

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday 21st May 2025.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Stephen Richardson)
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 Robert Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, 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 Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, 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 Paul Rowling, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Weston and Cllr Paul Weston

Officers: Mike Greene, Garry Cummings, Reuben Kench, Majella McCarthy, Graham Lyons, Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Laura Kelsey, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell and John Devine

Also in attendance: Members of the public

Apologies: Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

COU/26/25 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

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

COU/27/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

COU/28/25 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 March 2025 and 2 April 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

COU/29/25 Public Question Time

Public Question submitted by Sarah Moreland for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):

“How many additional staff have SBC employed over the last 8 years and what percentage are working from home?”

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

“Thank you for the question.

From 2017 to 2025, the Council's workforce—excluding maintained schools—increased by 111 people, from 3,183 to 3,294. That's a rise of around 3.5%.

However, this modest increase follows a more significant reduction earlier in the decade. In 2011, the Council employed over 4,260 people. That number fell sharply in the years following austerity, and while we've seen gradual stabilisation since around 2018, the overall workforce remains nearly 1,000 people smaller than it was in 2011.

This is part of a wider national picture. According to the Local Government Association, more than 90% of councils are now facing recruitment and retention difficulties, and that includes us—particularly in areas such as social care.

On homeworking, we don't hold live, centralised data on how many staff are working remotely at any one time, as working patterns are managed at service level to suit operational needs. That said, approximately 50% of roles are eligible for some form of flexible or remote working. Among those, most staff do work flexibly to some degree.

These arrangements are supported by our Smarter Working Policy, which is a key part of our Colleagues Powering Our Future mission. That mission is about empowering our workforce to do the best they can for our communities, using their skills and knowledge to meet the changing needs of the Borough.

Smarter working also allows us to be more efficient—it has enabled us to rationalise our office estate, reducing costs for residents and helping us modernise the way we work. It also makes the Council more inclusive, giving opportunities to people with different availability, such as those with caring or parental responsibilities, who want to stay active in the workforce.

We are committed to being an employer of choice, with a diverse, talented and empowered workforce that's fit to meet the future demands of the Borough and deliver our ambitious plans for our residents.

We are passionate about ensuring we have a passionate and productive workforce. Our working policies enable us to appeal to a wide range of potential employees and provide flexibility within reason for our existing workforce. The labour market is constantly adapting, particularly post covid, and we must ensure that we continue to be an attractive employer against strong private and public sector competition.”

Sarah Moreland asked the following supplementary question:

“With regard to those staff who work from home, is there a limit on the number of days they may do so?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

“There is no specific limit, instead working patterns are decided on a team-by-team basis under a hybrid model with officers attending the office when required.”

Public Question submitted by Sarah Moreland for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“Can SBC confirm if the Stockton Hilton Hotel is or ever has been used to house asylum seekers? If it has how much did this cost the council?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Despite lots of misinformation and rumours, the Hilton Hotel has never been used to house asylum seekers”

Public Question submitted by Mo Waqas for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“With the recent increase in employer National Insurance Contributions from 13.8% to 15% and the reduction of the earnings threshold to £5,000, businesses in Stockton-on-Tees face significant financial challenges. Given that sectors like retail and hospitality are already vulnerable and may experience further strain, what specific measures is the Council implementing to support local businesses and prevent potential job losses in our community?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“In Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, we have an excellent business support team that offers tailored services whether to a startup or an established business. The team offer a direct link to the wider business support landscape across the Tees Valley across the Tees Valley working with partners to connect local businesses with funding, training, innovation, export and growth opportunities.

We have tailored support on workforce development and apprenticeship schemes through our excellent employment and training hub. The hub also offers hands on recruitment support from job vacancy promotion and candidate matching to bespoke pre-employment training to help business save time and money. All of these services are free and we have excellent relationships with our local businesses to help and support when needed.”

Mo Waqas asked the following supplementary question:

“To prevent money draining out of the local economy, can the Council guarantee that procurement policies will prioritise local suppliers?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“We have lots of policies in place to support local business and independents and want to see out local businesses thriving.”

Public Question submitted by Mo Waqas for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“With Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council facing a projected funding gap of £7.78 million for the 2025/26 financial year, representing 3.18% of its revenue budget, and the recent approval of a 4.95% Council Tax increase to address these financial pressures, what specific measures is the Council implementing to ensure essential public services are maintained without placing an undue financial burden on residents?”

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport of the Council responded with:

“Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, like many local authorities nationwide, continues to experience significant financial challenges. Between 2010 and 2024 the council’s budget was cut by over £1 billion in real terms. The government has given a commitment to review local authority funding through the fair funding review and we have seen this year an increase in government funding. The projected overspend of £7.7 million for the 2024/25 financial year is largely due to increased demand for services. The pressures on adult social care and children's services are well documented around the country. The shortfall for this financial year was addressed in the budget approved by the Council in February. As a reminder, there was no proposal presented at that meeting by any political group that would have reduced council tax for this financial year.

We are dedicated as an organisation to constantly reviewing what we do and finding new and innovative ways to work to ensure that every penny of taxpayers money is spent as effectively as possible. The Council is embarking on a transformation programme to deliver savings and improve service delivery. This initiative aims to deliver £9m, and to date, £5.8 million in savings have already been identified, with further options currently under exploration.”

A public question was submitted by Hadia Malik for response by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Lisa Evans. However, as Ms Malik was not present at the meeting, it was advised that a written reply would be sent to her.

A further public question was submitted by Hadia Malik for response by the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Cllr Pauline Beall. However, as Ms Malik was not present at the meeting, it was advised that a written reply would be sent to her.

Public Question submitted by Luke Frost for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Cllr Nigel Cooke):-

“The impact of fly tipping within our communities are costing the council dearly, what is being done to prevent fly tipping within our urban areas?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture responded with:

“Firstly, there are now tougher penalties – Councils are cracking down on offenders with fines and even seizing vehicles used for dumping waste. Resent proposals from Central Government will make enforcement action faster to tackle this blight on communities.

Secondly, we’re making good use of surveillance technology – CCTV and mobile cameras are being used in areas where fly-tipping happens often.

Thirdly, public education remains an essential tool– Waste awareness campaigns are helping people understand the impact of fly tipping and how to dispose of waste properly. Engagement with schools and other community groups also regularly occur as we look to take a preventative approach by educating people on the right way to reduce and dispose of waste.

Fourthly, we will continue to targeting illegal waste collectors – We are encouraging people to use licensed waste carriers and are taking action against unregistered and unlicensed carriers operating in our community alongside partners such as the Environment Agency and Cleveland Police.

These efforts aim to keep our communities cleaner and reduce the cost of dealing with illegal dumping.”

Public Question submitted by Luke Frost for response by the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety (Cllr Norma Stephenson):-

“Councillors across the Borough are using ward budgets to pay for CCTV, can the council breakdown the costs per ward and how many CCTV cameras are currently being paid for in this way within each ward?”

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety, the Leader of the Council responded with:

“Community Safety is a key priority for this Council and this is why we have invested heavily in our frontline services including CCTV and enforcement officers.

Our Control Room Operatives undertake a vital and often unseen role, protecting us 24 hours per day, 365 days per week. In the last 12 months, this brilliant team responded to nearly 8000 incidents across the borough which resulted in 947 arrests. We currently have over 600 cameras monitored in our state-of-the-art control room. These cameras are located in key strategic areas which data and intelligence tells us crime is occurring. We also recognise that some Councillors also have priority areas in their own ward based on resident's concerns. There are currently 15 CCTV cameras which have been funded in this way, in the last financial year.

WARD	COST PER ANNUM
Billingham North	£3,900.00
Bishopsgarth and Elmtree	£8,200.00
Hartburn	£7,800.00
Mandale and Victoria	£3,900.00
Newton	£11,700.00
Norton South	£3,900.00
Village	£11,700.00
Yarm	£8,574.00

Public Question submitted by Jacob Jervis for response by the relevant Cabinet Member:-

“Speaking to a close resident, he encountered an unfortunate situation where his car was set on fire by youths. Later on it was confirmed these youths were housed within residential care. He later found this attack was mistaken identity but was drug related. How do you plan on getting social workers to take measures to protecting children from the ever increasing dangers of drugs and crime?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded with:

“I want to begin by acknowledging the deeply troubling incident that has been raised here tonight. This is completely unacceptable. No resident should have to live in fear, and no child should ever end up in a situation where they’re involved in crime or drug-related violence.

We take this incredibly seriously. But I also know that we need to look beyond the immediate headlines to understand the why. Why are some of our most vulnerable young people ending up in these situations? And what are we doing to stop it?

The answer lies not just in reacting to crime—but in tackling its root causes. That’s why this Council has committed to the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework. Because the uncomfortable truth is this: poverty, inequality, and exclusion are feeding a cycle that puts vulnerable children at risk of exploitation.

It is a sad fact that some young people in Stockton grow up facing limited opportunities. Some are living in poverty, others are excluded from school, or struggling with mental health without the support they need. These aren’t excuses—these are warning signs. And if we don’t act early, criminal gangs and drug networks will step in where public services have been stretched too thin.

That’s why we are:

- Investing in early help and youth support, especially in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Creating a dynamic space with the No Limits Hub in the heart of the town centre to engage children and young people creatively.
- Utilising innovative resources for training and awareness raising for example the use of immersive VR headsets to raise awareness of exploitation and criminal exploitation and how quickly things can spiral out of control so that our young people are more aware of the risks and how to spot the signs of exploitation.
- Assigning key workers to consistently respond to the same children who go missing from home, fostering strong relationships and identifying necessary interventions.
- Accepting referrals for children aged 10-17 involved in repeated anti-social behaviour, aiming to provide support and intervention with our Turnaround programme
- And crucially, pushing for long-term solutions—more jobs, better education, and secure housing—to give every young person a chance at a better future.

But let’s be honest. We can’t do this alone. Years of government cuts have left our services under immense pressure. If we’re serious about protecting children and keeping our communities safe, we must confront the causes, not just respond to the symptoms.”

Public Question submitted by Jacob Jervis for response by the relevant Cabinet Member:-

“How do you plan on tackling youth and drug related gangs in Billingham?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded with:

“Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in all our communities is a top priority for this Labour-led Council. Unlike others who talk tough but deliver little, we are taking real action—and it’s making a difference. Across Stockton-on-Tees, we’ve seen significant reductions in recorded crime and disorder, but we know the job isn’t done. That’s why in Billingham, we’re leading from the front to confront youth crime and drug-related issues.

Our approach is clear: a Labour solution built on prevention, partnership, and enforcement. Working through the Safer Stockton Partnership and in close collaboration with Cleveland Police, teams are in schools, youth services, and on the streets—identifying young people at risk of exploitation before gangs get to them.

Through CURV (Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence), we’re using a public health approach that tackles the root causes of violence, not just the symptoms. This is real early intervention—officers visiting schools, engaging with teachers, and supporting parents to divert young people from harm before it’s too late.

We’ve increased visible patrols, backed by intelligence-led operations that are disrupting drug networks and gang activity. We’re also investing in our Community Safety teams and reviewing our youth services, creating safer spaces where young people can find support, take part in positive activities, and build brighter futures. That’s the Labour difference—we don’t just police problems, we prevent them.

And let’s be clear: this is only possible because of our firm commitment to partnership working and our push for increased police numbers in Stockton. We’ve fought for—and secured—more officers on the ground, because our communities deserve to feel safe and be safe.

While others cut services and chase headlines, Labour is delivering results: safer streets, stronger communities, and real hope for our young people. There’s more to do, and we’re not slowing down. Labour will keep leading the fight against crime—with our communities, not just for them.”

Public Question submitted by John McDermottroe for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Cllr Richard Eglington):-

“Has a date been fixed to start the demolition of the West Precinct at Billingham Town Centre & how long is the whole regeneration set to take?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“At this stage it is anticipated that demolition of West Precinct will begin in Spring 2026. This date is not fixed, with a start to any demolition works dependent upon finalising arrangements between the Council and the town centre owners as well as the relocation of tenants from West Precinct.”

Public Question submitted by John McDermottroe for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Cllr Richard Eglington):-

“Is SBC paying for the relocation of the current West Precinct occupants & will their new premise refurbishments be paid for? or is this coming out of the £20M Government funding?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“Any eligible costs associated with the relocation of occupants of West Precinct will be met through Levelling Up Fund. The cost and works to enable vacant possession of West Precinct will be assessed on a case by case basis.”

