

Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of the Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday 28 May 2026.

Present: Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Chair), Cllr Katie Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Stephen Dodds (sub for Cllr Shakeel Hussain), Cllr Jason French, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson (sub for Cllr John Coulson)

Officers: Richard Bradford, Sharon Cooney, Mandy MacKinnon (A,H&W); Louise Hollick (ChS); Andrew Corcoran, Simon Milner (CS,E&C); Gary Woods (CS)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Shakeel Hussain

CSS/8/26 Livestreaming

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

CSS/9/26 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CSS/10/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CSS/11/26 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Community Safety Select Committee meeting which was held on 30 April 2026 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 April 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSS/12/26 Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations - Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

Presented by the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Assistant Director – Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care, and supported by the SBC Strategic Health & Wellbeing Manager, consideration was given to a draft Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the recently concluded review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse would be implemented, including success measures and target dates for completion.

Noting involvement from both Harbour (the local domestic abuse support service that was commissioned by SBC) and the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding

Children Partnership (HSSCP) in collating this draft document, specific attention was drawn to the following:

- Recommendation 3 (Options be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings (hospitals and primary care)): This recommendation had already been achieved following confirmation that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland had agreed to extend funding for the University Hospital of North Tees IDVA by a further six months. Collaboration with NHS partners regarding future steps beyond this extended period would continue.
- Recommendation 8 (SBC provides assurance to key partners and all Elected Members around the changes to its 'front door' to services for children and their families (note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026), including how existing partnership arrangements will be maintained / enhanced): This recommendation was already deemed achieved following briefings given to SBC Elected Members and key partners on the changes to the Council's 'front door' to services for children and their families.

Regarding recommendation 3 (above), the Committee commended officers and the OPCC for Cleveland for the prompt agreement to extend funding for the local hospital IDVA, particularly given the clear benefits the role brought to those who had experienced domestic abuse. This was a very positive development which addressed a key element of the Committee's findings.

In terms of recommendation 4 (*All organisations improve their recording of details (including a child's age) of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) (note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026) and local support service, Harbour (even when domestic abuse is only one of several reasons for a referral being submitted)*), the Committee queried if there had been any early progress in relation to data retention. Members were informed that data on referrals featuring domestic abuse factors was being retained within the new Family Help Point, with information produced weekly and reviewed on a monthly basis.

From a wider SBC perspective, the Committee asked how the proposed actions would feed into domestic abuse-related work being undertaken as part of the Council's *Powering Our Future* (POF) initiative. SBC officers stated that domestic abuse was being looked at as a risk factor for severe and multiple disadvantage in adulthood, and would continue to be a key consideration around early help discussions / planning. The Committee then approved the content of the draft Action Plan as presented and requested the first update on progress of the agreed actions in early-2027.

AGREED that the Action Plan in relation to the recently completed Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse be approved.

CSS/13/26 Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations – Welcoming and Safe Town Centres

Consideration was given to the assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Committee's previously completed review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres.

Presented by the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Service Manager – Public Protection, and supported by the SBC Community Safety Manager, this was the first progress update following the Committee's agreement of the Action Plan in May 2025. Supplemented by associated presentation slides, developments regarding actions linked to the Committee's recommendations were highlighted as follows:

- Recommendation 1 (Future refreshed versions of relevant Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) long-term strategies (e.g. Stockton-on-Tees Plan, Community Safety Strategy, Inclusive Growth Strategy) identify and reflect the unique nature of each of the Borough's six town centres, and outline how SBC and its partners will maximise a sense of 'welcoming' and 'safe' within these spaces (acknowledging the key findings of this review)): The uniqueness of the Borough's six town centres was recognised within several key SBC strategy documents, a number of which (e.g. Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, and Inclusive Growth Strategy) had been updated and published since the Committee concluded its review.

Learning from *Operation Shield* (a Stockton town centre initiative (referenced within the revised Community Safety Strategy 2025-2027) which aimed to improve safety through enhanced visibility, proactive engagement, and co-ordinated responses to issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and vulnerability) was informing how similar principles could be adapted in other town centres, proportionate to their scale and need (e.g. feasibility discussions were ongoing over whether Stockton's 'Reducing the Strength' campaign should also be rolled out in Norton town centre).

