

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday 20th May 2026.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Robert Cook)
Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Zagoria, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Judy Trainer, Michael Henderson, Peter Bell, Sarah Whaley, John Devine, Junita Agyapong, Clare Harper, Marc Stephenson, Simon Grundy and Neil Mitchell

Also in attendance: Press and public

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton and Cllr Marcus Vickers

COU/21/26 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

COU/22/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

COU/23/26 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 18 March 2026 and 1 April 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 18 March 2026 and 1 April 2026 be confirmed and signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

COU/24/26 Public Question Time

Question 1

The following question was submitted by Dan Poole:

“I set up a suicide prevention initiative called One More Life in 2017 and was making some good progress in 2019, sadly my best friend tragically took his own life on December 6th, 2019. I am currently going through the process of registering as a charitable organisation in Stockton. What support can I access through the council in terms of people, infrastructure, and resources to ensure that we have a robust set up this time round and that we can reduce our high rates of suicide locally?”

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

“Thank you for your enquiry. I am very sorry to hear about the tragic loss of your friend. The Council is continuing to work with partners including the NHS and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector on this important issue, to promote mental health and wellbeing and access to the support available. I am aware that you had a telephone conversation with one of our managers in the Public Health team to help ensure you are connected with the appropriate support, and it is great that you intend to undertake trainer training in both Safe Talk and ASIST (applied suicide intervention skills training). We are aware that you are also pursuing Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status with support from Catalyst.

The role of VCSE organisations is key in raising awareness, providing support and promoting the voice of people with lived experience in prevention and response around mental wellbeing. The Council actively participates in suicide prevention and the Public Health team will facilitate a link to the Tees Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator and the many suicide prevention partners within their network who contribute to the delivery of the Tees Suicide Prevention Strategy. We also commission services: Cruse to provide a post-vention offer to people and communities affected by suicide; and the Tees Mental Health Training Hub which provides applied suicide intervention skills training and many other courses related to mental health. Both of these services are part of the afore mentioned network. We will also connect you to the Council's community engagement team to support you further and we would like to wish you well in your endeavours.”

Question 2

The following question was submitted by John McDermottoe:

“What assessment has Stockton Borough Council made of the financial impact that Net Zero-related policies are having on local industry, manufacturing competitiveness and household costs across the Borough?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council adopted an Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ESCRS) in 2022. The strategy states that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should act as a catalyst to encourage and inspire residents, businesses, and other organisations to adopt practices and take positive action which will contribute to an environmentally sustainable borough.

The UK government's Net Zero Strategy aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 through a comprehensive legal framework established by the Climate Change Act (2008). Stockton-on-Tees ESCRS strategy is aligned to the UK government's Net Zero Strategy; however, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has not conducted a financial impact assessment in relation to achieving the Governments ambitions."

John McDermottroe asked the asked the following supplementary question:

"Given growing concerns, will the Council publish how the Strategy will impact financially on business and residents?"

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

"Financial spending is monitoring closely by the Council and there are regular reports presented to Cabinet. We need to comply with the legislation but will continue to monitor the impact on our residents."

Question 3

The following question was submitted by John McDermottoe:

"What assessment has Stockton Borough Council made of the impact that rising levels of migration and asylum accommodation are having on local housing availability, temporary accommodation demand and public services within the Borough?"

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety (Councillor Norma Stephenson) responded with:

"The Council's Housing Service uses both national datasets and locally collated information to understand the number of refugees and asylum seekers residing within the borough. The Council's Integration and Support Service works collaboratively across internal service teams and with wider statutory partners to assess and respond to any implications this may have on council services.

As with all local authorities supporting an asylum seeker population, the Council receives Home Office Asylum Grant funding. In line with the funding instructions, these monies can be used to support both statutory and non-statutory services.

It is also important to note that the Council has been designated by the Home Office as a 'maintain and replace' local authority. This means that the Home Office is not actively increasing the number of asylum seekers placed within the Borough."

John McDermottroe asked the asked the following supplementary question:

"Will the Council commit to publish clear local figures?"

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety (Councillor Norma Stephenson) responded with:

"This is not a problem as all figures are already published on the Government website."

Question 4

A public question had been submitted by David Blair. However, the questioner was not present at the meeting therefore it was advised that a written reply would be sent to him.

COU/25/26 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies 2026/27

Consideration was given to a report asking Council to consider a nomination to the Standing Conference on Religious Education (SACRE).

RESOLVED that Councillor Marc Besford be appointed to SACRE.

COU/26/26 Stockton on Tees Local Plan

Consideration was given to a report seeking the Council's agreement to commence a new Local Plan in accordance with Regulations and the establishment of a cross party consultative advisory steering group.