Public Question submitted by Julie Dolan for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“Regarding the move to Dunedin House, are the new council offices leased or purchased and what is the cost and how is that paid for? What are the plans for the old unused SBC buildings?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Dunedin House is owned by the Council. We previously had a plan to purpose build new council offices on the riverside. However, Dunedin House became available offering us a significant saving. Previously staff were housed over many separate buildings which required significant investment to maintain. Dunedin House was purchased in 2021 costing £3.2m including stamp duty and other fees. The purchase costs were funded by prudential borrowing as part of the wider office accommodation rationalisation strategy. The future use of the remaining corporate administration buildings are considered as part of the Council’s Strategic Asset Management Plan which is ongoing.”

Julie Dolan asked the following supplementary question:

“What savings will there be from the move?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Savings are significant and can be provided after the meeting. The move has allowed us to bring Council staff under one roof, saving on repairs of the different buildings which can now be re-purposed and put up for sale.”

Public Question submitted by Julie Dolan for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“The Stagecoach Depot on Portrack has been fitted with new transformers and about 30 charging points - did the council contribute to this and if so by how much, what was the funding strategy and how does this benefit the taxpayer?”

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

“Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council did not contribute to the installation of new charging points and electrical infrastructure at Stagecoach’s Depot. This was a jointly funded scheme by Stagecoach, the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Department for Transport to enable the roll out of Zero Emission Buses.”

Julie Dolan asked the following supplementary question:

“Is there a likelihood that bus fares will be increased to cover the investment?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

“That is a matter out of our control and you should raise this with the Tees Valley Mayor.”

COU/30/25 Yarm High Street One Hour Free Parking Petition

Consideration was given to a report presenting a petition calling for the reinstatement of one hour’s free parking on Yarm High Street. The petition had been confirmed to contain 3,400 valid signatures and read:

“Stockton Council to keep free parking on Yarm High Street.

Free Parking is crucial for supporting local businesses, encouraging footfall, and helping Yarm’s economy thrive. The Council’s changes to eliminate 1 hour free parking risks harming small businesses and deterring shoppers.”

The petition met the threshold for debate under the Council’s Petition Scheme and the report outlined the various options available to the Council in responding to the petition.

A local businessman, Paddy Morton, presented the petition on behalf of the Lead Petitioner, Matt Vickers MP citing what he believed had been the detrimental impact on business of the charge and lack of consultation.

It was moved by Councillor Niall Innes and seconded by Councillor Jack Miller:

“Council notes that:

There is vast public and business support for scrapping the new parking charges imposed by this Council and a return to the first 1-hour free model.

Council resolves:

That given the strength of feeling and lack of support for these new parking charges, that the matter is referred to Cabinet to reconsider this matter. Cabinet is requested to consult fully with local businesses on the parking charges to understand the full implication of the parking charge policy on our high street.

Following this engagement, the recommendation to Cabinet is to reverse the new policy and revert back to the original first 1-hour free model.”

Councillor Paul Rowling moved, seconded by Councillor Jim Beall, that the motion be amended to read as follows:

“Council notes that:

There is vast public and business support for scrapping the new parking charges imposed by the Council and a return to the first 1-hour free model.

Council resolves:

That given the strength of feeling for these new parking charges, that the matter is referred to Cabinet to reconsider this matter. Cabinet is requested to consult fully with local businesses on the parking charges to understand the full implication of the parking charge policy on our high street.”

The amendment was put to the vote and not carried (21 for the amendment; 27 against the amendment).

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.65, it was requested that a recorded vote be taken on the substantive motion, which was supported by at least a quarter of the Members present.

Members in favour of the motion: 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 Robert Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglinton, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, 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 Paul Rowling, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Weston and Cllr Paul Weston (51).

Members against the motion: None.

The motion was carried and it was:

RESOLVED

Council notes that:

There is vast public and business support for scrapping the new parking charges imposed by this Council and a return to the first 1-hour free model.

Council resolves:

That given the strength of feeling and lack of support for these new parking charges, that the matter is referred to Cabinet to reconsider this matter. Cabinet is requested to consult fully with local businesses on the parking charges to understand the full implication of the parking charge policy on our high street.

Following this engagement, the recommendation to Cabinet is to reverse the new policy and revert back to the original first 1-hour free model.

COU/31/25 Appointments to Committees, Joint Committees and Outside Bodies 2025/27

Consideration was given to a report presenting nominations to vacant seats on committees and panels, outside bodies and Chairs' positions.

RESOLVED that the following amendments/ appointments be made for the Municipal Years 2025 – 27:

Appointments Panel

Add: Cllr Jim Beall and Cllr Bob Cook

Corporate Parenting Board:

Remove: Cllr Pauline Beall – Add: Cllr Clare Besford

Cleveland Fire Authority

Remove: Cllr Sufi Mubeen – Add: Cllr John Gardner

Tees Active Board

Remove: Cllr Ray Godwin – Add: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Tees Valley Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Remove: Cllr Steve Nelson and Cllr Pauline Beall (substitute) – Add: Cllr Jim Beall and Cllr Marc Besford (substitute)

Procurement Collaborative Committee (aka NEPO)

Remove: Leader – Add: Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources

Local Government Association General Assembly

Remove: Cllr Bob Cook – Add: Cllr Paul Rowling

Community Safety Select Committee

Appoint: Cllr Ann McCoy as Chair

Place Select Committee

Appoint: Cllr Jim Beall as Chair

COU/32/25 Motion to Council

A motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40, moved by Cllr Ted Strike and seconded by Cllr Stephen Richardson.

In moving motion, Cllr Ted Stike agreed to incorporate some changes to the wording of the motion included within the agenda for the meeting.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried and it was:

RESOLVED

Council notes that while it may grant a dispensation to a councillor under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 where they are unable to attend meetings due to illness or other valid reason, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council does not currently have a formal policy setting out the process or duration for such dispensations.

Council further notes that many other local authorities operate policies which require councillors to reapply for a further dispensation if their absence continues beyond six months.

Council therefore resolves:

1. To introduce a formal policy governing the process for granting dispensations under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.
2. That the policy shall include the following key provisions:
 - A councillor must apply for a dispensation before reaching six months of non-attendance at meetings.
 - The initial dispensation, if granted by Council, will last for a maximum of six months.
 - Should the councillor remain unable to resume attendance at Council meetings at the end of that period, they may submit a further application for consideration by Council.

COU/33/25 Members' Question Time

Member Question submitted by Cllr Niall Innes for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Cllr Nigel Cooke):-

“To ask the Cabinet member for an update on the recent changes to Bin Collections and the introduction of Garden Waste Collections. Specifically:

- Out of the total number of households in the borough, how many have signed up?
- What was the reasons for the delays in people getting their bins?
- What is the total amount raised so far through the introduction of the new £40 a year Bin and how has that impacted the amount it was hoped to raise?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture responded with:

“As of 16th May 2025, there has been a total of 19,400 subscriptions and 20,500 bins have been ordered since going live in January 2025.

We don't believe there were any delays in residents receiving their new brown bin, if they ordered them before the cut-off date. Due to the logistics in delivering a large number of bins throughout the borough, it was regularly communicated to residents to 'Make sure you sign up to the new garden waste collection service by 14 February to ensure you receive your bin for the first collection date in April'. Residents who signed up after this date would still receive their new brown bin but it would not be guaranteed for the first collection of the new service as the next phase of deliveries did not start until 24th March 2025.

From the subscriptions referenced above, the Council has received income of Circa £800,000. This compares to the £600,000 forecast for 25-26 that was referenced in the October Powering Our Futures Cabinet report. This income will be monitored through the ongoing budget monitoring processes and reported to members in line with this. I feel this is good value for money.”

Cllr Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

“Despite residents paying £40 per annum for a brown bin, we have been told that it is fine for people to put garden waste in their ordinary bin. If they asked for a refund would they get one?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture responded with:

“No, this is not the message we are trying to communicate. We would prefer that residents who have regular green waste to dispose of, by using a brown bin.

For residents like myself with small gardens, who don’t generate a lot of garden waste, I would prefer that they either book a slot at the Haverton Hill Recycling Centre as I did last Sunday, or that they dispose of the waste in an environmentally friendly manner.”

Member Question submitted by Cllr Katie Weston for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“As the leader is aware, for the first time in over a decade the Clarences finally have a direct bus to Billingham, although limited and on a trial basis. This bus service is getting cancelled next week, as a private bus company cannot make a profit from a customer base of a village, especially off-peak. Does the leader agree that bus services shouldn’t be ran purely on a profit motive, and instead, like Teesside Airport, should be ran as a public service?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“I totally agree that every area across the Borough deserves access to a regular bus service. Unfortunately, this has proved problematic over many years for vulnerable communities like the Clarences. I firmly believe that transport cannot purely be run on a profit motive and the needs of communities must be taken into consideration.”

Councillor Katie Weston asked the following supplementary question:

“Will the Leader ask the Tees Valley Mayor to subsidise the Clarences bus service to Billingham?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“I will undertake to contact the Tees Valley Mayor to seek his support in securing bus subsidies for all vulnerable areas.”

Member Question submitted by Cllr Paul Weston for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“At the January council meeting, this council passed a motion to write to the Tees Valley Mayor asking that buses be taken back under public control, in the same way that is happening across the North of England. Have we had an answer yet?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“I have checked with the previous Leader and we have received no response from the Tees Valley Mayor. However, receipt of the letter was acknowledged by staff on behalf of the Tees Valley Mayor.”

Councillor Paul Weston asked the following supplementary question:

“This is very disappointing. Can the Leader write again to demand an answer?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“I am more than happy to write again to the Tees Valley Mayor to seek a response.”

Member Question submitted by Cllr Ted Strike for response by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Cllr Paul Rowling):-

“Could the Cabinet Member please provide information on the Council’s current working from home arrangements, specifically:

- a) What percentage of the workforce, who are eligible to work from home, currently do so?
- b) What is the general policy on the number of days per week staff are permitted to work from home (e.g. two or three days)?
- c) Are there any controls in place to manage how many staff work from home on the same days?
- d) What percentage of eligible staff work from home on each day of the week – Monday through to Friday?
- e) What percentage of staff work from home on both Mondays and Fridays?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

“Thank you, Councillor Strike.

The Council’s approach to flexible and remote working is shaped by our Smarter Working Policy, which forms part of the Council’s Workforce Strategy and supports our wider Colleagues Powering Our Future mission. This mission is about ensuring we have a committed, empowered and skilled workforce to deliver the Council’s priorities in a challenging financial climate.

Smarter working is not just about location—it’s about making the best use of our people, processes, technology and workspaces to deliver for our residents. It’s also key to supporting one of the seven priority areas in our Workforce Strategy: ensuring we are an inclusive, healthy, well-supported organisation with the right skills in place for the future.

Turning to your specific questions:

(a) While we don't hold live corporate data on how many staff are currently working from home, around 50% of roles are suitable for flexible or remote working. Among those, most employees do work flexibly in some form.

(b) There is no set corporate rule on the number of days per week permitted for homeworking. Arrangements are agreed between staff and managers depending on the needs of the service. In many cases, two or three days per week is common, but the pattern is not prescribed.

(c) There is no need for a corporate dictat in this area. Working patterns are best managed at team and service level to ensure appropriate coverage, continuity of service, and opportunities for in-person collaboration.

(d and e) The Council does not currently record which specific days staff work remotely, so we cannot provide data on day-by-day patterns or on staff working from home on both Mondays and Fridays.

Our approach has also supported wider benefits. We've been able to rationalise our office space, making savings for residents. And flexible working supports our ambition to be an inclusive employer—making space for colleagues with different life circumstances, such as carers or part-time workers, who might otherwise be excluded from traditional working models.

We're building a workplace that is adaptable, resilient and focused on wellbeing. Through smarter working, we continue to aim to be an employer of choice, aligned with our communities and capable of delivering for the Borough, both now and in the future.

We are committed to being an employer of choice, with a diverse, talented and empowered workforce that's fit to meet the future demands of the Borough and deliver our ambitious plans for our residents.

We are passionate about ensuring we have a passionate and productive workforce. Our working policies enable us to appeal to a wide range of potential employees and provide flexibility within reason for our existing workforce. The labour market is constantly adapting, particularly post covid, and we must ensure that we continue to be an attractive employer against strong private and public sector competition."

Cllr Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:

"When the last Chief Executive was in post, staff could work from home two days a week and then this was increased to three days. Clearly this is not the approach anymore. However, no policy on this has been taken through Council. Does the Cabinet Member agree that there should be a clear policy on this matter as staff can't be supervised if they are not in the office."

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

"There is no need for a prescriptive approach or changes to staff contracts. Our staff have different roles and it is best that working arrangements are agreed between staff and managers. The hybrid model of working also means that we can be efficient about

our Council accommodation and workspaces. What we are doing works. There are no concerns about supervision or performance, and we commend our staff for their dedication to their roles.”

Member Question submitted by Cllr Marcus Vickers for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Cllr Nigel Cooke):-

“We have seen the crisis in Labour ran Birmingham City Council, with well over 21,000 tonnes of rubbish piling up in the streets and rats bigger than cats, causing misery and health risks for residents.

Can you provide reassurances and detail what resilience or emergency planning measures are in place in relation to waste collections, to ensure that no such crisis will happen here within Stockton Borough Council?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture responded with:

“Whilst we are not fully aware of the specific issues in Birmingham, here in Stockton-on-Tees we have a long-standing record of maintaining excellent working relationship with our waste collection staff, with mutual respect and regular engagement between frontline colleagues and managers within the service, to ensure that we continue to deliver high performing services. This is a critical service to our residents and to ensure a continuation of the excellent service that we have all become accustomed to, a rigorous and robust business continuity plan is in place which ensure effective continuation.”

Councillor Marcus Vickers did not have a supplementary question but placed on record his thanks to the Council's waste collection staff.

Member Question submitted by Cllr Niall Innes for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Lisa Evans):-

“At Full Council on 22nd January 2025, I put forward a Motion that sought the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to outline the Council's desire for the Government to enact a full public inquiry in to Grooming Gangs.

The motion also asked 'That the Leader of the Council engages with local stakeholders and meets with them alongside other Group Leaders to discuss what this Council can do to robustly support and protect young people of this borough most at risk'.

Despite my motion successfully passing, I understand that the second part has not been undertaken and no meeting has yet been arranged. Can I ask why this is?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Innes, I do appreciate it.

The motion passed by Council in January 2025 included a request that the then Leader of the Council engage with local stakeholders and meet with them alongside other Group Leaders to consider what further steps could be taken to support and protect young people at risk.

Since that time, I have taken on the role of Leader. I have not received any proposals from the originating group as to how such a meeting would be structured, what it would aim to achieve, or how it would align with the Council's existing arrangements.

As Leader, and previously in my role as Cabinet Member for Children's Services, I have always engaged regularly with partners and stakeholders on issues relating to the protection of children and young people in our borough and have always had an open door policy to discuss anything with Councillors.

More broadly, the Council engages routinely with relevant partners through formal governance and partnership structures, particularly in the areas of safeguarding and community safety. These include, for example, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Community Safety Partnership, and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Having taken advice, it is also important to note that, under the Council's Constitution, the Leader holds executive responsibilities in relation to external engagement. Other Group Leaders do not have an equivalent role and are not able to exercise executive functions or represent the Council in external forums in the same way.

As the motion did not define a format, structure or specific objective for the proposed meeting, and as the approach suggested falls outside the Council's formal governance framework, no further steps have been taken at this stage in relation to that aspect of the resolution.

However, I am more than happy to meet with Group Leaders to explore this. If you have any ideas about how we can take that forward, then I remain open to considering any constructive proposals that you may have."

Councillor Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

"I appreciate that there has been a change in Leader, however, the response is unsatisfactory as the Council motion has not been actioned. The Leader should have reached out first, not waited for a Council question."

The Leader of the Council responded with:

"My response had already addressed this question. Due to recent surgery, I have not yet had the opportunity to meet with Group Leaders, but I look forward to doing so."

Member Question submitted by Cllr Ray Godwin for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Cllr Richard Eglington):-

"Recently it was announced that global online retailer Amazon will be opening a new site on land near to Queen Elizabeth Way. Although I welcome such investment. Sites such as this can attract hundreds of truck and van movements each day, working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What is the current provision for truck parking and driver facilities, toilets, showers etc within SBC? and what additional facilities and parking are planned to support this new facility?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“The Council is aware of recent press articles concerning this land and Amazon. The site is subject to a live planning application and, as such, it would be inappropriate to provide direct comment on the details of those proposals, however, parking for HGVs and any associated facilities deemed to be required as an integral part of the proposed development would be considered as part of the application and required to be provided where necessary.

In terms of current provision, as these tend to be on a site-by-site basis it is not information that the Council currently holds, however, both officers and I look forward to working with councillor Godwin about the issue.

I feel it's important to keep talking to businesses. Businesses need to feel they are part of the community alongside residents, I would like them to feel they are investing in communities and not just sites. I want them to feel and understand the social benefits of investing in our great communities.”

Councillor Ray Godwin asked the following supplementary question:

“It is a legal requirement for drivers to take proper breaks or they could lose their licences. Adequate parking and facilities need to be available. When companies do not meet their responsibilities, this pushes vehicles into residential communities. What lessons can we learn from going forward?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“Businesses need to understand the social benefits of investing in the community and I look forward to working with Councillor Godwin on this issue.”

Member Question submitted by Cllr Sylvia Walmsley for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Cllr Richard Eglington):-

“Will the Cabinet Member join with me in praising the progress and partnership working carried out to date by the Thornaby Town Deal Board? Will he also give a comprehensive update regarding the programme of works, especially with regard to demolition of the Golden Eagle and construction of the new swimming baths? This is to counteract deliberately mendacious and misleading information which is fed into the public domain by people who know better which causes widespread concern amongst the Thornaby people.”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“After a protracted and complicated period of negotiation The leasehold interests in the Golden Eagle were secured, giving the Council the unencumbered freehold of the building in October 2024.

Since that point a number of checks, surveys and inspections of the building have taken place allowing us to better inform a specification of tender documents to enable the demolition of the property. The tender process has now closed, with tenders being assessed with a view to appointment and start on site as early as possible, this is aimed to be done for the end June 2025. Timescales remain an estimate until the tender and appointment process is concluded and a contract programme agreed with

the successful demolition contractor. Full details on programme and milestones will be shared once agreed.

With regards to the pool, a contractor (Galliford Try) was appointed to undertake a two-stage design and build contract for the works to the pavilion leisure centre and construction of new pool and gym. The first phase involves carrying out the final stages of detailed design throughout the summer with a view to concluding design in August 2025 and starting on site in September 2025. It is anticipated that the construction phase will take circa 12 months.”

Councillor Sylvia Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:

“Would the Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader agree that we must communicate better in future and keep the public informed of any delays to counteract negative publicity?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“Rumour and speculation are fed by online comments, mainly from people looking to be online influencers rather than actually delivering something great for the town. They have enjoyed talking down the hard work of the town deal board.

I will take some of the criticisms on the chin; at times the Council, the Board and the members have not communicated what was happening well enough. There has been a vacuum of information, and all vacuums get filled. We must get better at shouting about our successes

I would like to say something about the town deal board. Since I joined it, I have been encouraged in the way that the members (most of the members) have worked together, I feel that under the great chairmanship of Mark White, members have worked with a common goal to improve the lives of our residents and the great town of Thornaby. And I would like to thank all members and the Chair, Mark White.”

COU/34/25 Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement

The Leader of the Council gave her Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement:

“Thank you for attending a very productive full Council meeting. We do welcome your questions and motions.

Since our last meeting on 2 April, Cabinet has met twice on 17 April and again on 15 May, to discuss key areas that matter to our residents.

We have endorsed important scrutiny reviews, including:

- Affordable Housing: We have backed a hybrid delivery model to build more quality homes
- Holidays are Fun: We are strengthening our much loved programme of holiday clubs and meals for children
- We have progressed our major regeneration plans for Billingham Town Centre and its new Sports Hub and look forward to seeing this progress

Cabinet will meet again on 12 June, with a strong focus on children's services. We will be looking at:

- A full Fostering Review to help us recruit, retain and support more local foster carers
- A new approach to the Children's Front Door, as we move towards a dedicated safeguarding hub for Stockton-on-Tees
- Updates on Bright Minds Big Futures and the Powering our Future programme

Looking ahead, I would encourage everyone to support two upcoming events in the Borough.

We have our brilliant Environment Fair on 14 June and we then have the much loved Armed Forces Day on 21 June. A chance for us all to thank those who serve and have served and after the success of our VE day celebrations which sadly I could not attend as the new Armed Forces Champion due to surgery. I asked the Deputy Leader to attend in my absence.

The next meeting of Council is on 23 July and I look forward to seeing you then."