Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday 23rd September 2026.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Robert Cook)
Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Barry Woodhouse and Cllr Katie Zagoria

Officers: Mike Greene, Ged Morton, Kellie Hopkins, Clare Harper, Chris Renahan, Angela Connor, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell, John Devine and Junita Agyapong

Also in attendance: Press and public

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Alan Watson and Cllr Sally Ann Watson

COU/46/26 Livestreaming

The Worshipful the Mayor announced to those present that the meeting was being livestreamed.

COU/47/26 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

COU/48/26 Minutes Silence - PC Matthew Blades and PC Tom Clough

Council Members observed a minute's silence in memory of PC Matthew Blades and PC Tom Clough who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty.

COU/49/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

COU/50/26 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2026 be confirmed and signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

COU/51/26 Public Question Time

Questions 1 and 2

Public questions had been submitted by John Smith. However, the questioner was not present at the meeting therefore it was advised that a written reply would be sent to him.

Question 3

The following question was submitted by John McDermottoe:

“Given the significant long-term financial commitment associated with the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility, will the Cabinet Member confirm the current estimated annual cost to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, including waste treatment charges and anticipated Emissions Trading Scheme costs, and explain what scrutiny has been undertaken to ensure this represents value for money for Stockton taxpayers?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“The estimated annual costs to the Council relating to waste management over the period 2026/27 to 2028/29 is included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan Agenda item - Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update and Strategy - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The new site is to become operational from April 2030.

In August 2026, the UK Government confirmed that expansion of the Emissions Trading Scheme to waste incineration will not take place until 2028 as originally intended. A new timeline will be set out in due course. Until this timeline is confirmed, the Council is unable to confirm what the estimated cost of ETS will be, however it should be noted that if ETS is applied to waste incineration, it will apply to waste incineration, either through existing facilities or new facilities.

An independent assessment of the procurement was undertaken by Local Partnerships (an organisation that is jointly owned by HM Treasury, the Local Government Association and the Welsh Government) having been commissioned by Durham County Council. [A copy of the report can be found here Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 24 November 2025 - Durham County Council].

Whole Life Cost (WLC) analysis undertaken as a part of the procurement assessment, demonstrate that the TV ERF contract delivers significant savings compared to other alternative options, providing long-term financial stability and predictability for the partner authorities.”

John McDermottroe asked the asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that alternative waste treatment arrangements have historically been available at a substantially low cost per ton, will the Council publish the full financial comparison of the options considered, including the assumptions for ETS costs, so elected Members and residents can see why TV ERF was judged to be the best value option.”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“As I said in my first answer, the full scrutiny leading up to the procurement of that contract was undertaken by the scrutiny committee at Durham County Council so I am sure that would be the best source of reference to get that answer. If you need any help finding that, I am sure Council officers will be able to help.”

Question 4

The following question was submitted by John McDermottoe:

“The Council previously identified the Billingham Sports Hub as a key regeneration project. Can the Cabinet Member provide an updated timetable for the scheme, including when construction is now expected to begin and when the facility is expected to open?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

“There is substantial work ongoing with funding partners to address issues related to the design detail for the Sports Hub. It is anticipated that this phase of work will be completed in early 2027 at which stage a period of procurement will begin to appoint contractors to deliver the key components of the scheme. A firm date for the completion of the project will only be established at the point at which procurement has taken place and a contractor appointed; however, the current estimated completion date is Spring 2028.”

John McDermottroe asked the asked the following supplementary question:

“We now understand that the previously agreed Football Foundation procurement route did not give the Council confidence on value for money or affordability, and that the design and funding arrangements also have had to be revisited. When did officers first become aware of these problems and what additional cost has the delay and redesign added to the project?”

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

“As I highlighted in my first answer, there is work undergoing and discussions underway with funding partners where we are discussing specifics around the design detail for the Sports Hub. We anticipate this will conclude early next year, at which stage we will be able to provide further details of the scheme going forward.”

