

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 15th January 2026.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Richard Eglinton (Cabinet Member), Cllr Paul Rowling (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Mike Greene, Peter Bell, Junita Agyapong, Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Julie Butcher, Tara Connor, Simon Grundy, Clare Harper, Reuben Kench, Majella McCarthy, Carolyn Nice and Kellie Wigley.

Also in attendance: Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair of People Select Committee) and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley.

Apologies: None.

CAB/80/25 Evacuation Procedure

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/81/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pauline Beall declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Re-procurement of the Stockton Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service. Councillor Pauline Beall withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

Councillor Norma Stephenson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Re-procurement of the Stockton Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service. Councillor Norma Stephenson withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

CAB/82/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 be approved.

CAB/83/25 People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Partnership Working in Early Help.

Early Help ensured that families received help and support at the earliest opportunity to improve the outcomes for children and young people. It sought to prevent situations reaching crisis point that then required statutory intervention. The aim of the review

was to gain a greater understanding of what Early Help was in Stockton-on-Tees, as well as identify where partnership working could be improved, identifying key actions to improve and deliver Early Help.

The Department for Education (DfE) published the Families First Partnership (FPP) Programme in March 2025, which supported Local Authorities to bring together targeted Early Help, Child in Need, and multi-agency Child Protection into a seamless system of help, support and protection. The Council's current Early Help offer included a wide range of universal and targeted support, demonstrating a strong commitment to prevention and early intervention. In addition, Early Help services were being provided by a wide range of organisations external to the Local Authority. While statutory interventions and response to safeguarding would remain with and be provided by the Council, the Council would seek to actively increase partnership activity across Early Help, promoting that Early Help is everyone's business, which in turn improved support provided to families.

The review's recommendations focused on strengthening governance structures, improving communication and accessibility to services, through investing in joint training and shared systems. By embedding the principle of shared responsibility across the partnership, the Council would seek to co-produce a clear strategy setting a joint approach to how the Council worked with children and families. Promoting a more integrated and responsive Early Help system which ensured children and families received the right support at the right time.

Contributions had been received from Early Help, Social Care, and Education services within the Council as well as several partners, namely Cleveland Police, Family Action, Harrogate & District Foundation Trust, and Stockton Parents and Carers Forum. A Family Hub focus group was utilised to hear users' views and experiences of those accessing Early Help. Additionally, Members attended two of the Children and Young People Partnership Workshops, which were focused on co-producing an Early Help Strategy, taking a partnership approach to working with families across Stockton-on-Tees. The Committee also received feedback from officer visits to two Ofsted rated outstanding Local Authorities, Lincolnshire County Council and Sunderland City Council.

RESOLVED that:-

1. A culture of shared responsibilities across the partnership is promoted to ensure that the principle of Early Help being "everyone's business" is embedded within schools, health and the voluntary sector.
2. The re-design of the front door to Children's Services embeds an Early Help focus, enabling timely outcomes and ensuring families are able to access the right support at the right time.
3. Advice and training are developed for schools and other partners referring to the Children's Hub, to ensure families who could be better supported by Early Help services are forwarded to the most appropriate service for help and reduce demand on the front door.
4. A programme of training, tools and professional guidance is developed to support non-local authority practitioners in holding lead professional roles with children and families.

5. The design of a multi-agency data impact assessment, combined privacy notice, and data sharing systems to ensure effective and timely communication between the Council and its partners is supported.
6. A robust data collection system is established to measure partnership delivery of Early Help services.
7. The updated online offer is relaunched, promoting it to partners, schools, and residents. Self-navigation tools should also be introduced to empower families to access early, universal support without needing formal referral.
8. Partners are encouraged to utilise Family Hubs, basing and/or providing services in the venues where appropriate to ensure that these are accessible to children and families.
9. Further support is provided for partners to understand the needs of SEND families to enable them to offer appropriate Early Help service to these families.

CAB/84/25 Director of Public Health Report 2025

Consideration was given to the Director of Public Health Report 2025.

Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012), the Director of Public Health had a duty to prepare an independent annual report. The report was considered by Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2025.

People were the heart of local places across the borough. The Director of Public Health Report 2025 aimed to set out a community-centred public health approach that could be used to bring together work with communities and work on developing healthy places. The report set out examples of work already underway and proposes further actions. The approach and next steps set out in the report support delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Stockton-on-Tees Plan.

The report also set out progress against the actions set in the last Director of Public Health Report.

The Report content was shared with Cabinet and through discussion with the communications team, this would be uploaded to form a web-based report following consideration at Cabinet. The web-based content would be developed in-line with accessibility requirements and with web links to references. As in previous years, hard copies of the Report would also be available in libraries across the borough, additional hard copies would also be available on request.

RESOLVED that the Director of Public Health Report 2025 be noted.

CAB/85/25 Re-procurement of the Stockton Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service

Consideration was given to a report on the re-procurement of the Stockton Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service.

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to commission drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services as part of their public health duties. The current Stockton service has been delivered by Change, Grow, Live (CGL) since 2020 under a five-year contract originally ending on 31st March 2025. To enable appropriate planning and alignment with wider system developments, the contract has been extended to 31st March 2026.

This report and accompanying background paper set out the proposed approach to re-procuring the Stockton Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service. It provides an overview of the service, outlines the recommended procurement route and provider, and presents options for the financial envelope of the new contract.

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to the Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing to make the specific contract award decision, and to approve any subsequent contract variations or extensions in line with this decision.

1. Recommendation to re-procure the Stockton drug and alcohol treatment and recovery Service through a Provider Selection Regime (PSR) Direct Award to Change, Grow, Live (CGL) for a period of five years.

2. Recommendation for the new contract to maintain the current contract value of £2.267 million per annum over the five-year term, with no uplift, resulting in a total contract value of £11.335 million. Under this option, the service will operate as a minimum viable, statutory-compliant model.

CAB/86/25 Article 4 Direction: Small Houses of Multiple Occupation (Use class C4)

Consideration was given to a report on Article 4 Direction Small Houses of Multiple Occupation Use class C4.

In view of growing demands for small HMOs, implications on the boroughs housing stock and communities, there was a need to consider the introduction of measures to restrict the use of permitted development rights for change of use from dwelling houses (Class C3) to small HMOs (Class C4).

In view of all the associated considerations, it was therefore recommended that the introduction of a borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights that allow of the change from a residential dwelling (use class C3) to small House of Multiple Occupation (Use class C4) to be pursued, along with associated guidance in line with the recommendations set out below.

In recent years Officers had seen an increasing number of concerns being raised by neighbouring residents and Elected Members on a Borough-wide basis about the presence of HMOs across the Borough.

Particular focus had been given to HMOs providing poor-quality housing which was not managed effectively. Consequently it was seen as attracting persons experiencing social and/or economic instability and those living a more transient lifestyle. Complaints also often included reference to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Housing Act (2004) defines a 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) as living accommodation occupied by persons who do not form a single household and share one or more basic amenities.

The Planning system currently categorises HMOs as either;

- Use class C4 for between three and six persons with basic shared facilities.
- Sui Generis classification (meaning a 'class of its own') for seven or more residents.

The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) allowed certain forms of development to take place without the need for planning permission, which was known as 'permitted development'.

Residential dwellings (Use class C3) had permitted development rights to change use to small Houses in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4). Where a change to Sui Generis classification, automatically required planning permission.

For clarity, the introduction of an Article 4 direction would affect only those elements which currently do not require planning permission, i.e. class HMOs falling in use class C4 and mean that planning permission would be required as they are for larger HMO's.

Whilst there was a clearer case for a smaller geographical area to restrict small HMOs, given the current circumstances and matters considered within the report, it was considered that there was sufficient merit in introducing a Borough wide Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of dwelling houses to small HMOs in order to protect the amenity and cohesion of our communities.

In recognising that HMOs do play an important role in providing a source of affordable housing, particularly those in acute housing need, the aspiration of future planning policies and associated guidance should therefore look to ensure that small HMOs were of the right quality, the right need and in the right area, to ensure our Borough maintains balanced, inclusive and cohesive communities.

The introduction a non-immediate Article 4 direction allowed for time to manage any associated risks arising from legal challenge and compensation. Crucially it would also enable the development of an interim policy/SPD, ensuring decisions on HMO applications were based on a robust framework and giving the greatest chance of success in defending any associated appeals.

In view of all the associated considerations, it was therefore recommended that the introduction of a borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for small HMOs be introduced along with interim policy/SPD, in line with the recommendations contained within the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it is expedient to make the article 4 Direction and the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to make a Borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights allowing conversion from a dwelling to small HMO.

2. The Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to undertake all necessary notifications and consultation in association with Schedule 3 of the General Permitted Development Order, 2015.

3. The Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to consider all representations made during the consultation period and, subject to remaining satisfied that it remains expedient to make the Direction after considering the representations, to confirm the Article 4 Direction and take all necessary action following the confirmation

Recommended to Council that:-

4. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and the Planning Committee to produce a draft interim policy or Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to inform the determination of future applications for HMOs

5. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to undertake all necessary consultation in association with recommendation 4 above.

CAB/87/25 2025 Event Summary and 2026 Memorial Lighting Calendar

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of the Council's 2025 Events Programme, combining events delivered directly by the Council's Events Service, with commercial and community-led events delivered by third parties but supported or hosted by the Council.

The report also included details of the large-scale events delivered in 2025, including the Council's signature event Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF), which continued to receive very positive feedback from visitors and residents. Large-scale events contributed an estimated £2 million to the local economy in 2025.

The Stockton & Darlington Railway Bicentenary Festival featured some of the largest events in the Borough in 2025, including the spectacular Ghost Train show. The report included some information about the S&DR Festival, but as that event extends into the spring of 2026, a separate, full report on the S&DR Bicentenary would be presented to Cabinet in 2026.

As was customary, the report also provided the suggested Memorial Lighting Calendar for 2026.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The success of the 2025 events programme be noted.

2. The memorial lighting calendar for 2026 be approved and that any in year changes to the lighting calendar be delegated to Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture.

CAB/88/25 Minutes of Various Bodies

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below were submitted to members for consideration:-
TSAB – 10 September 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.