

COUNCIL – 21 JANUARY 2026 MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

MOTION 1

Motion submitted by Cllr Niall Innes, to be seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

“Council notes that:

The Labour Government’s recent Budget has introduced policies that have significantly increased the financial burden on businesses, including higher employment costs, increased taxation, and a failure to adequately support our high streets.

Small businesses, independent shops, pubs, cafés, restaurants and hospitality venues are the beating heart of our communities in the borough of Stockton, providing employment, social value, and vital gathering spaces on our high streets and in our neighbourhoods.

Many of these businesses are already operating on tight margins and facing rising costs are now being further crippled by the Labour Governments policies that show little understanding of the realities facing local employers.

Labour promised a fundamental reform of business rates, yet this reform has failed to materialise. Instead, as a result of the Budget and the forthcoming revaluation, businesses are facing substantial and unaffordable increases in business rates.

Industry estimates indicate that over the next three years, Labour Government policies will result in average increases in business rates of 76% for pubs with many other small businesses facing similarly steep rises that threaten their long-term viability. This figure comes from analysis undertaken by UK

Hospitality: <https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/hospitality-business-rates-reform-unravelling-with-urgent-action-needed/>

Under previous Conservative Governments, businesses received meaningful and targeted support, which helped protect jobs and keep high streets alive during unprecedented economic challenges.

Council believes that:

The Labour Government’s failure to deliver on its promises to reform business rates, combined with its broader fiscal policies, risks causing widespread business closures, job losses, and long-term damage to high streets across the country and those in our borough.

Local authorities have a responsibility to speak up when national government decisions are actively harming local businesses, workers, and communities.

Council resolves:

That the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing this Council’s deep concern about the impact of the Labour Government’s Budget and business rates policies on small businesses and the hospitality sector.

That the correspondence urges the Chancellor to honour Labour's commitment to fundamental business rates reform and to reverse policies that are placing unsustainable pressure on pubs, restaurants, and small businesses.

That the correspondence highlights the severe impact on businesses in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees and call for urgent, targeted support to protect jobs, sustain local enterprise, and safeguard the beating heart of our communities.

That the letter be issued on behalf of the Council by the Chief Executive."

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MOTION 2

Motion submitted by Cllr Niall Innes, to be seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

“Council notes that:

Recent major decisions taken by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council — including the purchase of Debenhams, proposals affecting The Shambles, and the introduction of parking charges in Stockton and Yarm town centres have generated significant concern among elected councillors, residents and local businesses.

These decisions have been taken within the framework set out in the Council’s Constitution but in a way that nevertheless raising concerns about transparency and engagement on matters with significant financial and community impact. Many elected councillors and local communities being left excluded from matters with significant financial, economic and community impact.

As a result, this Council has attempted to progress projects that could have led to the eviction of local businesses, harmed high streets and damaged trust in the Council’s decision-making processes.

Only because Conservative councillors stood up for residents and businesses across the borough has this Council been forced into a series of U-turns on these deeply unpopular proposals — a situation which should never have arisen had adequate engagement taken place from the outset.

Council believes that:

The Constitution of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council sets out how decisions are to be made and ensures they are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people, including through its Cabinet Procedure Rules and requirements around Key Decisions and the Forward Plan.

A Key Decision, as set out in the Constitution, is a decision that will be taken by the Cabinet or under executive arrangements and should be included on the published Forward Plan so that all councillors and the public are notified in advance of decisions likely to have significant financial or community impact.

Major projects which involve large expenditure, the acquisition or disposal of assets, or significant community impact benefit from appropriate opportunities for elected member engagement, even where the final decision rests with the Executive.

Council resolves that:

1. For the purposes of this motion, a “Major Project” shall be understood as any proposal or programme that meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. Involves capital or revenue expenditure, commitment or liability of £250,000 or more
 - b. Constitutes or is likely to constitute a Key Decision under the Council’s Constitution and executive arrangements
 - c. Involves the acquisition, disposal or long-term lease of land or buildings

- d. Proposes significant changes to town centres, high streets, parking arrangements or public spaces
 - e. Has a material impact on local businesses, residents or the use of community assets
- 2. In accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules and the Forward Plan requirements within the Constitution, all Major Projects, should, where they meet the definition of a Key Decision, be included on the Forward Plan sufficiently in advance of any decision being taken and circulated to all councillors in accordance with constitutional requirements.
- 3. Prior to any final decision being taken on a Major Project, the Leader, relevant Cabinet Members and officers are encouraged to:
 - a. ensure appropriate information is made available through existing governance arrangements, including financial implications, impact assessments and any consultation carried out;
 - b. consider the use of member briefings, overview and scrutiny, or other appropriate engagement mechanisms including voluntary referral to Full Council or an agreed Committee forum for pre-decision advice; and
 - c. have regard to relevant feedback received through those mechanisms.
- 4. Officers and members must continue to ensure that all Major Project proposals comply with the provisions of the Constitution relating to access to information, notices of Key Decisions and publication of the Forward Plan, so that decisions are made in a transparent and accountable manner.

This motion supports the constitutional decision-making framework, promotes democratic accountability and asks that major decisions affecting Stockton-on-Tees are taken transparently, with meaningful involvement of all elected members and adequate scrutiny.”

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