- Recommendation 2 (Utilising existing partnerships (including engagement with local business forums / groups), consideration be given over how to maximise the annual events and markets programme to provide further opportunities for increased footfall / exposure to town centre environments): Aided by the identification of a Single Point of Contact (SPoC) from relevant SBC departments, the Council engaged enthusiastically with local partners to improve footfall into the Borough's town centres. Several mechanisms enabled this collaboration including the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP), Stockton Business Improvement District (BID), Security Forum, *Operation Shield*, Pub Watch, Shop Watch, and daily partnership meetings. SBC Community Safety officers had contributed and led on problem-solving projects to address issues in both Thornaby and Billingham town centres, liaising with the police, housing providers, fire service, SBC Town Centre Regeneration, and SBC Public Health.

SBC Community Safety was embedded into event planning considerations (e.g. Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF), Yarm Fair) and was represented at meetings to maximise the annual events and markets programme which provided further opportunities for increased footfall / exposure to town centre environments. Presentation data showed higher footfall in April 2026 compared to May 2025 for all six town centres apart from Norton (which remained the same) – Billingham, Thornaby and Yarm had seen significant rises compared to nearly a year ago, whilst a more modest rise had been experienced in Ingleby Barwick.

- Recommendation 4 (There should be a specific 'town centres' element to the SBC Communications Strategy which reflects greater and more consistent use of communication platforms (online and print media) to proactively market the Borough's town centres (including periodic marketing campaigns) and promote positive developments, ensuring this reflects all six town centre spaces (not just Stockton)): There was a specific 'town centres' element within the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, and Regulatory Services, annual communications plan which made consistent use of a host of communication platforms and engaged external media stakeholders to proactively market the Borough's six town centres and promote positive developments, including community safety. Example campaigns included the Stockton waterfront urban park, Thornaby regeneration schemes, Norton High Street improvements, Yarm improvements, *Operation Shield*, Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs), 'Reducing the Strength', events held in the town centre such as Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) and SIRF, markets promotion, court cases, and closure orders where there had been positive action around ASB and criminality.
- Recommendation 5 (SBC engages with the Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative to establish effective ways in which to publicise / promote the Borough's town centre offers to young people): Examples of engagement with BMBF, and its impact on service delivery, included consultation on the Community Safety Strategy 2025-2027, consideration of feedback on what made young people feel safe within town centres, and BMBF participation in Family Fun Days and the 'Takeover Day' within SBC Community Safety and Regulated Services.
- Recommendation 6 (SBC provides the Committee with an evaluation of the 2023 implementation of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Stockton and Norton town centres, including details of how this was / is resourced, and whether such an approach may be suitable for other town centre spaces within the Borough): Following the introduction of identical PSPOs in Stockton and Norton town centres in April 2023, there was an immediate 52% reduction in reported begging incidents in Stockton town centre (2023-2024). Initial deterrence was effective, largely due to warnings and the threat of legal action. Reports of street drinking, and action taken to address this, increased.

However, over time, the deterrent effect diminished, with public perception suggesting a lack of visible enforcement and confusion about alcohol consumption rules in public spaces. Consultation took place with the public at the end of 2025 (as well as with key SBC staff and partners), with feedback incorporated into the revised, and now different, PSPOs for both Stockton and Norton which went live in April 2026. Importantly, vulnerable people continued to be directed to relevant support services.

- Recommendation 8 (The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland provides the Committee with the outcomes of its evaluation of the recent anti-social behaviour (ASB) hot-spot patrols in Billingham, Stockton and Thornaby): A report had been received from the OPCC for Cleveland which showed mixed results concerning crime and ASB. Suggesting that areas with higher levels of serious violence were more resistant in responding to efforts to lower ASB, data indicated that Norton saw a 2.63% reduction in ASB, and Billingham a 10.17% reduction. However, Stockton town centre had experienced a 5.88% increase in ASB (July 2025 – March 2026).

