

Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of the Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday 26 March 2026.

Present: Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Chair), Cllr Katie Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Alan Watson

Officers: Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Mandy MacKinnon (A,H&W); Louise Hollick (ChS); Phil Hardie, Simon Milner (CS,E&C); Gary Woods (CS)

Also in attendance: Cllr Clare Besford (SBC Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (SBC Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety)

Apologies: Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Jason French

CSS/48/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CSS/49/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CSS/50/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Community Safety Select Committee meeting which was held on 22 January 2026 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 22 January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSS/51/25 Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

Consideration was given to the draft final report for the Committee's Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse. Specific attention was drawn to the following:

- Conclusion & Recommendations: Commentary on the feedback received from early years providers had been added to this section of the report (paragraph 5.9).

The recommendation regarding domestic abuse-related training (recommendation 5) now had multiple elements to reflect discussions at the Committee's informal 'summary of evidence' session in February 2026 and the subsequent end-of-review tri-partite meeting held in early-March 2026. In addition, recommendation 9 had been added following the Committee's desire for future focus around the voice of the child.

SBC officers proposed some minor amendments / clarifications to the draft report as follows:

- Findings (paragraph 4.37): The reference to the Young Person's (YP) Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) being '*commissioned by PCC*' (Police and Crime Commissioner) was incorrect as the role was part of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) contract with Harbour.
- Conclusion & Recommendations (paragraph 5.4): The final sentence should begin, '*Although future funding for hospital IDVAs is uncertain*' (not 'IDVAs' in general) as the GP IDVA was part of the core contract with SBC and was not at risk.
- Conclusion & Recommendations (paragraph 5.5): The reference to three of the four Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within the Borough being unaware of the local GP IDVA arrangement should be accompanied by a line noting that this was not reflected in the referrals from individual GP practices, which had increased dramatically since the role was introduced (as reflected within paragraph 4.68).

From an executive perspective, the SBC Cabinet Member for Children and Young People thanked the Committee for its efforts in tackling this difficult topic and felt the number of recommendations reflected the depth of work undertaken. Recognition around the value of the IDVA role was particularly welcomed, as was evidence of positive partnership-working across the Borough in relation to domestic abuse. Members were also commended for linking several recommendations to the local Domestic Abuse Steering Group, emphasising the need for organisations to improve their recording of details (including a child's age) of domestic abuse-related referrals, and acknowledging the importance of Elected Members (as well as SBC staff) receiving appropriate training to help identify this form of abuse and how / where to report it.

Reflecting on the content of the draft report, and the review in general, the Committee thought that a high number of recommendations was always likely given the complexity of this scrutiny topic. Members felt the report would raise the profile of this type of abuse and support the large amount of work going on, with the review hopefully making a difference to the Borough's children and young people. A lot of good practice had been brought to the Committee's attention, and it was important that this was recognised and built upon moving forward.

The Committee approved the content of the draft final report, subject to the identified minor amendments / clarifications, and was informed that the agreed version would be presented to Cabinet in April 2026.

AGREED that the Children affected by Domestic Abuse final report be approved for submission to Cabinet.

CSS/52/25 Scrutiny Review of Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget

Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Billingham) and Cllr Ray Godwin (Thornaby) wished it to be recorded for transparency purposes only that, as well as a Ward Councillor, they were currently a member of their respective Town Councils.

Consideration was given to the draft scope and project plan for the Scrutiny Review of Community Participation Budget (CPB) and Ward Transport Budget (WTB), the proposed aims of which would be to:

- understand the scope of interventions that are eligible through these two budget schemes, the processes for determining the priorities for use of the funds, and the management of the projects that are funded through CPB and WTB.
- establish the effectiveness of these two budgets and whether projects funded through the CPB / WTB have had genuine and sustained impact.
- ascertain the communication of the CPB and WTB to Ward Councillors and wider public awareness of these two funding streams.
- consider the value of CPB and WTB in the context of significant ongoing budget pressures for the Council as a whole.

Given this scrutiny topic was largely Council-focused, relevant Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) officers involved with these initiatives and Ward Councillors themselves would be the predominant contributors to the review. However, it was also proposed that the review established the extent to which residents were aware of these budget schemes, the involvement of local Town and Parish Councils in CPB / WTB-related work, and whether any learning could be found within other Local Authorities which operated similar funding arrangements involving its Elected Members. It was anticipated that the Committee's findings and recommendations would be reported to Cabinet in October 2026.

Regarding the contribution from Ward Councillors, a set of potential survey questions was tabled for information – these would be circulated for comment after this meeting, with a view to agreeing a final list at the next meeting in April 2026.

Noting the varying challenges / needs within different Wards across the Borough (which influenced how funds were spent / which projects were proposed), the Committee looked forward to undertaking this review, particularly in light of the ongoing financial situation which SBC was experiencing. It was expected that many issues relating to these budget schemes would be raised, including planning-related concerns, and questions on the ability to even spend any allocated funding given limitations on resources to support the implementation of an approved project.

AGREED that the draft scope and project plan for the Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget review be approved.

CSS/53/25 Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) – Previous Minutes (November 2025)

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meeting which took place in November 2025. Attention was drawn to the following:

- Operation Shield Update: The Committee's previous review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres was noted as part of this update. Developments in relation to Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) was also referenced – another topic the Committee had previously looked at and made recommendations on as part of the initial introduction of such orders within the Borough.

AGREED that the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meeting which took place in November 2025 be noted.

CSS/54/25 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programmes 2025-2026 & 2026-2027

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair had no further updates.

WORK PROGRAMMES 2025-2026 & 2026-2027

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme, as well as the initial version for 2026-2027. The next meeting was due to take place on 30 April 2026 where the first evidence-gathering session would be held for the Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget review. In addition, an overview report in relation to the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Community Safety and Regulated Services department (within the SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate) would be presented, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and emerging issues (it was noted that the anticipated 'performance' element of this report would not be available until the October 2026 meeting).

Members were also notified of the recent allocation of scrutiny topics to the Council's five Select Committees by the SBC Executive Scrutiny Committee. The Community Safety Select Committee would be reviewing Alley Gates as its final topic for the current four-year Council term (this would be initiated at the conclusion of the Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budget review).

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Community Safety Select Committee Work Programmes 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 be noted.

Chair: