitored through regular engagement and review meetings with the Department for Education and NHS England.
3. The report highlights a clear understanding of both strengths and areas requiring further development, alongside a shared vision and coordinated approach to improvement across education, health and care partners. Inspectors acknowledged the effective use of local data and intelligence to shape services and provision, strong co-production arrangements through the Parent Carer Forum and SEND Youth Forum, and the positive impact of SENDIASS in supporting families.
4. Inspectors identified four areas for improvement:
 - Ensuring children and young people with SEND are better supported during key transitions between educational settings, services and adulthood.
 - Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans so that they consistently identify needs, provision and aspirations, supported by up-to-date advice from all agencies.
 - Continuing to work with schools to embed the local inclusion vision, improve consistency of SEND support and reduce disengagement, suspensions and exclusions for children and young people with SEND.
 - Reducing waiting times for neurodevelopmental assessment and community paediatric services and improving understanding of the impact of waiting times on families
5. A multi-agency improvement plan has been developed jointly by the Council, Integrated Care Board and education partners. The plan aligns directly to the four areas identified within the inspection report and builds upon existing priorities within the SEND and AP Strategy and Local Area Reform Plan. The plan includes clear actions, milestones, success measures and governance arrangements to monitor delivery and impact and will be published on the Council's Local Offer Website.

Consultation and engagement

6. The improvement plan has been developed through existing SEND partnership arrangements and informed by engagement with educational settings, health partners, social care services, the Parent Carer Forum, SEND Youth Forum and wider stakeholders.

Next Steps

7. The final improvement plan will be submitted to the Department for Education by 30 September 2026.
8. Following submission, the Council and its partners will participate in a programme of regular review meetings with the Department for Education and NHS England to monitor progress against the four areas for improvement. These meetings will provide support, challenge and assurance regarding delivery of the action plan.
9. Progress updates will be reported through existing governance arrangements, including the SEND Strategic Improvement and Reform Board, and periodic updates will be provided to Cabinet.

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REPORT TO CABINET

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

COUNCIL DECISION

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

Youth Justice Plan Stockton-on-Tees 2026-2027

Summary

This report presents the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan 2026-27 for consideration and endorsement.

The Plan sets out how statutory partners will work together to prevent children entering the criminal justice system, reduce reoffending, minimise the use of custody, strengthen responses to serious youth violence and child exploitation, and ensure children's voices shape service delivery. The Plan demonstrates continued commitment to Child First principles and reflects strong partnership working across Children's Services, Police, Probation, Health, Education and the voluntary sector.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities, working with statutory partners, to prepare and publish an annual Youth Justice Plan. The Plan provides strategic direction for youth justice services and outlines how partners will fulfil their statutory responsibilities and improve outcomes for children, young people, victims and communities.

The Plan reflects positive performance in reducing First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system and sets out priorities for addressing ongoing challenges relating to reoffending, serious youth violence, exploitation and custody.

Recommendations

Cabinet/CMT is recommended to:

- Note the contents of the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan 2026-27.
- Endorse the strategic priorities and delivery approach outlined within the Plan.

- Support continued multi-agency collaboration through the Youth Justice Management Board to deliver improved outcomes for children, families and communities.
- Approve the implementation and monitoring arrangements contained within the Plan.

Detail

1. The Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Partnership has developed the Youth Justice Plan 2026-27 in accordance with statutory requirements and Youth Justice Board guidance. The Plan has been approved by the Youth Justice Management Board and reflects a collective commitment to delivering high-quality, evidence-led and child-centred services.
2. The Youth Justice Management Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and includes representation from Police, Probation, Health, Education, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and voluntary sector partners. The Board provides strategic oversight, performance scrutiny and governance for youth justice services across the Borough.

The Plan highlights significant achievements during 2025-26, including:

- Continued reduction in First Time Entrants (FTEs), with the rate falling from 154 to 96 and the number of children entering the criminal justice system reducing from 33 to 21. These figures are significantly better than regional and national comparators.
 - Successful use of Child First Out of Court Disposal Panels, diversionary interventions and the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Programme.
 - Continued reduction in the use of custody, with custodial sentences reducing from five to four children.
 - Strengthened partnership responses to serious youth violence, child exploitation and organised crime.
 - Positive feedback from children and families regarding the quality of relationships, intervention delivery and support received.
3. Despite these achievements, the partnership recognises several ongoing challenges:
 - Reoffending rates remain above national and regional averages.
 - A small cohort of children present with increasingly complex needs linked to trauma, exploitation, violence and organised criminality.
 - Serious Youth Violence and school exclusions continue to present risks to children's safety and long-term outcomes.
 - Reductions in external funding streams may impact future prevention and early intervention activity.

4. The Youth Justice Plan identifies the following key priorities for 2026-27:
- 4.1 **Prevent Children Entering the Criminal Justice System**
Continuing to strengthen diversionary approaches, Out of Court Disposals, Turnaround interventions, early identification and preventive support through multi-agency partnership arrangements.
 - 4.2 **Reduce Reoffending**
Improving intervention programmes, strengthening transition arrangements into adult services, addressing health needs and maintaining a strong focus on education, training and employment outcomes.
 - 4.3 **Reduce the Use of Custody**
Ensuring robust community alternatives are available, strengthening resettlement arrangements and enhancing multi-agency planning for children at risk of custodial sentences.
 - 4.4 **Strengthen Responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation**
Working closely with the Harm Outside the Home Team, Police, Community Safety and Violence Reduction partners to identify vulnerability, safeguard children and disrupt exploitation.
 - 4.5 **Early Intervention and Children's Participation**
Ensuring services are informed by children's lived experiences and expanding participation opportunities so children influence both individual plans and wider service development.
5. Progress against the Plan will be monitored through the Youth Justice Management Board and reported through established governance arrangements.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

6. The Youth Justice Plan adopts a Child First approach and recognises the impact of deprivation, inequality, adverse childhood experiences, exclusion, trauma and exploitation on children's outcomes. The anticipated impact is positive through improved access to services, strengthened prevention activity, reduced offending and better long-term outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Corporate Parenting Implications

7. There are significant corporate parenting implications. Many children involved within the youth justice system are children in our care, care experienced, or have additional safeguarding needs. The Plan reinforces the Council's commitment to reducing the criminalisation of children in care, promoting positive outcomes and ensuring children receive coordinated support across agencies.

Financial Implications

8. Delivery of the Plan will be supported through a combination of Youth Justice Board grant funding, Ministry of Justice Turnaround funding, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner funding and existing partner contributions. The Youth Justice Service continues to utilise available resources efficiently and benefits from substantial in-kind contributions from Police, Probation and Health partners.
9. There are no immediate additional financial implications arising directly from adoption of the Plan. However, reductions in external funding remain a strategic risk and will continue to be closely monitored through governance arrangements.

Legal Implications

10. The Youth Justice Plan fulfils statutory requirements under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and aligns with expectations set by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The Plan supports partners in meeting their statutory responsibilities relating to youth justice, safeguarding and crime prevention.

Risk Assessment

11. Key risks identified within the Plan include:
 - Reduced external grant funding impacting prevention and diversion services.
 - Continued challenges associated with serious youth violence and child exploitation.
 - High levels of complexity amongst a smaller cohort of children.
 - Ongoing system and performance reporting changes associated with Youth Justice Modernisation.

These risks will be monitored and managed through the Youth Justice Management Board and relevant council governance arrangements.

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

12. The Plan applies across all wards within Stockton-on-Tees. It has been developed through extensive collaboration with statutory and voluntary sector partners and informed by feedback from children, young people and families engaged with youth justice services.

Background Papers

- Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan 2026-27.

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Youth Justice Plan Stockton-on-Tees

2026-2027



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Introduction, Vision, and Strategy



Welcome to the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan 2026–27. This plan reflects on the progress we have made to date, acknowledges the challenges that remain, and sets out a clear and ambitious direction for the year ahead. It outlines our shared priorities to deliver high-quality, evidence-led and child-centred youth justice services that improve outcomes, reduce reoffending and keep communities safe.

Developed and agreed by the Youth Justice Partnership, the plan demonstrates our collective commitment to continuous improvement, strong partnership working and delivering meaningful, lasting change for children, young people and families.

The Youth Justice Management Board remains steadfast in its commitment to children and to the principles of Child First practice. Across our partnership, we share a strong ambition for every child to be and achieve the best possible outcomes. Our collective focus remains steeped in promoting positive futures, reducing crime and harm, and building safer, stronger communities for everyone.

Thank you to the continued dedication and innovation of the Youth Justice Team (YJT) and the vital service they deliver for children, families and victims. Over the past 12 months, the Management Board has focused on strengthening its own effectiveness, while maintaining a clear understanding of day-to-day practice and delivery within the service. This has deepened our insight into the challenges and barriers faced by children involved in the youth justice system and reinforced the importance of responsive, proportionate and systemic intervention.

We acknowledge the national and local increase in serious youth violence and the significant impact this has on children, families and communities. In response, the

Board has reflected on how we work collectively across the system to strengthen prevention, early intervention and safeguarding approaches, ensuring responsibility is shared and action is coordinated.

This plan reflects our shared commitment to inclusion, continuous improvement and delivering intervention that is both proportionate and transformative. As a partnership, we work as one to understand the issues that impact on our children and to respond effectively, positively and at pace. The year ahead is no different. We remain focused, purposeful and united in our vision and intentions, with a clear commitment to delivering the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees.

Majella McCarthy, Chair of Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Management Board & Director of Children's Services

Local Context

Stockton-on-Tees is a unitary authority with an estimated population of 196,587 (Census 2021) residents. Within the Borough of Stockton there are 6 town centres: Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Yarm, Ingleby Barwick. Stockton Town Centre is located on the north bank of the river Tees.

The population age profile below shows that Stockton-on-Tees has a higher percentage of 10-14 year olds compared to the North East and England. The Census (2021) shows that the total population for Children and Young People (CYP) aged 10-17 years is 20,103 residents this is due to increase by 6.3%. A total of 8% of the population are from a black or other minority ethnic groups.

There are areas of great affluence alongside some of the most deprived in England, with some significant differences around life and health outcomes. There are 28.1% of people are living in the 20% most deprived areas in England, this is significantly worse than England (20.2%) but better than the North East (31.0%).

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) is responsible for the national collection, assurance, analysis and publication of youth justice data. This function underpins its statutory role in overseeing the youth justice system and advising the Secretary of State on performance, practice, and policy improvement. Data gathered by the YJB provides national evidence base on how children are entering, moving through, and exiting the youth justice system.

The latest report shows a youth justice system that is smaller in scale but more complex in demand compared to the earlier period. There has been continued success in preventing children from entering the system, indicating that early help and diversionary approaches remain effective. This marks a positive shift from the earlier report, which reflected a higher flow of children into youth justice and a broader spread of lower-level cases.

While overall activity has reduced, the nature of current demand has changed. The more recent report highlights that ongoing pressure is increasingly driven by a small cohort of children with persistent and entrenched needs, rather than by new entrants. This contrasts with the earlier period, where demand was more evenly distributed across a larger group of children.

Custody continues to be used sparingly and appropriately in both periods, demonstrating consistent practice and decision-making. The current report reinforces that this approach is being maintained even as case complexity increases.

In summary, the comparison shows clear progress in reducing system entry and maintaining proportionate responses. However, the challenge has shifted from managing volume to addressing intensity, persistence, and complexity, requiring more targeted and multi-agency approaches to achieve further improvement.

Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Youth Justice Management Board

The Management Board remains committed to providing strategic leadership for youth justice delivery and plays a central role in coordinating the contribution of partners across the system. It maintains a strong focus on accountability, ensuring that statutory functions and the wider youth justice partnership are held to account for performance, quality, and outcomes at both operational and strategic levels. The Board is responsible for setting clear strategic direction, providing robust oversight, and ensuring that youth justice services remain child-first, outcome-focused, and aligned with national standards and Youth Justice Board guidance.

The Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and includes representation from statutory partners such as the Local Authority, Police, Probation Service, and Integrated Health Board, alongside local partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, (OPCC) the voluntary and the community sector. Attendance over the past year has been consistently strong. The Board meets quarterly and, in addition to monitoring youth justice outcomes, considers emerging trends, policy developments, legislation, research, and inspection findings. It also oversees compliance with Youth Justice Board grant conditions through regular review of performance information and quality assurance activity.

The Board initially identified that a development session would provide an opportunity to refresh and co-produce the Youth Justice Plan. In January 2026, the Board came together for a dedicated development session, providing a timely and valuable opportunity to take stock of its current position and to set a clear focus for development over the next twelve months. The session was recognised as an important moment to reflect on the Board's effectiveness, strengthen collaboration across the partnership, and sharpen its strategic direction in response to the changing and increasingly complex nature of youth justice demand. We revisited the Board's core responsibilities, its role in overseeing and responding to serious youth violence, and the importance of setting clear future priorities. The session also explored how stakeholder voice and co-production can be strengthened, ensuring that children, families, and partners play a meaningful role in shaping services. These conversations were underpinned by a shared commitment to using insight, data, and learning to inform future priority setting.

The depth of insight shared by partners and the constructive challenge offered throughout the session significantly strengthened the quality of discussion. Members demonstrated openness, reflection, and a willingness to challenge and support one another, reinforcing the collective nature of the Board's leadership role. Overall, the session demonstrated a clear collective focus and a strong, shared commitment to the continued development of the Youth Justice Management Board. The high level of engagement reflected a genuine investment from all partners in shaping a more effective, collaborative, and forward-looking approach to supporting children and young people.

Structure

The Youth Justice Team (YJT) is located within Children's Services and is positioned alongside a range of early help and family-focused services, including Family Hubs, the Family Support Team, Family Group Conferencing, Therapeutic Services, Youth Support, and the newly integrated front door, Family Help Point. This structure supports a coordinated, whole-family approach and enables early identification of need, timely intervention, and effective co-ordination between services.

The service model is overseen by three Service Leads, with dedicated leadership for Early Help, Youth Justice and Youth Support, and the Family Help Point. This arrangement strengthens alignment across services and ensures clear accountability while promoting integrated practice across prevention, early intervention, and statutory responses.

The YJT is centrally located within the same building as Early Help and statutory Social Care teams, which facilitates regular informal contact and daily professional discussion, particularly where there is active social care involvement. This co-location supports effective information sharing, joint decision-making, and a cohesive response to children and families with complex or overlapping needs.

Strategic leadership for Youth Justice is provided through the Head of Service role, which spans Family Help Point, Early Help, Youth Justice, and Youth Support. This role is line-managed by the Assistant Director for Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care, ensuring strong strategic oversight, clear links to safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities, and alignment with wider Children's Services priorities.

Resources and Value for Money

Resourcing for youth justice services is provided through a combination of Youth Justice Board grant funding and local partnership contributions. Statutory staffing requirements under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 continue to be met, with the Youth Justice Board grant fully allocated to staffing within the Youth Justice Team and seconded staff funded by their employing agencies.

The service operates with strong management, supervision, and performance oversight arrangements, supported by a management database used to monitor activity and outcomes. The YJT comprises substantive staff and community volunteers and is committed to delivering value for money, with a clear focus on prevention, 'invest to save' approaches, and partnership delivery to avoid duplication and maximise collective resources in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people.

Partnership Arrangements

Youth justice services in Stockton-on-Tees have developed a range of strategic and operational linkages; outlined below:



The range of partners in the team has expanded this year, including the addition of Change Grow Live (Substance Misuse Service). Stronger and revised links have also been established with the Adolescence Team and the Harm Outside the Home Team to jointly tackle Serious Youth Violence. Over the next twelve months, we will further strengthen links with Youth Services to pool resources and enhance early intervention activity.

Most statutory Youth Justice interventions are delivered either in-house or in partnership with key stakeholders. Commissioned arrangements for Speech, Language and Communication services with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust will continue.

Joint working arrangements with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) funded Custody Navigators remain in place to support children within the police station. These services are critical in ensuring that children are appropriately supported at the earliest point of contact and that professionals are present during key 'reachable moments' to influence decision-making and outcomes.

There is a strong and well-established working relationship between the YJT and Children's Social Care for children identified as children in need, children in our care, and care experienced. Clear working protocols are in place to support this partnership. Reducing the criminalisation and offending of children in our care is a shared corporate priority and is embedded within local decision-making through effective collaboration with Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Courts.

Multi-agency pathways have been developed to support the effective implementation of Prevent and Modern Slavery legislation. The YJT is also an integral partner within Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). Where a multi-agency response is required to prevent serious harm, information-sharing agreements ensure that relevant information is available to support holistic assessment and effective planning for children. All information is managed sensitively and in line with data protection principles.

As part of its recent White Paper, **Cutting Youth Crime. Changing Young Lives:** The youth justice system reform and delivery plan, the Ministry of Justice has announced new investment in community alternatives to youth custody. The goal of this new funding is to strengthen opportunities for children and young people to live safely in the community, with the support needed, while awaiting trial and/or sentence. Working together across Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool, in partnership with justice systems change organisation, SHiFT, we have secured funding as part of this programme to benefit children and young people at greatest risk of remand to custody across Tees.

Update on the previous year

Help children stay out of the criminal justice system.

During 2024/25, we established bespoke Child First Out of Court Disposal (OOCDD) panels, which have played a significant role in driving a sustained reduction in First Time Entrants (FTEs).

The panel brings together volunteers, police representatives, the Youth Justice Team Manager, a Youth Justice Officer, victim representation and administrative support to ensure accurate documentation. The Youth Justice Officer coordinates attendance and invites other professionals involved in the case, such as social workers or personal advisors, where appropriate. This multi-agency model supports informed, shared decision-making, ensuring that outcomes are proportionate, child-centred, and take full account of risk, need, and context.

The strength of this joint decision-making approach has enhanced the consistency and effectiveness of OOCDDs, increasing confidence across partners and ensuring appropriate diversionary outcomes. As a result, more children are being diverted away from the Criminal Justice System at the earliest opportunity.

This has contributed to a continued decline in the FTE rate in Stockton, representing an excellent level of performance and the lowest number of First Time Entrants recorded in over three years. While performance was already strong 18 months ago, with a rate of 125 (26 children), ongoing system improvements and consistent application of diversionary practice have driven further reductions beyond this baseline.

Two key areas of work have had a particularly positive impact on reducing FTE rates. Firstly, the OOCDD panel process has proven highly effective, with 98 children discussed at panel over the past twelve months and only four going on to become First Time Entrants. The vast majority were successfully diverted away from formal criminal justice processes. Secondly, the FTE audit completed in September 2025 identified the need for Youth Justice Officers to take a more proactive role in court proceedings to maximise diversion opportunities. This has led to clear improvements in practice, including the successful diversion of children charged with driving-related offences away from court where appropriate.

The OPCC has agreed to continue funding Triage disposals and interventions for 2025/26, recognising their critical role in early diversion. Over the last twelve months, a total of 99 OOCDDs were delivered, with Triage remaining the most widely used disposal (53 interventions), followed by Outcome 22 (41 interventions). These figures highlight the importance of proportionate and non-statutory responses in preventing unnecessary criminalisation.

The Turnaround programme has also made a strong contribution to positive outcomes. Against a Ministry of Justice target of 19, we delivered 33 successful interventions by March 2026. Turnaround

support has included family work, access to positive activities, and targeted help with Education, Training and Employment (ETE), supporting children to address underlying needs and reduce the likelihood of further offending.

Reduce the use of custody and prioritise effective resettlement.

Our custody rate has fallen, reducing from 0.23 to 0.18, equating to a decrease from five to four children receiving custodial sentences. Despite this improvement, Stockton's custody rate remains higher than national and local comparators, including the regional average (0.11), England and Wales (0.09) and the Family comparator (0.05). This continues to present a challenge for the partnership, particularly given the seriousness of offences coming before the courts.

Between April and June 2025, three children were sentenced to long custodial terms ranging from four to ten years for serious violent offences. These cases will not be included in the next Youth Justice Board performance dataset and, as a result, the custody rate will reduce further. This reduction partly reflects a reporting time lag, as recent serious custodial cases fall outside the current Youth Justice Board dataset and are not yet captured in the published figures.

Over the past year, we have worked in partnership with HOTH and Cleveland Police to enhance intelligence-sharing, deliver targeted disruption activity in relation to serious youth violence and exploitation, and coordinate multi-agency interventions for children identified as being at risk of involvement in organised crime.

However, the overall custody rate remains impacted by the nature of offending in a small cohort of cases, particularly where children are charged with serious violence, exploitation-related offences and activity linked to Organised Crime Groups operating across the borough. This mirrors the position outlined in last year's report, where serious youth violence was identified as the primary driver behind custodial outcomes.

The Youth Justice Team continues to work proactively to minimise the use of custody wherever possible.

To reduce reoffending

We ensure that all children have a dedicated worker, recognising the importance of consistency and trusted relationships. Recent feedback from children and parents in February 2026, highlights that workers are experienced as supportive, approachable, proactive and reliable, with many children reporting that they felt listened to, understood and safe throughout their intervention. Where children are receiving a Turnaround intervention, practice continues to ensure continuity of worker should they be charged with any offence, which has been identified by families as key to building trust and engagement.

Our interventions remain under continuous review and development, informed directly by the views and experiences of children and parents. Children have spoken positively about the range of activities and interventions they have accessed, including reparation, cookery sessions, outdoor activities and one-to-one work, all of which have supported improvements in confidence, emotional regulation and understanding of behaviour. We have built a flexible intervention offer that responds to different ages, learning styles and individual needs, with a particular focus on positive experiences, relational

work and practical skill-building. Informed by feedback, we are further strengthening how we involve parents and carers, ensuring clear communication, regular updates and opportunities for joint sessions where appropriate.

Across Early Help, Youth Justice, Youth Support and Children's Social Care, staff continue to work closely together to deliver coordinated and effective interventions. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in securing positive outcomes across education, health and wellbeing, with families highlighting the impact of Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) assessments, CAMHS involvement, neurodiversity pathways and therapeutic support. We have strengthened our transition arrangements, including joint development work with Probation colleagues, to ensure that young adults experience a seamless and well-supported transition between services. Additionally working with the newly created transitions team when appropriate, to support the early identification of any adult social care needs.

We have maintained a strong focus on Education, Training and Employment (ETE) through our dedicated ETE worker, providing intensive support to help children re-engage with learning, access alternative provision and develop realistic aspirations for the future. Feedback from parents reflects noticeable improvements in children's confidence, behaviour and engagement with education. Alongside this, we offer a comprehensive health response, with SALT and CAMHS practitioners embedded within the team and monthly health hub meetings enabling coordinated planning. Specialist clinicians from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust continue to support staff through regular consultations for children with complex needs, strengthening our trauma-informed approach and ensuring children receive timely and appropriate support.

Strengthen our responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation

Over recent years, the Youth Justice Management Board has played a central role in advancing and shaping Stockton-on-Tees' multi-agency response to Serious Youth Violence (SYV). As part of this work, nine partner agencies completed the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Self-Assessment, which captured the breadth of activity being delivered across the partnership while also highlighting gaps in provision. In response, partners then worked closely with Public Health to complete a Rapid Needs Assessment, providing a robust understanding of local need and identifying effective practice to inform future planning. This process laid the foundations for a more coordinated and evidence-led approach to SYV.

Building on this work, the partnership has now developed a Serious Youth Violence Strategy, which will be presented to the Management Board for approval in Summer 2026. The strategy sets out how agencies will work collectively to prevent and reduce serious youth violence through a public health, whole-system approach. It is informed by local evidence and shaped by the voices of children, young people, families and communities. The strategy outlines a shared vision, principles and priorities, the local SYV needs profile, clear actions and how progress and impact will be measured over time.

The strategy builds on existing work led by Cleveland Police, Community Safety Teams and the Harm Outside the Home Team, including targeted action to disrupt adults and organised crime groups who exploit children. This includes joint problem-solving approaches involving Police, Community Safety, Youth Justice, Education and the voluntary sector, with a clear focus on hotspot locations, areas of

concern and safeguarding-led responses to protect children at risk of harm and exploitation.

This is a live strategy, developed in line with the Serious Violence Duty, and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains responsive to emerging risks, evidence and learning. Through regular review and strong governance arrangements, the partnership will ensure alignment with the Cleveland Violence Reduction Unit's overarching strategy and wider Stockton-on-Tees priorities, while maintaining a clear long-term focus on achieving sustained reductions in serious youth violence and improved outcomes for children and young people.

To reduce the number of School Exclusions

Education Service have undertaken in-depth discussions with key stakeholders regarding suspension and exclusion to inform a robust, evidence-led action plan. This has supported the development of a strengthened multi-service response, improving collaboration, accountability, and outcomes for children at risk of exclusion. As part of this work, we have completed the Inclusive Education Framework Analysis to ensure a consistent, inclusive approach across the borough, alongside producing a support booklet for schools to clearly identify available services and referral pathways. A shared ABC model focused on behaviour and attendance also supports our schools to access support at an earlier time through our school support service.

Alongside this, Education have focused on building capacity and expertise within schools. They have further developed our governor training package on exclusions, which has seen significantly increased uptake compared to previous years and has received 100% positive feedback. They have also delivered free trauma-informed practice training throughout the academic year and developed a supporting vision statement to embed this approach. Many schools who have accessed these CPD opportunities already show a reduction in suspensions and exclusions. In addition, the Key Adult programme is being implemented across three secondary schools, strengthening relational practice and targeted support for vulnerable pupils.

The service have also expanded alternative provision and early intervention offer. Tiered Alternative Provision (AP) has been further developed across the borough, with increased providers on the framework and strong engagement from schools attending half-termly AP network meetings. Targeted support has been enhanced through the Commando Joe programme, providing 11 secondary schools with one day of support per week over six months, alongside one school participating in the longer-term "Leading the Way" project. Collectively, this work demonstrates a cohesive multi-agency effort to reduce exclusions and improve outcomes for children and young people.

To refresh our practice in our victim work and restorative practice.

Work has continued on delivering the victim support action plan, with a strong focus on improving

how the service supports victims of crime and ensuring compliance with the new HMIP inspection victim standards. An audit tool was developed and used to review ten cases, identifying areas for improvement, many of which had already been implemented or were in progress prior to the audit, providing assurance of ongoing development.

Victim contact data indicates that while initial engagement is moderate, with 55% of victims viewing outreach, there is a significant drop-off in deeper engagement. Only 10% of victims go on to accept support, despite a higher proportion (33%) opting to receive updates, suggesting a preference for low-level, information-based engagement rather than direct intervention. This highlights a need within Youth Justice services to strengthen how support is introduced and delivered, ensuring approaches are trauma-informed, clearly communicated, and responsive to readiness. Increasing follow-up opportunities, building trust over time, and utilising updates as a gateway to more meaningful engagement will be key to improving uptake. Additionally, the low rate of automatic referrals to specialist support services suggests further scope to enhance pathways and ensure vulnerable young people and families are proactively identified and supported at the earliest opportunity.

To strengthen victim voice and feedback, a QR code has been introduced to enable victims to share their experiences directly with the service. Processes with the police have been improved to ensure clearer and more consistent approaches to obtaining victim consent for court cases, and the OOCd referral form has been enhanced to better capture victim protected characteristics.

In addition, the Youth Justice Coordinator has renewed their Advanced Practitioner accreditation with the Restorative Justice Council, supporting continued high-quality leadership and expertise in restorative and victim-focused practice

To Develop a Participation Model of Practice

Stockton Youth Justice are working with children to develop a participation model of practice that ensures that the children we work with are fully involved in shaping the future of the service. We understand that a participation model in youth justice should be rights-based, trauma-informed, inclusive and meaningful, ensuring children and young people are active partners rather than passive recipients of services.

It is important that children influence their own casework, service delivery, strategic decisions and accountability processes, while being honest about statutory boundaries and safeguarding responsibilities. Participation is embedded into everyday practice through co-produced plans, choice in how interventions are delivered, and regular opportunities for reflection. We want to expand this further by having structured mechanisms such as a child user group, children with lived-experience giving feedback and consultation on future developments and currently exploring how we share information with children in a meaningful way.

Performance over the last year.

First Time Entrants (FTE's)

The rate of FTE's has decreased in the last year (data taken from January – December 25). The latest published YJB data currently has our rate at 96 and this is a significant decrease of the same period

the previous year from 154. The actual numbers of children who have become FTE's is 21 compared to 33 previously. In comparison to the Region 180, Cleveland PCC area 156, Family 139 and England and Wales 150. This is a promising picture and showing clear evidence that early intervention initiatives are impacting.

Reoffending Rate

The reoffending rate stands at 58.8% for the last YJB reporting period January 2024- March 2024. This remains higher than other comparatives Region 44.3%, Cleveland PCC 55.8% and England and Wales 33.4%.

Reoffences/Reoffender

The latest reoffences/reoffender rate is 3.60 which is slight increase on the previous rate 3.3. However the current rate is lower than other comparisons of the Region 5.42, Cleveland PCC area 5.14, Family 4.27 and England and Wales 4.64.

Use of Custody

The latest use of custody rate is 0.18, this is a decrease on the previous year of 0.28. Our rate is higher than all other measures. The rate for the region is 0.11, family 0.05 and England and Wales 0.9. The custody rate comes from six custodial sentences being given in the past year. All sentences were for violent offences.

Risks and Issues

The Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Partnership continues to operate within an increasingly complex and evolving landscape. While strong partnership working and service integration have enabled the YJT to maintain high standards of delivery, ongoing financial pressures, policy changes and rising expectations present a number of risks that require careful management.

Children involved in the youth justice system in Stockton remain among the most vulnerable in the borough, particularly those entering custody who often present with multiple and overlapping needs, including exploitation, trauma, health and education needs. Although the overall cohort has reduced, reoffending by a small number of children, particularly those involved in serious or violent offences, continues to present challenges locally and nationally. Serious Youth Violence and school exclusions also remain significant contextual risks, increasing the likelihood of children becoming criminalised. Our 2026/27 plan and newly developed Serious Youth Violence Strategy set out how the partnership intends to respond to these issues through a preventative, child-first and public health approach.

Funding remains a significant and ongoing risk. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) core grant continues to be essential in enabling the delivery of a comprehensive statutory service. In addition, while funding from the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Programme and OPCC Triage funding has been critical in supporting early intervention, this funding has reduced, placing additional pressure on the service to prioritise resources against rising demand. The partnership may be required to redesign aspects of service delivery, potentially reducing our ability to intervene early and effectively with children at risk.

Further pressure arises from national policy changes, including the introduction of mandatory interventions for children found in possession of a knife. While this aligns with a preventative public safety agenda, it may lead to an increase in demand for Youth Justice interventions and resources,

particularly within a context of constrained funding. There is an associated risk that without adequate capacity and flexibility, mandatory responses may inadvertently undermine the Child First principle of proportionate and individualised intervention.

The ongoing Youth Justice Modernisation Programme also presents both opportunity and risk. Modernisation brings the potential for improved data quality, consistency, digital capability and outcome measurement across the system. However, changes to systems, expectations and reporting requirements place additional demands on staff capacity and require sustained investment in training, implementation and change management to avoid unintended disruption to practice or performance. Operational risks linked to systems and infrastructure remain under review. Following the transition to the Pathways case management system, the team has worked hard to minimise disruption; however, data reporting has remained challenging. The planned NEC system upgrade is expected to improve KPI and performance reporting, but until this is fully embedded, there remains an ongoing risk to timely and accurate data submission.

Plans for the forthcoming year

Child First

The Child Focus¹ approach has 4 tenets, which are summarised as:

As children

Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.



Building pro-social identity

Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

Collaborating with children

Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.

Diverting from stigma

Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

A Child First approach remains embedded across all Youth Justice practice in Stockton-on-Tees. Staff consistently refer to our cohort as *children*, which both reflects their developmental stage and supports more effective access to appropriate services. Children are spoken to in a strength-based and hopeful way, focusing on their abilities, resilience and capacity for positive change. This approach is reflected in feedback gathered from children and parents, who consistently describe workers as supportive, understanding and respectful, with many children reporting that they felt listened to, safe and understood throughout their involvement with the service.

Diversion continues to be actively promoted across the Youth Justice Team and wider partnership, contributing to a significant proportion of children being dealt with through OOCs. This reflects our ongoing commitment to avoiding unnecessary criminalisation and responding proportionately to behaviour. The continued use of the PDAT assessment framework has strengthened planning and the quality of interventions, ensuring language is child-focused and developmental. Practitioners consistently talk about behaviours rather than offences, and safety rather than risk, supporting children to develop a positive, pro-social identity. This approach is reinforced by feedback from families, who report meaningful improvements in behaviour, wellbeing and understanding.

Strong partnership working remains central to delivering personalised, child-focused

interventions. Support workers continue to engage children in creative and meaningful ways, including access to music studios, bike projects, photography and positive leisure activities. A multi-disciplinary offer is embedded within the team, including Speech, Language and Communication support, health and CAMHS provision, and Education, Training and Employment (ETE) workers. Feedback from parents demonstrates the positive impact of this joined-up approach, particularly where assessments, mental health support and neurodiversity pathways have helped children better understand themselves and improve engagement with education and daily routines.

We continue to actively promote opportunities for children and families to share their views, including the use of QR codes to make feedback accessible. As a result, children have provided feedback on programmes such as Turnaround and have directly contributed to the design and development of resources within our children's space at the No Limits Hub. The February 2026 feedback report highlights high levels of satisfaction across both children and parents, with strong relationships, clear communication and trust consistently identified as key strengths. One area of learning raised around parental inclusion has been positively received and is informing ongoing improvements in practice.

Overall, we remain firmly committed to ensuring that children and families have a meaningful voice, both in shaping individual intervention plans and in influencing broader service development. Our ambition is to deliver motivational, respectful and relationship-based support, grounded in children's strengths and lived experiences, to promote long-term desistance and improved outcomes for children, families and communities.

Resources and services

Regular financial monitoring reports continue to be presented to the Youth Justice Management Board, enabling members to review spend, consider emerging pressures and agree any required actions. Income and projected expenditure are based on the current Youth Justice Team structure, confirmed funding streams and approved national and local service initiatives. As in previous years, staffing costs account for the majority of expenditure, reflecting the service's commitment to maintaining a skilled, specialist workforce capable of meeting the complex needs of children.

All funding carried forward within reserves remains earmarked for planned Youth Justice activity, and any future use of reserves is subject to approval by the Management Board. There is currently no financial contribution required from Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Service towards remand costs; however, this position continues to be monitored and may change should remand numbers increase.

The Youth Justice Team continues to utilise 100% of its available funding, including YJB grant, partner contributions and in-kind support, to deliver statutory and non-statutory services. These resources support improved outcomes for children and families and underpin strong performance. During 2026/27, performance improvement will continue to be driven through a place-based, problem-solving approach, with a particular focus on our most vulnerable and

complex children, enhancing support for First Time Entrants and strengthening engagement with Stockton's diverse communities.

The financial position, detailed in the table on page 26, reflects a slight uplift to the Youth Justice Board grant following the national 2026 settlement. Importantly, confirmation of three-year YJB funding provides greater financial stability and enables more effective forward planning and workforce sustainability.

Funding for the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Programme will continue to be reported separately during the 2026/27 financial year, this also comes with the additional security of three years funding. The service also continues to benefit from payment in kind contributions from Police, Probation and Health partners, which remain integral to delivering a comprehensive multi-disciplinary offer. While the OPCC has confirmed continued funding for the Triage programme for 2026/27, this funding has been reduced by half, increasing the importance of close monitoring and prioritisation to ensure early intervention capacity can be maintained.

Workforce Development

During 2025–26, the team has continued to place a strong emphasis on workforce development and maintaining high standards of practice through a structured programme of learning and reflection. Monthly Effective Practice sessions have been consistently delivered, providing staff with regular opportunities to refresh and deepen their knowledge across a range of key Youth Justice areas, including Early and Late Release arrangements, Home Detention Curfew (HDC), MAPPA processes, victim awareness, and risk, safety and wellbeing. These sessions support consistent practice, reinforce statutory responsibilities and promote reflective learning across the team.

In March 2026, staff attended a specialist conference on stalking delivered in partnership with Forensic CAMHS, recognising stalking as a newly emerging and increasingly complex area of work within Youth Justice and ensuring the team remains informed of developing research, risk factors and intervention approaches.

Several team members have also completed Systemic Practice training, undertaking five-day and fifteen-day courses to strengthen relational, whole-family and formulation-based approaches to assessment and intervention.

In addition, two officers have completed AIM3 assessment and intervention training, and all officers are now fully trained in AIM3, ensuring a consistent, confident and evidence-based response to children presenting with harmful sexual behaviours.

To support workforce sustainability and quality, all new staff complete a comprehensive two-week induction programme, which includes Asset Plus training, ensuring they are well equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools required to deliver safe, effective and child-centred practice from the outset.

Evidence-based practice and innovation

We continue to actively explore and implement evidence-based interventions and resources to ensure our practice is responsive to the individual needs of children. In doing so, we consistently take account of learning needs, special educational needs (SEN), speech, language and communication needs, and neurodiversity, adapting approaches to promote accessibility, engagement and positive outcomes.

To better support children at key points of vulnerability, we have developed custody passports, which provide clear, child-centred information about individual needs, risks and protective factors to support children effectively while in police and youth custody.

The team also continues to use virtual reality (VR) headsets as an intervention for children involved in knife crime, supporting awareness of consequences, victim impact and decision-making in an engaging and developmentally appropriate way.

During 2025–26, we contributed to wider Children's Services resource groups, working collaboratively to develop and strengthen resources and approaches across three priority areas: knife crime, online safety and peer influence. This collaborative work supports consistency across services and ensures that interventions are informed by current evidence, emerging risks and the lived

experiences of children.

Evaluation

Over the past twelve months there has been a significant programme of evaluation and quality assurance activity, which has directly informed the service development plan. The Youth Justice Service remains committed to continuous improvement, with a strong focus on ensuring that practice consistently delivers the best possible outcomes for children and their families. Evaluation enables us to reflect, review and adapt our approaches so that we respond more effectively to the needs of children.

During the year, a range of audits and evaluations were completed. Child-focused audits highlighted strong and consistent Child First practice across assessment, planning and delivery. Assessments were thorough and strengths-based, planning was proportionate and needs-led, and interventions were personalised, flexible and effective. Children consistently felt listened to and supported, with strong multi-agency working contributing to positive outcomes. Areas for learning focused primarily on strengthening case recording and summaries, rather than the quality of practice itself.

The First Time Entrant audit found that most children entered the system due to the serious nature of their offences, in line with national guidance requiring direct court charges, meaning diversion was not always appropriate. Overall court practice was strong, with children and families well supported and clear efforts made to explore diversion wherever possible. However, a small number of missed opportunities were identified, where stronger recommendations for Out of Court Disposals, clearer recording of diversion rationale, or further engagement at the police station may have avoided criminalisation. These findings highlight opportunities to further strengthen confidence, consistency and recording to support continued reductions in FTEs.

In addition, we have considered parent and child feedback, alongside targeted audits on the use of remand beds and the Turnaround programme. Feedback gathered from children and parents indicates high levels of satisfaction, with workers consistently described as supportive, approachable, responsive and trusted. Children reported feeling listened to, understood and safe, while parents highlighted the strength of relationships, clear communication and the positive impact of the service on their child's wellbeing, behaviour and engagement with education. Multi-agency support, particularly around health, communication needs and emotional wellbeing, was identified as having a significant and lasting impact. One area for learning was identified around consistent parental inclusion, reinforcing the importance of maintaining clear communication and joint working with families throughout an intervention.

Learning from all evaluation activity continues to directly inform service improvements and development planning. The Youth Justice Service remains fully committed to ongoing audit and evaluation as a key driver for effective, reflective and child-centred practice, ensuring that children's voices and lived experiences remain central to how services are designed and

delivered.

Priorities for the coming year

1. Help children stay out of the criminal justice system.

We will:

- Embed and consistently promote diversionary practice through OOC panels, including the effective use of Triage, Outcome 22, and restorative interventions.
- Deliver targeted and intensive interventions for children identified through the Turnaround programme, addressing both offending behaviour and underlying needs.
- Maintain delivery of Triage services in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Convene quarterly multi-agency meetings with the Police to review all cases where children become First-Time Entrants to the criminal justice system.
- Develop and implement action plans arising from these reviews to address emerging themes, patterns, and systemic risks.
- Continue to develop and create innovative interventions to effect change for children.
- Work closely with the Youth Support Team to proactively identify and engage children at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
- Strengthen early knife crime prevention and intervention activity.

2. To reduce reoffending.

We will:

- Develop and deliver contemporary, evidence-informed programmes addressing driving-related offences, aligned to risk, responsibility, and harm reduction.
- Facilitate workforce development through structured staff workshops focused on social skills training and positive behaviour change.
- Further strengthen and embed our transition offer in partnership with Probation to ensure continuity of support for young people moving into adulthood.
- Maintain a strong focus on identifying and addressing health needs, ensuring all children are appropriately assessed and supported in relation to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), CAMHS, and Education, Training, and Employment (ETE).
- Continue to provide a comprehensive and accessible offer of sports and physical activity opportunities for the youth justice cohort, promoting wellbeing, resilience, and positive engagement.

3. Reduce the use of custody and prioritise effective resettlement.

We will:

- Continue to convene pre-sentence meetings in all cases where custody is being considered, to ensure robust community-based sentence options are fully explored and recommended

to the Court. All reports will be completed using a Child First approach, clearly evidencing the child's needs, circumstances, strengths, and progress.

- Where appropriate, propose Intensive Supervision and Surveillance, to provide the Court with confidence that children can be managed safely and effectively within the community.
- Ensure all resettlement cases are reviewed through Management Board meetings to identify and address any gaps in provision, with escalation to senior Board members where strategic decision-making is required.
- We will work with the Tees to effectively develop the remand partnership in conjunction with SHIFT.
- Embed early and effective release planning for all children leaving custody, with oversight and progress monitored through monthly resettlement meetings.
- In appropriate cases, work proactively with Courts and defence solicitors to support a single sentencing exercise for children with multiple matters before the Court, reducing delay and promoting proportionality.

4. Continue to Strengthen our responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation.

We will:

- Launch and implement a Serious Youth Violence Strategy, which will be overseen through the Youth Justice Management Board.
- Identify children at risk of SYV and knife crime at the earliest opportunity through HOTH screening, Custody Navigators, the Turnaround Programme, and intelligence relating to POCS and LOCS.
- Deliver targeted, direct interventions for children involved in or at risk of SYV, addressing unmet needs.
- Work in close partnership with the HOTH and Adolescent Social Work Teams to disrupt pathways into serious violence and child exploitation and to promote safe, positive alternatives.
- Recognise and respond to the high prevalence of exploitation among children involved in SYV by embedding NRM considerations within assessment, planning, and intervention.
- Regular oversight of SYV activity through the Youth Justice Management Board.
- Establish Prevention Partnership Panels in partnership with CURV to coordinate early intervention and preventative responses.
- Expand and evaluate SYV interventions, using evidence of impact to inform service development and continuous improvement.

5. Early Intervention and Prevention

We will:

- Strengthen early intervention and prevention through close collaboration with schools, family support services, youth workers, and community partners to identify and respond to emerging risks at the earliest opportunity.
- Deliver the Turnaround Programme to children who have been arrested and are at risk of further offending, providing targeted, preventative support that successfully engages children before patterns of offending become embedded.

- Use Out of Court Disposals (OCD) as a key prevention and diversion mechanism, ensuring children receive timely, needs-led interventions that support desistance and promote crime-free futures.
- Provide access to wider specialist support services for children engaged with Youth Justice and prevention services, addressing vulnerabilities such as education, health, family context, and wellbeing.
- Expand constructive engagement opportunities, including the Skills for Success programme and creative and positive activity offers, to develop life skills, resilience, and pro-social identity.
- Ensure all early intervention and prevention activity is underpinned by a Child First approach and informed by evidence of what works, with progress and impact reviewed through governance arrangements.

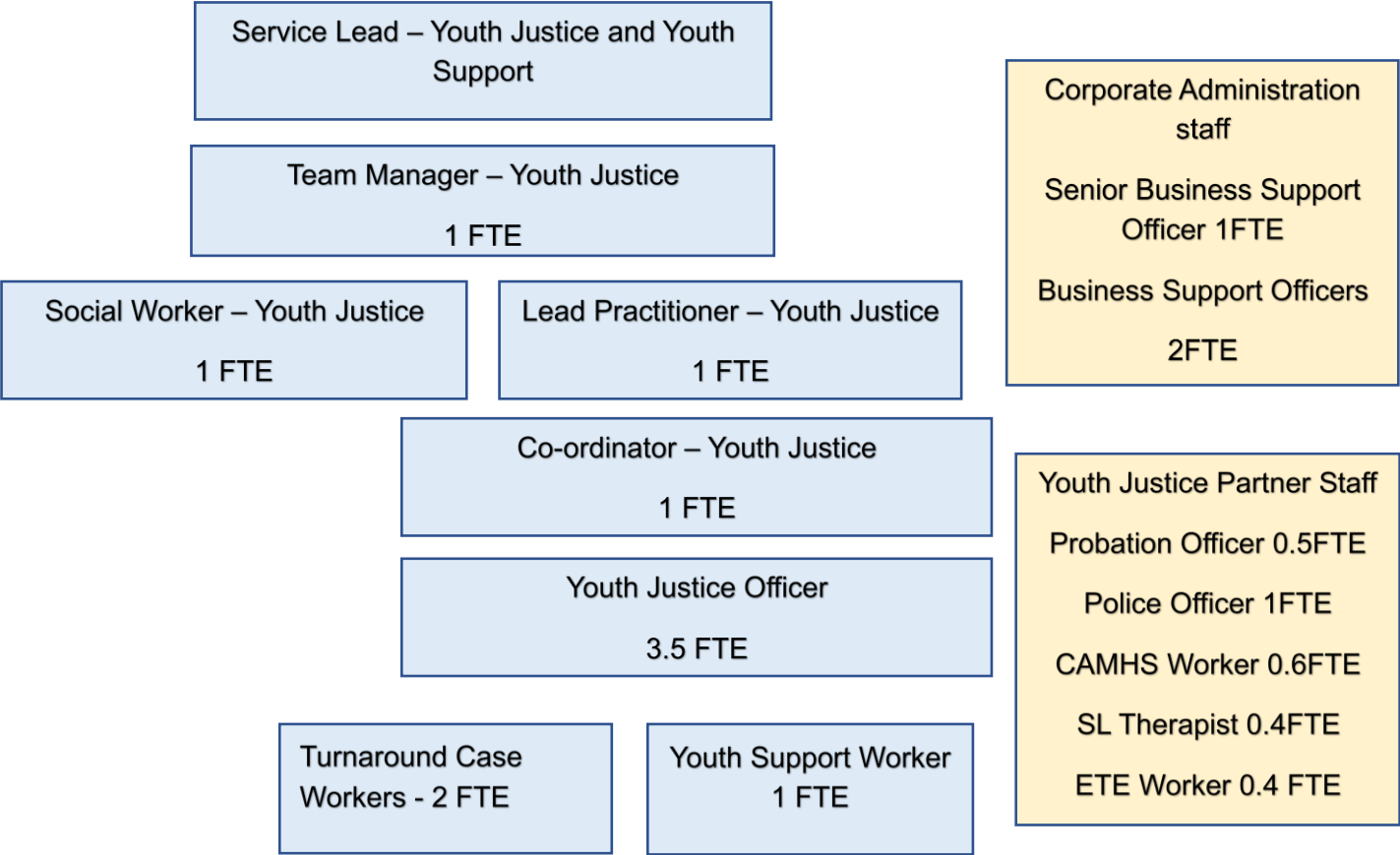
6. Child's Voice

- Place children and young people at the centre of service design and delivery, ensuring their views and experiences directly inform decision-making and practice.
- Use innovative and accessible participation methods, including digital tools, to gather feedback and promote meaningful involvement.
- Build on recent co-production work with children to review and redesign Youth Justice leaflets and written materials, ensuring information is clear, child-friendly, and accessible.
- Continue consultation with children on service environments, including the Youth Justice youth space, using feedback to inform ongoing improvements.
- Expand participation beyond traditional QR-code and paper-based feedback, including exploring the development of a child user group to strengthen sustained engagement and co-production.
- Ensure participation outcomes are embedded within governance and performance monitoring, complementing existing Youth Justice Board priorities relating to reducing reoffending, reducing the use of custody, and preventing children from entering the criminal justice system.
- Monitor progress through the Youth Justice Management Board, including oversight of the Youth Justice Modernisation Programme and its role in driving systemic improvement.

Appendix 1A: Staffing Demographics

Youth Justice Team staff demographics		
GENDER	Female	17
	Male	4
	Other	0
ETHNICITY	White	95.2%
	Asian	04.8%
	Black	0%
	Mixed	0%
	Other	0%
DISABILITY	YES	0
	NO	21

Appendix 1B: Youth Justice Team structure chart



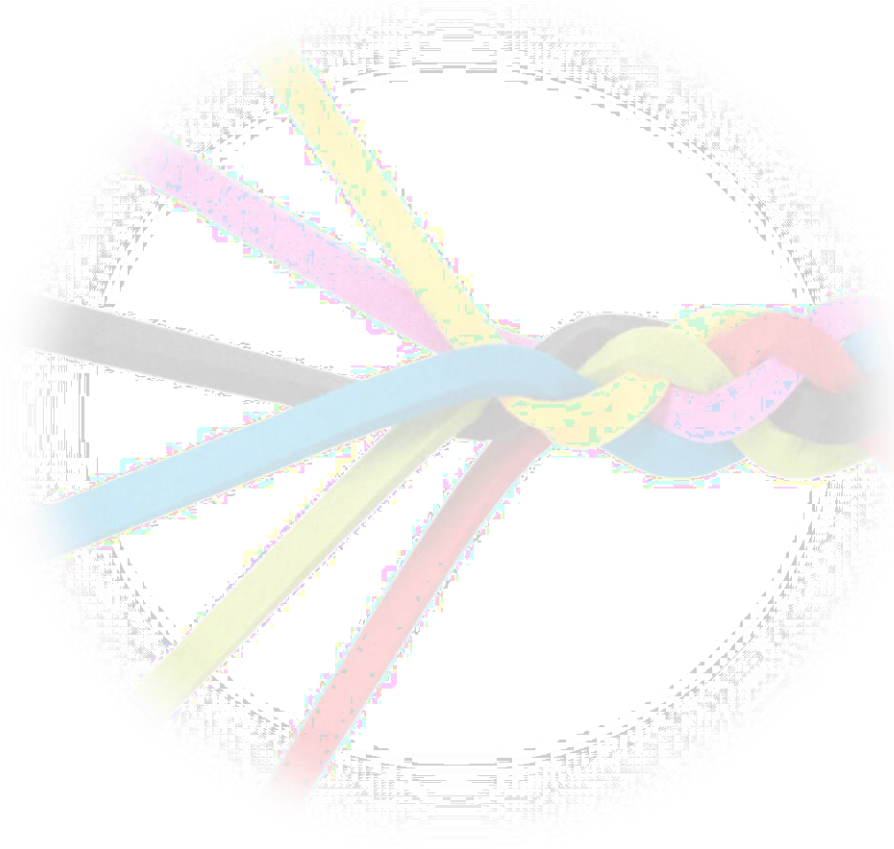
Appendix 2: Budget Costs and Contributions

Below is a summary of the YJT's financial profile for 2023-24. As in previous years, the majority of expenditure was on staffing costs.

BUDGET 2024/25	budget	outturn 2024/2025	outturn variance
Staff	832,086	832,086	0
Premises	42,778	42,778	0
Professional Services	31,500	31,500	
Indirect Staffing Costs (Transport & Training)	12,000	12,000	0
Office Costs	33,420	33,420	0
Central recharges	53,000	53,000	0
Total Expenditure	1,004,784	1,004,784	0
Income	1,004,784	1,004,784	0
Net Expenditure	0	0	0

Glossary

AssetPlus	A strengths based structured assessment tool based on research and developed by the Youth Justice Board looking at the child or young person's offence, personal circumstances and factors affecting desistance from crime
Child Exploitation	Safeguarding activity which focuses 'beyond the child's home and families,' to target those adults who are exploiting (targeting, tricking, and coercing) children for their own purposes and needs.
CURV	Cleveland's Unit for Reduction of Violence
ETAC	Exploitation Team Around the child.
ETE	Education, training, and employment; work to improve educational and learning outcomes
FTE	First-time entrants to the criminal justice system
HOTH	Harm Outside The Home
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
Justice System	Involves any or all of the agencies involved in upholding and implementing the law: police, courts, youth justice, probation, and custody providers.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
OPCC	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Pathways	The new YOT case management system
PDAT	Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool
Restorative Justice	The use of restorative approaches within a justice context. Brings those harmed by crime (victims) and those responsible for the harm (the offender) into communication, with a view to repairing the harm caused
Safety & Wellbeing	Terminology introduced by the YJB / AssetPlus to describe potential adverse outcomes where concerns exist that the young person's safety and well-being may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts / omissions of others
Safeguarding	Action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YJT	Youth Justice Team



For more information on this Plan, please contact the Youth Justice Team

youthjusticeadmin@stockton.gov.uk

REPORT TO CABINET/COUNCIL

DATE September 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION

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

Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031

Summary

This report presents the Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031 for consideration and endorsement.

The Strategy sets out a five-year partnership approach to preventing and reducing serious youth violence through a public health and whole-system model. The Strategy has been developed in response to the Serious Violence Duty and is informed by local intelligence, a Serious Youth Violence Rapid Health Needs Assessment, multi-agency engagement and the views of over 100 children and young people across Stockton-on-Tees.

The Strategy reflects a shared commitment from partners to reduce violence, address its root causes, strengthen protective factors and improve outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Serious youth violence remains a significant concern nationally and locally and has a profound impact on victims, families and communities. The Strategy provides the framework through which partners will work collectively to understand, prevent and respond to violence affecting children and young people aged 10-24.

The Strategy has been developed through extensive partnership working involving Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Cleveland Police, Public Health, Education, Youth Justice, Health providers, the Voluntary Sector and the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). It reflects local need and aligns with statutory responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty.

Recommendations

Cabinet/CMT is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031.
2. Endorse the vision, priorities and partnership approach outlined within the Strategy.
3. Support implementation of the annual Serious Youth Violence Delivery Plan.
4. Endorse the governance arrangements which place strategic oversight with the Youth Justice Management Board.

1. Detail

1.1 The Strategy establishes a long-term commitment to reducing serious youth violence through prevention, early intervention and coordinated multi-agency action. It recognises that serious youth violence is shaped by a range of factors including exploitation, poverty, adverse childhood experiences, educational exclusion, community influences and family circumstances. The Strategy adopts a public health approach that seeks to address these root causes rather than solely responding to incidents after they occur.

The Strategy has been informed by:

- The Serious Violence Duty
- The Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Rapid Health Needs Assessment.
- Local crime, safeguarding and partnership intelligence.
- Multi-agency workshops and strategic development sessions.
- Engagement with more than 100 children and young people aged 10-18 years.

1.2 The Strategy's vision is that by 2031 Stockton-on-Tees will be one of the safest places in the North East for children, young people and young adults aged 10-24. Partners are committed to reducing harm from serious youth violence, strengthening partnership intelligence, preventing entry into the criminal justice system, building resilience and improving the conditions that help children thrive.

Strategic Priorities

The Strategy is built around four key priorities:

2. Early Intervention and Prevention

2.1 Strengthening universal and targeted prevention activity through Youth Support Services, Family Hubs, the Holidays Are Fun Programme and the Youth United Stockton Alliance (YUSA). This aims to identify risk early, improve resilience and provide positive activities and trusted relationships for children and young people.

3. Deter, Disrupt and Divert

3.1 Delivering intelligence-led interventions to disrupt exploitation, reduce opportunities for violence and divert children away from offending behaviour. Activity includes Custody Navigators, the Youth Justice Turnaround Programme and targeted Youth Justice interventions for children involved in violence or knife crime.

4. Strengthening Family Support

4.1 Providing coordinated support for parents and carers through the Family Help Point, Early Help services and the Youth Justice Health Hub. The Strategy seeks to strengthen parenting capacity, improve wellbeing and equip families to identify and respond to risks associated with serious youth violence.

5. Improving Educational Support

5.1 Reducing exclusions, improving attendance and supporting educational achievement through Prevention Panels, partnership working with schools, targeted emotional wellbeing resources and improved access to education, training and employment opportunities.

5.2 The Strategy will be supported through an Annual Serious Youth Violence Delivery Plan which will set out specific actions, milestones, responsibilities and performance measures and will be reviewed annually.

6. Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

6.1 The Strategy is expected to have a positive impact on communities by reducing violence, improving safety, strengthening community confidence and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. It specifically recognises the relationship between deprivation, inequality and the risk factors associated with

serious youth violence and seeks to address these through targeted prevention and support.

- 6.2 The Strategy promotes equitable access to support services, positive activities, education and opportunities for children and young people who may be vulnerable to violence, exploitation or exclusion.

7. Corporate Parenting Implications

- 7.1 The Strategy has significant corporate parenting implications. Children in care and care experienced young people can be disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation, missing episodes, criminalisation and serious youth violence. The Strategy strengthens partnership approaches to safeguarding and improving outcomes for these children through coordinated intervention and support.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Delivery of the Strategy will primarily be achieved through existing services, programmes and partnership arrangements across Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Cleveland Police, Health, Education, Youth Justice and voluntary sector partners.
- 8.2 The Strategy also aligns with resources available through the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence, Public Health initiatives and existing early intervention programmes. There are no immediate additional financial implications arising directly from approval of the Strategy. Future resource requirements will be considered through the Annual Delivery Plan and existing governance arrangements.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Strategy supports compliance with the Serious Violence Duty and strengthens multi-agency arrangements for preventing and reducing serious youth violence. The Strategy contributes to statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding, crime prevention, public health and community safety.

10. Risk Assessment

- 10.1 The principal risks identified within the Strategy include:
- Continued increases in serious youth violence and knife crime.
 - Child criminal exploitation and organised criminal activity.
 - Educational exclusion and disengagement.
 - Emerging safeguarding risks affecting vulnerable young people.
 - Financial pressures impacting preventative services.
 - Failure to maintain effective partnership coordination and information sharing.

- The Strategy mitigates these risks through clear governance arrangements, multi-agency accountability, intelligence-led responses and annual delivery planning

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

- 11.1 The Strategy applies across all wards of Stockton-on-Tees.
- The Strategy has been developed through comprehensive consultation and engagement involving statutory partners, community organisations, schools, health agencies and over 100 children and young people aged 10-18 years. Their views and lived experiences have directly informed the priorities and actions contained within the Strategy.

Background Papers

Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031.

Youth Justice Plan 2026-27.

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Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy - 2026–2031







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Forword

From Majella McCarthy – Director of Children's Services



We are committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees are safe, nurtured and able to thrive. We recognise that serious youth violence is an increasing concern both nationally and locally, and that addressing it requires sustained early intervention, trusted relationships and resilient communities.

This is an ambitious five-year strategy, recognising that preventing and reducing serious youth violence is a long-term endeavour that will require consistent commitment, partnership working and system transformation over time. Meaningful change will not be achieved quickly; it requires a whole-system, public health approach that tackles root causes, strengthens protective factors and embeds prevention at every stage of a child's life.

The strategy sets out how we will work collectively to prevent and reduce serious youth violence through a public health, whole-system approach. It is informed by local evidence and shaped by the voices of children, young people, families and communities. It outlines our shared vision, principles and priorities, the Stockton-on-Tees needs profile, our key actions, and how progress and impact will be measured over time.

Our strong multi-agency partnership has worked collaboratively to target action to disrupt adults and organised crime groups who exploit children. This includes problem-solving approaches with Cleveland Police, Community Safety, Youth Justice, Education and the voluntary sector, with a particular focus on hotspot locations and areas of concern alongside safeguarding-led responses to protect children.

This is a dynamic and ambitious strategy, developed in line with the Serious Violence Duty. It will be underpinned by an annual delivery plan to ensure it remains responsive to emerging risks, learning and evidence. The delivery plan will be regularly reviewed by the Board, to ensure the strategy remains aligned with the Cleveland Violence Reduction Unit's overarching strategy and the wider priorities of Stockton-on-Tees, while maintaining a clear long-term focus on achieving sustained reductions in serious youth violence and improved outcomes for children and young people.

From Councillor – Clare Besford

Every child and young person in Stockton-on-Tees deserves to grow up safe, supported and able to look to the future with confidence. As Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, I welcome this Serious Youth Violence Strategy as an important statement of our shared determination to prevent harm, reduce inequality and ensure that every child has the best possible start in life.

The impact of serious youth violence reaches far beyond individual incidents. It can leave young people feeling unsafe, limit their confidence and opportunities, and place additional pressure on families who are working hard to protect and support their children. It also affects wider communities, creating fear, damaging trust and weakening the sense of belonging that is so important to strong neighbourhoods. Recognising this harm is why our response must be compassionate, urgent and focused on lasting change.

That lasting change starts from the belief that serious youth violence is not inevitable. It is shaped by the circumstances children experience, the opportunities available to them, and the strength of the relationships and communities around them. This is why the strategy rightly focuses on prevention, early help and partnership working. It recognises that fairness means acting early, listening to children and families, and targeting support where it can make the greatest difference.

Our ambition is for Stockton-on-Tees to be a place where background does not limit potential, where children feel safe in their homes, schools and communities, and where young people are supported to learn, thrive and achieve. By working together across education, health, police, youth justice, community safety and the voluntary sector, we can build the conditions that help children make positive choices and raise their aspirations for the future.

Welcome

Our Principles:

Welcome to the *Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026–2031*, which sets out how partners across the Borough will work together over the next five years to prevent and reduce serious youth violence and create safer communities for children, young people and families.

This strategy sets out our shared vision, ambitions and priorities for tackling serious youth violence through a whole-system, public health approach. It reflects our collective commitment to strengthening early intervention and prevention, addressing the underlying causes of violence, disrupting activity, supporting vulnerable children and families, and improving outcomes for children and young people across Stockton-on-Tees.

The strategy has been developed through extensive partnership working and co-production with organisations and individuals who share responsibility for safeguarding children and reducing violence. This includes:

- Children, young people and families
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Cleveland Police
- Safer Stockton Partnership
- Public Health
- Youth Justice Service
- Education providers, including schools and academies
- Health partners, including North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and NHS providers
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations
- Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV)

Partnership working and co-production are central to both the development and delivery of this strategy. No single organisation can prevent serious youth violence in isolation and meaningful change will only be achieved through sustained collaboration, shared accountability and a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

The strategy has been informed by the Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Needs Assessment, which brought together local data, intelligence and evidence from across health, education, voluntary services, police, youth justice, community safety and children's services. We also worked closely with partners through a series of multi-agency workshops, strategic development sessions and partnership discussions to identify and refine the priorities contained within this strategy.

The voices of children and young people have been at the heart of this work. More than 100 young people aged 10–18 shared their views, experiences and ideas about serious youth violence, safety and prevention. Their insights have strengthened our understanding of both the factors that contribute to violence and the protective factors that help keep children safe.

Together, this evidence, engagement and partnership collaboration have shaped a strategy that reflects what matters most to children, young people, families and communities whilst setting a clear direction for collective action over the next five years.



Source: Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Rapid Health Needs Assessment, May 2025

What our children told us:



The Vision

By 2031, partners across Stockton-on-Tees are collectively committed to making the borough one of the safest places in the North East for children, young people and young adults aged 10–24.

We will achieve this through a shared, whole-system approach that:

- Strengthens the protective conditions that enable children, families and communities to feel safe, supported and able to thrive
- Reduces the number of children and young people who experience or are affected by violence
- Prevents children and young people from entering and re-entering the criminal justice system

This vision has been shaped through partnership collaboration and informed by the voices of children, young people and communities. It reflects a collective commitment to sustained, evidence-informed action that addresses the root causes of harm, not just its consequences.

Our Goals:

- ✓ **Reduce harm from serious youth violence** - *We will reduce the number of children and young people who are victims of, or affected by, serious youth violence by strengthening prevention, identifying risk earlier and targeting support where it is most needed.*
- ✓ **We will strengthen partnership intelligence** - *We will strengthen partnership intelligence and continue to build on our Serious Violence Dashboard to monitor, evaluate and better understand the nature and impact of serious violence across our communities. The Dashboard is an interactive strategic digital tool that provides access to anonymised and restricted police and partnership data relating to the nature, scale and drivers of serious violence across the Cleveland Police Force area. This will enable us to better understand need, identify emerging risks and trends, target resources more effectively, and measure the impact of our interventions. By using high-quality data, research, partnership intelligence and the voices of children, young people and families with lived experience to drive continuous improvement, we will ensure services remain effective, evidence-informed and responsive to local need, leading to improved outcomes for children and young people.*
- ✓ **Prevent entry to and escalation within the justice system** - *We will strengthen early help and universal prevention by ensuring all children and young people understand the risks of violence and have access to timely support before harm occurs. This includes improving pathways into services and embedding prevention across education, youth provision and community settings.*
- ✓ **Strengthen the conditions that prevent harm** - *We will improve the protective factors that underpin positive outcomes, including school attendance, inclusion, attainment, emotional wellbeing and family stability, so that children and young people are supported to thrive.*

- ✓ **Build resilient children, families and communities** - *We will empower children, families and communities to play an active role in preventing violence. This includes building confidence, strengthening relationships, and increasing access to safe spaces, positive activities and trusted support networks.*

Our Priorities:

A substantial programme of work is already underway across the partnership. This strategy brings together existing activity aligned to each priority, alongside new and emerging workstreams to strengthen impact over time.

Our priorities are closely aligned with the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) and the Safer Stockton Partnership and are informed by the Stockton-on-Tees Rapid Needs Assessment. They have been shaped through engagement with the Youth Justice Management Board, partner agencies, practitioners, and the voices of children, young people and local communities.

Central to this approach is our commitment to co-production, ensuring children, parents, carers and communities are actively involved in shaping solutions. This includes recognising the importance of safe spaces, positive activities, meaningful opportunities and clear pathways into education, training and employment, ensuring our work reflects lived experience and delivers sustainable, positive change.

Our Four Priorities

Early Intervention and Prevention:

We will strengthen early, proactive and universal prevention and intervention so that children and young people receive the right support at the right time, before needs escalate and risks increase. This will be delivered through improved early identification, increased capacity across services, a strengthened universal youth offer, and coordinated multi agency action informed by high quality data, evaluation and community insight.

We will achieve this by:

- **Youth Support:** We will continue to provide targeted early help and prevention, offering timely and flexible interventions for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability, exploitation, missing episodes, anti-social behaviour and emerging risks of harm. Through strong relationship-based practice, targeted early help teams will undertake assessments, coordinate whole-family support, lead multi-agency planning and develop safety plans that strengthen protective factors and reduce risk.
- **Family Hubs:** We will continue to strengthen the Family Hub offer, providing accessible, community-based support for children, young people and families from pregnancy through to adulthood. Delivered in partnership with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, health providers and

voluntary sector organisations, Family Hubs will offer a wide range of activities, groups, advice, information and targeted support designed to promote positive family relationships, emotional wellbeing and resilience. By strengthening family stability, reducing isolation and building protective factors, the Family Hub network will play a key role in preventing escalation of need and improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- **Holiday Activities Fund:** We will continue to deliver the Holidays Are Fun (HAF) programme, providing enriching activities, healthy meals and positive experiences for children and young people during school holiday periods. Targeted primarily at children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals, the programme will help reduce inequalities, tackle holiday hunger and increase access to safe, supportive environments. Through a wide range of sport, creative, recreational and educational activities, HAF will promote physical and emotional wellbeing, strengthen social connections, build resilience and provide positive opportunities that help reduce vulnerability to exploitation, anti-social behaviour and serious youth violence.
- **YUSA:** We will continue to support and strengthen the Youth United Stockton Alliance (YUSA), bringing together key partners to deliver sustainable, high-quality open access youth provision across Stockton-on-Tees. Through a coordinated and community-based approach, YUSA will provide safe spaces, trusted relationships, positive activities and early intervention opportunities that build resilience and reduce vulnerability to exploitation, offending and serious youth violence. By aligning resources and delivering targeted support within youth settings, the Alliance will help identify and respond to emerging needs at the earliest opportunity, contributing to better outcomes for children and young people while reducing longer-term demand on public services and strengthening the local youth sector.

Deter, Disrupt and Divert:

We will work with partners to target and disrupt the pathways, behaviours and environments that enable serious youth violence, reducing opportunities for harm while increasing safety for children, young people and communities. This will be achieved through intelligence led, trauma informed and safeguarding focused approaches that identify and respond to emerging risks, exploitation, harmful peer influences and locations associated with violence. Strong multi agency partnership working, effective information sharing and timely intervention will be central to preventing escalation and protecting those most vulnerable to involvement in serious youth violence.

We will achieve this by:

- **Custody Navigators:** We will continue to provide Custody Navigators to ensure children and young people entering custody receive timely, trauma-informed support at a critical point. Navigators will provide emotional and practical assistance, support engagement with services, and work with partner agencies to inform sentence planning and early resettlement, with a focus on continuity

of care, maintaining family links where appropriate, and effective release planning to improve outcomes and reduce reoffending.

- **Youth Justice Turnaround Programme:** We will continue to deliver the Youth Justice Turnaround Programme, providing targeted, voluntary interventions for children arrested but not charged. The programme will offer timely, child-centred support to address the underlying causes of offending, including education, wellbeing, family circumstances and exploitation. Through early intervention, restorative and diversionary approaches, and multi-agency working, the programme aims to prevent escalation into the formal youth justice system and reduce further offending.
- **Youth Justice Team:** We will ensure the Youth Justice Team completes comprehensive, high-quality assessments for all children, including those arrested for knife possession, and deliver timely, mandatory interventions in line with statutory requirements. Interventions will be proportionate and trauma-informed, addressing factors such as exploitation, safeguarding risks, peer influence and unmet needs, with the aim of reducing reoffending and increasing safety for children and communities. Collate and utilise contemporary resources, including virtual-reality headsets, to support intervention work with children and maximise positive outcomes and impact.

Strengthening Family Support:

We will strengthen family support by providing effective, coordinated help to parents and carers facing challenges including mental health needs, substance misuse, poverty and difficult home circumstances, reducing risk and improving outcomes for children. We will also equip parents and carers with the knowledge and confidence to understand the risks of serious youth violence, recognise early warning signs, and play a key role in supporting and safeguarding their children.

We will achieve this by:

- **Family Help Point:** We have recently launched a new integrated Front Door to Children's Services, designed to ensure early identification of families' needs and swift access to the most appropriate support. Through this approach, we will ensure that families' needs are identified quickly and that they are connected to the right help at the earliest opportunity, enabling timely, coordinated intervention and preventing the escalation of need.
- **Providing an established offer of support:** Through our established Early Help services, we will continue to provide practical and emotional support to families. This support will focus on parenting, routines, healthy lifestyles and overall wellbeing, helping families to build resilience, address challenges early and improve outcomes for children.
- **Youth Justice Health Hub:** Through the Youth Justice Health Hub, we will provide timely CAMHS and Speech and Language Therapy screening and support for children working with the Youth Justice Team. This will support early identification of mental health needs and speech, language

and communication difficulties, enabling appropriate intervention, improved engagement and better outcomes for children.

- **Upskill the Workforce:** We will upskill the workforce across Children's Services, education, health, youth justice and partner agencies to strengthen our collective response to serious youth violence. This will include training to improve understanding of contextual safeguarding, exploitation, trauma, adolescent development and the drivers of violence, alongside building confidence in identifying early warning signs and responding effectively. A shared, trauma-informed approach will support practitioners to engage children and families in a consistent, strengths-based way, addressing risk while promoting protective factors. By strengthening skills, knowledge and professional collaboration, we will improve early identification, reduce escalation and deliver more effective, preventative support for children and young people at risk.

Improve Educational Support:

We will work across Children's Services and with our educational partners to reduce exclusions and improve attendance and engagement through strengthened educational support, trauma-informed practice and improved alternative pathways for excluded young people. This will include access to high-quality alternative provision, better system integration, and targeted tutoring and mentoring to ensure children and young people are supported to achieve their full potential.

We will achieve this by:

- **Prevention Panels:** We will introduce Prevention Panels within Stockton, utilising the SBC Education Attendance, Behaviour and Concerns (ABC) model to identify emerging issues early and ensure timely, proportionate intervention. These panels will incorporate cases where there has been no further action from Police and will be integrated within existing educational panels to consider all relevant factors and determine the most appropriate support. Working closely with schools and multi-academy trusts, this approach will reduce exclusions and improve school attendance and engagement through coordinated early help, improved system integration and targeted support for children and young people at risk.
- **Working in partnership and maximising resource:** Working with Cleveland Police Early Intervention Officers, schools and other organisations we will strengthen early identification and support for children at risk of serious youth violence. This will include contextual risk awareness, preventative and proportionate interventions, and the use of Pol-Ed resources to support education on personal safety, the law, healthy relationships and wellbeing, helping to reduce escalation and improve safety and outcomes.
- **Youth Support within Schools:** We will work with partners to develop targeted, age-appropriate emotional and life-skills resources for primary and secondary schools, supporting children and young people to build resilience, manage emotions and make safe, positive choices. Resources will

support emotional regulation, confidence, healthy relationships and decision-making, complement existing PSHE and wellbeing provision, and be informed by trauma-informed practice. Through early intervention, this approach will help prevent escalation of need and improve engagement and long-term outcomes.

- **Community Safety Partnership:** We will strengthen post-16 pathways by increasing access to education, training and employment opportunities for young people, particularly 16–17 year olds already known to services. This will include referrals to the Tees Valley Trailblazer scheme to support engagement in skills development, employment pathways and sustained progression. We will also deliver the *Skills to Success* pilot, providing targeted support to build employability skills, confidence and readiness for learning or work. Through coordinated partnership working, this approach will improve participation, reduce the risk of disengagement, and support positive transitions into adulthood.

We will achieve this by:

What success looks like

How will we measure this?

Success will be demonstrated through a sustained reduction in serious youth violence and improved safety, wellbeing and life chances for children and young people. Progress will be measured through a shared performance framework drawing on data from police, health, education, youth justice, safeguarding and community feedback.

Key measures will include:

- ❖ **Police:** A reduction in the number and rate of child and young person victims of violence; fewer knife enabled offences and weapons possession; and positive changes in hotspot and trend data.
- ❖ **Health:** Reduced A&E attendances and hospital admissions for assault and knife-related injuries among under-25s.
- ❖ **Youth Justice:** Fewer first-time entrants, reduced reoffending rates, appropriate use of out-of-court disposals, reduced custody levels, and improved disproportionality outcomes.
- ❖ **Education:** Improved attendance and reduced persistent absence; fewer suspensions and permanent exclusions; improved quality and outcomes within alternative provision; increased use of managed moves; and successful reintegration into mainstream education.
- ❖ **Safeguarding:** Reduced HOTH and child criminal exploitation referrals, fewer missing episodes, improved stability for looked-after children, and reduced exposure to domestic abuse.
- ❖ **Wellbeing and Perception:** Improved perceptions of safety and trust, measured through youth and parent/carer surveys, alongside positive school climate and wellbeing measures.

- ❖ **Participation and Progression:** Increased access to positive activities and improved engagement in education, employment or training, reflected in reduced NEET levels for 16–18 and 16–24 year olds.

This framework will support regular monitoring, learning and accountability, ensuring that our approach remains responsive and focused on achieving meaningful, long-term change.

Governance and Accountability

Strong governance arrangements are essential to ensure that the Serious Youth Violence Strategy is effectively implemented, regularly reviewed and delivers measurable outcomes for children, young people and communities across Stockton-on-Tees.

Overall governance and strategic oversight of this strategy will sit with the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), which will act as the lead partnership body responsible for monitoring delivery, scrutinising performance and ensuring partners fulfil their commitments. The YJMB brings together senior representatives from key statutory and voluntary sector agencies and is therefore well placed to provide oversight of the multi-agency response required to prevent and reduce serious youth violence.

The Board will maintain responsibility for:

- Strategic oversight of the Serious Youth Violence Strategy and associated delivery plan.
- Monitoring progress against agreed priorities, objectives and performance measures.
- Reviewing emerging risks, trends and intelligence relating to serious youth violence.
- Ensuring appropriate partnership engagement and accountability across agencies.
- Identifying barriers to delivery and agreeing corrective actions where required.
- Overseeing the use of resources and ensuring activities remain aligned to identified need and evidence-based practice.

Recognising that serious youth violence is a whole-system issue, governance arrangements will be aligned with existing partnership structures to avoid duplication and strengthen accountability. Progress against the strategy will be reported through the Safer Stockton Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board, ensuring that community safety, public health, safeguarding and wider wellbeing considerations are fully reflected in implementation. This reporting structure provides assurance that serious youth violence remains a strategic priority across the local partnership landscape.

The Serious Youth Violence Strategy is also reflected within the Youth Justice Plan, ensuring alignment with broader youth justice priorities and providing a clear line of accountability between strategic objectives and operational delivery.

Annual Delivery Plan

Delivery of the strategy will be supported by an Annual Serious Youth Violence Delivery Plan, which will set out the specific actions, milestones, responsibilities and performance measures for the forthcoming year. The annual plan will be reviewed and refreshed each year to ensure it continues to respond to local needs, emerging evidence, changing risk factors and the lived experiences of children and young people.

The annual delivery plan will:

- Identify lead agencies and named officers responsible for each action.
- Include measurable outputs and outcomes linked to the strategic priorities.
- Set clear timescales and milestones for delivery.
- Identify resource requirements and opportunities for joint commissioning.
- Reflect findings from local needs assessments, intelligence and performance data.
- Incorporate feedback from children, young people, families and communities.

**REPORT TO CABINET
17th SEPTEMBER 2026**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

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

FINANCIAL UPDATE AND MEDIUM- TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) – 2026/2027 Quarter 1

Summary

This report summarises the Council's financial performance and projected position at the end of the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

The Council continues to face expanding and emerging cost increases and demand pressures leading to greater costs and greater financial challenges. The quarter one budgetary control position identifies significant budget pressures across Council services, driven by a combination of increasing costs and continued demand for services. Based on activity to date and current intelligence, the most significant forecast pressures relate to Children's Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, and Community Services.

The forecast overspend of £5.8m against the approved revenue budget for the current financial year. The projected overspend represents a significant financial challenge that will need to be actively managed throughout the remainder of the year. Work is underway across services to identify mitigating actions and opportunities to reduce the forecast overspend and improve financial performance. If the forecast overspend materialises by the end of the financial year, it will be a further call on earmarked reserves, reducing the resources available to support existing commitments and placing further pressure on the Council's financial sustainability and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Council has developed a programme of transformation and savings through Phase 2 of the Powering Our Futures Programme to help address the underlying budget gap and support long-term financial sustainability. The budget report to Council in February identified a budget gap of £6.7m for the current financial year, this has successfully identified £5.3m so far, with work underway across the Council's Powering our Future's programme to identify the remaining savings.

Nevertheless, growing demand for council services and increases in service delivery costs are placing pressure on the budget for the current financial year, and are likely to place additional strain on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), increasing the budget gap and therefore the level of savings and efficiencies that will be required in future years. While these pressures are not unique to the Council and reflect challenges being experienced across the Local Government Sector, these factors both local and national reflect a significant financial challenge. Maintaining financial sustainability will require continued focus on robust financial management, delivery of transformation plans and timely corrective action.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To update Cabinet on the Council's financial performance and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Recommendations

1. That the update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
2. That the revised Capital Programme at Appendix C be noted.

Detail

FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

GENERAL FUND

3. The following table sets out the projected financial position for each Directorate in 2026/2027, based on information at 30 June 2026. A detailed breakdown of the budget is presented at Appendix A. Details of the key variances are described in subsequent paragraphs of the report.

Directorate	Annual Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Q1 Over/(Under)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	118,309	117,426	(883)
Children's Services	71,487	73,886	2,399
Children's Services - DSG 10% High Needs Stability Grant	0	1,520	1,520
Neighbourhood Services	55,028	58,156	3,128
Finance, Revenue, Benefits & Welfare	10,258	10,006	(252)
Corporate Services	19,485	19,575	90
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	3,758	3,473	(285)
Corporate Items	15,508	15,198	(310)
Total	293,833	299,240	5,407
Pay Offer	0	400	400
Revised Total	293,833	299,640	5,807

4. The projected financial position indicates significant pressure in the current financial year, primarily driven by inflationary cost increases and rising demand for services, resulting in expenditure exceeding budgets. The forecast overspend presents a

considerable financial challenge and will place further strain on both current and future years' budgets. All Directorates are actively exploring opportunities to reduce, defer, or avoid expenditure where possible to help mitigate the position. Performance against the budget within the current financial year, and impacts upon future year budgets across the medium term will continue to be closely monitored throughout the remainder of the year, with measures being implemented to improve the forecast.

5. However, delivering planned savings while maintaining existing service levels is becoming increasingly challenging in the current financial climate. This challenge is compounded by the significant medium-term budget gap already facing the Council, as identified in the budget-setting report approved by Council in February. Furthermore, the forecast in-year overspend is expected to place additional pressure on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), increasing the existing budget gap and, consequently, the level of savings and efficiencies that will be required in future years. The need to address both current-year budget pressures and substantial future funding gaps limits the Council's ability to absorb additional costs and reinforces the importance of identifying sustainable solutions to support long-term financial resilience.

REASONS FOR PROJECTED VARIANCE OVER £100,000

6. Detail of the variances against budgets exceeding £100,000 are noted below, and further detail is included at appendix A.

Adults, Health and Wellbeing

7. Based on information at quarter one, Adult Social Care placement budgets are not anticipated to generate any significant variances. However, as these figures are based on placements as at the end of June, demand pressures are usually experienced throughout the winter period which may impact upon these projections. This will continue to be monitored on a regular basis.
8. In June 2026, the UK Supreme Court handed down a landmark judgment which significantly changes how Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) are assessed. Understanding the impact of this ruling is still in early stages, but there may be significant savings, projected to be (£445,000). This position will be reviewed over the year.
9. There are anticipated to be savings across Adult Social Care due to staffing vacancies, leading to a projected underspend of (£292,000). However, recruitment is underway for critical posts within the services, so this is likely to reduce.

Children's Services

10. Members will recall the commentary on the pressures in previous reports and the investment in Children's Services across recent years, along side a wide ranging Transformation Programme of work.
11. The Children's Transformation Programme comprises several service improvement and demand management initiatives, one of which has been the implementation of the

Integrated Family Help Front Door in April 2026. Early evidence indicates that the new model is supporting a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, improving access to support for children and families at the earliest opportunity and strengthening partnership working across education, health, voluntary sector organisations and the Council.

12. Whilst it is too early to quantify any financial benefits arising from these changes, the emerging outcomes are positive and indicate the potential to reduce future demand for higher-cost statutory interventions. The increased use of Early Help provision, digital triage tools, Family Hubs and partner-led support is helping to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time through lower-cost community-based services, supporting the longer-term objective of delivering improved outcomes within a more sustainable and cost-effective service model.
13. The proposal to modernise the Fostering Service as part of the Transformation Review was approved by Cabinet in July 2025. The objective is to address the declining number of foster carers and the increasing number of children in external private provider care, to support better outcomes for children in our care, and help give them the best start in life. The proposal aims to build sufficiency within the mainstream fostering service by encouraging new foster carers, retaining existing ones, and meeting the diverse needs of children in care. The business case anticipates less reliance on costly external residential placements, therefore relieving pressure on the budget across the medium term.
14. The MTFP includes savings anticipated to accrue from the implementation of the business case, through moving children from external placements into mainstream fostering arrangements. Securing additional foster carers as an alternative to external residential is on-going and to date the projected savings have not yet materialised. This, accompanied with more children in external residential placements, at higher cost than anticipated, is leading to a projected overspend position on the external residential budget of £2.960m.
15. However, several children have been moved from an external Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) into a mainstream fostering arrangement, which generates a financial saving for the Council. There are anticipated to be savings across internal and external fostering budgets due to less children being supported in these placements than budget, projection at Q1 is (£510,000).
16. There are more children being supported in a connected foster care arrangement than anticipated in the budget, leading to a projected overspend position. However, work is on-going to identify children who could be supported under a Special Guardianship Order. The projected overspend across these budgets is £340,000 to the year end, however if more children can move across to Special Guardianship Orders this position will improve.
17. There is anticipated to be a savings against adoption allowances paid to adoptive parents in the financial year (£100,000).

18. The additional children in connected care arrangements are leading to staffing pressures within the Family Placement Team, equating to an estimate of £120,000. This is offset with staffing vacancies across the safeguarding teams (£120,000).
19. Recruitment of Education Psychologists continues to be a challenge and is a recognised national issue for Local Authorities, with continued reliance on use of external professionals to deliver assessments. Additional budget was provided within the 2026/2027 MTFP, however the budget is projected to be overspent by a further £102,000.
20. Reviewing of grants and availability of one-off resources continues to be a key focus of work across the Council. This has identified (£291,000) of one-off resources to mitigate the Children's Services position. Also grant has been awarded to support Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring which was not budgeted and will lead to a saving of (£100,000).

Children's Services – Dedicated Schools Grant

21. 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. These costs are met by the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is accounted for in a separate ring-fenced account.
22. Earlier this year, the Government announced changes to the arrangements for funding Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits. Under the proposed arrangements, local authorities may be eligible for a Sustainability Grant of up to 90% of their cumulative DSG deficit as at 31 March 2026, subject to meeting specified grant conditions. In recognition of the uncertainty surrounding the final level of support, the Council prudently set aside funding at the 2025/26 outturn to meet its anticipated 10% contribution towards the historic deficit.
23. The Council has submitted its SEND Local Area Reform Plan and is awaiting the outcome of the Department for Education's assessment, including confirmation of the level of Sustainability Grant funding that may be awarded. In addition, further Government announcements are expected later in the year regarding the long-term funding arrangements and accounting treatment for existing and future DSG deficits. Pending this clarification, it is considered prudent to continue providing for 10% of any in-year DSG deficit, consistent with the approach adopted by many other local authorities. This provision helps mitigate financial risk and ensures that any future liability can be accommodated within the Council's medium-term financial planning assumptions.
24. The overall DSG is forecast to show an in year overspend of £15.2m, we are therefore assuming £1.52m will be required to be funded in the current financial year. There is more detail on the reasons for the forecast overspend later in this report.

Neighbourhood Services

25. Waste – the council implemented a new waste collection service in April in line with the introduction of the Simpler Recycling legislation and statutory weekly food waste

collections. This is a fundamental change in the way waste was collected and required a major change to the service operations, following a scrutiny review in 2024.

26. The new model has reduced the volume of residual waste sent for disposal through incineration and landfill, generating cost savings. While the service remains in the early stages of implementation, initial data indicates that tonnage reductions are exceeding expectations. As a result, disposal costs are forecast to be lower than anticipated, with projected savings of £700,000 by year-end. However, these figures are based on early data and will need to be monitored over a longer period before a steady-state position can be confirmed.
27. The projected income from the selling of recyclable materials is significantly down on budget to date, due to international factors affecting the resale value of recyclable materials, leading to a forecast deficit of £400,000 against the projected income target by year end.
28. The income from the green waste bins has not grown in line with the financial model and as such there is forecast to be a £300,000 shortfall against this area.
29. The new waste collection model is still in the early phase of roll out, and more time will be required to monitor participation levels. In order to ensure kerbside collection is met in respect of recycling, additional waste collection rounds have been required to meet demand. This has resulted in additional costs and therefore the cost of collection is currently projected to be £942,000 higher than the original modelling and budget.
30. Work is ongoing across departments to understand the current position and identify ways to mitigate the projected financial pressures. The service is undertaking a deep dive review and this will be reported to a future Cabinet meeting.
31. The vehicles budget is forecast to overspend by £1.1m. This is primarily because of an increased number of vehicles being hired to meet the increased uptake of recycling and food waste, amounting to £750,000 of the projected overspend. Alongside this, the conflict in the Middle East is driving an increase in the costs of fuel across the country.
32. Income from the crematorium is below that currently budgeted, £100,000. Work is ongoing to understand what opportunities there are to drive this and address the shortfall.
33. Home to School transport continues to see significant financial pressures, and these are intrinsically linked to the drivers of the DSG deficit outlined elsewhere in this report. The main drivers of this are a growth in young people requiring passenger assistants and increased costs of external buses and taxis. These are currently forecast to generate a pressure of £628,000.
34. The catering service continues to experience financial pressures due to the increase in food costs and rising staffing costs. Whilst significant work has been undertaken to address this since the previous financial year, including price increases, there is still expected to be a £226,000 pressure on this service in 2026-27.

35. Within the transport service there is an increased cost in the Concessionary Fares service from £3.7m to £4.0m for 2026-27, thus adding a £300,000 pressure to the Council. This scheme is delivered by the TVCA who undertake negotiations with the main operators on behalf of the Tees Valley authorities.

Finance, Revenue, Benefits & Welfare

36. There are anticipated to be significant savings across the Directorate due to staffing vacancies, leading to a projected underspend of (£252,000).

Corporate Services

37. Legal Services is projecting a net overspend of £247,000, driven by factors outside the service's direct control. Case volumes and complexity relating to Children's Services have increased significantly this year, requiring greater use of external specialist legal advice and representation from counsel, together with associated court and ancillary costs. This has created a gross pressure of £447,000, partially offset by £200,000 of staffing vacancy savings, reducing the net position to £247,000.
38. There are anticipated to be savings within the Procurement and Governance Service due to staffing vacancies, leading to a projected underspend of (£140,000).

Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

39. There is an anticipated underspend of (£476,000), mainly driven by ensuring the continued efficient use of grants together with savings from vacant posts. This is partially offset by pressures arising from income shortfalls and additional costs associated with held assets £157,000

Corporate Items

40. Treasury Management (AMRA) costs have been reviewed. The Council is currently benefiting from an improved position in the short term. The Council has retained a higher level of cash balances than originally anticipated and is benefiting from investment interest earned on these. This is mainly due to reprofiling of the capital programme and interest rates remaining at a higher rate than originally forecast, resulting in savings against budget of (£270,000). This continues to be subject to volatility in interest rates.

Pay Offer 2026/2027

41. The pay award for 2026/27 for employees on National Joint Council (inc. Chief Officers) terms and conditions has been agreed with the trade unions. The terms of the pay award are that all employees will receive an increase of 3.3%. This will be paid to employees as part of their September salary. The MTFP for 2026/27 included a provision at 3%, therefore the additional amount above this has resulted in a budget pressure of £400,000.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

42. 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.
43. 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 on 31 March 2026 was £17.134m.
44. 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. 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.
45. If the reform plan is approved and all other conditions are met, then the authority will receive a Stability Grant payment of £15.4m in the autumn of 2026. Local authorities must meet the cost of the residual 10%. In preparing the year-end financial position, the positive movement across directorate budgets enabled sufficient funding to be identified to set aside the required 10% (£1.7m) in reserves, avoiding the requirement to identify further savings.
46. There is a statutory override in place until 31st March 2028, meaning that any on the DSG is accounted for separately within an unusable reserve within the Council's accounts.
47. Members will recall that the budget setting report in February 2026 allocated £500,000 per year to meet the costs of servicing the financing of the accrued deficit. The Council will still incur these costs until the stability grant is approved and paid, therefore the allocation of £500,000 for the current financial year is still anticipated to be needed. This will continue to be monitored, alongside government announcements relating to current and future year deficits, and any variation to the existing financial plans will be reflected in future MTFP reports.
48. The table below summarises the estimated year-end financial position for the DSG budget. This shows an in-year overspend on the High Needs Block of £15.2m. There have not been any announcements from the government associated with grant funding 2026/27 deficits but if they do apply the same criteria then the Council will need to find the remaining 10% which would equate to £1.52m.

Dedicated Schools Grant 2026/27	Annual Budget £'000	Quarter 1 Projection £'000	Variance £'000
DSG Expenditure			
Schools Block	184,877	184,877	0
Central Schools Block	1,479	1,479	0
Early Years Block	37,533	37,533	0
High Needs Block	46,972	62,169	15,197
Total DSG Expenditure	270,861	286,058	15,197
DSG Funding	(270,861)	(270,861)	0
In-year deficit	0	15,197	15,197
DfE Stability Grant			
Cumulative Unusable Reserve at 31/03/2026 (DSG Deficit)			17,134
Estimated DfE Stability Grant (90%)			(15,421)
Estimated SBC contribution required to offset deficit (10%)			(1,713)
In-year deficit 2026/27 (as above)			15,197
Estimated DfE Stability Grant (Assumption 90% but not confirmed)			(13,677)
Estimated SBC contribution required to 2026/27 deficit (10%)			(1,520)

49. Details of significant variances against budget estimated to occur during the 2026/27 financial year are:

- Independent Special School placements – £5.15m overspend expected as numbers are still increasing along with fee increases.
- £0.503m additional high needs place recoupment costs expected relating to new ARP/SEN Units.
- £0.220m anticipated overspend relating to tutoring support costs with external providers.
- £0.460m overspend expected on additional top-ups/exceptional payments to maintained schools.
- Academy High Needs top-up funding - £4.4m overspend expected. Funding to support new ARP/SEN Units. Expected exceptional payments and further top-ups/additional payments to SBC mainstream schools and SBC Special Academies.
- Out of area schools (not independent) - £3.6m overspend expected. Number of places still increasing. Currently 177 placements although the budget was based on 138.

- Post-16 top-ups - £0.460m overspend expected. Increase in number/cost of post-16 high needs pupils, including some agreed exceptional payments to an SBC Special Academy.
- Alternative Provision - £0.250m overspend expected on tuition costs and additional top-up funding relating for pupils, who due to exclusion, illness, or other circumstances would not receive suitable education. Numbers of children being excluded continues to rise.

Powering Our Futures – Transformation Reviews

50. The Council's Powering our Futures programme is well established, and work is progressing across the large transformation mission, resulting in savings or additional income to address the budget gap. The transformation reviews are focusing on day-to-day efficiencies, alongside Outcome based Reviews and cross council transformation. This approach aims to balance continuous improvement in services ensuring they 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 alongside the need for decisive and immediate financial savings.

51. Several reports have been presented to cabinet this financial year, detailing the progress of the reviews and the impact upon the MTFP to date. The current position is reflected in the table below:

Date of Report	Title of Report	Savings Identified 26/27 £	Savings Identified 27/28 £	Savings Identified 28/29 £
	Budget Gap (February 2026)	6,700,000	13,775,000	18,365,000
14 th May 2026	Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update	(2,974,000)	(2,364,000)	(2,364,000)
14 th May 2026	Yarm Levelling Up Fund – Reconsideration of Decision following Call-in	(1,015,000)	(65,000)	(65,000)
16th July 2026	Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update	(1,231,000)	(1,091,000)	(1,091,000)
	Total Savings Identified to date	(5,220,000)	(3,520,000)	(3,520,000)
	Remaining Budget Gap	1,480,000	10,255,000	14,845,000

52. The table above shows that the programme has identified £5.2m of savings in 26/27, with work underway to identify the remaining £1.5m. The revised budget gap for 2027/28 is now £10.3m and £14.8m in 2028/29. This is prior to any updates required to the MTFP from 2027/28 onwards reflecting factors such as cost inflation, increased demand for services and government funding.

53. The Council continues to face a highly challenging financial position. Should the projected quarter one forecast overspends materialise at year end, it will place additional pressure on future years' budgets alongside the existing and significant medium-term budget gap. The widening gap between available funding and forecast expenditure is not sustainable, and reliance on reserves to support recurring expenditure cannot be considered a long-term solution.
54. The Council's transformation programme, service reviews and efficiency initiatives, including Phase 2 of the Powering Our Futures Programme, will continue to play a critical role in addressing these financial pressures. However, the scale of the challenge means that further action and difficult decisions are likely to be required and delivered at pace, to ensure the Council achieves a balanced and sustainable financial position over the medium term, while continuing to deliver essential services and support for local communities

General Fund Balances and Earmarked Reserves

55. The Council's General Fund balances and earmarked reserves are reviewed regularly as part of the budget monitoring and Medium-Term Financial Planning process. Members will recall that recent reports have highlighted the critical importance of maintaining adequate reserves and balances in ensuring the Council's financial resilience and ability to manage unforeseen financial risks. The Council's earmarked reserves have reduced steadily over several years, largely as a consequence of funding budget overspends and supporting service delivery in a period of sustained financial challenge.
56. The reserves strategy approved by Council as part of the budget setting report in February established a clear plan to rebuild earmarked reserves and General Fund balances to a more sustainable level over the life of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This approach was reflected within the approved 2026/27 budget and indicative MTFP and was intended to strengthen the Council's financial resilience and capacity to respond to future risks and pressures.
57. If the forecast overspend for 2026/27 materialises by year end, this will need to be funded. As outlined above, significant work is underway across all Directorates and the senior leadership team to mitigate the financial pressures currently being experienced. However, given the scale of the projected overspend, it is likely that there will remain a requirement to draw upon reserves to fund part of the in-year budget deficit should the current forecast materialise at year end.
58. Any additional use of reserves would further exacerbate an already challenging reserves position and would reduce the Council's ability to respond to future financial risks and unforeseen events. Any in-year use of reserves will therefore need to be carefully considered and reflected as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process and future revisions to the MTFP.

59. The table in Appendix B provides an updated projection of the Council's reserve balances across the Medium-Term Financial Plan period. The opening balance of earmarked reserves at the start of 2026/27 was £27.469m. Planned contributions to reserves as per the MTFP report and planned reserve usage are anticipated to lead to reserves balances of £22.153m by the end of the financial year. The Council's reserves are earmarked to fund existing service delivery and commitments, redirecting them to support the MTFP will result in ceasing service activity and weakened financial resilience. Should the current forecast overspend materialise, this would reduce reserves to £16.346m, by the end of the financial year. This is materially below the reserve levels assumed when the budget was approved in February and is not considered sustainable over the medium term. Consequently, action will be required through future budget-setting and transformation activity to restore reserve balances to an appropriate level.
60. A comprehensive review of earmarked reserves is currently underway to reassess existing commitments, ensure reserve provisions remain aligned to current risks and priorities, and identify any opportunities to release or repurpose funding. Whilst this work may provide some limited flexibility to support the Council's financial position, the underlying budget challenge remains significant and cannot be addressed through reserves alone. Sustainable recurring solutions will be required to secure a balanced budget and support the replenishment of reserves over the medium term

Medium Term Financial Plan Outlook

61. The in-year projected position for the current financial year provides important intelligence to inform and predict matters which may impact upon future years' budgets and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The financial pressures currently being experienced across several service areas are likely to have longer-term implications for the Council's financial sustainability and may require a reassessment of future funding requirements, savings targets and service delivery models.
62. When the indicative MTFP was approved by Council in February, it included provision for growth across several services to reflect known and anticipated cost pressures. The largest areas with existing budget growth allocations within the MTFP are Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and pay awards. Work is ongoing to understand the longer-term impact of the current year's financial projections on future budgets and to assess whether existing growth assumptions remain sufficient.
63. In addition, the Council's financial planning assumptions will need to be reviewed in light of recent national announcements, including the business rates reconciliation, which have demonstrated the potential for changes in funding levels and resource allocation. Further announcements are expected as part of the Autumn Budget and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, the outcomes of which may have a significant impact on the Council's future financial position and medium-term planning assumptions. These announcements will be carefully assessed as further information becomes available and reflected in future MTFP update reports.

64. The Council continues to face a highly challenging financial position, with current and emerging budget pressures expected to have implications for both the current year and the medium-term financial outlook. Phase 2 of the Powering Our Futures Programme will continue with a renewed focus on identifying and delivering timely and sustainable solutions to address the Council's financial challenges and improve long-term financial resilience. This will require continued emphasis on transformation, service redesign, delivery at pace, efficiency improvements and robust financial management to ensure the Council can achieve a balanced and sustainable financial position over the medium term whilst continuing to deliver essential services and support for local communities.

CAPITAL

65. The Capital Programme is summarised below and shown at **Appendix C**.

Capital Programme up to 2030	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Changes @ 30/06/26	Revised Capital Programme	Prior year spend	Capital Programme 26/27	Capital Programme 27/28	Capital Programme 28/29	Capital Programme 29/30	External (Grants & Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)
At 30/06/26	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	6,808	6,340	3,024	9,363	1,813	3,961	1,717	264	1,607	(7,736)	-	(1,628)
Children's Services	21,355	28,455	705	29,160	8,378	12,426	6,031	2,325	-	(27,736)	(734)	(690)
Neighbourhood Services	53,593	38,420	(251)	38,169	12,503	16,125	7,622	1,919	-	(22,422)	(12,220)	(3,527)
Finance, Revs, Bens & Welfare	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corporate Services	900	658	-	658	658	-	-	-	-	-	-	(658)
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	158,845	152,572	(888)	151,684	62,367	47,987	33,168	500	7,663	(99,942)	(46,769)	(4,973)
Corporate Items	19,350	18,616	-	18,616	-	616	6,000	6,000	6,000	-	(18,616)	-
Total Approved Capital MTFP	260,852	245,061	2,590	247,651	85,719	81,115	54,538	11,008	15,270	(157,836)	(78,339)	(11,476)

66. The capital programme has increased by £2.59m from £245.061m to £247.651m since the Outturn report to Cabinet in July 2026. The table below shows the changes between financial years. Further detail in respect of all changes covering, re-profiling of schemes, additions and virements on a scheme by scheme basis are shown in appendix C.

Capital Programme up to 2030	Prior years	Capital Programme 26/27	Capital Programme 27/28	Capital Programme 28/29	Capital Programme 29/30	Total Capital Programme	External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)
At 30/06/26	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	85,719	94,944	43,358	21,039	-	245,061	(153,940)	(78,339)	(12,782)
Changes @ 30/06/26	-	(13,829)	11,180	(10,031)	15,270	2,590	(3,896)	-	1,306
Revised Programme @ 30/06/26	85,719	81,115	54,538	11,008	15,270	247,651	(157,836)	(78,339)	(11,476)

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

67. 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

68. None

Financial Implications

69. The report updates on the financial position for 2026/27 based on information for the first quarter of the financial year.

Legal Implications

70. There are no specific legal implications.

Risk Assessment

71. The report provides an update to Members on projected year end position for 2026/2027, based on information at 30 June 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)

72. N/A

Background Papers

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

74. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Outturn March 2026 16 July 2026

Name of Contact Officer: Clare Harper

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Appendix A

Directorate	Annual Budget	Projected Outturn	June Q1 Variance Over/(Under)	Comment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Directorate Wide - Adults, Health & Wellbeing	931	888	(43)	Staffing vacancies
Adult Services	11,234	10,985	(249)	Staffing vacancies
Direct Payments	11,912	11,943	31	Lower clients than budget receiving Learning Disability Direct Payment
Residential & Nursing Placements	38,458	38,368	(90)	Lower clients than budget in a Learning Disability residential placement
Commissioned Homecare	21,703	21,643	(60)	Lower clients than budget receiving MH homecare. Saving offset in part due to two new high-cost packages for young people transitioning from Children's services.
Social Care Management	9,030	8,585	(445)	DoLs assessments reduced following UK Supreme Court judgement
Public Health	16,053	16,053	0	
Community Safety & Regulated Services	4,177	4,177	0	
Housing & Fairer Stockton	4,811	4,784	(27)	Staffing vacancies
TOTAL - Adults, Health & Wellbeing	118,309	117,426	(883)	

Directorate Wide - Children's Services	(928)	(1,219)	(291)	Ongoing review of grants and availability of one-off resources has identified one-off funds to mitigate the Children's Services position.
CIOC & Care Leavers	8,842	8,962	120	Staffing pressures in the Family Placement Teams
SBC Childrens Homes	6,278	6,345	67	Staffing overspends
Special Guardianship	2,525	2,305	(220)	Lower SGO placements than budget.
Connected Persons	2,870	3,390	520	Significantly more placements than budge.
External Residential	19,150	22,110	2,960	Continued increases in the cost of external residential placements as well as escalating needs, requiring greater levels of care.
SBC Fostering	2,965	2,635	(330)	Several children have been moved from an external Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) into a mainstream fostering arrangement, which generates a financial saving for the Council
External Fostering	5,400	5,220	(180)	
SBC Adoption Costs	850	750	(100)	There is anticipated to be a savings against allowances paid to adopters in the financial year
Safeguarding	8,708	8,556	(152)	Staffing vacancies
Early Help, Youth Justice & Youth Support	4,729	4,609	(120)	Staffing vacancies and additional grant Income for Family finding, befriending and mentoring programme awarded
Education, Inclusion & Achievement	7,114	7,259	145	Recruitment to Education Psychologists is a major issue alongside several other local authorities. External professionals used to deliver assessments
Children's Strategy & Commissioning	637	637	0	
Practice Development	1,304	1,224	(80)	Staffing vacancies

Quality & Improvement	1,043	1,103	60	Staffing overspends
TOTAL - Children's Services	71,487	73,886	2,399	
Directorate Wide – Neighbourhood Services	127	127	0	
Community Services & Transport	16,405	16,146	(259)	Staffing vacancies and additional highways income
Waste	10,772	11,714	942	Staffing overspends due to higher participation levels than originally anticipated following implementation of new waste collection service
Bereavement Registrars Crematorium	(849)	(749)	100	Shortfall in income, predominantly in relation to the crematorium.
Community Transport	8,610	9,238	628	Growth in young people requiring passenger assistants and increased costs of external buses and taxis
Vehicle Services	5,055	6,155	1,100	The vehicles budget is forecast to overspend due to increased vehicle hire requirements to meet growing recycling and food waste demand, together with higher fuel costs.
Catering	(112)	114	226	The catering service continues to face cost pressures from higher food prices
Transport	3,742	4,103	361	Higher concessionary fares costs, resulting from increased scheme charges set by TVCA.
Culture, Libraries & Events	4,748	4,772	24	Minor variances
Environment & Leisure	2,942	2,942	0	

Customer Services	1,167	1,173	6	Minor variances
Digital Services	2,421	2,421	0	
TOTAL - Neighbourhood Services	55,028	58,156	3,128	
Directorate Wide - Finance, Revenue, Benefits & Welfare	(628)	(628)	0	
Finance Services	1,774	1,705	(69)	Staffing vacancies
Revenues, Benefits, Welfare & Admin	9,112	8,929	(183)	Staffing vacancies
TOTAL - Finance, Revenue, Benefits & Welfare	10,258	10,006	(252)	
Directorate Wide - Corporate Services	186	193	7	Minor Variances
Legal Services	2,243	2,490	247	Increased use of external barristers and associated court costs. higher volume of cases and increased complexity relating to Children's Services cases. Offset in part by staffing vacancies
Communications	1,345	1,304	(41)	Staffing Vacancies
Procurement & Governance	4,452	4,312	(140)	Staffing Vacancies
People & OD Service	1,614	1,631	17	Minor Variances
Democratic Services	1,781	1,781	0	

Strategic Planning & Performance	1,855	1,855	0	
Stockton ICT & Xentrall	6,009	6,009	0	
TOTAL - Corporate Services	19,485	19,575	90	
Directorate Wide - Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	56	77	21	Minor variances
Inclusive Growth & Development	2,262	1,943	(319)	Additional income from efficient charging into grants offset by income shortfalls and additional costs associated with held assets
Town Centre Investment	31	44	13	Small shortfall in markets income
Planned Maintenance	1,409	1,409	0	
TOTAL - Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	3,758	3,473	(285)	
Corporate Items	15,508	15,198	(310)	The Council has retained a higher level of cash balances than anticipated and is benefiting from investment interest earned. Other minor savings anticipated.
Pay Offer	0	400	400	Pay Award Expected at 3.3% (Provision 3%)
DSG 10% High Needs Stability Grant Shortfall	0	1,520	1,520	Forecast overspend £15.2m in-year; assuming 90% Government SEND Stability Grant contribution, the remaining 10%, £1.52m would need to be funded by the Council.
TOTAL - Corporate Items	15,508	17,118	1,610	
TOTAL	293,833	299,640	5,807	

Appendix B

Earmarked Reserves	Opening Balance 26/27	Forecast Movement 26/27	Forecast Closing Bal 26/27	Forecast Movement 27/28	Forecast Closing Bal 27/28	Forecast Movement 28/29	Forecast Closing Bal 28/29	Forecast Movement 29/30	Forecast Closing Bal 29/30
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Scheme Reserves	(5,297)	4,337	(959)	800	(159)	0	(159)	158	(1)
Insurance Fund	(4,517)	274	(4,243)	0	(4,243)	0	(4,243)	0	(4,243)
Service Development & Improvement	(2,019)	1,610	(409)	111	(298)	111	(186)	86	(100)
Partnership / Statutory Reserves	(2,142)	587	(1,555)	1,228	(327)	280	(47)	47	(1)
Transformation & Implementation	(4,759)	720	(4,039)	445	(3,594)	31	(3,563)	(92)	(3,655)
MTFP Support Reserve	(1,063)	(3,000)	(4,063)	(3,000)	(7,063)	(3,000)	(10,063)	(3,000)	(13,063)
DSG Deficit Support Reserve	(1,700)	0	(1,700)	1,700	0	0	0	0	0
Pooled Funds and Interest Rate Risk	(1,000)	0	(1,000)	0	(1,000)	1,000	0	0	0
PFI Scheme Liability	(1,420)	161	(1,259)	292	(967)	146	(821)	521	(300)
Public Health Reserve	(756)	627	(129)	71	(58)	58	(0)	0	(0)
Schools Related Reserves	(2,795)	0	(2,795)	500	(2,295)	500	(1,795)	500	(1,295)
Total	(27,469)	5,316	(22,153)	2,147	(20,006)	(874)	(20,879)	(1,780)	(22,660)
General Fund	(8,000)	(1,000)	(9,000)	(1,000)	(10,000)	(1,000)	(11,000)	(1,000)	(12,000)

Appendix C

Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Financial Year 26/27					27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
			Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26					
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING												
Independent Living - Adults with Learning Disabilities	202,000	45,459	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	156,551	202,010	45,459
Affordable Housing	910,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	910,000	910,000	-
Victoria Estate Regeneration	540,514	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	540,514	540,514	-
Homeowner Improvement Loan	267,984	20,196	247,788	(199,164)	-	1,376	50,000	199,164	-	-	269,360	20,196
Disabled Adaptations	2,890,486	1,725,115	1,165,371	(828,749)	-	2,476,854	2,813,476	828,749	-	-	5,367,340	1,890,260
Accelerated Affordable Housing Delivery - SBC site redevelopment	150,000	22,514	127,486	-	-	-	127,486	-	-	-	150,000	67,406
Accelerated Affordable Housing Delivery - Property Acquisition	1,378,905	-	531,006	158,446	-	-	689,452	689,453	-	-	1,378,905	-
Local Authority Housing Fund 4	-	-	-	(264,402)	-	545,304	280,902	-	264,402	-	545,304	-
Local Authority Housing Fund 3	468,490	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING	6,808,379	1,813,284	2,071,651	(1,133,869)	-	3,023,534	3,961,316	1,717,366	264,402	1,607,065	9,363,433	2,023,321

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			Narrative
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	
£'s	£'s	£'s	
(202,010)	-	-	
-	-	(910,000)	
-	-	(540,514)	
(92,324)	-	(177,036)	£199,164 has been slipped to 27/28 based on current loan requirements.
(5,367,340)	-	-	Grant funding for Disabled Facilities has been included in the programme, £2,319,668 for 26/27 and £149,280 relating to the additional grant allocated at the end of 25/26. £828,749 has been slipped to 27/28 based on current information. This will be updated at Q2 26/27.
(150,000)	-	-	
(1,378,905)	-	-	Slipped £158,446 from 27/28 to 26/27; this will cover the set up costs and initial purchase of properties for the scheme.
(545,304)	-	-	Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4 has been awarded to the authority, £545,304 grant funding has been added to the programme. The funding will be used to support the purchase of 6 properties to deliver affordable housing with a delivery partner. This is a multi year scheme that ends in 29/30.
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
(7,735,883)	-	(1,627,550)	

Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Financial Year 26/27					27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
			Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26					
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
CHILDRENS SERVICES												
School Planned Maintenance	2,252,127	-	1,196,337	(704,984)	-	704,984	1,196,337	704,984	-	-	1,901,321	13,682
Oxbridge Primary	8,238,000	7,033,990	1,204,010	-	-	-	1,204,010	-	-	-	8,238,000	7,406,889
St John the Baptist Primary School	5,555,058	757,344	4,650,920	-	-	-	4,650,920	-	-	-	5,408,264	1,096,751
Mill Lane Primary School	1,700,000	82,559	1,617,441	-	-	-	1,617,441	-	-	-	1,700,000	164,945
Northfield School & Sports College	1,250,000	25,535	1,224,465	-	-	-	1,224,465	-	-	-	1,250,000	31,985
Bishopton Pru	-	8,327	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,327	8,327
Secondary School Adaptations - St Michael's	-	2,801	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,801	2,801
SEND Higher Needs Capital Provision	-	-	2,334,644	(2,325,000)	-	-	9,644	2,325,000	2,325,000	-	4,659,644	-
Assistive Technology Lending Libraries	31,525	18,818	12,707	-	-	-	12,707	-	0	-	31,525	23,112
Schools Unallocated Programme Contingency	592,827	0	600,000	-	-	-	600,000	-	-	-	600,000	-
Basic Need Grant Capital Provision	114,609	-	3,001,268	(3,001,268)	-	-	-	3,001,268	-	-	3,001,268	-
Preston Primary School	385,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ash Trees Satellite at Billingham South	5,177	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Durham Lane SEN Toilets	14,469	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Childcare Expansion Fund	406,788	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Children's Homes - Edge of Care	655,641	335,524	320,117	-	-	-	320,117	-	-	-	655,641	350,224
Children's Carer extensions/ adaptation works	153,521	112,688	123,355	-	-	-	123,355	-	-	-	236,043	127,927
Children's Homes - Complex Dual	-	-	733,570	-	-	-	733,570	-	-	-	733,570	-

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
(1,901,321)	-	-	Grant funding for Schools Capital Maintenance for 26/27 has been added to the programme, £704,984, this funding will be used for additional works in year or the 27/28 programme.
(8,238,000)	-	-	
(5,408,264)	-	-	
(1,700,000)	-	-	
(1,250,000)	-	-	
(8,327)	-	-	
(2,801)	-	-	
(4,659,644)	-	-	Programme to be refined and presented to Cabinet later this year, linked to local area reform plan priorities
(31,525)	-	-	
(600,000)	-	-	
(3,001,268)	-	-	Programme to be refined and presented to Cabinet later this year, linked to local area reform plan priorities
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
(201,412)	-	(454,229)	
-	-	(236,043)	
(366,785)	(366,785)	-	

Children's Homes - Complex, Solo	-	-	733,570	-	-	-	733,570	-	-	-	733,570	-	(366,785)	(366,785)	-	
TOTAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES	21,354,742	8,377,586	17,752,404	(6,031,252)	-	704,984	12,426,136	6,031,252	2,325,000	-	29,159,974	9,226,642	(27,736,132)	(733,570)	(690,272)	

Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Financial Year 26/27					27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
			Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26					
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES												
Integrated Transport	852,967	-	1,292,088	-	(60,000)	5,241	1,237,329	-	-	-	1,237,329	41,421
Carriageways	2,374,747	-	1,824,334	-	(21,849)	2,395	1,804,880	-	-	-	1,804,880	489,198
Bridges	523,251	-	880,000	-	60,600	-	940,600	-	-	-	940,600	42,175
Structural Maintenance	567,941	-	559,551	-	21,249	-	580,800	-	-	-	580,800	133,451
Other	3,666,632	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eaglescliffe Station New Car park & Access	3,065,508	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newport Bridge	2,171,152	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
A689 Hanzard Drive Feasibility	460,640	460,640	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	460,640	460,640
Strategic Urban Expansion - West Stockton	3,655,105	128,586	3,389,311	-	-	-	3,389,311	-	-	-	3,517,897	139,372
Cycleway feasibility and design - Norton Road	450,000	433,776	16,224	-	-	-	16,224	-	-	-	450,000	433,776
A19/A689 Interchange Improvements (feasibility)	660,000	660,758	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	660,758	660,758
A19/A689 Interchange Improvements (construction)	4,500,000	-	4,500,000	(3,500,000)	-	-	1,000,000	3,500,000	-	-	4,500,000	-
Cycleway feasibility and design - Preston Park to Bowesfield	40,000	-	40,000	-	-	(40,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cycleway feasibility and design - Yarm to Stockton	70,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cycleway feasibility and design - Stockton Town Centre	400,000	599,206	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	599,206	599,206
Cycleway feasibility and design - Cowpen Bewley WP to Wolviston	280,000	158,741	121,259	-	-	-	121,259	-	-	-	280,000	158,741
Cycleway feasibility and design - Thornaby to Stockton Town Centre	450,000	278,290	171,710	-	-	-	171,710	-	-	-	450,000	281,080
Bus route - Ingleby Way / Thornaby	181,500	103,994	47,805	-	-	-	47,806	-	-	-	151,800	107,035
S278 - Craythorne Interchange	138,213	138,838	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	138,838	138,870
S278 - Widening leg of Green Lane Roundabout	5,396	5,396	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,396	5,396
S278 - Yarm Back Lane (2 x PRT)	40,000	38,586	1,414	-	-	-	1,414	-	-	-	40,000	38,586
S278 - LILO at Ingleby Manor	37,334	37,334	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,334	37,334
S278 - Yarm back Lane Shared PRT	69,547	49,276	20,271	-	-	-	20,271	-	-	-	69,547	49,276
S278 - Signalised Junction Development on Harrowgate Lane	60,690	65,085	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65,085	65,085
S278 - 2 x PRT Signalised Junction on Harrowgate Lane	85,731	40,741	44,990	-	-	-	44,990	-	-	-	85,731	45,733

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
(1,237,329)	-	-	
(1,804,880)	-	-	
(940,600)	-	-	
(580,800)	-	-	
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
(460,640)	-	-	
(3,468,051)	-	(49,846)	
(450,000)	-	-	
(660,758)	-	-	
(4,500,000)	-	-	The main construction is due to start later in the year therefore £3,500,000 has been slipped to 27/28.
-	-	-	
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
(599,206)	-	-	
(280,000)	-	-	
(450,000)	-	-	
(151,800)	-	-	
(138,838)	-	-	
(5,396)	-	-	
(40,000)	-	-	
(37,334)	-	-	
(69,547)	-	-	
(65,085)	-	-	
(85,731)	-	-	

S278 - Pedestrian crossing of Green Lane & amends to Bus Stop Locations	121,000	27,272	93,728	-	-	-	93,728	-	-	-	121,000	33,528	(121,000)	-	-	
S278 - Green Lane Yarm Housing Development - PRT and site access	128,560	75,339	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75,339	75,339	(75,339)	-	-	
S278 - Green Lane Yarm Housing Development - works to crossroad/roundabout	180,000	31,217	148,783	(145,788)	-	-	2,995	145,788	-	-	180,000	37,207	(180,000)	-	-	Works not expected to commence until next year therefore £145,788 has been slipped to 27/28.
S278 - Widening Works of the A67/Tesco Roundabout	100,000	11,366	88,634	-	-	-	88,634	-	-	-	100,000	11,366	(100,000)	-	-	
S278 - FUJI Borealis	58,989	105,030	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	105,030	105,030	(105,030)	-	-	
S106 - Wynyard Footbridge	561,908	561,908	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	561,908	561,908	(561,908)	-	-	
S106 - Horse & Jockey Roundabout	13,589	27,345	130,889	-	-	-	130,889	-	-	-	158,234	32,345	(158,234)	-	-	
S278 - Signalised Junction Development on Harrowgate Lane (Vistry)	50,690	59,852	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59,852	59,852	(59,852)	-	-	
S278 - Low Grange Shopping Parade	5,000	-	5,000	-	-	-	5,000	-	-	-	5,000	-	(5,000)	-	-	
S278 - Norton Shopping Parade	15,000	-	15,000	-	-	-	15,000	-	-	-	15,000	-	(15,000)	-	-	
S278 - Queen Elizabeth Way	-	40,122	-	-	-	2,890	2,890	-	-	-	43,012	43,012	(43,012)	-	-	
S106 - West Street Car Park Yarm	-	(1,226)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,226)	(1,226)	-	-	1,226	
Billingham Forum Solar Panels	400,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Fairfield Primary School Solar Panels	77,636	72,147	14,697	-	-	-	14,697	-	-	-	86,844	72,147	(86,844)	-	-	
MRF Solar Panels	260,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Trees For Stockton	820,691	546,292	318,951	-	-	-	318,951	-	-	-	865,243	546,292	(865,243)	-	-	
Childrens Outdoor Play Spaces	169,335	92,365	76,970	-	-	-	76,970	-	-	-	169,335	92,365	(36,446)	-	(132,889)	
Stillington Play Area	209,366	157,315	74,579	-	-	-	74,578	-	-	-	231,893	157,315	(231,893)	-	-	
Wynyard Woodland Park	249,507	-	-	-	-	443	443	-	-	-	443	443	-	-	(443)	
Childrens Outdoor Play Spaces (Hardwick Enhanced)	67,165	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Circular Trail	34,857	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Ropner Park Play Area	46,263	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Redbrook Park	92,677	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Preston Park Play Area	158,468	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park	54,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Littleboy Park	(5,790)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Billingham Beck Habitat Restoration	120,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Flood Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme - Tees Tidelands	7,077,710	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
Greens Beck Culvert	717,360	-	717,360	(317,360)	-	-	400,000	317,360	-	-	717,360	-	(717,360)	-	-	Project is in the design stage therefore

Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Financial Year 26/27					27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
			Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26					
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
CORPORATE SERVICES												
Xentrall ICT Network	900,000	657,915	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	657,915	657,915
TOTAL CORPORATE SERVICES	900,000	657,915	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	657,915	657,915

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
-	-	(657,915)	
0	0	(657,915)	

Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Financial Year 26/27					27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
			Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26					
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
REGENERATION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH												
Acquisition & Investment	1,044,394	1,044,394	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,044,394	1,044,394
Investment Site Infrastructure Durham Lane Industrial Estate	3,613,564	1,714,636	1,944,716	(350,000)	-	-	1,594,716	350,000	-	-	3,659,352	1,827,289
Inward Investment Strategy	455,606	311,067	144,539	-	-	-	144,539	-	-	-	455,606	331,686
Business Growth Fund	1,000,000	888,826	111,174	-	-	-	111,174	-	-	-	1,000,000	906,581
Regeneration Investment	131,000	76,148	9,064	-	-	-	9,064	-	-	-	85,212	82,127
Additional Accommodation	1,500,000	-	1,500,000	-	-	-	1,500,000	-	-	-	1,500,000	-
Billingham Sports Hub	800,000	789,185	10,815	-	-	-	10,815	-	-	-	800,000	800,000
Building Control System	-	-	-	-	-	63,000	63,000	-	-	-	63,000	-
Democratic Space/Council Chamber	1,250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stockton Town Centre - Infrastructure Projects	29,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Townscape Heritage	2,756,032	1,736,861	1,049,024	-	-	-	1,049,024	-	-	-	2,785,885	1,736,861
Town Hall / Debenhams / small units split	6,500,000	24,750	3,000,000	(2,000,000)	-	-	1,000,000	5,475,250	-	-	6,500,000	24,750
Splash Redevelopment	8,500,000	66,868	509,890	-	-	-	509,890	7,923,242	-	-	8,500,000	66,868
Wellington Square Car Park Resurfacing	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000	-
Town Centre Developments - unused borrowing approvals	7,662,960	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,662,960	7,662,960	-

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
(1,044,394)	-	-	
(3,659,352)	-	-	£350,000 has been slipped to 27/28 to enable additional infrastructure works required to open up development plots, following completion of the main Teeslink works.
(455,606)	-	-	
(1,000,000)	-	-	
(85,212)	-	-	
-	-	(1,500,000)	
(800,000)	-	-	
(63,000)	-	-	
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
-	-	-	Scheme closed out 25/26
(2,181,906)	-	(603,979)	
-	(6,500,000)	-	£2,000,000 slipped to 27/28 as scheme is currently in feasibility/design stage.
-	(8,500,000)	-	
-	(1,000,000)	-	
-	(7,662,960)	-	

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Billingham Town Centre	30,000,000	303,281	11,277,675	-	-	-	11,277,675	18,419,044	-	-	30,000,000	337,112	(20,000,000)
Ingleby Barwick	514,515	446,921	62,579	-	-	-	62,579	-	-	-	509,500	446,921	(10,000,000)
Norton	77,800	74,988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	74,988	74,988	(410,620)
Yarm	-	2,800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,800	2,800	(98,880)
Thornaby TF - Cycleways	5,850,000	1,282,976	4,587,024	-	-	-	4,587,024	-	-	-	5,870,000	1,544,166	(60,000)
Thornaby TF - Regeneration of Town Centre - Swimming Pool	16,250,000	3,878,143	12,171,857	-	-	-	12,171,857	1,000,000	500,000	-	17,550,000	5,191,804	(5,870,000)
Thornaby TF - Regeneration of Town Centre - Golden Eagle	3,525,000	1,985,490	1,601,780	-	-	-	1,601,780	-	-	-	3,587,270	2,420,553	(12,550,000)
Thornaby TF - Regeneration of Town Centre	900,440	900,440	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	900,440	900,440	(3,587,270)
Thornaby TF - North Thornaby	2,985,483	2,688,174	293,895	-	-	-	293,895	-	-	-	2,982,069	2,722,924	(750,000)
Thornaby TF - Project Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2,982,069)
Thornaby TF - Skills Development	4,700,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yarm LUF - Cycleways	5,889,840	1,733,035	4,158,685	-	-	-	4,158,685	-	-	-	5,891,720	2,053,139	-
Yarm LUF - Public Realm	3,623,904	1,184,428	2,439,476	-	-	(950,792)	1,488,684	-	-	-	2,673,112	1,193,075	Scheme closed out 25/26
Yarm LUF - Preston Park	13,520,000	13,192,298	327,702	-	-	-	327,702	-	-	-	13,520,000	13,197,305	(5,891,720)
Yarm LUF - Town Hall and Toilets	876,096	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,723,112)
Urban Park	29,131,638	26,372,816	2,964,231	-	-	-	2,964,231	-	-	-	29,337,047	27,849,540	(950,000)
Community Diagnostic Centre Car Park	1,750,000	1,668,219	81,781	-	-	-	81,781	-	-	-	1,750,000	1,668,358	(13,070,792)
Unallocated Town Centre Wayfinding	291,717	-	291,717	-	-	-	291,717	-	-	-	291,717	-	(449,208)
Building Maintenance Programme	2,316,284	-	1,286,835	-	-	-	1,286,835	-	-	-	1,286,835	175,808	-
Vehicle Ramp Replacement - Cowpen Depot	300,000	-	300,000	-	-	-	300,000	-	-	-	300,000	-	(24,167,332)
Allotments	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	-	(4,995,250)
TOTAL REGENERATION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH	158,845,273	62,366,744	51,224,459	(2,350,000)	-	(887,792)	47,986,667	33,167,536	500,000	7,662,960	151,683,907	66,599,489	(174,465)
													(1,750,000)
													(291,717)
													(1,286,835)
													(300,000)
													(100,000)
													(99,941,765)
													(46,768,830)
													(4,973,312)

Financial Year 26/27												
Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26	27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
CORPORATE ITEMS												
Invest to save	19,350,000	-	1,266,430	(650,000)	-	-	616,430	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	18,616,430	-
TOTAL CORPORATE ITEMS	19,350,000	-	1,266,430	(650,000)	-	-	616,430	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	18,616,430	-

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
-	(18,616,430)	-	Schemes subject to individual business case approval, £650,000 slipped to 27/28
-	(18,616,430)	-	

Financial Year 26/27												
Per Scheme	Approved Budget as of Feb 2026	Prior Years Spend	Capital Programme @ 25/26 Outturn	Slippage/ Acceleration	Virement	Cost Variation, Addition or Reduction	Revised Budget @ 30/06/26	27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	29/30 Budget	Total Budget as at 30/06/26	Total Spend as at 30/06/26
At 30/06/26	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	260,851,811	85,719,021	94,944,374	(16,419,361)	-	2,590,146	81,115,159	54,538,394	11,008,402	15,270,025	247,651,001	92,934,892

Funding of Total Budget as at 30/06/2026			
External (Grants and Contributions)	Internal (Borrowing)	Internal (Other)	Narrative
£'s	£'s	£'s	
(157,836,023)	(78,338,794)	(11,476,185)	

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REPORT TO Cabinet

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE SERVICES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2025/26

Summary

The report provides details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual review letter for 2025/26. The annual review letter details that there were 69 enquiries submitted to the Ombudsman during 2025/26, with the Ombudsman responding to 51 complaints (an increase from 30 the previous year), 7 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman (this is a similar number to the 8 investigated in 2024/2025). All 7 of the investigations were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following their investigations, have been accepted and implemented by the Council. The Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council had remedied 3 of the 7 complaints prior to their investigation.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet to note the report.

Detail

1. Each year the Ombudsman publishes its annual letter and summary of statistics on the complaints and enquiries it has received about Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and the decisions made. The Council has received the latest report for the financial year ending 31 March 2026.
2. Of the 51 complaints and enquiries responded to by the Ombudsman in 2025/26, 7 were progressed to investigation, with all 7 of the complaints being upheld. The number of complaints responded to by the Ombudsman has increased since the previous year (30 in 2024/25), however the number of complaints investigated by the Ombudsman has remained steady, suggesting that while more complainants are taking their complaints to the Ombudsman, a high number of complaints are being appropriately addressed locally without the need for investigation by the Ombudsman.
3. Of the 7 upheld Ombudsman complaint investigations, 2 related to Adults Services, 2 related to SEND and Inclusion, 2 related to Children's Social Care and 1 was regarding Community School Transport. The Ombudsman issued its findings in relation to 1 complaint as a public report. The complaint related to alternative education provision for a young person who has an Educational Health Care (EHC) Plan and was considered by Cabinet on 16 October 2025.

4. The annual report details that the Ombudsman was satisfied with the remedy offered by the Council (such as an apology, financial redress) in advance of the complainant raising the complaint with the Ombudsman, in 3 out of the 7 cases. Remedy guidance for officers undertaking complaint investigations, has been strengthened in the complaints training programme delivered by the Information Governance Team and was also included in the annual Complaints Officer Forum that was held on 13 May 2026.
5. A copy of the 2025/26 performance tables received from the Ombudsman is attached at **Appendix I** of this report. A useful guide to interpretation of the Ombudsman's statistics is available on the [LGSCO website](#).

Financial Implications

6. None as a direct result of this report. The financial implications of individual complaints would be dealt with separately as part of the responses to those complaints.

Legal Implications

7. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. They may, however, arise on a case-by-case basis, depending on the particular circumstances of the complaint and related decision and Legal Service input is called upon in these cases. The Corporate Governance Group also has a Legal Service representative.

Risk Assessment

8. The Ombudsman complaint investigations and associated decision notices create public relations risks to the Council and can undermine resident confidence. The 3 Complaints Policies developed by the Council (Corporate, Children's Statutory and Adult Services Statutory) and associated procedures are designed to minimise these risks, and the oversight provided by the Complaints Team and Corporate Governance Group provide assurance to senior management and Members that complaints are taken seriously, corrective action is implemented and learning maximised. Councillor Paul Rowling is the Council's Member responsible for complaints considered within the corporate process, and receives periodic updates on complaint handling, including decisions the Ombudsman has upheld.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors

9. The Ombudsman complaints information does not indicate any significant ward specific information or trends.

Background Papers

10. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review of Local Government complaints for 2025/26 has been published and relevant extracts have been included in this report. A copy of the complete report can be viewed on the [LGSCO website](#).

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Skipsey

Post Title: Assistant Director of Procurement and Governance

Telephone No: 01642 526364

E-mail Address: martin.skipsey@stockton.gov.uk

Appendix I - Stockton data from the annual report 2025/26

Complaints upheld	
100% of complaints investigated were upheld.	National average of 85% in similar organisations
7 upheld decisions	1 public report
3.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Average for authorities of Stockton's type is 5.6 upheld decisions per 100, 000
Statistics are based on a total of 7 investigations for the period between 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations	
In 100% of cases the Ombudsman were satisfied with the actions taken by Stockton in response to their recommendations.	National average of 77% in similar organisations

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation	
In 43% of upheld cases the Ombudsman found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman	
3 satisfactory remedy decisions	
Statistics are based on a total of 7 upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	

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REPORT TO CABINET

17 SEPTEMBER 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

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Skipsey

Post Title: Assistant Director Procurement & Governance

Telephone number: 01642 526364

Email address: martin.skipsey@stockton.gov.uk

Annex 1

Department: Community Services & Transport	Category: Transportation
Scheme: Yarm Road / Darlington Back Lane /Bishopton Road West Junctions Signalisation	Budget: £5.5m
Contract(s) Purpose Signalisation of the Yarm Road/Darlington Back Lane junction, with the option to signalise the Bishopton Road West junction.	
Contract(s) Value £4.2m	
Procurement Process The project will be procured through a direct award to Balfour Beatty via the SCAPE Framework. This route has been selected as Balfour Beatty previously undertook pricing and programme development for the works as part of a larger scheme linked to the Elton Interchange project. The projects were subsequently decoupled due to funding constraints; however, Balfour Beatty's existing knowledge of the scheme provides significant advantages in terms of project understanding, programme certainty, and delivery efficiency. The direct award approach was chosen due to the complexity of the works, the need to maintain access and traffic flows on Yarm Back Lane and Darlington Back Lane throughout the construction period, and the requirement to ensure buildability and programme certainty. This procurement route will reuse the early contractor involvement, enabling effective planning, risk management, and efficient project delivery	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within Capital Programme: An element is already included. However, the contract will not be let until all remaining funding has been secured and signed.
Delegated Officer: Director of Neighbourhoods	
Checks and Balances: Decision in consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include Finance and Procurement. Legal for certain specified decisions.	

Department: Community Services & Transport	Category: Transportation
Scheme: A19/A689 Interchange	Budget: £7.8m
Contract(s) Purpose Construction of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge to the north of the current interchange with associated footway widening, and reallocation of the existing footway to a third eastbound lane.	
Contract(s) Value £6.5m	
Procurement Process The project will be procured through a direct award to Balfour Beatty via the SCAPE Framework. This route was selected at the direction of the TVCA following a procurement options appraisal undertaken by the TVCA, who are funding the project. The direct award approach has been chosen due to the complexity of the works, the need to coordinate closely with National Highways infrastructure, and the requirement to maintain programme certainty and ensure buildability. This procurement route will facilitate early contractor involvement, enabling collaborative planning, effective risk management, programme optimisation, and efficient project delivery	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within Capital Programme: An element is already included. However, the contract will not be let until all remaining funding has been secured and signed.
Delegated Officer: Director of Neighbourhoods	
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

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration –
Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling**

Minutes of Various Bodies

Summary

The attached minutes are for consideration by Cabinet.

Reasons for Recommendation

To enable Cabinet to view the minutes of various bodies.

Recommendations

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

Detail

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

TVCA Cabinet – 26 June and 31 July 2026

Consultation and engagement

Not applicable.

Next Steps

None.

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney

Post Title: Head of Democratic Services

Telephone number: 01642 526312

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

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TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 26 June 2026 at 10.15am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	
Members	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Councillor Graham Harrison	Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Mayor of Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Lisa Evans	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Officers	
Tom Bryant	Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Brackenborough	Director of Operations, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jo Moore	Interim Director of Finance & Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority (joined on Teams)
Craig Peacock	Director of Inward Investment & Marketing, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jonathan Spruce	Director of Infrastructure, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Walker	Director of Business Solutions, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jeanette McGarry	Interim Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Elizabeth Davison	Executive Director, Resources & Governance, Darlington Borough Council
Matt Wilton	Chief Executive, Hartlepool Borough Council
Erik Scollay	Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Council

Brian Archer	Chief Executive, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Mike Greene	Chief Executive, Stockton Borough Council
Jacqui Banks	Business Solutions Manager – Skills TVCA
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA

These Minutes capture the key points and decisions of the meeting, but they do not attempt to reproduce every word spoken. The full recording can be found [here](#).

	<u>CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS</u> The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.
TVCA 05/26	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were submitted by Matthew Ord and Rose Rouse
TVCA 06/26	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST No declarations of interest were received
TVCA 07/26	MINUTES RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 th April 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record.
TVCA 08/26	TEES VALLEY MAYOR'S UPDATE The Mayor advised Cabinet members that he had nothing further to update them on which was not covered elsewhere on the agenda. Members were however given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. No questions were asked.
TVCA 09/26	GOVERNANCE & APPOINTMENTS Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on the recruitment process for the Chief Legal & Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance & Resources.

	Members' approval was sought for the appointment of Andrew Perriman as Monitoring Officer. They were advised that interviews had taken place the previous week. Councillor Evans and Matt Wilton were thanked for being involved in the interview process. Cabinet were further advised that it is proposed to regrade the position to Director in line with other Combined Authorities and to reflect the level of responsibility aligned to the new Devolution and Community Empowerment Act. Councillor Brown noted that the new Monitoring Officer looks to be skilled and experienced. An update was also provided on the progress made on the recruitment of Independent Persons. Interviews have taken place and successful candidates have been appointed. Those candidates not appointed have expressed interest in joining the Development Corporation Audit & Governance Committees. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Councillor Brown enquired on progress on the recruitment of a new Director of Finance & Resources. He was advised that work is ongoing to identify a suitable candidate. In the meantime Cabinet previously agreed to extend Jo Moore's contract until the end of September and she has committed to ensure there is a smooth transition once the successful person is appointed. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • <u>NOTED</u> the update on the recruitment process for the Chief Legal & Monitoring Officer and the Finance & Resources Director; • <u>APPROVED</u> the permanent appointment of the Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer), (tabled at the meeting); • <u>NOTED</u> the progress of the recruitment of Independent Persons.
TVCA 10/26	ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress in relation to the Organisation Improvement Plan and other matters relating to the Best Value Notice issued on 3 April 2025, and the External Audit Statutory Recommendations Letter, issued on 15th April 2025.

	Mayor Cooke advised members that changes have been made to how the data is presented. He thanked the Director of Operations and the Programme Manager (Improvement) for their work in developing the report. He advised that there is a desire to move towards a continuous improvement plan once this plan is complete. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. The Chief Executive advised members that he had a meeting recently with The Chair of the Independent Advisory Board, The Tees Valley Mayor and the Mayor of Middlesbrough. The role and future membership of the Board was discussed and an update will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting as this progresses. The Chair thanked Mayor Cooke for working with officers who have all appreciated his support and advice. He also thanked all Cabinet members for their support and for the cross-party approach. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • <u>NOTED</u> progress in relation to the Organisational Improvement Plan; • <u>APPROVED</u> the continuation of the Independent Advisory Board, in line with the detail set out in the report; • <u>NOTED</u> the intention to develop a continuous improvement strategy.
TVCA 11/26	DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26 Cabinet received a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer which advised that the informal meeting of the TVCA Audit & Governance Committee considered the Annual Governance Statement on the 21 May 2026. The Committee members commented positively on the level of progress and evidence provided. Members requested that the weaknesses section of the report be enhanced. It was noted that this section of the report would be updated once feedback has been provided by the External Auditor (EY) and the Internal Auditor (TIAA). Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet :-

	• <u>NOTED</u> the comments on the Draft Annual Governance Statement made at the informal meeting of the TVCA Audit and Governance Committee on 21 May 2026; • <u>APPROVED</u> the Draft Annual Governance Statement for publication, subject to any future comments from the Internal Auditor (TIAA) and the External Auditor (EY).
TVCA 12/26	SOUTH TEES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN Cabinet received a report from the Interim Director of Finance & Resources presenting the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) Capital and Revenue budgets for 2026/27, the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2030/31 as required by the STDC Constitution. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • <u>NOTED</u> the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) Capital and Revenue budgets for 2026/27, the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2030/31.
TVCA 13/26	SOUTH TEES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive of the STDC which presented an annual update on the activities of South Tees Development Corporation and progress across the Teesworks site since the previous Cabinet update in March 2025. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet:- • <u>NOTED</u> the contents of the report.
TVCA 14/26	WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

	Cabinet received a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer which presented the amended TVCA Whistleblowing Policy, which incorporated the Internal Auditor's recommendations and comments made at the informal meeting of TVCA's Audit & Governance Committee on 21 May 2026. The Mayor expressed his thanks to the Audit & Governance Committee. The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that the revised Whistleblowing Policy was at Appendix 1 and she thanked Comms and HR colleagues for implementing the Delivery Plan at appendix 2, in response to the Internal Auditor's comments Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • Noted the comments made by the Informal Audit and Governance Committee; and • Approved the revised Whistleblowing Policy.
TVCA 15/26	DRAFT REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN 2025/26 Cabinet received a report from the Interim Director of Finance & Resources presenting the draft revenue and capital outturn position for Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for the year ending 31 March 2026, highlighting any key variances to the approved budget for the year, based on the provisional outturn position as at the end of Quarter 4 (31 March 2026). Cabinet members were advised that the report was provisional pending the finalisation of the Annual Statement of Accounts 25/26 and prior year accounts for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Interim Director of Finance & Resources provided Cabinet members with an overview of the report and Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Councillor Harrison thanked officers for the report and commented that, noting the underspend on projects, the Investment Committee can play an important role here, alongside the new Single Assurance Framework in challenging and scrutinising the delivery of the projects. RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

	• <u>NOTED</u> the draft revenue outturn position of a net deficit of £5.798m for the year ending 31 March 2026, which is an adverse variance of £0.026m against the budgeted deficit of £5.772m, and an adverse variance of £5.204m from the reported deficit of £0.594m at Quarter 3. • <u>APPROVE</u> the revenue budget carry forward requests of £3.811m set out in Table 6 of the report, for Creative Place Programme, Sector Networks and Hydrogen Refuelling Station to deliver committed activity. • <u>NOTED</u> the proposed contributions to reserves of £27.603m and contributions from reserves of £10.959m, which is a net movement to revenue reserves of £16.644m. • <u>NOTED</u> the total usable revenue reserves of £51.545m as of 31 March 2026 set out in Table 17. • <u>NOTED</u> the matters to be resolved to finalise the outturn • <u>NOTED</u> the draft outturn for the Capital Programme of £155.610m for the financial year to 31 March 2026, which is a reduction of £81.613m against budgeted capital expenditure of £227.223m and an increase of £48.765m from the reported Q3 position. • <u>NOTED</u> the capital reserves position of £194.060m as 31 March 2026. • <u>APPROVED</u> the additional contribution to MRP of £3.042 for Goosepool 2019 Ltd loans backdated to the loan advance date.
TVCA 16/26	TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2025/26 Cabinet received a report from the Interim Group Director of Finance & Resources which informed Cabinet of the TVCA performance against the treasury management and prudential indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26, approved by the Authority on 28 March 2025. The Interim Director of Finance & Resources provided Cabinet members with an overview of the report, highlighting that we have been fully compliant with Treasury Management codes. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet:- • <u>NOTED</u> the Treasury Outturn Report for 2025/26. • <u>NOTED</u> that all treasury and prudential indicators approved for 2025/26 have been complied with.

TVCA 17/26	APPROVAL OF LOCAL GROWTH PLAN AND INVESTMENT PIPELINE Cabinet received a report from the Director of Business Solutions which presented the Tees Valley Local Growth Plan for publication and adoption along with associated Investment Pipeline Priority Packages. The Director of Business Solutions expressed her thanks to the Investment Development Team and the Communications and Marketing team. The Local Growth Plan document has been reframed and it is now an extremely positive story about the Tees Valley and sells the opportunities available. The input from Local Authority officers has been important and appreciated. Sarah noted that, since the document was circulated 3 small changes have been made:- • The commitments from the front have now been moved into the Executive Summary; • Some additional imagery has been included around the strategic projects; • Some amends have been made to the digital and creative section. The intention is to have a soft launch if this is approved today and a larger scale launch event in the future involving a “call to action” with stakeholders. The Chair acknowledged that this has been a huge piece of work and expressed specific thanks to all the staff involved both from the Local Authorities and the Combined Authority. He specifically thanked Elaine Fryett and Joseph Demetriou who had worked on it, along with the rest of the teams involved. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Mayor Cooke also thanked the teams involved. He noted that the Inward Investment Strategy and the Local Growth Plan are aligned. It feels like all the work is coming together and acknowledges it is a really good piece of work. The Chair concluded by saying that this has been a great example of work undertaken collaboratively and collectively. It has been a good demonstration how we work closely together with Local authorities. RESOLVED that Cabinet :-
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	• <u>APPROVED</u> the Tees Valley Investment Pipeline Priority Packages as set out on pages 138-145 of the Local Growth Plan; • <u>APPROVED</u> the Tees Valley Local Growth Plan and agree that it can be published and adopted, in accordance with section 8 of the Guidance for Mayoral Strategic Authorities on developing Local Growth Plans. • <u>DELEGATED</u> authority to TVCA's Director of Business Solutions to update and amend the Local Growth Plan if required where these changes would not alter the strategic intent or priorities of the document.
TVCA 18/26	SKILLS PROGRAMME UPDATE <i>Appendix 1 is a "restricted item" not for publication until Secretary of State approval has been received.</i> Cabinet received a report from the Director of Business Solutions seeking Cabinet approval of the Local Skills Improvement Plan 2 (2026-2029) for the Tees Valley along with the supporting letter of endorsement. The report also provided an update on the Adult Skills procurement and new funding to support Construction Industry Placements. The Director of Business Solutions advised Cabinet that the NorthEast Chamber of Commerce were the lead body working with TVCA on the production of the Local Skills Plan. Feedback from businesses has been that this is a tangible plan and the actions within it can be taken forward. She advised that the Education & Skills Advisory Group will oversee the implementation of the plan, led by the portfolio holder, Councillor Evans. She further advised that an additional £1.2m of funding from the Department for Education has been received to deliver the construction skills package. Additional smaller funding pots continue to be made available. Councillor Evans expressed her thanks to the team at TVCA and also to the Chamber of Commerce and to the Education and Skills Advisory Group. She noted that excellent feedback had been received from both about the work we are doing so we will continue in the same direction. Councillor Harrison welcomed the plan. It supports the ambitions of the Local Growth Plan and it is important that not only industry and business have

	access to the right skills to support economic growth in the Tees Valley but also that residents have every opportunity to benefit from that growth too. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • Approved the Local Skills Improvement Plan 2 (2026-2029) for the Tees Valley as set out in Appendix 1 and the letter of endorsement as set out in Appendix 2. • Noted that the Education Employment and Skills Advisory Group will oversee the implementation of the Local Skills Improvement Plan 2 and keep it under review throughout the three-year cycle. • Noted that the Adult Skills Fund procurement launched in January 2026 has been withdrawn for review, with a revised opportunity expected in the coming weeks. • Noted the £1.2m funding from the Department for Education as part of the national Construction Skills package to support Industry Placements. • Noted the additional funding of £0.366m to be allocated to the Combined Authority from the Department for Business and Trade to support the adult skills within the Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy and Engineering sectors.
TVCA 19/26	DELEGATED DECISIONS Cabinet was presented with a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer, which advised of all the Delegated Decisions made since Cabinet last met on 24th April 2026. Cabinet was invited to NOTE the Delegated Decisions. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the Delegated Decisions made since Cabinet last met on 24th April 2026.
TVCA 20/26	DATES AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETING • Friday 31st July 2026 10am

TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 31st July 2026 at 10.00 am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

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

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	
Members	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Graham Harrison	Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Mayor of Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Lisa Evans	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Officers	
Tom Bryant	Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Brackenborough	Director of Operations, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Alan Layton	Interim Deputy Director of Finance & Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Craig Peacock	Director of Inward Investment & Marketing, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Walker	Director of Business Solutions, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Victoria Pescod	Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Elizabeth Davison	Executive Director, Resources & Governance, Darlington Borough Council
Matt Wilton	Chief Executive, Hartlepool Borough Council
Erik Scollay	Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Council

Neil Shaw	Executive Director, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Clare Harper	Chief Financial Officer, Stockton Borough Council
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA
Also in attendance	
Stephen Kitching (on Teams) – item 8 only	Arlingclose

These Minutes capture the key points and decisions of the meeting, but they do not attempt to reproduce every word spoken. The full recording can be found [here](#).

	<u>CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS</u> The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.
TVCA 21/26	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Stephen Harker, Matthew Ord, Mike Greene, Rose Rouse and Jonathan Spruce.
TVCA 22/26	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Alec Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 as Vice Chair of the STDC Board.
TVCA 23/26	MINUTES RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 26 th June 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record.
TVCA 24/26	TEES VALLEY MAYOR'S UPDATE The Mayor advised Cabinet members that he had nothing further to update them on which was not covered elsewhere on the agenda. Members were however given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. No questions were asked.

TVCA 25/26	INFORMATION GOVERNANCE POLICIES Cabinet received a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer which presented the following revised governance policies for approval:- • Data Protection Policy • Data Retention and Deletion Policy • Access to Information (FOI/EIR) Policy • Subject Access Request Policy • Staff Privacy Notice • CCTV Policy The policies form part of the overall corporate policy framework. Cabinet members were asked to note that they are being asked to approve each policy individually, not the full suite of policies. All policies have been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee who have recommended them to Cabinet for approval. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • APPROVED each policy within the suite of corporate policies; • DELEGATED authority to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the policies, providing that the overall substance, scope and intent of the policies are not significantly altered.
TVCA 26/26	ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICIES AND RIPA SURVEILLANCE PROTOCOL Cabinet received a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer which presented the following revised governance policies for approval:- • Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy; • Anti-Money Laundering Policy; • RIPA Surveillance Protocol. The policies form part of the overall corporate policy framework. Cabinet members were asked to note that they are being asked to approve each policy individually, not the full suite of policies.

	All policies have been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee who have recommended them to Cabinet for approval. They were also advised that if approved today an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Action Plan will be developed to sit alongside the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • APPROVED each policy within the suite of corporate policies; • NOTED the comments made by the TVCA Audit & Governance Committee; • DELEGATED authority to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the policies, providing that the overall substance, scope and intent of the policies are not significantly altered.
TVCA 27/26	SOUTH TEES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LOAN AGREEMENTS Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive and Interim Deputy Director of Finance & Resources seeking approval to formalise the loan arrangements between Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) and to delegate authority to finalise and execute the associated loan agreements within the financial and governance parameters set out in the report. The report set out the proposed repayment principles, monitoring arrangements and controls for existing advances and future borrowing within the approved £350m loan facility to STDC. The recommendations were supported by independent financial modelling advice from the TVCA treasury advisers (Arlingclose), including reconciliation of the £421m loan position and stress-test outputs on key downside scenarios. The delegation is subject to the final agreements remaining materially consistent with the repayment principles, affordability safeguards and governance controls set out in this report. Mayor Chris Cooke noted that Cabinet members have had several workshops to discuss this report leading up to the Cabinet meeting. He

	advised that work has been ongoing with Arlingclose to ensure the debts and overarching liabilities are all covered and that there is a mechanism in place for STDC to pay back the debt over the 19 years, but also a way to pay back the debt faster if possible. He advised that further updates will be brought to Cabinet as part of routine reporting. There will be a schedule of debt, which will ensure that all liabilities are covered and also enable overpayments as part of a surplus sweep mechanism. Alan Layton confirmed that this is an important set of recommendations for Cabinet to consider. It formalises the loan arrangements from an informal process to a formal footing and provides assurance to Cabinet that the debt can be paid off within the timescale of the business rates retention agreement period. He highlighted that the quay loan is based over a longer period. He further advised that this has been stress-tested by Arlingclose. Officers are of a view that the STDC business rates income forecasts are prudent. They are based only on current contractual committed occupancies. There is scope for more occupancy going forward so there is a high degree of confidence that the loans can be paid off during the 19 years of the business rates retention period. Councillor Brown enquired whether more tenants on site would mean the debt can be paid off quicker and also asked how often the schedule of payments will be reviewed. He was advised that it will be reviewed quarterly and reported back to Cabinet. There will also be a formal annual review. From a treasury point of view, at any point in the year that STDC have sufficient resources, they can make additional payments. There is no need to wait for a quarterly review. It was noted that, from an STDC perspective it is beneficial to pay the debt off sooner, but it would be better for TVCA for the debt to be paid back over 19 years to maximise the interest from STDC back to TVCA. In the agreement, a minimum repayment has been factored in along with the ability to overpay rather than having standard terms of paying the same amount every year which would tie STDC into a 19 year loan period. Councillor Brown enquired how far the stress testing go in terms of future-proofing.
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He was advised that Arlingclose pushed the current proposals as far as possible within the business rates that are being retained. They looked at a scenario where there is a significant reduction in contractual cash-flows and they are still confident that the debt can be paid. They also tested the impact of delaying the cash flows by 2 years and STDC were still able to pay back within the 19 years. The stress testing proved that even with a significant delay, repayment can still be made within the 19 year period.

Councillor Bown noted that this piece of work has provided the assurance he needed and answered any concerns he had. He enquired whether this would have any impact on whether the BVN would be lifted by government.

The Chair advised that it was not possible to say whether this would impact on the BVN being lifted, however, agreed that this is a significant piece of work and thanked all those involved.

The Chief Executive advised that he has spoken to government and offered them a separate briefing. A press release will be issued if this is approved by Cabinet today.

Councillor Evans thanked everyone involved in getting to this stage. She then proposed some additions to the recommendations within the report. She noted that the additions do not seek to change the principle of the loan arrangements presented, nor do they seek to delay the progress and noted there has been a huge amount of progress made. She advised that the proposed additions are intended to strengthen appropriate governance, transparency and Cabinet oversight as these arrangements develop over time.

Councillor Evans advised that her proposed amendment to recommendation E is that, while authority is delegated to officers, and rightly so, any change that extends the payment period beyond that set out in the report or results in a different financial impact on TVCA, is presented back to Cabinet for approval. This will ensure that any material changes to the assumptions which have been mentioned remains a matter for elected members to consider and determine.

Councillor Evan went on to advise that her proposed amendment to recommendation F is also focussed on transparency and recognises the need for officers to approve future loan advances within the already approved facility. It also provides that Cabinet will receive an update setting out the details and terms of each loan advance. Given the scale of the facility and the importance of these arrangements for the Combined

	Authority and our constituent authorities, she believes it is appropriate that Cabinet maintains visibility of how the facility is being managed and utilised and how the associated risks are being managed. Councillor Evans noted that these proposed amendments do not remove operation flexibility for officers. They simply provide additional assurance for Cabinet that members remain informed and retain decision making oversight when there are significant changes to the financial position or repayment arrangements. The proposed amendment to the recommendations was seconded by Councillor Brown. Mayor Cooke then noted that the sweep mechanism means that if STDC over-pay, this would not be captured by this amendment as this is already included in the recommendations in the Arlingclose report and would not slow down any over-payment process. He agreed that the amended recommendation makes it more explicit. Mayor Cooke then noted TVCA had received questions from the public and provided verbal responses. All questions and officer responses can be found on TVCA's website here. Cabinet members were invited to agree to the amended recommendations as proposed by Councillor Evans. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • <u>Noted</u> that Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) has advanced funding to South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) totalling circa £421 million as at 31 March 2026; • <u>Noted</u> that TVCA has obtained independent financial modelling advice from its treasury advisers (Arlingclose), including stress-test outputs on key downside scenarios. This advice provides confidence that under the current MTFP assumptions and with the proposed repayment mechanism, STDC's debt is sustainable and it can afford to repay its debt in full within the remaining period of the business rates retention arrangements, while maintaining financial resilience, even within a stressed scenario; • <u>Approved</u> the formalisation of loan agreements governing all existing loans advanced by TVCA to STDC on the basis set out in this report and recommended by Arlingclose. This provides a bespoke payment mechanism to ensure the repayment of all loans
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	to STDC that are due to be repaid by the end of the business rates retention agreement in 2046, and includes future loans envisaged in the STDC MTFP; • <u>Noted</u> the loan agreements will include a review mechanism, requiring TVCA and STDC to review the repayment profile, affordability assumptions, cashflow position, reserves position and relevant income forecasts at least once each financial year; • <u>Delegated</u> authority to the Director of Finance & Resources (Section 73 Officer), in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Organisational Improvement and Business Growth, to finalise and execute the detailed terms of the loan agreements, provided that the final agreements are materially consistent with the repayment principles, interest methodology, monitoring arrangements, early warning triggers, information rights, lender protections and affordability safeguards set out in this report. If the agreement terms, either within the original agreement or through any subsequent review, extend beyond the loan repayment period set out in this report, or if the financial impact upon TVCA differs from that outlined in this report, the matter will be referred back to TVCA Cabinet for approval; • <u>Delegated</u> authority to the Director of Finance & Resources (Section 73 Officer), in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Organisational Improvement and Business Growth, to approve future loan advances, within the already approved £350million loan facility, to STDC subject to compliance with the agreed loan framework set out in this report, confirmation of affordability, an updated cashflow assessment, and consistency with the TVCA on-lending policy once approved. TVCA Cabinet will be provided with an update setting out the full details and terms of each loan advance.
TVCA 28/26	BUSINESS TEES VALLEY PROGRAMME Cabinet received a report from the Director of Business Solutions which sought approval for Business Tees Valley: a single, integrated business growth system for entrepreneurs, existing businesses and high-growth firms across the Tees Valley. The programme builds on the strategic framework approved by Cabinet in June 2025 and aligns business support,

	access to finance and Investment Zone activity with the Tees Valley Local Growth Plan. Cabinet approval was sought for the proposed programme, funding allocations and delivery approach pending completion and appraisal of a Full Business Case. Approval was also sought for programme governance and delegation arrangements. Cabinet were also provided an update on programme development and market engagement activity. Cabinet were also asked to note that the delegations within this programme will also be in conjunction with 2 Cabinet portfolio leads – Business Growth and Investment. This will provide additional oversight for Cabinet members. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Mayor Cooke noted that the inter-authority agreement is an important mechanism. There are a lot of good people working across all the Local Authorities who over time have built up specific sector specialisms which can now be shared. RESOLVED that Cabinet:- • APPROVED the Business Tees Valley programme and associated funding allocations, subject to final due diligence of the Business Case in accordance with the Assurance Framework; • AGREED TO DELEGATE approval of the Full Business Case to the Combined Authority's Statutory Officers in accordance with the current Assurance Framework, and in addition, consultation with the Accountable Cabinet Portfolio Leads for Business Growth and Investment • AGREED TO DEVELOP AND ENTER INTO AN INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT - with Tees Valley local authority partners to enable consistent delivery of the Business Tees Valley model, including the sharing of resources, data and procurement opportunities where this supports effective programme delivery; • AGREED TO DELEGATE authority to the Director of Business Solutions to take all decisions to manage and deliver the programme within the strategic framework and budgets agreed by Cabinet, in consultation with the Accountable Cabinet Portfolio Leads for Business Growth and Investment. Any
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	projects within the programme above the value of £5m will come back to Cabinet for approval, this will be required for the Tees Valley Co-Investment Fund; • AGREED to receive a quarterly report on progress in delivering the Business Tees Valley Programme including any variances approved through the delegation.
TVCA 29/26	BROWNFIELD HOUSING FUND ROUND 4 Cabinet received a report from the Director of Infrastructure which provided an overview of the Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) Round 4 funding opportunity which is to be received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The report sought approval to the concept of the BHF Round 4 Programme in principle as a named programme with a confirmed allocation of £33.3m (£32.6m capital and £0.7m revenue). Cabinet were invited to approve the development of a BHF Round 4 Programme Business Case which will be presented to Cabinet at a future meeting. Cabinet were also asked to approve the process to develop the BHF Round 4 Programme including identifying eligible capital projects to go into the Tees Valley Investment Pipeline through the launch of an open call. In addition, Cabinet were invited to approve the proposed usage of the RDEL funding for the BHF Round 4 Programme to cover staffing, marketing & communications (including workshops), project development capacity, business case development and technical appraisal support. It was noted that this is the first time a strategic pipeline of housing projects has been available. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Councillor Brown enquired whether a project could be added to the pipeline of projects next year and was advised that the pipeline is being constantly updated. RESOLVED that Cabinet :-

	• AGREED in principle to the concept of the Brownfield Housing Fund Round 4 as a named programme with a confirmed allocation of £33.3m; • AGREED to the development of a programme level business case which will come to a future meeting for approval; • AGREED to proposed process to develop the BHF Round 4 Programme including process of identifying eligible capital projects to go into the Tees Valley Investment Pipeline; • AGREE to the proposed use of the £0.7m of Revenue Funding to allow progression of the BHF Round 4 Programme to meet the requirements of MHCLG and the TVCA Assurance Framework.
TVCA 30/26	DELEGATED DECISIONS Cabinet was presented with a report from the Interim Monitoring Officer, which advised of all the Delegated Decisions made since Cabinet last met on 26th June 2026. Cabinet was invited to NOTE the Delegated Decisions. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments. RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the Delegated Decisions made since Cabinet last met on 26th June 2026.
TVCA 31/26	GOVERNANCE & APPOINTMENTS Alan Layton left the room at this point. Members' approval was sought for the appointment of Alan Layton as Interim Director of Finance & Resources (Section 73 Officer). Members were invited to approve the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tees Valley Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee. Members were invited to note the appointment of a member and substitute member to the South Tees Development Corporation Audit & Governance Committee.

	Members were asked to note the appointment of a member and substitute member to the Middlesbrough Development Corporation Audit & Governance Committee. Members were also asked to note the appointments to the Investment Committee. Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. Mayor Chris Cooke requested that his thanks to Jo Moore be placed on record. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • APPROVED the appointment of Alan Layton, current Interim Deputy Director of Finance, as Interim Director of Finance & Resources (Section 73 Officer); • APPROVED the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tees Valley Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee; • NOTED the appointment of a member and substitute member to the South Tees Development Corporation Audit & Governance Committee; • NOTED the appointment of a member and substitute member to the Middlesbrough Development Corporation Audit & Governance Committee; and • NOTED the appointments to the Investment Committee. <i>The Chair then moved to Exclude members of the public by virtue of paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual), paragraph 2 (information which may identify an individual) of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972).</i> This was proposed by Councillor Harrison and seconded by Councillor Evans. Cabinet received an update from the Chief Executive on the recruitment for the Director of Finance & Resources. RESOLVED that Cabinet :- • APPROVED the appointment of the permanent Director of Finance & Resources (Section 73 Officer) subject to the standard due diligence being completed (references and normal employment checks). Members of the public were invited back into the meeting at this point.
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	CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10:38

DRAFT

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