Questions 5 and 6

Public questions had been submitted by Debbie Finlayson. However, the questioner was not present at the meeting therefore it was advised that a written reply would be sent to her.

COU/52/26 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies 2026/27

Consideration was given to a report asking Council to appoint to the TVCA Investment Committee

No nominations were made at the meeting and the nomination would therefore be brought back to a future Council meeting.

RESOLVED that the outstanding vacancy be noted.

COU/53/26 Youth Justice Plan Stockton-on-Tees 2026-2027

Council was asked to consider and endorse the Youth Justice Plan.

RESOLVED

1) That the contents of the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan 2026/27 be noted.

2) That the strategic priorities and delivery approach outlined in the Plan be endorsed.

3) That the continued multi-agency collaboration through the Youth Justice Management Board be supported to deliver improved outcomes for children, families and communities.

4) That the implementation and monitoring arrangements contained within the Plan be approved.

COU/54/26 Stockton-on-Tees Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2026-2031

Council was asked to consider and endorse the Youth Violence Strategy.

RESOLVED

1) That the contents of the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Violence Strategy 2026 -2031 be noted.

2) That the vision, priorities and partnership approach outlined within the Strategy be endorsed.

3) That the implementation of the annual Serious Youth Violence Delivery Plan be supported.

4) That the governance arrangements which place strategic oversight with the Youth Justice Management Board be endorsed.

COU/55/26 Planning Committee and National Scheme of Delegation

Council was asked to consider decisions relating to the Constitution, the scheme of delegation and Planning Committee arrangements.

RESOLVED

1) That, having regard to the report and Appendix 4, the national requirements be noted and the size of the Planning Committee be reduced to 9 Members.

2) That the Planning Committee be reconstituted with effect from 31 October 2026 and the following appointments be approved in accordance with the wishes of the political groups:

   Cllr Carol Clark
   Cllr Stephen Dodds
   Cllr Lynn Hall
   Cllr Eileen Johnson
   Cllr Tony Riordan
   Cllr Andrew Sherris
   Cllr Norma Stephenson
   Cllr Mick Stoker
   Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

3) That Councillor Andrew Sherris be appointed as Chair of the Planning Committee.

4) That Councillor Lynn Hall be appointed Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

5) That the constitutional amendments at Appendix 1, incorporating the committee size determined at resolution 1 above, the retaining of the existing quorum of five and the requirement for appropriate member training be approved.

6) That the substantive Planning Referral and Triage Protocol at Appendix 2, including the local thresholds, member-request procedure, treatment of own-interest applications and requirements for recording and publishing referral assessments be approved.

7) That the Chair of the Planning Committee be the nominated member for the purposes of regulations 5 and 6 with the Vice-Chair being the substitute nominated member and the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to designate, in writing, a suitably qualified senior planning officer to act as the nominated officer for the purposes of those Regulations.

8) That the revised Planning Protocol at Appendix 5 be approved and the implementation arrangements and workflow contained in Appendix 3 be noted including the administrative operation of which will be settled under resolution 10.

9) That the Head of Democratic Services issue the statutory allocation notices and administer outstanding nominations under the proper-officer designation recorded in paragraph 2.158 of the Constitution with any outstanding permanent appointments being brought back to Full Council (the authority to administer the process does not itself confer power to appoint) and that any proposal to fill an

unclaimed allocated seat with another member will be brought to Full Council once the statutory requirements have been satisfied.

10) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, Planning Services Manager and Head of Legal Services, to settle the final drafting, numbering and cross-references; approve associated guidance, workflow processes, publication arrangements, internal administrative procedures, implementation documentation and transitional measures; and make consequential amendments necessary to implement Council's decisions. Constitutional updates to be made consistently with paragraph 1.37, and any Local Scheme of Delegation or amendment to it must be agreed by both the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer under paragraph 2.148. (This delegation does not permit changes to the substantive thresholds, counting rules, member-request rights or deadline, own-interest arrangements, committee size, quorum or allocation of decision-making responsibility approved by Council).