A number of detailed questions were raised at the meeting in relation to the process and following discussion it was proposed by Councillor Richard Eglington, seconded by Councillor Niall Innes and

RESOLVED that the item be deferred to a future meeting to allow consideration of the questions raised.

COU/27/26 Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 Direction

Consideration was given to a report seeking adoption of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document. The report also outlined next steps in relation to confirmation of the Article 4 Direction.

RESOLVED that Council:

- 1) Notes and consider comments of Planning Committee in relation to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document.
- 2) Adopts the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A) and its accompanying technical appendices (Appendices B to D).
- 3) Delegates authority to approve non-material and minor alterations to the SPD and its accompanying technical appendices to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, prior to publication.

COU/28/26 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Consent Street Trading Policy Review 2026

Consideration was given to the revised Consent Street Trading Policy, following receipt of a valid petition, a public consultation and comments received from General Licensing Committee.

RESOLVED that the proposed consent street trading policy be approved.

COU/29/26 Motions to Council

Motion 1

It was moved by Cllr Niall Innes, seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan and unanimously:

RESOLVED

This Council notes the increasing concerns raised by residents across the Borough regarding unsafe, inconsiderate and obstructive parking, particularly around school entrances, bus stops and residential streets. Residents regularly report issues including blocked pavements preventing access for those with disabilities or pushchairs, vehicles stopping in restricted zones outside schools creating dangerous conditions for children and parents, and persistent parking in locations where enforcement is difficult to maintain. These issues not only cause daily frustration but pose genuine risks to safety and accessibility within our communities.

This Council further notes that a number of local authorities, including Middlesbrough Council, utilise mobile CCTV enforcement vehicles to support parking enforcement, particularly in locations where on-foot enforcement is difficult or impractical.

This Council further notes that:

- Evidence from Middlesbrough shows such vehicles have issued hundreds of Penalty Charge Notices annually, historically generating around £18,000 per year, with more recent figures indicating ongoing income in the region of £5,000–£10,000 per year;
- These vehicles are primarily deployed at school entrances, bus stops and high-risk locations, where they improve compliance and reduce dangerous parking behaviour;
- Over time, the number of contraventions typically falls, demonstrating a clear deterrent effect and improved driver behaviour;
- This Council recognises the ongoing concerns raised by residents regarding unsafe and inconsiderate parking, particularly around schools, and the pressure this places on existing enforcement resources.

This Council further recognises that a mobile CCTV enforcement vehicle has the potential to:

- Support enforcement teams by covering multiple locations efficiently;
- Improve road safety and accessibility in high-risk areas;
- Generate income that can contribute towards offsetting its cost over time;

Therefore, this Council resolves to request that the Cabinet:

- 1) Undertake a full options appraisal on the introduction of a mobile CCTV enforcement vehicle within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council;
- 2) Report on:

- The full capital and revenue costs, and the expected payback period;
 - The anticipated impact on parking compliance and road safety, particularly around schools;
 - The potential level of income generation and cost recovery;
 - Comparative data and outcomes from neighbouring authorities, including Middlesbrough;
- 3) Identify how any proposal could be funded within existing resources, including opportunities for reprioritisation within current enforcement, highways or transport budgets;
 - 4) Set out clear arrangements for transparency and reporting, annual publication of performance, income and compliance data.

Motion 2

It was moved by Cllr David Reynard and seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:

“This Council notes that:

Despite receiving over £4.4 million per year in Central Government funding for highways maintenance, many roads across the Borough remain in a visibly deteriorating condition, with residents frequently raising concerns about poor surfaces, recurring defects, and roads worn down to their base layers.

Council further notes that:

- Only 1.05% of the total road network has been treated through planned works in the last year
- No Central Government funding has been used directly for reactive pothole repairs, despite these being one of the most common issues raised by residents
- The cost of repairing a single pothole averages £75–£80, while resurfacing larger areas can deliver longer-term value at significantly lower cost per square metre
- The Council does not hold key data on:
 - Repeat repairs within 12 months
 - Defects not meeting intervention thresholds
 - Outstanding repairs or response times
- The proportion of unclassified roads in “poor” condition has increased to 22%, highlighting deterioration in the roads most used by residents

Council recognises that:

Whilst asset management principles and lifecycle modelling are important, residents judge the effectiveness of highways maintenance by the visible condition of roads in their communities, and there is growing concern that the current approach is not delivering the standard expected.

This Council believes that:

- The current balance between reactive repairs and preventative maintenance is not delivering the improvements residents expect
- A lack of transparency in key performance data makes it difficult to properly assess value for money

- Too many roads are falling below acceptable standards but are not being addressed due to intervention thresholds
- A more targeted, transparent and outcomes-focused approach is required

Council resolves to:

1) Improve Transparency and Accountability

- Publish an annual Highways Maintenance Report detailing:
 - Roads treated (by type and location)
 - Spend by category
 - Network condition trends
 - Backlog estimates
- Introduce clear reporting on:
 - Average repair times
 - Number of outstanding repairs
 - Repeat repairs within 12 months

2) Review Intervention Criteria

- Undertake a formal review of current defect thresholds to ensure that roads with widespread deterioration are not excluded from repair due to technical criteria
- Report back to Cabinet with recommendations within 6 months

3) Prioritise Residential and Unclassified Roads

- Develop a targeted programme focused on unclassified roads, where condition is deteriorating most significantly
- Ensure future funding allocations better reflect the roads most used by residents

4) Strengthen Value for Money

- Expand the use of preventative and planned resurfacing programmes where this reduces long-term costs
- Review the balance between reactive and planned maintenance spending, with a view to reducing repeated short-term repairs

5) Introduce a “Worst First” Programme

- Identify and publish a rolling list of the worst affected roads in each ward
- Commit to a clear timetable for intervention

6) Enhance Local Member Involvement

- Provide Ward Councillors with greater input into prioritisation of local highways works
- Introduce a mechanism for Members to formally raise roads for review

7) Ensure Effective Use of Funding

- Require a report to Cabinet within 12 months assessing:
 - The impact of Government funding on road condition
 - Whether current delivery models represent best value for money.

RESOLVED that as action requested in the motion is an executive function, the motion be referred to Cabinet under rule 3.42 of Council Procedure Rules.

COU/30/26 Members' Question Time

Question 1

The following question was submitted by Cllr Sufi Mubeen:

“The Home Office developed Clear, Hold, Build, as a framework for tackling serious and organised crime at a neighbourhood level, involving partners and the community in delivering and sustaining reductions in serious organised crime, related crime, and Anti-Social Behaviour.

In 2023 this Labour led council adopted this strategy in the Stockton Town Centre and Ropner Ward’s. Moving forward the strategy was headlined under the Project Harmony and Operation Nightfall banners.

Can the Cabinet Member please update members as to the progression of these initiatives?”

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety (Cllr Norma Stephenson) responded with:

“Since adopting the Home Office Clear, Hold, Build framework in 2023, the Council and partners have delivered Project Harmony and Operation Nightfall in Stockton Town Centre and Ropner Ward with clear success. The initial Clear phase focused on disrupting organised crime through arrests, enforcement activity and high visibility patrols, led by Cleveland Police with strong Council support. This moved into the Hold phase, maintaining a sustained multi-agency presence, challenging inappropriate HMOs and licensing applications, and embedding community engagement. The Build phase then strengthened community resilience through residents’ groups, Family Hub drop ins, environmental improvements and targeted community investment. These initiatives have resulted in significant and sustained reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour, and by late 2025 the programme transitioned from an intensive project into business as usual, with key elements such as Operation Nightfall patrols, Family Hub engagement and councillor walkabouts continuing into 2026.”

Cllr Sufi Mubeen asked the following supplementary question:

“Would the Cabinet Member agree that in reality incidents of anti-social behaviour, including rape and violence are on the increase in Ropner and other town centre wards despite promises by the Council to make these areas safer and that the Council is giving tax payers’ money to street workers?”

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety (Cllr Norma Stephenson) responded with:

“The answer to the first part of the question is no and the Council is not providing money to street workers; refreshments are being provided by A Way Out and Change Grow Live.”

Question 2

The following question was submitted by Cllr Nathan Gale:

“Could the Cabinet Member outline what actions Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is currently taking—and plans to take—to increase the uptake of Supported Internships for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including how the Council is working with local employers, education providers and support organisations to expand opportunities and improve outcomes?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Cllr Clare Besford) responded with:

“Thank you Mr Mayor and Cllr Gale.

I am proud to speak about the ambitious work we are delivering to create a more inclusive future and expand opportunities for young people across Stockton-on-Tees—particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

At the heart of our approach is a simple but powerful belief: every young person, regardless of their background or needs, deserves the chance to thrive, to contribute, and to build a meaningful future. Inclusion is not an add-on—it is a foundation for stronger communities and a healthier local economy.

That is why we are delivering a bold programme to expand and improve Supported Internships across the borough. These internships provide young people with SEND the invaluable opportunity to gain real-world experience, build confidence, and move towards sustainable employment.

To accelerate this work, we have appointed a dedicated Supported Internship Coordinator within our SEND Service for the next 18 months. This role is already playing a vital part in strengthening partnerships, increasing capacity, and ensuring that our offer is both inclusive and impactful.

But we know that real change requires planning ahead. That is why we are now identifying and supporting young people from as early as Year 9—gathering data, understanding their aspirations, and forecasting future demand. By doing this, we can better design clear, structured pathways into Supported Internships and beyond, ensuring no young person is left behind or overlooked.

Crucially, we are also working to grow opportunities across our local economy. We are collaborating with employers within our own organisation and with major partners such as Amazon, Asda, and our local primary schools. Alongside this, we are strengthening ties with the Employment Hub, the Tees Valley Combined Authority, and our voluntary sector partners. Together, we are opening up a wider, more diverse range of job roles—reflecting the talents and ambitions of the young people we support.

This work is not just about creating opportunities—it is about ensuring they are meaningful and of high quality. We are improving consistency across our Supported

Internship programmes through regular review meetings with employers, education providers, careers services, and social care partners. This joined-up approach ensures that every young person receives the support they need to succeed.

We are also enhancing how we communicate these opportunities. We are finalising a strengthened Local Offer and refreshing the marketing and branding of Supported Internships, making it clearer, more accessible, and easier for families and young people to navigate.

And importantly, we are celebrating success. We have already held a Supported Internship Marketplace and a regional celebration event. I'm looking forward to the graduation event in June which is one of my favourite events. It's a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on the achievements of our young people and the commitment of our partners.

All of this work is driving towards a shared goal: widening employer choice, improving programme quality, and providing clear, joined-up information. Most importantly, it ensures that more young people with SEND can access Supported Internships and progress into paid employment or other positive next steps.

Because inclusion is not just about access—it is about opportunity, dignity, and aspiration.

If we get this right, we are not only transforming individual lives—we are strengthening our communities, enriching our workforce, and building a borough where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential.”

Question 3

The following question was submitted by Councillor Tony Riordan:

“Will the Cabinet Member join me in recognising the excellent work of our HR Team, particularly the People and Talent Acquisition Manager, who recently led the successful in-house recruitment process for the Director of Neighbourhoods role with professionalism, energy and positivity, delivering a service that not only surpassed previous external agency exercises, but also secured a significant saving to taxpayers at a time of tight financial pressures?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Cllr Paul Rowling) responded with:

“Thank you, Councillor Riordan.

I am very happy to join you in recognising the excellent work of our People and OD team in delivering the recent recruitment process for the Director of Neighbourhoods.

Having been directly involved, I saw first-hand the professionalism, organisation and attention to detail that underpinned the exercise from start to finish. A great deal of work went into ensuring that the process was not only robust and well managed, but also gave Members the confidence to make such an important senior appointment.

It is fair to say that Members involved were impressed with both the quality of the arrangements and the way the process was conducted.

What this demonstrates very clearly is that we have strong capability within our own organisation. The People and OD team have shown that we do not need to rely on costly external support to deliver complex senior recruitment. We can do it ourselves, and we can do it well.

The campaign attracted a strong and credible field of candidates, which speaks to both the quality of the role and the reputation of the Council as an employer. That is important, because attracting high calibre leadership is critical to delivering the services and outcomes our residents expect.

Just as importantly, this approach delivered a significant saving when compared to the use of an external executive recruitment agency. At a time when every pound of public money must be spent wisely, this is exactly the approach we should be taking, driving value for money while maintaining high standards.

This is not just about one appointment. Building and retaining this expertise within our People and OD team strengthens the Council as a whole. It puts us in a better position to respond to a challenging and competitive labour market, and to ensure we can recruit the skilled and committed workforce we need across all of our services.

As a Council, we are ambitious for our communities, and that ambition depends on the people we employ. It is therefore vital that we continue to present ourselves as a modern, inclusive and forward-looking organisation, and one that offers real opportunities to build a meaningful career in public service.

I would encourage anyone who wants to make a genuine difference in their community to consider Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as an employer of choice.

Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to everyone involved for their hard work, their professionalism, and the positive and determined way in which they represented the Council throughout this process.”

Cllr Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for your response.

Moving forward, will the Cabinet Member agree with me, and the long-standing position of the Conservative Group, that the recent in-house recruitment exercise highlighted the many opportunities that are available within Stockton Borough Council to trade our services, such as recruitment, HR, etc, to other local authorities and businesses in the local and regional areas, and as such will they now commit to joining the Conservative Group position in exploring those openings as part of the transformation programme going forward?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Cllr Paul Rowling) responded with:

“Although recruitment is a fluid area, I agree that this is something that could be explored provided that there is capacity to do this and it would not impact on what the team was employed to do.”

Question 4

The following question was submitted by Councillor Niall Innes:

“Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the 1st Month of the new bin collection regime?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Cllr Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“The Council has launched the most significant changes to waste collection services in over 20 years which has seen the launch of the nationally mandated weekly food waste collections, as well as a shift to fortnightly refuse collections alongside a move to weekly dry recycling collections. This service has already seen a significant improvement in recycling rates and we expect Stockton will move swiftly up both regional and national league tables in relation to the redirection of waste from traditional disposal methods.

As expected, the first month has not been without challenge, although collection rounds have largely been delivered as scheduled, with the majority of properties receiving their collections on the correct day. Some initial disruption was experienced during the first week as crews adapted to the new collections and tipping arrangements at our new waste transfer station and our residents have also needed to get used to a change in collection arrangements although this has bedded down in recent weeks.

As a direct consequence of all the national changes for food waste and the impact on vehicle manufactures to supply all English councils with new vehicle at around the same time, we have not yet received our full allocation of new recycling vehicles which has resulted in us needed to use some of our existing recycling and flatbed vehicle to supplement the new fleet – it anticipated that all of our new fleet will be delivered by early June.

The biggest positive is the level of participation by the residents and how well they have responded to the new collection arrangements, with resident participation being monitored at around 80% in the first 6 weeks after the new services launched – this is based on resident engagement participation modelling over a 3 day period although more statistically meaningful data will follow over the next 6 month period. .

As a result of the overwhelming levels of participation by residents, we have seen a reduction in general waste which would have ordinarily been disposed of at the Energy from Waste facility (EFW) of over 30%.

Overall, while there were the expected teething problems associated with a significant service change in week one, collections since then across both waste and recycling services has been excellent and staff across Community Services have delivered an outstanding service in a very short space of time.”

Cllr Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

“All Councillors have a heavy casework, but we have seen this increase with complaints about missed collections and rats. Would you agree that the changes have caused inconvenience to residents and have caused more problems than they have solved?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Cllr Paul Rowling) responded with:

“We recognise that issues such as rats are not new and are experienced widely, although this is something we take seriously. We are approaching the introduction of food waste collections in a measured and considered way, as many other councils have done successfully over a number of years.

Some of the challenges experienced to date have been linked to the availability of a full fleet, and it is worth noting that other Local Authorities have encountered similar issues during implementation. As an interim solution, certain collections have been co-mingled and then separated at a later stage. Once the full fleet is in place, we will return to the original operating model.

We would like to commend both Community Services and the engagement team for their work throughout this process. We also recognise and thank residents across the Borough, as this has required a significant change in behaviour, and they have risen to it.

We will have a clearer indication of the long-term success of these changes over time.”

COU/31/26 Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement

“Mr Mayor, since our last meeting Cabinet has continued to meet regularly and progress a wide range of work across the Borough, with decision records circulated to Members in the usual way.

At our next Cabinet meeting we are due to consider a number of reports covering adult services, children’s services, housing, environmental delivery and regeneration activity.

This includes reports relating to supported and temporary accommodation, reablement services, learning disability care provision and wider environmental and green infrastructure proposals linked to the Powering Our Future programme. Cabinet will also receive a report arising from scrutiny work relating to children not in school.

As always, these reports reflect both the increasing complexity of demand facing local government services and the continuing importance of investing in our communities, neighbourhoods and public spaces despite the ongoing financial pressures councils continue to face nationally.

Alongside that work, activity continues across the Borough on regeneration, economic development and service transformation as we move further into the new financial year. I know Members across the chamber will recognise the scale of work being undertaken by staff across all service areas to continue delivering services for residents day in and day out.

Before I finish, I also want to highlight what promises to be a fantastic community event for the Borough next month as Stockton hosts Armed Forces Day celebrations within the new Stockton Waterfront urban park.

It will be the first major public event held within the new park and is a fitting way to recognise the contribution of serving personnel, veterans and armed forces families from across our communities. The programme will include community activities, live performances and a ceremonial flypast by the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, which I know will attract considerable interest across the Borough.

Events such as this are an important reminder not only of the contribution made by our armed forces, but also of the role that community events and public spaces play in bringing people together.

And finally, Mr Mayor, as fellow Boro supporters, recent events have at least reminded us both that if you cannot quite get the job done on the pitch, a strong legal strategy can still apparently get you to Wembley.

I am sure our Monitoring Officer and legal team will be pleased to see the legal profession finally receiving some overdue public recognition.

Thank you, Mr Mayor.”