

REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

April 20th 2026

REPORT OF Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Regeneration & Inclusive Growth Performance Overview Report

Summary

This report gives an overview of the key achievements and challenges in 2025/6 for Regeneration & Inclusive Growth Directorate.

Key Achievements

1. Over the last year, the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth directorate have established a clear strategic approach to the work of the new Directorate, with revised governance arrangements to improve strategic focus, benefits realisation, financial control, corporate oversight and effective risk management.
2. We have made great progress with a wide range of initiatives including:
 - a. Delivery of a large Capital regeneration programme
 - b. A new Inclusive Growth Strategy
 - c. The development and delivery of a nationally recognised innovative skills programme
 - d. Delivery and development of exciting inward investment opportunities and ongoing business support
 - e. Developing and embedding new planning policy.
 - f. Development in implementation of a new Strategic Asset Management Plan which sets out a methodology for making asset decisions, establishes a new model for a Corporate Landlord to manage all SBC property assets and reinforces the drive to deliver effective services from a value for money, fit for purpose asset base.

Placemaking Powering Our Future

3. We have defined the Placemaking Powering Our Future mission. Under this banner we are actively delivering an ambitious capital programme of regeneration activity. A short synopsis of this programme is set out below:
4. Stockton Waterfront – a c£40million package of works to bring about the Transformation of the site formerly occupied by Castlegate Shopping Centre into a waterside urban park, creating direct links from the High Street to an expanded riverside via an amphitheatre that spans a reduced and realigned Riverside Road. Stockton Waterfront will provide a series of interesting and accessible play and recreation spaces for all ages. The park will introduce areas of greenery and planting onto the High Street along with a high spec garden and large oval lawn. The park will accommodate a variety of regular events and activities alongside new public toilets a range of play spaces, art features, heritage and historic references that will provide a visitor attraction for residents and visitors to the Borough that will have national profile whilst creating a backdrop for future investment and development in Stockton town centre area. Having started demolition in autumn 2022, work on site is nearing completion with this exciting landmark attraction due to open to the public in June 2026
5. Stockton Town Centre Assets – work is continuing to explore future uses of key town centre assets including the Town Hall and former Debenhams building. This includes exploring options to further develop health facilities as well as increasing the leisure offer capitalising on the opportunities presented by Stockton Waterfront
6. Preston Park Museum and Grounds – part of a c£22million plus programme of works a wide range of improvements to the Tees Valley's most popular visitor attraction have been undertaken at Preston Park with new car parking, public toilets and enhancements to the cafe supplemented by investment in new play equipment, improved footpaths and the opening up of the Aviary as a space for the public to access and enjoy. The main intervention saw the delivery of a contemporary extension to the museum accommodating an open store, gallery and exhibition space, cafe and education space as a means of increasing public access to different exhibitions and artwork that could not have previously been accommodated in the Borough. The Spence Building opened in September 2025 and continues to be an incredibly popular addition to the Park. Subject to Planning approval, the final element of the programme of works will see the demolition of South Lodge and installation of an entrance art feature that reflects the historic gatehouse building and the historic route of the Stockton Darlington Railway line.
7. Yarm – A wide ranging programme of works on Yarm High Street has seen the refurbishment Yarm Town Hall into a visitor centre, creation of new public toilets alongside improvements to Snaiths Field Play Area and True Lovers Walk. Proposals for use budget allocated to public realm enhancements is subject to a call in process through Executive Scrutiny Committee in April 2026. Works are underway to create a new cycle connection between Elton Interchange and Teeslink
8. Thornaby Town Deal – a c£40million plus programme of works under the Town Deal banner has seen a number of improvements in the North Thornaby area notably;

- a) 937 properties subject to security enhancements
- b) Redevelopment of Victoria Park play area and Community Centre

- c) 192 properties received 456 energy efficiency measures (Solar PV, LED Lighting, new boilers and heating controls) which has provided an average saving of £671.40 per property per year.

- d) vacant properties brought back into use

The wider programme has seen the Council work in partnership with the Education and Training Collective to lever in DfE funding alongside Town Deal funds to enable the enhancement and relocation of the NETA training facility on the Riverside Campus. The new facility is due to open in Autumn 2026

The Council secured control of the Golden Eagle in October 2024, with complex works now underway to remove asbestos spread throughout the building before demolition of the main structure concluding in autumn 2026. on the adjacent site of the former Phoenix House, work is underway to construct a new swimming pool and gym that will connect into the existing pavilion leisure centre providing modern leisure facilities in the heart of the town centre. works will be complete in May 2027

Works to create an integrated cycle route throughout Thoranby are underway with completion due in early 2027

- 9. Billingham - following award of £20million Levelling Up funding works are ongoing to secure agreement on ownership and relocation of affected businesses that would enable the demolition of West Precinct. A period of public consultation to help inform priorities for the cleared site and future investment in Billingham will also be undertaken. Additional work is required to refine details for Billingham Sports Hub to ensure the widest range of facilities can be provided within existing budgets along with procurement of suitable contractors to deliver the critical elements of the scheme throughout the summer of 2026

- 10. Housing Delivery – in June 2025, Cabinet agreed a Hybrid Delivery Model aimed at accelerating affordable housing delivery within the borough. As part of this report, several small sites were identified as suitable for potential affordable housing development. Recently (March 2026) Cabinet agreed to the direct disposal of the Raleigh Road site (utilising its enabling function) to North Star Housing for the development of an affordable rented scheme. This report also noted that a competitive procurement exercise will be undertaken to identify a Registered Housing Provider to bring forward 3 further sites (Londonderry Road, Stirling House and Parkside House), delivering a mix of units that directly addresses the boroughs housing needs.

- 11. A further report was presented to Cabinet in July 2025 setting out proposals to procure a development partner to progress on delivery of new residential areas across a number of town centre sites in line with the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint. Following a period of preliminary market engagement in late 2025, a formal procurements process will be undertaken in early summer 2026 to secure development partner for these key sites.

12. Tees Valley Care & Health Innovation Zone –Tees Central is one of the largest and most significant rail-connected, brownfield regeneration opportunities in the country. Through the successful delivery of rail rationalisation and redevelopment of the 70-hectare site, it could bring about the delivery of up to 3000 homes, circa 1m sqft of commercial space, a new rail servicing depot for the Tees Valley, and a new multi-model transport hub to support sustainable modes of transport and unlock a new cross boundary community at the heart of the Tees Valley. The site would also provide a potential platform for a significant investment in new research and development, and clinical facilities linked with the Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone. We are working with a wide range of partners to craft this huge opportunity into a nationally significant, deliverable scheme.
13. In addition to our own Placemaking activity, the Directorate is also responsible for the strategic spatial planning of the Borough and the determination of planning applications to both support and manage development.
14. A summary of the performance of the Planning Service for 2025/26 is shown below:
 - A) Number of applications processed: 1373
 - B) Number of homes permissioned – 473*
 - C) Amount of commercial space permissioned: 99,143.70 sqm (c. 60% is new floorspace, 41,079.40sqm already existed in those developments)
 - D) Planning compliance interventions: 670 requests received, 546 requests determined, 11 enforcement notices served (93% of all cases determined in line with internal performance monitors).

Inclusive Growth Strategy

15. The Inclusive Growth Strategy was developed to reflect the importance of a long-term approach that encourages both sustained economic growth across the Borough and a more equitable distribution of the wealth that we generate and was agreed by Cabinet on 12th December 2024 [Decision - Inclusive Growth Strategy - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)
16. The Strategy was centred on ten strategic 'levers'. These were the themes that would govern the Council work on inclusive growth and would ensure that the Council take a comprehensive approach that focused equally on economic growth and inclusivity. The themes were wide-ranging and included developing new economic roles for Stockton-on-Tees and ensuring the Borough becomes a place recognised for good work, fair pay and responsible business ownership.

Inward Investment

17. The Council continues to have a collaborative approach to inward investment enquiries working with partners including TVCA, national Office for Investment, developers and land agents and clients. This joined up approach ensures an excellent showcase of the Borough's strengths and capabilities. An example of this is the numerous visits the Council has hosted over the last year, including a number from international businesses keen to expand into the area.

18. The Council has facilitated £889k of grant funding into Stockton businesses to enable business growth. For example, £50k grant to BA Joinery to unlock £250k investment into production growth and training facilities that resulted in recruitment of 5 additional staff and new client contracts. Also, Power Plastics received £50k grant towards £103k investment into 6 ultrasonic welding machines which resulted in a £1.5million defence contract and 6 new jobs.

Skills Gaps and Training

19. The Employment & Training Hub has supported over 1800 residents into since early 2022 and has over 10,000 residents registered for work or upskilling.
20. Programmes continue to be developed and scaled to address skills shortages across priority sectors. For example, the Care Academy is now in its 18th cohort and has supported over 120 individuals directly into employment. From April 2026, this area of work will expand further through secured TVCA funding of an appointed Care & Health Recruitment Coordinator, supporting businesses and workforce development across the Tees Valley.
21. The Employment and Training Hub continue to work closely with businesses and training providers to identify skills needs and develop training that is fit for purpose. This employer led approach ensures provision is aligned directly to workforce demand. For example, in response to recruitment challenges and training gaps identified by Harlum Services, a bespoke programme was designed with Stockton Riverside College to deliver training, which subsequently resulted in eight residents progressing into employment.

Early Talent

22. A range of targeted programmes are being delivered to support young people and raise aspirations at key transition points. This includes *Skills for Success*, supporting disengaged secondary school students, and *Excellence for All*, designed for post16 learners who are unsure of their next steps. For young people who are NEET, the *Industry Insights* programme bridges opportunity and aspiration by connecting young people to priority sectors and real career pathways through business engagement and sector focused workshops.
23. Early outcomes demonstrate positive impact across both student engagement and educational performance. Students report increased insight into employment and progression opportunities. Schools have reported a significant improvement in attendance, with increases of up to 3.6% in some cases, alongside improved attitudes to learning and levels of engagement. There has also been an increase in the number of students working at or above target in Maths and English.

Hub on Tour

24. The Hub on Tour initiative was launched in summer 2024 to improve access to economic opportunities within local communities. The programme now visits 54 locations across the borough and works in partnership with existing community

provision, including church groups, library sessions, warm spaces, and food banks. By taking the Hub offer directly into neighbourhood settings, the initiative ensures that residents who may not otherwise engage with services can access employment, skills, and progression opportunities.

Virtual Offer

25. The Hub's virtual offer has grown significantly, strengthening access to support beyond physical locations. This includes a comprehensive website of resources [Stockton](#), the use of VR software to provide virtual workexperience opportunities, and an established social media presence. Facebook engagement has averaged a reach of 42,000 per month over the past year. The Hub website has averaged over 4500 hits per month and acts as a key signposting and matching platform, enabling businesses to upload vacancies and connect directly with local talent.

Work & Health Programmes

26. The Employment and Training Hub is delivering nationally funded work and health programmes that support residents back into work, remove barriers to employment, and tackle youth unemployment.
27. *Work Well* is a £377,000 programme funded by the ICB, supporting residents who are absent from work due to health-related barriers to return to employment. The programme provides tailored, early intervention support focused on improving employability, wellbeing, and sustained work outcomes.
28. *Connect to Work* supports residents facing multiple barriers to employment through a supported employment model. The programme focuses on personalised, wraparound support, working closely with businesses to enable access to jobs and in work support for those who need it most.
29. The *Youth Guarantee Trailblazer* is an initiative aimed at tackling youth unemployment. Stockton is leading delivery across the Tees Valley, coordinating partners to ensure young people can access paid work experience, education, training, or support, with a strong focus on early intervention and progression.
30. To date, 72 young people from Stockton have accessed paid work experience opportunities through the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, with training bursary support provided to help remove financial and practical barriers to participation.
31. In October 2025, a dedicated Recruitment Coordinator to support care experienced young people was recruited. Since launch, the role has supported 57 young people, with 24 progressing directly into employment.

Business Support

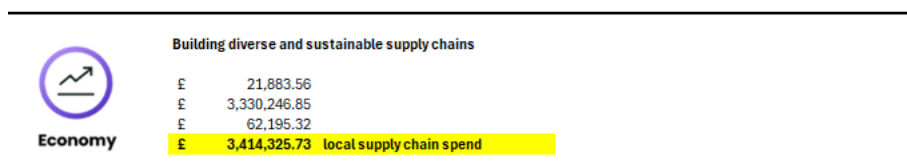
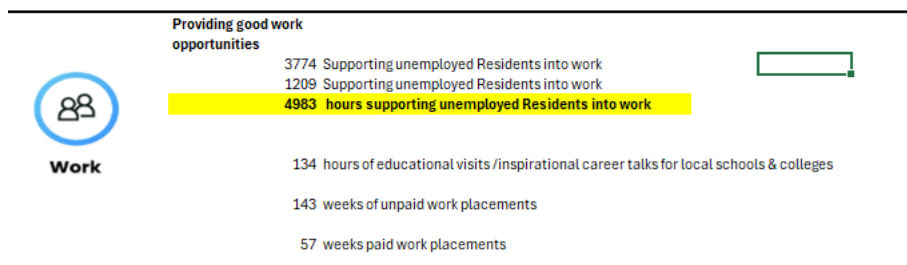
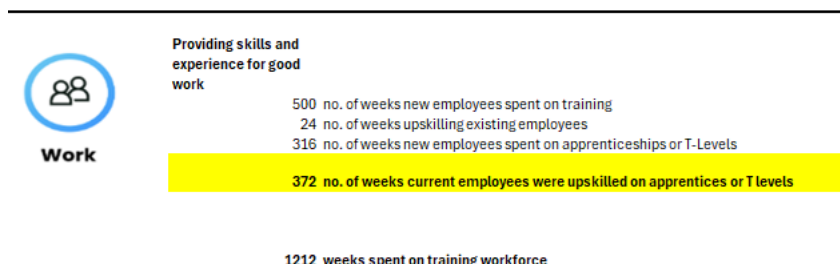
32. The Council continues to implement a proactive business engagement campaign through the *Invest Stockton-on-Tees brand* which has seen an increase in the number

of digital subscribers to 2,791 and a total of 5,281 businesses reached in the last year. April-25 saw the launch of the 'Connect Stockton-on-Tees' breakfast events to provide demand-led briefings and masterclasses for businesses. Last year, the Council hosted 24 events in collaboration with partners, to provide specialist support to 289 businesses. The has provided insight to inform future activities and demonstrates demand for support in specific areas for growth. A business support video launched in March-26 which demonstrates impact of Council programmes on business growth - [Invest Stockton-on-Tees Business Support Team | Videos & Movies on Vimeo](#)

33. The Council's Business Advisory service continues to help organisations to navigate Council services by providing a 'one door' approach for local business. The support offer for start-ups and existing businesses includes help with planning, business expansion, premises searching, contracts and supply chain and signposting to specialist business support and delivery partner interventions. A recent example of support includes the engagement of businesses for the Tees Valley Youth Trailblazer initiative, that onboarded 111 Stockton businesses since Sep-25 that resulted in 77 young people placed into 44 companies to gain meaningful, work experience. The programme has facilitated companies including social marketing company, Petite Agency, call centre, Toob and software development firm, Circle Cloud to onboard young people where it has resulted in permanent positions for all involved.
34. The Council continues to work in partnership with other Local Authorities and TVCA to co-design a robust business support offer. This has included support to the Combined Authority on its implementation of UKSPF contracts for business support. The Council has recently led the implementation of the Tees Valley Masterclass programme, a series of workshops and large events of specialist support for businesses on behalf of TVCA that saw the engagement of 600 regional businesses receiving support and providing intelligence to inform future activities.

Social Impact

35. The Economic Development team is working closely with Procurement to maximise social value outcomes and impact through procured activity. As part of this work, the Social Value Framework has been updated to ensure a stronger focus on meaningful, measurable outcomes that deliver tangible benefits for residents and communities.
36. The team has also established a bank of mentors, with over 200 hours committed to support programme delivery and outcomes.
37. This includes aligning programmes with contractor social value commitments to deliver clear benefits for residents. A key example is the *Excellence for All* post16 programme, which fully utilises Galliford Try's social value commitment to deliver an impactful offer for young people. The programme will deliver a series of targeted masterclasses for young people, focused on developing core employability skills including leadership, time management, organisation, interview preparation, and effective self marketing.
38. *Figure 1: Social Value Impact 2025*



Sustainable Council

39. A sustainable Council is a priority in the Stockton-on-Tees Plan. It sets out the ambition to ensure our council is financially sustainable and manages our assets effectively to enhance their local impact. We will be a well-run council across areas of our business and continue to improve outcomes for communities. SBC has a large-scale programme of capital projects within the Borough to ensure that that we are providing quality facilities for residents, attracting investment, and making Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit. It is important that when these are developed, they are well thought out, delivered on time, and on budget, to demonstrate that our council is sustainable and well managed

Strategic Asset Management Plan

40. In December 2024, Cabinet agreed the Strategic Asset Management Plan. An update to this plan will be considered at April Cabinet which will update the principles and develops those into a first phase of actions. Progress has already been made on the with both Ideal House and 18-20 Yarm Road properties being sold. A number of others are sold subject to contract with a further three recently being marketed.

41. Establishment of a Corporate landlord function that will drive efficiency savings that have been incorporated into the MTFP for 2026-2029 The SAMP reinforces the Council's move to a fully centralised Corporate Landlord Model to ensure assets are managed consistently, risks are controlled, and opportunities for rationalisation, regeneration and income generation are maximised. It ensures:

- Ownership and strategic management of all assets is held corporately

- Service areas act as corporate tenants
 - Decisions on investment, maintenance, acquisition and disposal are taken in the corporate interest
42. Establishment of a Corporate landlord function will drive efficiency savings that have been incorporated into the MTFP for 2026-2029

Challenges

43. The local economy is unusually exposed to global economic conditions due to the relatively high levels of energy intensive sectors such as chemical and process, advanced manufacturing and clean energy. While this creates competitive advantages, it also increases vulnerability to international shocks. Some of the key challenges faced recently are:
- a) Volatile Global Energy Markets (aftermath of the war in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East, slow rebalancing of global energy markets)
 - b) Global Inflation & Challenging Financial Conditions (high borrowing costs, reduced investments) Fragility in
 - c) Global Supply Chains (shipping and logistics uncertainties, increased risks/costs for export oriented businesses)
44. In particular the high level of inflation with regard to construction costs continues to have a significant impact on the capital programme. Levels of contingency set previously (especially for grant funded schemes which were scoped a number of years ago). This issue was considered recently as part of the Scrutiny review of the Capital programme but as evidenced by recent events in the middle east, supply chain and material costs remain some what susceptible to external factors.

Emerging Issues

45. Significant changes to Planning legislation are in train which will have a big impact on both spatial planning and development management.
- a) A revised procedure for Local Plans and the reinstatement of local housing targets mean that we will be required to update our Local Plan. A report will be brought to Cabinet in the coming weeks to initiate that review.
 - b) As part of the development of regional Local Growth Plans each Combined Authority will need to develop a regional Spatial Development Strategy
46. The new National Planning Policy Framework is expected to come into force in 2026. It aims to:
- Strengthen the role of national policy in decision-making.

- Ensure more consistent planning outcomes across England.
- Streamline plan-making and development approvals.

These changes represent a fundamental reset of the NPPF rather than a minor update, signalling a shift toward a more structured, outcome-focused planning system

47. In addition reforms to Planning Committees currently being consulted on which proposes to:
- a. Introduce a national scheme of delegation for planning functions
 - b. control the size of planning committees
 - c. require members of planning committees to be trained and certified, in key elements of planning
48. Also, as from 11th May 2026 any housing scheme which is over 150 units where the Local Planning Authority is minded to refuse the application, has to be referred to the Secretary of State to determine if they will call in the application
49. In the summer of 2025 **Stockton Central and Portrack** was announced as a Phase 2 Pride in Place (PiP) Trailblazer Neighbourhood, with funding of up to £19.6m into the PiP area over the next 10 years. Government guidance on the management and governance of the PiP programme was issued in November 2025. An update on establishing the PiP programme (including the requirement to establish a Neighbourhood Board, who will be responsible for producing a 10-year vision for their place) is to be reviewed at Cabinet on the 23rd April 2026. Although the PiP programme will be led from the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Directorate, it will be a corporate, cross-council programme of work.
50. Funding of future aspirations – The extensive capital programme that is currently under way is largely funded by external grant with some matching capital support from Council capital budgets. A major element of these schemes have been funded by the MHCLG Local Regeneration Fund and all remaining funds must be spent by April 2028. The 2026/7 MTFP sets out the current financial position of the council and has limited capacity for new capital investment. It is therefore important that remaining grant funding is spent judiciously and that SBC continue to bid for new sources of funding as they are announced.
51. Devolution – The government agenda for further devolution of functions continues to impact on the economic development and regeneration arena. As a result of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2025 further changes are imminent which will establish an increased role for the Combined Authority in spatial planning, land and housing issues.

Performance Reporting

52. Unlike many departments that directly deliver services to customers, it is difficult to measure or reflect the outcomes of the functions in the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Directorate. An approach to performance management that concentrates in output metrics doesn't reflect the link between activity and outcome. Trying to articulate

the effectiveness of regeneration activity by counting the Square metres of public realm is unlikely to be helpful to the Place Select Committee. Measuring the average wage across Stockton will not meaningfully evidence the impact of a skills programme for young people

53. Previously economic scrutiny committees have received a narrative report explaining the global national and regional trends and setting out activity and outcome in that context. Members are asked to consider whether this is a suitable route to scrutinise the Inclusive Growth element of the work of the Directorate
54. Performance metrics across the council will also be provided going forward. The Key performance metrics are tiered. The Select Committee will receive Tier 2 metrics and wish to identify some tier 3 metrics which help to understand the work of the teams or the impact upon our residents. These are listed at Annex 1.
 - a. KPIs at Tier 2
 - b. Overview of KPIs tier 3
55. The performance monitoring of our regeneration activities is also difficult to empirically measure. The recent scrutiny on the capital programme makes recommendations that if accepted by Cabinet will lead to regular reporting of progress on the delivery of the capital programme. This could be a way to scrutinise that aspect of the department's performance.

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