11) That any substantive change to those arrangements must be reported to Full Council and any further substitute nominee needed outside the arrangements approved above must be formally nominated through a lawful Council decision or express delegated authority before exercising the statutory referral function.

12) That the new committee and revised arrangements take effect on 31 October 2026, and a report be submitted to Council after 12 months reviewing the committee's size, local triage criteria and practical operation. (The existing arrangements to continue until commencement, subject throughout to the law.)

COU/56/26 Motions to Council

Cleveland Fire Brigade Funding and Thornaby Fire Station

It was moved by Councillor Ted Strike and seconded by Councillor Tony Riordan and:

RESOLVED

Council notes that:

Cleveland Fire Brigade is consulting on a proposal to change the staffing arrangements for one of the two fire appliances based at Thornaby Fire Station.

Under the proposal, one appliance would continue to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, while the second would operate for 12 hours a day during daytime hours. The consultation closes on 26 November 2026, after which recommendations will be considered by Cleveland Fire Authority.

Cleveland Fire Brigade is forecasting a funding gap of at least £1.198 million by 2028/29.

The Brigade serves an area with one of the most significant industrial risk profiles in the country, including major petrochemical and other nationally important infrastructure and a significant concentration of upper-tier COMAH sites.

Council believes that:

Cleveland Fire Brigade must receive sufficient and sustainable funding to maintain effective frontline services and respond safely to the particular risks within its area.

National funding arrangements should properly reflect industrial and community risk and not be based principally upon population.
The proposed reduction in the availability of the second appliance at Thornaby raises legitimate concerns about fire cover for Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Yarm and the wider Borough, as well as the safety of residents and firefighters.

Any final decision must be informed by the consultation responses and by clear evidence about its effect on risk, appliance availability, response standards and firefighter safety.

Council resolves that:

1) The Chief Executive responds to the Service Delivery Review consultation on behalf of the Council, expressing Council's serious concern about the proposed reduction in the availability of the second appliance at Thornaby and asking Cleveland Fire Authority to demonstrate, before making any final decision, how appropriate fire cover, response standards and the safety of residents and firefighters will be maintained.

2) The Chief Executive writes to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, sending a copy to the Brigade's Chief Fire Officer, calling upon the Government to address Cleveland Fire Brigade's forecast funding gap of at least £1.198 million by 2028/29 and to ensure that future funding arrangements properly reflect the significant industrial and community risks within the Brigade's area.

3) The Chief Executive writes to the Members of Parliament for Stockton West, Stockton North and Middlesbrough and Thornaby East seeking their support for sufficient and sustainable funding for Cleveland Fire Brigade.

<u>Protecting Stockton Residents from Further Tax Rises</u>

It was moved by Councillor Tony Riordan and seconded by Councillor Niall Innes and:

RESOLVED

Council notes that:

People across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees continue to face significant pressure on their household finances.

Inflation (Consumer Prices Index) rose by 2.9 per cent in the twelve months to July 2026, with housing and household services making one of the largest contributions to rising costs.

Since April 2025, the rate of employer National Insurance contributions has increased from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent, while the threshold at which employers begin paying these contributions has fallen from £9,100 to £5,000. These additional employment costs affect local businesses, charities and other employers and can ultimately place pressure on wages, prices and employment.

Residents in the borough have also faced a 4.95 per cent increase in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's element of Council Tax for 2026/27, in addition to other household bills and taxation.

Council believes that:

Hard-working people, pensioners, families and businesses across Stockton-on-Tees should not be asked to carry an even greater financial burden.
Sound public finances are essential, but further increases in taxation would risk reducing household disposable income, weakening business confidence and placing additional pressure on local jobs and the borough's economy.

National fiscal decisions should take proper account of their cumulative impact on communities such as Stockton-on-Tees, where many households and businesses are already managing significant increases in their costs.

Council resolves that:

The Chief Executive write on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

Setting out the cumulative pressures currently facing residents and businesses across the borough.

Requesting that the forthcoming Budget does not introduce further increases in the overall tax burden on working people, pensioners or local businesses.

Asking the Chancellor to prioritise responsible control of public expenditure, economic growth and measures that allow people across Stockton-on-Tees to keep more of the money they earn.

Opposing the Early Release of Serious Offenders

It was moved by Councillor Tony Riordan and seconded by Councillor Niall Innes and:

RESOLVED

Council notes that:

From 1 October 2026, the Labour Government's new sentencing arrangements will allow many eligible offenders serving standard determinate sentences to be released after serving as little as one third of their custodial sentence.

Although some offences are excluded from these arrangements, the fundamental principle remains that offenders could spend substantially less time in prison than victims, their families and the public were led to expect when the sentence was imposed.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation rated the North East Probation Service as "Requires improvement" overall and its public protection work as "Inadequate". The Stockton and Hartlepool Probation Delivery Unit was rated "Inadequate" for both the assessment and implementation of public protection work.

The inspection found that the North East region was already managing 8,616 people in the community, of this 3,058 people released from prison on licence, while implementing several national policies intended to reduce pressure on prison capacity.

Council believes that:

The first duty of government is to protect the public.

The exclusions set out on 30 August 2026 for life sentences, extended determinate sentences, rape offences, specified serious child sexual and grooming offences, and offences relating to unlawful killing must be maintained and applied fully in every relevant case. No offender convicted of attempted murder, terrorism, serious violence, child abuse, child sexual exploitation or serious domestic abuse should qualify for earlier release under the Progression Model.

A prison sentence should mean what victims, the public and the courts reasonably understand it to mean. Reducing the time an offender spends in custody after a sentence has been imposed undermines confidence in the criminal justice system.

The capacity pressures within the prison estate must not be addressed by transferring greater risk and responsibility onto communities, police forces, probation services and local authorities.

The findings concerning public protection work in the North East demonstrate the serious risks of placing even more offenders under supervision in communities before the probation system is demonstrably able to manage them safely.

The present Government's decision to release many offenders after as little as one third of their custodial sentence is the wrong approach. It prioritises the management of prison capacity over punishment, public protection and the rights of victims.

For victims and their families, seeing an offender released substantially earlier than expected risks creating the unacceptable impression that crime pays. It is an insult to those who have suffered and risks diminishing the seriousness of the crimes committed against them.

"Council condemns the Government's approach and believes that dangerous and serious offenders should remain behind bars, prisons should have the capacity required to accommodate them and sentences imposed by the courts should be properly served.

Council resolves that:

The Chief Executive write on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor:

Expressing this Council's opposition to the release of offenders after serving as little as one third of their custodial sentence.

Condemning the use of earlier release as a means of managing pressure on the prison estate.

Seeking a firm assurance that the exclusions set out on 30 August 2026 for life sentences, extended determinate sentences, rape offences, specified serious child sexual and grooming offences, and offences relating to unlawful killing will be maintained and applied fully in every relevant case, while calling for them to be extended to cover any offences involving attempted murder, terrorism, serious violence, child abuse, child sexual exploitation or serious domestic abuse that might otherwise qualify under the Progression Model.

Requesting that no offender assessed as presenting a significant risk to the public is released early solely because of pressure on prison capacity.

Calling upon the Government to provide sufficient prison places so that serious criminals can serve the custodial sentences imposed upon them.

Requesting sufficient resources for the Probation Service, Cleveland Police and other agencies responsible for protecting people across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Asking that victims are informed promptly of any proposed change to an offender's release date and are given a meaningful opportunity to raise concerns about their safety and the conditions attached to the offender's licence.

COU/57/26 Members' Question Time

Question 1

The following question was submitted by Councillor Tony Riordan:

"A recent Freedom of Information (FOI) request submitted by a resident revealed that £1975 of this council's funds had been spent on three Social Media Influencers to promote event campaigns within the Borough.

The FOI response made clear that this Labour led Council were unable to provide any recorded reach, impressions, engagement, or performance metrics used to assess the effectiveness of the campaigns.

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that promoting campaigns via Social Media Influencers and not being able to provide any measure of effectiveness is not a good way to be spending local taxpayers' money."

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"The purpose of this expenditure was very straightforward: to bring people into Stockton-on-Tees, to our events and attractions, and to support our local businesses and town centres.

The £1,975 was not a single payment or a general influencer campaign. It covered a small number of targeted commissions over two years supporting specific activities including Tracks of Change at Preston Park Museum, Stockton Sparkles, and the S&DR Anniversary Journey and Ghost Train.
The content creators were deliberately selected because of the size and nature of their audiences, particularly families across the wider Northeast who we would not necessarily reach through the Council's own channels.

For a relatively modest investment, we were taking some of Stockton's biggest events and attractions to audiences beyond our Borough and encouraging those people to come here, enjoy them and spend their time and money here. That supports our town centres, our visitor economy and our local businesses.

On the FOI point, there is an important distinction. We knew the overall reach and audience of the people we were commissioning and why we were commissioning them. What we did not hold when the FOI request was received was the detailed analytics showing the performance of each individual piece of commissioned content.

So "information not held" in an FOI response should not be confused with "we did not know who we were targeting or why we were spending the money."

Officers have subsequently gone back to the content creators and obtained that additional performance information without charge.

But the strategy itself is simple, use a modest amount of money to get Stockton in front of audiences we cannot easily reach ourselves and encourage more people to choose Stockton-on-Tees for their day out."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

"Hopefully, the Cabinet Member will be aware that the three social media influencers were based in the Newcastle area. Can the Cabinet Member detail what selection criteria took place to select these influencers? Were any influencers based in the Borough approached or commissioned and what is the total amount of money spent on influencers over the past two years?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"As I said in my initial question, the point of commissioning these influencers was to reach people that we wouldn't reach who are up to date with our social media channels. When I was younger, 20 years ago, social media influencers weren't a thing and they really are now. I can't believe how much that has changed. So, I would absolutely support the use of them.

I think you mentioned Newcastle. That's what we want to be doing in Stockton. We want people to come from the region and further afield to come to our attractions. So that's exactly why we did it.

In terms of the absolute money that was spent on influencers over the last two years, that's not information I have at my fingertips. However, I will go back to officers and get a figure.

Just to reiterate my initial response, we do have the performance data for those posts. The issue was simply a time lag with the FOI request. I would absolutely advocate promoting our Borough to encourage visitors from across the region, because not only will they have a great day out, but they will also spend money in the local economy.

As we discussed earlier in relation to the motion, that is exactly what we want to see: local businesses thriving. Effective promotion of our events and attractions is an important way of helping to achieve that."

Question 2

The following question was submitted by Councillor Ted Strike:

"On 18th March 2026 I put forward a motion regarding "Social Care". The motion was passed and a letter written to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the response was not a positive one.

We now have a new PM and Chancellor and the PM is putting changes to the unfair Adult Social Care system, which I welcome.

My question to the responsible cabinet member is:

Now we have a new PM and Chancellor, will the cabinet resubmit the letter we sent to the then Chancellor following my motion at the March meeting?"

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"Thank you, Councillor Strike.

The Council's view as agreed was clearly expressed in March, and that view was formally communicated to Government by the Chief Executive following the resolution of Full Council.

I recognise, of course, that since then there has been a change of Prime Minister and Chancellor. But I also think it is important to recognise that the national position has moved on quite significantly since we had that debate.

The Prime Minister has now made a clear commitment to reform Adult Social Care and to deliver a National Care Service. He has accelerated the work of the Independent Commission led by Baroness Casey so that it reports by summer 2027, has announced cross party discussions, and has established a group of Ministers from across Government, including the Chancellor, to drive that work forward.

I think those are important developments. Many of the concerns which prompted the Council's debate in March, particularly around the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care, are therefore very much part of the national discussion. That does not mean that all of the particular funding issues we raised in March have yet been resolved, and we will obviously continue to follow those developments very closely.

Against that background, I am not sure that simply asking Cabinet to resend the same letter is necessarily the most useful thing for us to do now. The Council's view was clearly expressed in March. If the Council wishes to make a further representation, I think we should make sure it reflects where the debate is now.

There is also an important point about how we do that. The March letter was sent on behalf of the Council following a resolution of Full Council. If we now want to make a

further representation in the name of the Council as a whole, then I think it is right that Full Council should collectively consider and agree what that new message should be.

So, Councillor Strike, if you and other members feel there is more that Stockton on Tees should now contribute to that debate, I would welcome you considering bringing a more detailed proposal back to a future meeting of the Council, perhaps in November.

In conclusion, if there is a position around Adult Social Care that members across this chamber can collectively support, then I think there is real value in the Council, not Cabinet expressing that view. But let's make sure that what we say is current, relevant and helps to move the debate forward."

Question 3

The following question was submitted by Councillor Tony Riordan:

"The Cabinet member will, hopefully, be aware of the finer financial details of the £30 million plus the local taxpayers have pumped into the Globe Theatre, whether that's by way of borrowing, the use of annual revenue or dipping into the scarce reserves this Labour Led Council holds, They'll also, hopefully be aware of the promises this Labour led Council made to the local taxpayer regarding the profit sharing agreement with the Ambassador Theatre Group from year 4 of opening. Can the Cabinet member please inform members how much this Labour Led Council has received from the profit share agreement from year 4 onwards?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"The Globe opened in September 2021 and there was no profit share received for the 2025-26 financial year. The project saw the building saved from further decline and as a key asset on the High Street has unlocked wider regeneration, economic growth and job creation. Situated in the heart of Stockton High Street, the Globe's 3,000 capacity makes it the biggest live entertainment venue between Newcastle and Leeds. Putting Stockton back on the map as a live entertainment destination. Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) runs major venues worldwide from the London West End to Broadway and the Globe offers a wide-ranging programme featuring top tier musical theatre shows, musicians and comedy acts. This means that residents can now see some of the world's best-known bands, artists and comedians right here on their doorstep. The Globe has also proved to be a real positive for our local hospitality industry with residents and visitors drinking in local bars, eating in local restaurants, and staying in local hotels. The people of Stockton deserve world class facilities on their doorstep."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

"The Cabinet Member will be familiar with the restoration of the Globe report presented to Members in 2019. The report outlined the profit share agreement with Ambassador Theatre Group, in which this Council would receive 30% of any earnings above £600,000 in the form of rent from year four of operation. It further outlined that this will be reviewed as part of the Council's MTFP planning during year three of the Globe's operation ahead of the profit rent agreement starting in year four. We now know through Councillor Rowling's response to that the Council has not received a

single penny from this arrangement. Can the Cabinet Member point Members to the review that was undertaken during year three as part of the MTFP?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"Yes, I think it is right to clarify the position regarding The Globe, because I think there are some misconceptions out there. So yes, of course, the profit element would mean that we would receive a share of any earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation over £600,000.

You will see, if you have looked at the MTFP, that the subsidy for The Globe is contained within it and is subject to approval by Council each year. It was included in the MTFP and all groups were briefed on it and, as far as I am aware, there were no amendments proposed to it. Therefore, the subsidy is in the MTFP.

I am always happy to have conversations about The Globe because I think it is a real asset for the town centre, and I do not think this fixation on pounds and pence is necessarily the way forward. Across the country, we have seen old theatres brought back into use, and the wider economic benefits have been there for all to see.

I was in Stockton town centre last week and spoke to businesses that talked about the real increase in trade they see around shows at The Globe. So, as I have said, the subsidy element for The Globe is contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan, and it was there for all Members to see."

COU/58/26 Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

"Mr Mayor,

Since we last met as Full Council on 22 July, Cabinet has met once, on 17 September.

As always, the reports and papers considered at that meeting are available on the Council's website.

Our next scheduled Cabinet meeting is on 15 October and there are a number of important matters due to come forward over the next few weeks that I wanted to touch on briefly.

First, our finances.

Members will have seen the latest financial monitoring reports and the update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Local government finances remain under significant pressure nationally and Stockton-on-Tees is no exception. During the speeches earlier, we have supported motions on economic difficulties and we acknowledge the tough decisions that this Chamber has to make. As also said, this isn't anything new and demand-led services continue to face increasing pressures, whilst wider inflationary and economic factors continue to affect councils across the country.

The Council has a clear financial and transformation programme in place to respond to those challenges. Work continues through Powering Our Future and through the

wider programme of service reviews designed to ensure that we remain financially sustainable while continuing to deliver essential services to residents.

With a programme of this scale, it is inevitable that circumstances will change, assumptions will evolve and some elements of delivery will not proceed exactly as originally anticipated. The important thing is not that challenges arise, but that they are identified, understood properly and addressed.

Where pressures emerge, we must understand them. Where assumptions change, we must adjust our plans. And where services need to work differently, we must be prepared to consider those options openly and objectively.

That financial context will be important as Cabinet considers a number of significant issues over the coming months.

One of those is Billingham Town Centre.

Members will be aware that a considerable amount of work is currently underway to develop the financial, commercial and legal information required to support the next stage of decision-making.

It is important that Cabinet has the fullest possible information before us when decisions of this significance are brought forward.

For that reason, officers may require a little more time and we may therefore hold an additional Cabinet meeting later in October to discuss Billingham Town Centre.

Our objective remains straightforward: to ensure that Cabinet is able to make decisions on a clear, robust and fully informed basis, while providing residents, businesses and stakeholders in Billingham with as much certainty as possible about the future direction of the town centre.

There are, of course, other important matters progressing through the Forward Plan, including further work around opportunities for young people and the continuing programme of transformation and service review.

But it would be wrong for an update on the Council's work to focus entirely on budgets and reports.

There has also been a great deal happening across the Borough since we last met.

This summer saw another hugely successful SIRF and for the first time, the festival was able to make extensive use of the new Stockton Waterfront.

Thousands of residents and visitors including myself and other members enjoyed the programme across the weekend, and the event provided an excellent demonstration of what the Waterfront can deliver as a destination for culture, leisure and community activity. It showcased the investment that has been made in the area and highlighted the role the Waterfront can play in supporting the continued regeneration of Stockton Town Centre.

There is more cultural activity to come.

At Preston Park Museum, the Council's original J.M.W. Turner watercolour, Mustering of the Warrior Angels, will return to public display as part of the wider Turner on Tees programme. The new Spence building has celebrated its first-year anniversary recently and I've been wowed with the success of exhibitions such as the opening, the hand decorated wooden dolls. The three iconic paintings which were load by His Majesty the King. The fabulous installation of preserved flowers grown in the grounds, named corridors. My personal favourite Perfume by a global artist. Then we have had the return of the dice players, Viking events, heritage skills days, the fabulous walled garden and Matisse exhibitions. I'm very much looking forward to using my membership and viewing the Turner display.
This is why we are shortlisted for town of culture and this is just one of our fabulous venues.

Work is continuing on Our Town, Our Time following our shortlisting for the inaugural UK Town of Culture 2028 competition.

To be shortlisted from almost 400 applications is a remarkable achievement in itself and reflects the quality, creativity and ambition that exists across Stockton Town Centre and beyond.

The next stage provides an opportunity for residents, businesses, cultural organisations, community groups and young people to help shape the bid and contribute directly to Stockton's future cultural vision. I would encourage everyone to get involved and make their voice heard.

Taken together, these projects illustrate the breadth of activity taking place across the Borough. Our investment in town centres, cultural programmes, public spaces and community partnerships is all part of a wider ambition: creating places where people want to live, work, invest and spend their time.

There are significant challenges ahead, particularly around the Council's finances and the continuing need to transform services. Those challenges must be faced openly, honestly and realistically.

But it is equally important that we continue to look forward with confidence. The decisions we take now will shape not only the future of our services, but the future of our towns, our communities and our Borough as a whole.

Thank you, Mr Mayor."