

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee
Review of Protection of Property
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? The review will contribute to the following Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028 priorities: • <i>Priority 2: Healthy and resilient communities:</i> Protecting property prevents escalation of need, avoids crisis situations, and assists people to return to their home safely, maintaining independence, safety, and community wellbeing. • <i>Priority 5: A sustainable Council:</i> A focus on early intervention and prevention will see us create the conditions for people in the Borough to be healthy and maximise their potential, by providing support for them in the right place and at the right time. Our approach will prevent, reduce and delay demand for services.	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review? Under Section 47 of the Care Act 2014, Local Authorities must take reasonable steps to protect the moveable property of adults with care and support needs who are being cared for away from home (such as in hospital or residential care). This duty applies when no suitable arrangements have been made and requires the Local Authority to prevent or mitigate the loss or damage of the adult's personal property. The Local Authority has the power to enter the persons property and deal with the moveable property in any way which is deemed reasonably necessary (the person must give permission for this, or a best interest decision can be made under the Mental Capacity Act 2005). In Stockton-on-Tees, this process is managed by the Adult Social Care Financial Services (ASCFS) team which makes the necessary arrangements. Presently, the team hold the keys for 26 properties (as of May 2026) which are visited weekly to maintain their insurance and upkeep. On a personal level, effective protection of property supports vulnerable adults to maintain stability, reduce financial harm, and avoid homelessness due to property deterioration. Supporting individuals in this way helps maintain their dignity, stops potential exploitation, and assists in their safe return home (when ready). From a wider social perspective, timely and	

appropriate protection can also reduce environmental risks such as damage and unsafe conditions in empty properties within neighbourhoods, as well as deter vandalism.

The main aims for this review will be to determine whether:

- Existing Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) arrangements for fulfilling the Care Act duty to protect properties are fit for purpose.
- ASCFS has the capacity, procedures and resources to manage increasing numbers of properties (including clarity around what is defined as 'property').
- SBC is recovering reasonable expenses (as allowed by legislation).
- Risk, accountability and decision-making processes (including those involving mental capacity act decisions) are clear, consistent and auditable.

Note: the review will not include the protection of pets as this is currently being considered by the Place Select Committee as part of a review of Animal Welfare.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

With regard Section 47 of the Care Act 2014, how does SBC define the terms 'reasonable steps' and 'moveable property'?

How does the Council know / learn if an individual requires their property to be protected? How is it kept informed about how long this protection may be required for, and when does this obligation end?

What capacity does the Council's ASCFS team have and what do their visits to properties being protected entail?

How many individuals have had their property protected by the Council in recent years (and for how long)? What has been the cost to the Council over this time?

In terms of recovering costs, how are 'reasonable expenses' defined, how robust is this process, and what has SBC claimed back in recent years? Who pays these costs, and have there been any unsuccessful attempts to collect expenses?

How does the Council / other relevant agencies make the public aware of this legal duty for Local Authorities? Who holds Councils to account for ensuring this obligation is carried out?

Are local health and care partners aware of the Council's duty around the protection of property; are they identifying if an individual may require such support?

Does the Council seek any feedback from those whose property they have protected?

How do other Local Authorities approach this legal duty?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, residents requiring such support.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

4 months (report to Cabinet in January 2027)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Care Act 2014 (Section 47): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/47>
- tri.x (Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures): https://www.proceduresonline.com/templates/adultsg/web/p_protect_property.html
- SBC Adult Social Care Financial Services (ASCFS): <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/adult-social-care-financial-services>

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

SBC Adult Social Care

- Legal definitions / interpretations
- Identification of eligible individuals
- Support provided
- Data on / costs associated with this support
- Service evaluation

SBC Community Safety

- Derelict properties

Local NHS Trusts

Housing Services (SBC / Thirteen Housing Group / North Star)

- Awareness of this legal duty
- Identification of eligible individuals
- Communication with SBC (prior to and during property being protected)

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)

- Oversight of this legal duty

Other Local Authority Areas

- Activity in relation to this legal requirement
- Recovery of costs associated with this duty
- Publicity of this obligation

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, research, case studies, benchmarking (TBC).

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings, information submissions.

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030: The places where we live (our homes and neighbourhoods), the communities we are part of... all have a significant influence on our mental and physical health and wellbeing (*Focus Area 3: Everyone lives in health and sustainable places and communities*).

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and / or transformation:

This review could:

- Identify opportunities to streamline weekly inspections, reduce unnecessary visits, and clarify where responsibility lie.
- Ascertain whether there is scope to recover more reasonable expenses in line with the Care Act, therefore reducing the net cost to the Council.
- Improve consistency and clarity in decision-making, reducing the number of inappropriate referrals and cases requiring prolonged involvement.
- Propose improvement in performance, reduce demand on ASCFS, and ensure statutory activity is being delivered efficiently.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	May 2026	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	03.06.26	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	21.07.26	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence		22.09.26 20.10.26	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	17.11.26	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	November 2026	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	15.12.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	19.01.27	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	21.01.27	Cabinet / Approving Body