

## Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of the Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday 30 April 2026.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Chair), Cllr Katie Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Alan Watson

**Officers:** Stephen Donaghy, Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Marc Stephenson (A,H&W); Phil Hardie, Simon Milner (CS,E&C); James O'Donnell, Gary Woods (CS)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (SBC Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety)

**Apologies:** None

### **CSS/1/26 Livestreaming**

This meeting was scheduled to be livestreamed. However, due to technical difficulties, this could not be facilitated.

### **CSS/2/26 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CSS/3/26 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CSS/4/26 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Community Safety Select Committee meeting which was held on 26 March 2026 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26 March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **CSS/5/26 Overview Report: SBC Adults, Health & Wellbeing (Community Safety & Regulated Services: Environmental Health and Licensing)**

The Committee received an overview report from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate which provided details of key achievements and challenges in 2025-2026 for the Community Safety and Regulated Services department (with specific focus on Environmental Health and Licensing), as well as emerging issues within these areas of Council activity.

Introduced by the SBC Assistant Director – Regulated Services and Transformation, and supported by the SBC Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety, the Committee was informed that the Community Safety and Regulatory

Services portfolio was made up of a wide-ranging offer which focused on protecting the Borough's communities and local businesses. These preventative, collaborative and place-focused services included Civic Enforcement, CCTV and Community Safety, alongside Trading Standards, Environmental Health and the Licensing department. Within this group of services was also both Emergency Planning (involving the major incident plan) and organisational Business Continuity.

This overview report demonstrated how Environmental Health and Licensing services were managing risk, protecting vulnerable residents, supporting safe and compliant businesses, and working in partnership to address crime, disorder and environmental harm. The report also highlighted how resources were being targeted using data and intelligence, how performance was monitored, and how workforce and financial challenges were being actively managed – providing Members with confidence that services were delivering their responsibilities while supporting the Council's wider ambitions for healthy, safe and resilient communities.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Environmental Health is a branch of public health that examined how various environmental factors could affect human health and wellbeing. With an important role in protecting the public, the service fed into a number of other SBC directorates / departments (e.g. planning, events) and was split into three main operational areas – Commercial Environmental Health, Animal Welfare and Pest Control, and Environmental Protection and Nuisance. Led by the SBC Environmental Health Service Manager, key achievements, challenges and emerging issues regarding the SBC Environmental Health department were summarised as follows:

- Commercial Environmental Health: Responsible for ensuring that food produced, sold or consumed within the Borough was safe, compliant with legislation, and accurately described, service performance was robust during 2025-2026, with 100% of all food premises due for review (757) receiving a full inspection (with no outstanding general inspections at the end of the year). 801 service requests (complaints) were received, mostly relating to food hygiene concerns, and the service responded to national food alerts, including a significant listeria incident affecting health and care settings.

In terms of notable successes, Stockton-on-Tees had the highest level of food sampling in the region for the fifth year running, and one of the highest rates in the UK. The Borough was also noted nationally as having both the highest level of food hygiene rating standards in the North East, and the third highest across the country.

Looking ahead to 2026-2027, priorities included maintaining high compliance, responding to emerging risks, and supporting national initiatives. Challenges included business growth, rising public expectations, increasing regulatory demands, and adapting to future system and legislative changes. Overall, the service remained well-placed to protect public health and support local businesses effectively.

- Animal Welfare and Pest Control: Animal welfare focused on the protection of domesticated and captive animals (ensuring they were kept in safe, healthy and humane conditions), whilst pest control aimed to manage and reduce infestations of rodents, insects and other pests that could spread disease, damage property,

and harm quality of life. 887 animal welfare / stray dog requests had been handled during 2025-2026, with 1,912 pest control-related contacts received and actioned over the same period (treatment levels had remained relatively static for the latter).

The SBC Animal Welfare Team had received the RSPCA *PawPrints* Platinum Award 2025 for stray dogs (the highest accolade available), a recognition of the exceptional, long-term commitment to protecting stray dogs (this was achieved after 17 consecutive years at 'Gold' standard and five years at the highest level). The Council's pest control team did exceptional work and had been seen as an exemplar for other Local Authorities.

- Environmental Protection and Nuisance: The Environmental Protection Team addressed a wide variety of areas including complaint work in terms of noise and other environmental stressors, land contamination (involving the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy), and planning and licensing consultation (as statutory consultees), and continued to maintain all three of the closed landfill sites which SBC managed. One of the major areas of work in the last year had been concerning air quality (alongside all other duties) which remained good across the Borough and fully compliant with all national air quality objectives.

A key achievement was the adoption of the Air Quality Strategy 2025-2030 – the Council's first standalone air quality strategy which adopted a proportionate, preventative approach focused on maintaining compliance and addressing local pollution sources. Significant progress had already been made, including air quality education for over 2,400 primary school pupils, anti-idling patrols and signage outside schools, expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and improvements to fleet emissions. Indeed, Defra (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) had acknowledged the work undertaken by SBC and had given it 'ambassadorial' status (a highly recognised standard).

- Challenges: The most significant challenge facing the service continued to be workforce sustainability, particularly the recruitment, training and retention of Environmental Health Officers within a profession that was experiencing an ageing staff profile. While training and trainee roles remained a key part of future workforce planning, the number of student, apprenticeship and trainee posts had reduced slightly year-on-year. The age profile of the local workforce continued to shift, with around a quarter of Environmental Health Officers now aged over 54 and a growing number approaching retirement. SBC had responded proactively, with four Environmental Health trainees employed since 2022 – however, the wider regional context demonstrated that sustained focus would be required to ensure the service remained resilient, skilled and well-placed to meet future demands.

Commending the Environmental Health service for its successes, particularly the work undertaken within schools in relation to air quality, the Committee encouraged a stronger emphasis on more regular communication of these achievements to the wider public.

Members asked whether the Council carried out pest control activity with Thirteen Housing Group (who used to have a contract with SBC) and were informed that Thirteen now had its own in-house pest control service. Should the Council experience any issues around pest control, root cause analysis was undertaken, and if concerns emerged in / around Thirteen properties, SBC still had statutory powers to intervene if necessary. The Committee heard that the Council had maintained its pest

control team despite other Local Authorities deciding to cease their own offer (relying instead on private companies) – a move which many were since regretting. SBCs proactive approach to pest control included leading on work across the North East, an ongoing regional collaboration which intended to meet with all social landlords regarding pest control matters.

Regarding air quality, Members queried if the Council was getting co-operation from those larger organisations which were having a significant impact on the local environment. SBC officers gave assurance that industrial processes were regularly checked by the SBC Environmental Protection Team and that some were regulated by the Environmental Agency which, as reported previously to the Committee, the Council had strengthened its relationship with over the course of the past year.

From a wider Environmental Health perspective, the Committee noted recent media which highlighted increasing attacks on Trading Standards officers. Members heard that the work undertaken by such teams had the potential to unearth organised crime – something which could result in confrontation. SBC had a zero-tolerance approach to attacks on its officers (seeking justice where required), with safeguards in place to protect staff (e.g. training / body-worn cameras) – however, there was also a reliance on support from partners, particularly the police.

## LICENSING

The SBC Licensing function administered, inspected and enforced more than 50 legislative regimes including, but not limited to, alcohol and regulated entertainment, taxi and private hire, animal activities, street trading, and pavement licensing. Delivering a comprehensive statutory regulatory function, the service ensured licensed activities across Stockton-on-Tees were carried out lawfully, safely and responsibly, with the aim of protecting the Borough's residents. Summarised by the SBC Trading Standards & Licensing Services Manager, key achievements during 2025-2026 were summarised as follows:

- 1,998 service requests were logged, with 1,061 investigations opened. The team received 2,918 licensing applications (2,893 of which were processed on time, with the remaining 25 rejected) and attended 12 Licensing Committee hearings.
- Five underage sales test purchasing operations across 28 premises (involving age-restricted products such as alcohol, vapes and fireworks) were carried out, with enforcement action taken and follow-up compliance work completed.
- 906 drivers (up 25% since 2023), 638 vehicles (up 31%), and 49 private hire operators (up 133%) were licensed.
- Compliance activity included private hire operator and rank checks, school transport vehicle checks at local schools, and four joint operations with the Cleveland Police Matrix Team where 68 vehicles were stopped and inspected (as a result, 21 compliance notices were issued for minor defects, two suspension notices were served, and verbal advice was provided where appropriate).
- Random drug-testing of licensed drivers continued, with 50 tests conducted during the year and two confirmed positive results (down on previous years) – appropriate enforcement action followed in each case to protect passenger safety.

- 11 out of the 13 premises in the target area signed up to participate in the 'Reducing the Strength' scheme (encouraging retailers within Stockton Town Centre not to sell beers, lagers and ciders above 6.5% alcohol by volume) – early outcomes demonstrated a reduction in alcohol-related incidents, reducing from 31 in July 2025 to three by December 2025.
- The service regulated 570 premises licensed under the Licensing Act 2003 and delivered 531 service requests, including inspections, investigations and advisory visits in this area. While enforcement action was required for a small number of problem premises, many businesses remained compliant, allowing officers to focus on prevention and relationship-building.
- 202 Temporary Event Notices were processed, supporting community events, charity fundraising and local business activity. 21 night-time working operations were supported, including general premises checks, joint operations with the Road Policing Unit, and intelligence-led visits.
- Licensing of businesses that provided animal activities licensing continued to increase – the service licensed over 82 animal activity premises and carried out 133 inspections, investigations and advisory visits. Enforcement outcomes included the issuing of cautions for illegal dog breeding where appropriate, alongside ongoing efforts to disrupt activity linked to organised criminal activity.

The report concluded by outlining challenges and emerging issues for the self-funded SBC Licensing service – a small team managing high volumes of reactive work alongside proactive crime prevention activity. Increasing demand, complex cases, and the need for out-of-hours work could stretch capacity and limit the ability to undertake long-term problem-solving work, though the recent merger of Trading Standards and Licensing services was expected to drive improvements / efficiencies and produce a robust and resilient service.

From a wider perspective, economic pressures on licensed businesses could contribute to non-compliance and increased crime and disorder risks. Also, the introduction of the Tobacco and Vapes legislation would have a significant impact on both Licensing and Trading Standards teams, increasing demand for advice, compliance checks, and enforcement activity as new age-of-sale, product and retail requirements were introduced. The legislation was likely to require closer joint-working between services and with partners, alongside additional officer time to support education, intelligence-led enforcement, and transition for businesses adapting to the new regulatory framework.

Welcoming the very positive nature of this element of the report and expressing appreciation for the work carried out by the Licensing service to keep the Borough safe (difficult roles which did not get enough praise), the Committee noted the reference to apprenticeships and asked if these were still offered within the service. SBC officers stated that attracting people into this arena had traditionally proved challenging, and that the Council had made a conscious decision to grow from within using apprenticeships – a move which was bearing fruit. Members emphasised the benefits of making roles appealing to both males and females, and heard that external funding had been confirmed for a specific role in relation to the new Tobacco and Vapes legislation.

The Committee questioned if the Licensing function had any control over pizza delivery vehicles, some of which were seemingly in dubious condition – SBC officers confirmed that there was no requirement for oversight of these, and that such establishments did not need a licence if they were open before and up to 11.00pm.

Final comments came from the SBC Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety who praised the staff working within both the Environmental Health and Licensing services, and noted her personal experience of going out with the teams wherever possible.

## FUTURE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Following the presentation of the overview report, some further context around this item was outlined. In 2025, to facilitate the important overview function of scrutiny committees and provide the opportunity to hold SBC Cabinet Members and services to account, a decision was made to resume overview and performance reporting to the Council's Select Committees (it was noted that the Community Safety Select Committee last considered an overview report in July 2023). It was agreed that this should take place twice-yearly.

Although the reporting of performance measures would not commence until September / October 2026, officers from the SBC Strategic Planning Team were in attendance to briefly outline how future performance information would be presented. With work ongoing in relation to finalising key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, reporting would involve the relaying of 'tier 1' (Council outcomes) measures bi-annually to Cabinet and annually to the Executive Scrutiny Committee and Full Council, with 'tier 2' (service outcomes and progress update, including data that supports SBC strategies / plans) measures being submitted bi-annually to the five Select Committees.

The Committee queried how the Council would ensure the presented performance measures reflected Member priorities. SBC officers stated that there was a page within the Stockton-on-Tees Plan (previously agreed by full Council) about how success would be measured, and that ongoing work to identify the appropriate metrics was all linked to this overarching plan. In terms of future performance reporting, the Committee called for consistency in the colour scheme for the proposed 'progress quadrant'.

AGREED that the Overview Report: SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing (Community Safety & Regulated Services: Environmental Health and Licensing) be noted.

## **CSS/6/26 Scrutiny Review of Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget**

The first evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Community Participation Budget (CPB) and Ward Transport Budget (WTB) considered an initial submission from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Community Safety, Environment and Culture directorate. Presented by the SBC Highway Network & Traffic Team Leader, and supported by the SBC Highways Manager, information covered the following:

- Origins & Evolution
  - CPB: Introduced in 2007 as the *Small Environmental Improvements Budget* (providing a modest, flexible funding mechanism for local environmental works)

that were not prioritised through core budgets), the scheme was later re-named to reflect community participation and Member input (with Ward Councillors promoting projects based on local priorities). This annual Borough-wide pot was initially £400,000 per year (revenue-funded) and was allocated by population. Over time, the eligibility expanded to small engineering works, and in 2019, through the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the scheme was reduced to £200,000 per year, with tighter eligibility introduced to reflect long-term maintenance impacts.

- WTB: This scheme began following a Place Select Committee review of the Area Transport Strategy in 2019 which saw the budget move from an area-based pot that Members would bid into to obtain funds to ward-based allocations which made it easier for Members to access. From April 2020, £150,000 per year was allocated, with funding ring-fenced for transport issues. WTB operated within a structured, evidence-led framework – Members shaped priorities, while officers assessed, designed and delivered schemes to ensure they met safety, legal and affordability requirements.
- CPB v WTB – Key Differences: CPB was revenue funding, which had been identified within the MTFP and supported broader community-focused capital works. WTB, meanwhile, was capital funding from the Council’s annual allocation toward highway priorities from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, and was strictly transport-focused (spending was audited to ensure it was directed toward transport priorities).

CPB could match-fund WTB schemes where there may be a shortfall in available budget. However, WTB funding could not be used for CPB projects as the latter were more environmentally focused (rather than transport-related). Crucially, it was important to emphasise that both budgets remained Council funds, where Members influenced priorities and officers retained overall responsibility for determining validity and for delivery.

- Core Funding Criteria: The Council’s core highway budgets prioritised statutory duties and road safety interventions at locations with proven casualty records (based on recorded evidence from the Cleveland Police road casualty database). The Department for Transport (DfT) assessed how Council’s spent money, and if this was judged to have been used unwisely, funding could be withheld.

CPB and WTB budgets operated differently because they allowed flexibility and could be directed where the concerns of constituents did not meet the evidence thresholds for funding via core budgets. The availability of the CPB / WTB therefore filled the gap between evidence thresholds and lived experience of the Borough’s residents.

- Eligibility
  - CPB: This could be used to capital fund projects, but SBC needed to be mindful of proposals that created ongoing revenue or maintenance costs. Eligibility was therefore refined to avoid unfunded liabilities, and some schemes would only become eligible where third-parties (e.g. Town / Parish Councils or resident groups) took on maintenance.
  - WTB: This was far stricter and operated within a tightly defined framework, where funding could only be used for transport, safety and accessibility

interventions. All schemes required evidence-based assessment to demonstrate eligibility, with projects triggering ongoing revenue costs or amenity scope being excluded.

- CPB / WTB Examples: Several projects facilitated through the CPB and WTB schemes over the past year were highlighted, including physical traffic calming measures, village gateway features to encourage reduced speeds, and parking restrictions.

Examples were also given of carriageway and footway resurfacing where Members chose to use their budgets to bring forward schemes that were already identified as future contenders within SBCs five-year programme (this would allow delivery to be accelerated into the current financial year rather than waiting for their scheduled year). This included a live case in Thornaby, where resurfacing on Cunningham Drive was already programmed for the 2026-2027 year – Members had requested that their budget be used to bring forward resurfacing further along the same route on Tedder Avenue, enabling a larger area of works to be completed while resources were already on site (making a bigger difference to the condition of the highway and a noticeable improvement for residents).

- Monitoring Effectiveness: For traffic-calming schemes, speed surveys were conducted before and after implementation – this provided an objective, evidence-based measure of impact on vehicle speeds. Results from schemes delivered this year on Wynyard Road and Wolviston Road showed significant speed reductions – this enabled SBCs enforcement resources to be targeted elsewhere and also had a positive impact on partners (particularly the police).

For parking restrictions, SBC could look at the locations Members had requested double yellow lines for to overcome parking problems. Supporting this scrutiny review, a sample of completed CPB / WTB schemes were assessed after 12 months which focused on service requests, parking and anti-social behaviour (ASB), and repeat incidents – this showed that no service requests had been received into the SBC Civic Enforcement Team at most locations, with only low-level interventions where they did arise. Such a positive impact allowed Civic Enforcement Officers to turn their focus to issues like ASB and other frontline priorities.

- Scheme Delivery: Using internal SBC teams to deliver CPB and WTB schemes avoided contractor overheads and allowed for a consistent approach to standards across the Borough's highway network. Benefits were also highlighted in relation to long-term assurance (in-house teams could be re-directed quickly to undertake priority / emergency works), the ability to efficiently deliver smaller schemes which were aligned with wider maintenance activity, and supporting jobs / retaining skilled staff (the latter being particularly important as these same professionals were relied upon to carry out the Council's statutory duties in maintaining the Borough's highways, deliver winter services by gritting through the cold winter nights, and responding to emergency incidents like flooding).
- Processes & Timescales
  - CPB: These schemes started with Members submitting project requests, supported by evidence of community need – officers then assessed feasibility, eligibility, costs and risks, and whether consultation was required. Seasonal deadlines applied to some CPB activity (e.g. planting) to allow delivery to be

completed within the financial year – late submissions may be deferred to the next year (contributing to perceptions of delay).

- WTB: This was far more structured, with proposals initially submitted via the online Member portal which then triggered officer investigation (site visits, surveys, historic data review) – only once these were done could the detailed design begin. Often these works required a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), therefore it was not unreasonable for such schemes to take up to nine months before they started to hit work programmes. It was also important to highlight that delivery was reliant on workload and capacity – for both the WTB and CPB, the Council had only one dedicated officer dealing with 27 wards and 56 Members, and there was an additional need to factor in required input from other SBC departments (e.g. Design Services, Legal Services) which may result in extended timescales.

To emphasise the timelines involved in some CPB / WTB-related projects, examples were given on the steps required (along with the approximate timescales for each) for introducing double yellow lines and traffic calming measures (both involving a stringent legal process), as well as litter bins.

- Funding: Both CPB and WTB allocations were divided between wards based on population. Whilst unspent funding could be carried forward into the following year, it was encouraged to be kept to a minimum as there was the possibility it could be re-absorbed or re-allocated (that decision would ultimately be taken by the Cabinet Member, depending on the Council's financial position). For larger projects that exceeded a single year's funding, there was the option to draw down from the following year so as not to delay delivery of good projects (with the caveat that this could not be done during election years where future budgets and memberships were undetermined).

The individual allocations for each of the Borough's 27 wards were outlined (it was reiterated that there was only one dedicated SBC officer to manage all the enquiries, investigations and deliveries), with graphics showing that both schemes had an underspend (58% unspent for the CPB and 73% unspent for the WTB). This situation may reflect capacity to develop and deliver rather than a lack of demand, and could be alleviated by addressing resident concerns about the condition of the Borough's highways (reflected in the annual National Highways & Transport Survey), something which, as previously highlighted, had been undertaken in some wards via the WTB.

- Communications: With regard Members, following an internal 'lean' review, an online platform was being developed to raise requests through the CPB and WTB – this case management solution would show the progress of current schemes and available budgets, with improved record-keeping and communication.

In terms of communicating the schemes to the public, Members played a role in promoting these via ward surgeries / Councillor newsletters, and SBC had historically included articles in Stockton News to highlight the availability of the budgets and the projects it had delivered. It remained important to emphasise that schemes delivered through the CPB and WTB had often generated visible, localised benefits, and strengthened links between Members and their communities.

- Next Steps: Improved guidance documents in relation to these schemes would be produced and circulated to Members highlighting issues raised within this presentation, including the level of detailed investigation, revised costs to reflect inflation, and available resource. As part of this scrutiny review, a demonstration of the new online case management platform was intended.
- Summary: These budgets allowed Members to make local improvements that complemented SBCs core budget and made a real difference to residents (providing flexibility for smaller-scale issues that were not prioritised elsewhere). However, there were challenges to address around delivery capacity alongside the Council's statutory duties (leading to pressures on timescales), the potential for sustainability and revenue implications, and the future communication and visibility of these schemes (particularly to / for residents).

Thanking officers for the comprehensive information provided, the Committee asked if Members were able to use allocated funds for repairing potholes (an issue which was frequently raised by residents). It was stated that neither the CPB nor WTB was generally used for potholes and that approval of such work would have to meet the necessary intervention levels. In terms of road re-surfacing, officers noted that there was more highway needing attention than the Council had a budget for.

With reference to the pie-charts depicting spend patterns for both the CPB and WTB, the Committee requested graphics which showed funds that had been allocated but not yet spent. Officers agreed to provide these at the next meeting in May 2026, though cautioned that ongoing investigations in relation to a proposal could make it difficult to quantify how much a project may ultimately cost.

Reflecting on the workforce resources that the Council had to support these schemes, Members commented that whilst funding may be available to support viable projects, there was clearly a capacity issue in terms of getting proposals implemented / delivered. In response, officers suggested that, in order to ensure the Council was prioritising the most impactful repairs to the Borough's highway, details on what roads were listed on the maintenance programme could be shared with Members to see if these locations mirrored what residents were raising concerns about.

#### WARD COUNCILLOR SURVEY

An updated list of proposed Ward Councillor survey questions was tabled which reflected Member comments that were subsequently received following the circulation of the initial draft at the last Committee meeting in March 2026. These were agreed (subject to a minor re-wording for one question) and would be issued to all SBC Elected Members in the near future.

AGREED that the information submitted by the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Community Safety, Environment and Culture directorate be noted, and further information be provided at the next meeting as requested.

**CSS/7/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027**

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed the Committee that the final report following the Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse was presented to Cabinet in mid-April 2026. All recommendations were subsequently endorsed.

WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme. The next meeting was due to take place on 28 May 2026 where the next evidence-gathering session would be held for the Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget review. The draft Action Plan in relation to the recently completed Children affected by Domestic Abuse review would also be presented for approval, and the first update on progress of the agreed actions following the previously completed review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres would be received.

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Community Safety Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027 be noted.

Chair: .....