- Recommendation 9 (Cleveland Police ensures incidents reported to them by the business community are captured and reflected within its own crime / ASB recording systems): A force-wide governance structure was in place for retail and business crime, and the recently completed strategic retail crime plan, supported by a 4P delivery plan (Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare), established a consistent framework for engagement, information-sharing, and co-ordinated activity across partners. Cleveland Police actively encouraged reporting of retail and business crimes which not only assisted with detection but also built intelligence for effective crime prevention initiatives to be developed. Various partnership-focused initiatives had led to a 17.8% drop in shop thefts in Stockton town centre during the preceding six months from December 2025.
- Recommendation 10 (Cleveland Police and SBC consider further ways in which greater police / enforcement visibility can be achieved within the Borough's town centres, particularly around identified hot-spot areas for crime / ASB / congregations of groups of individuals with addiction issues, as well as anticipated new developments (e.g. new Stockton waterfront)): There was clear evidence of multi-agency improvements being made to better resource town centre environments (e.g. *Operation Shield*, the Cleveland Police 'Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee' (a neighbourhood policing uplift programme), and OPCC support). Given the increased demand in Stockton town centre and the regeneration project at the waterfront, the Council had committed to not only maintaining daily foot patrols within the town centre but increasing the team by an extra two in summer 2026. These patrols would contribute to a consistent and visible uniformed presence, providing reassurance to residents, visitors and businesses, whilst also supporting early intervention and problem-solving.
- Recommendation 11 (Where appropriate, consideration be given to the introduction of multi-agency, co-located hubs within town centre spaces to provide sanctuary, support and signposting for those with addiction needs) and recommendation 12 (SBC and its relevant partners formulate an agreed plan for managing and supporting highly visible street drinkers / drug-users (who may or may not be ready for recovery)): Work was actively underway to explore and apply best practice approaches to improving engagement with individuals experiencing addiction-related needs within town centres – this was being progressed through the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) Programme. A decision was recently made to pursue a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) of professionals, both clinical and lived experience, from statutory bodies and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, to improve and encourage access to support and recovery for those suffering from alcohol and drugs addiction.

Commending the progress made since the agreement of the Action Plan linked to the Committee's previously completed review, Members acknowledged the work of the OPCC for Cleveland in relation to retail crime, though noted that the police often felt let down by the courts which were handing down inappropriate / lenient sentences to shoplifters, meaning these individuals were soon committing crimes again. In response to a Committee query on whether this issue needed to be raised with relevant authorities, SBC officers supported the relaying of any feedback on the challenges being faced as a result of decisions made by courts.

With reference to recommendation 3 (*As far as possible, SBC ensures the ongoing and future development of the Borough's town centres maximises accessibility, with appropriate amenities (e.g. seating / toilets) to support the experience of those using*

these spaces, and the promotion of existing public transport options into these areas) and the seven House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) applications refused since 2022, Members asked if the Council provided support to those proposing such developments (e.g. around good management). SBC officers stated that the Council's Planning Team gave advice around HMO applications and that these were sometimes re-submitted after SBC guidance.

Highlighting the perception that it was a no-crime area, the Committee noted that there was little mention of Ingleby Barwick within the information provided despite there being recent incidents of arson and shoplifting. SBC officers offered to feed back any identified issues to the relevant Cleveland Police Neighbourhood Police Team (NPT) and would ensure Ingleby Barwick featured more prominently in the next update to the Committee.

Members returned to the rolling 12-month graph included within the *Operation Shield* slide of the presentation and sought clarity over which area/s this pertained to. SBC officers explained that the graph illustrated the drop-off in reported ASB within Stockton town centre compared to April 2025, most likely because of the revised PSPO which was now active within that space.

Observing that there were only three weeks until the opening of the new Stockton waterfront urban park, the Committee sought assurance that appropriate plans were in place to ensure community safety around this key development. SBC officers reiterated the use and visibility of dedicated personnel (numbers of which would be boosted for specific events (e.g. Armed Forces Day)), and the Council would continue to work / plan with police, mindful that deployment to this new park should not adversely impact other areas of the Borough.

AGREED that the Welcoming and Safe Town Centres progress update be noted and the assessments for progress be confirmed as stated.

CSS/14/26 Scrutiny Review of Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget

The second evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Community Participation Budget (CPB) and Ward Transport Budget (WTB) considered a further submission from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Community Safety, Environment and Culture directorate. Presented by the SBC Highways Manager, and supported by the SBC Highways, Transport and Design Manager, information covered the following:

- Project Delivery (Schemes in progress)
 - WTB: A total of 36 schemes were in progress (nearly half of which were now in the programme for delivery, with the remainder being almost evenly split between the 'investigate / consult', 'further information required', or 'awaiting programming' stages), totalling just over £175,000. 44% of these were in relation to parking restrictions, 42% for highway engineering, 11% for traffic calming, and 3% for resurfacing.
 - CPB: 95 schemes were currently being worked through (the vast majority of which were now in the programme for delivery, with a very small number either still being investigated / consulted upon or requiring further information), totalling just over £165,000. 57% concerned planting projects, 15% for CCTV, 8% in relation to boulders and bollards, 4% for bins, and 4% for benches. The

remaining 12% was marked 'other' for projects involving different themes / categories.

- Project Delivery (Proposals not taken forward): There had been 48 proposals not taken forward in the last 14 months (covering the full 2024-2025 financial year and the 2025-2026 financial year to date). 21 were not progressed for reasons such as cost eligibility or a lack of evidence (e.g. a demonstrable safety issue), 17 had technical constraints (e.g. the proposal conflicted with another planned scheme), and 10 did not proceed due to other priorities (e.g. re-direction of funds to alternative schemes). It was important to note that significant officer time / resource was required on an application even if a decision was subsequently made not to proceed.
- Eligibility Criteria
 - CPB: Schemes should focus on local community and environmental improvements, must demonstrate local need and community benefit, and must be feasible and deliverable. Decisions to proceed with proposals which created ongoing revenue or maintenance costs were limited, and some schemes required third-party maintenance arrangements.
 - WTB: This budget was restricted to transport, safety and accessibility schemes and must be supported by evidence (e.g. safety data / speed surveys). Proposals required full technical assessment and design, and must be safe, compliant and deliverable on the highway network. The WTB was not suitable for non-transport or revenue-based schemes.
- Project Summary (Spend profile): As previously stated, CPB schemes costing just over £165,000 and WTB schemes totalling just over £175,000 were in development and committed, whilst the cost of those projects that were not progressed came to nearly £432,000. It was emphasised that any underspend in relation to either budget reflected schemes that were either in development or constrained by delivery factors, not by a lack of demand / interest.
- Revenue Implications: Proposed new schemes had the potential to create ongoing revenue costs which may in turn influence eligibility. Examples of such projects (and associated revenue implications) included the installation of CCTV (requiring monitoring costs), planting (needing maintenance / watering), bins (to be emptied / serviced), road markings (necessitating periodic refresh and enforcement), and speed indicator devices (creating energy costs, with mobile devices needing to be rotated to different locations).
- Benchmarking: Comparisons with other North East Local Authority Member-related budget schemes demonstrated variance in the level of funding available, along with differences in governance and control, and project eligibility / purpose. A graphic highlighted the budget models, key features and key constraints of similar schemes operated by Hartlepool, South Tyneside, Durham, Northumberland, Doncaster and Stockton-on-Tees Councils.

Although funding models differed quite considerably between these six Local Authorities, there were common challenges around revenue and maintenance pressures, expectations versus deliverability, and officer capacity and competing priorities. Highways-related projects were becoming increasingly evidence-led (a national trend), but Member budgets did allow for some flexibility (albeit within

limits). It was felt that the current model in Stockton-on-Tees provided a balance between project flexibility and control, but that SBC was experiencing similar challenges to other Local Authorities in terms of operating such budget schemes.

OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBER-RELATED BUDGET SCHEMES

Supplementing the latter part of the SBC Community Safety, Environment and Culture directorate presentation, a paper highlighting further Member-related budget schemes offered by Local Authorities across the country (including links for further detail) was summarised.

Again, whilst it was recognised that funding allocations and processes / governance differed from the SBC model, it was also apparent that these schemes were very transparent to the public. Councils elsewhere provided individual Ward Councillor spend (City of Stoke-on-Trent), a breakdown of projects funded along with photographic evidence (Hillingdon), and interactive maps of projects completed through their current scheme (Royal Borough of Greenwich).

WARD COUNCILLOR SURVEY

Quantitative feedback received thus far in relation to the previously issued SBC Ward Councillor survey was tabled for information (it was noted that the survey deadline was tomorrow (Friday 29 May 2026)). As of 22 May 2026, there had been 21 responses from SBC Elected Members – it was subsequently agreed to extend the survey deadline to Friday 12 June 2026 to provide an opportunity for further views to be submitted.

TOWN / PARISH COUNCILS AND LOCAL RESIDENT SURVEYS

Proposed survey questions for Town and Parish Councils were tabled for approval – these were subsequently agreed and would be circulated to relevant contacts after this meeting.

Proposed survey questions for local residents were tabled for approval – these were subsequently agreed and would be circulated to existing engagement mechanisms via the SBC Community Engagement Team after this meeting.

AGREED that:

- 1) the information submitted by the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Community Safety, Environment and Culture directorate be noted.
- 2) the deadline for responses to the Committee's survey for SBC Ward Councillors be extended by two weeks (to Friday 12 June 2026).

CSS/15/26 Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) – Previous Minutes (January & March 2026)

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meetings which took place in January and March 2026.

AGREED that the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meeting which took place in January and March 2026 be noted.

CSS/16/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair stated that the executive summary of the Committee's final report following its review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse had been presented to the SBC Executive Scrutiny Committee where several recommendations were highlighted (including the call for options to be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings).

WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme. The next meeting was due to take place on 2 July 2026 where the final evidence-gathering session was scheduled for the ongoing Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget review.

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

Chair: