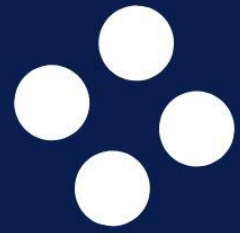


# STOCKTON ON TEES



## POWERING OUR FUTURE THE STOCKTON- ON-TEES PLAN 2024-2028



## Introduction

This is our new Council Plan. It sets out a vision for the future of our Borough, which has been developed following conversations with communities. The Council Plan is a framework that the Council, as well as our partners and communities, will use to ensure we work together towards a shared vision that brings our vision to life.

Our Vision is:

*Stockton-on-Tees is home – a warm and friendly place, where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place, where everyone can grow and succeed. We work together to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.*

This Plan marks a new way of working for the Council. Pressures on communities and public services have been growing for some time, which mean we can no longer afford to deliver services the way we have in the past. We are confident we can work with local stakeholders to put in place new and innovative approaches that will reshape what we do in the best interests of our residents, whilst effectively managing the resources we have.

Our Council Plan also responds to the policy direction of the new Government and aligns with their priority Missions, particularly in breaking down barriers to opportunity, creating safer communities and kickstarting growth. Our co-ordinated approach to delivery will ensure that national policy and approach, supports local success.

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## **Foreword from Leader/Chief Executive**

This Council Plan marks a new direction for our organisation.

We are proud to be a high performing Council, with evidence to show that we have, and will continue to make a positive difference to the lives of our communities, however, the conditions we are working in have changed and what we have done in the past won't get us to where we need to be in future.

Like most public sector organisations, the pressure on our finances is significant. At the same time, the demand for the services we provide has been rising and our costs have been increasing rapidly, especially in recent years.

Our strong and careful management means we're in a better position than some councils. However, we face some tough decisions about the way we work in future and the services we provide, or in some cases, may have to stop providing. This will mean working differently with our partners and our communities, empowering residents to do more for themselves and harnessing the strengths of our communities to achieve better outcomes for the people of Stockton-on-Tees.

We must think differently and creatively about how we respond to the challenges ahead as we strive to achieve the best for our Borough, while we carefully manage the money we have available.

This is a plan that aims to make the Borough the best place it can be over the coming decade, where we all have a part to play.

The plan sets out our key priorities and provides a unifying strategy for the whole of the Borough to make it the best possible place to live and work.

Councillor Bob Cook (Leader of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

Mike Greene (Chief Executive of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

**Executive Summary – plan on a page**



## OUR VISION

Stockton-on-Tees is home. It's a warm and friendly place where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of the Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place where everyone can grow and succeed. We will continue to work together to reduce inequalities and barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

### THE BEST START IN LIFE TO ACHIEVE BIG AMBITIONS

A safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. Working hard to prevent the impact of poverty, creating a bright and healthy future with a shared sense of belonging. Supporting children in our care and creating equality of opportunity

### HEALTHY AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Building happy and healthy lives, supporting those who are experiencing poverty. Ensuring that our residents are resilient, independent

### A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

A vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy that residents can be proud of



### AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Growing the local economy and cementing our role as the well-connected, economic heart of Tees Valley. Ensuring that all residents can benefit from secure and sustainable jobs

### SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL

A well-run financially sustainable Council that improves outcomes for communities



## WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY TO MAKE OUR VISION A REALITY

#### SOME OF THE THINGS WE WILL DO:

- Support children and families with early development
- Increase access to screening and immunisations
- Work with communities to manage the impact of serious and organised crime
- Progress delivery of our exciting plans for regeneration
- Encourage inward investment from companies that have good and fair operating principles
- Support our residents to access secure and sustainable employment
- Continue to deliver a balanced budget while improving outcomes for communities

#### SOME OF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- Get involved with our Family Hubs.
- Volunteer - see what's available at [www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk](http://www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk)
- Use and enjoy your local town and village centres
- Use our online forms or call us to report issues such as broken streetlights, damaged street furniture and potholes
- Support local businesses and shop close to home, helping local companies to succeed
- Boost your skills by taking a course with any of the great providers in the Borough
- Share your ideas for doing things differently in your area

#### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

- Our residents will feel like they belong to their community, live for longer and in good health.
- More of our children will have a good level of development and be ready for school when they reach reception age. More will achieve outstanding educational attainment and remain in education, employment and/or training at age 16, building a bright future in our Borough.
- Crime rates will reduce and more residents will feel safe at all times.
- More residents will be happy in their employment and accommodation.
- Employment rates and GVA will increase.
- We will do more with our partners and communities, recognising the part we all have to play in the future of our Borough.

Read the full plan



## **Developing the plan – with communities, for communities**

The Council Plan is underpinned by wide range of data and intelligence. But most importantly, it represents the voice of the Borough. It has been developed with communities, for communities.

We've heard from:

- Over 1600 residents who responded to our Residents Survey;
- Over 100 residents through conversations at Community Groups;
- 72 people who joined us for face-to-face interviews; and
- 117 residents on our Viewpoint Panel.

This has given us a rich insight into the things that matter to our residents, including what's great about the place they live and what could make it better. Using the voice of communities, we have developed a shared Vision for the future of the Borough. Our Vision is:

*Stockton-on-Tees is home – a warm and friendly place, where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place, where everyone can grow and succeed. We work together to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.*

Achieving our Vision and delivering on what residents have told us are important to them will be a shared effort. This will include the need for decisive action, support and engagement from the Council, our partners and communities themselves – **we all have a part to play.**

### **Our message to Communities...**

You've told us the kind of place you want to live and work in, and through these conversations we know there are great strengths in your communities. We see the role of the Council, working with our partners, as empowering you to make the most of the resources and facilities in your areas, to improve your wellbeing, engagement and reduce reliance on council services. To make this a reality, we will help to leverage the existing strengths in communities to drive positive change. In this way, we can maximise the potential and capabilities you have, helping you to collaborate, co-produce and lead initiatives that will improve outcomes.

### **Partnerships Powering Our Future...**

Working with our partners, we are stronger together. Public services across Stockton on Tees face shared challenges of decreasing budgets and increasing demand. In response, we will pull together around the needs of our communities, not drift apart into silos. We will work collaboratively to build on our strengths and seek to ensure that services are provided by the organisation or community group best placed to do so.

**Each of our priorities in this Council Plan make it clear how we can all work together to unlock the full potential of communities by doing our bit for the Borough and where we all have a part to play.**

## **Stockton on Tees – a picture of the Borough**

Stockton-on-Tees is a place of contrasts and diversity. Our natural assets, industrial heritage and innovative spirit are fundamental to who we are – as a place and as communities.

The River Tees runs through our Borough, shaping lives past, present and future. It runs alongside Georgian-fronted market squares, nature reserves, spectacular bridges and unforgettable industrial architecture. Our Borough sits between striking landscapes and a stunning coastline, all within easy reach of key centres across Yorkshire and the North East, including Newcastle, York and Leeds.

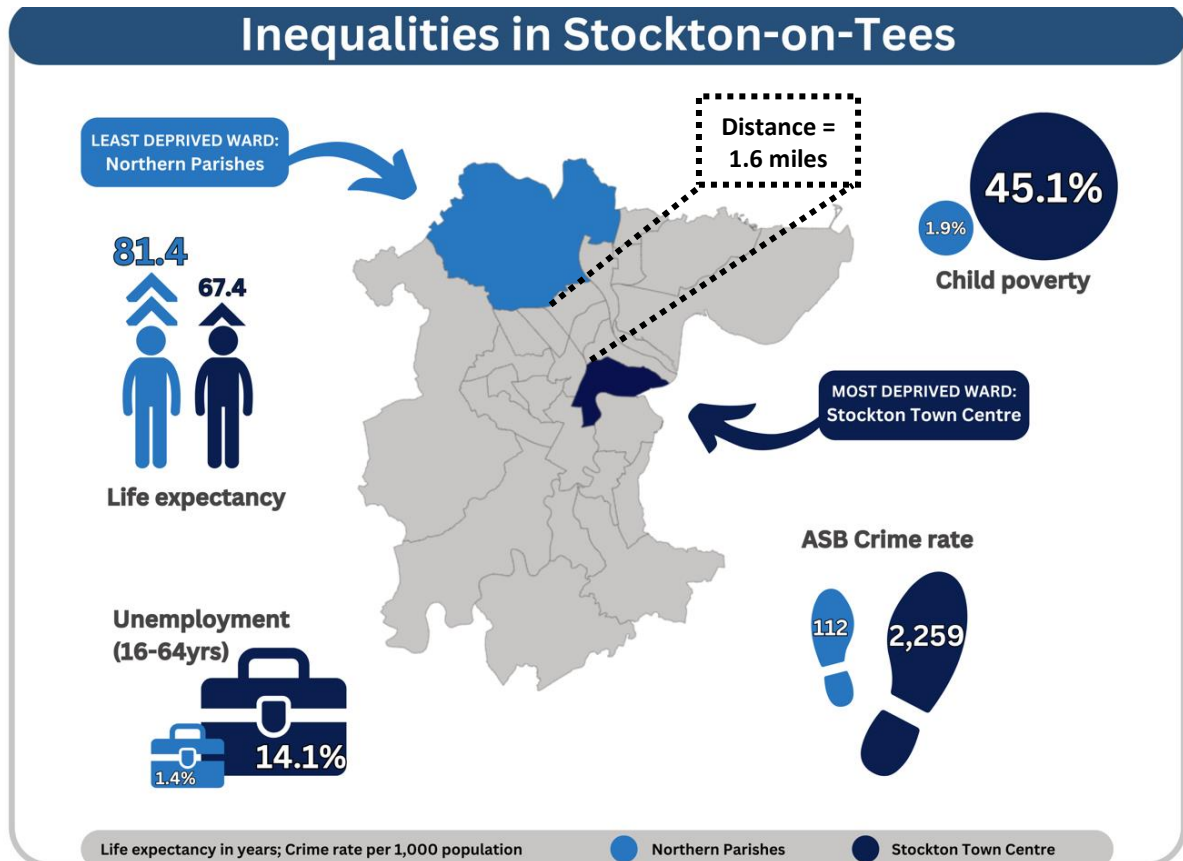
We are the largest Borough in the Tees-Valley with approximately 200,000 residents, making up a diverse and welcoming community, with a strong sense of community spirit.

Our Borough is a place with:

- Some of the warmest, friendliest and most welcoming people in the country.
- Entrepreneurial energy and economic potential – we have highly productive companies and high quality jobs across a number of dynamic sectors, including: chemicals, engineering, environmental technologies, life sciences and digital technologies, as well as a vibrant voluntary sector.
- A fantastic and mixed housing offer, from starter properties to high end executive homes, all at a good level of affordability and served by high quality schools and local services.
- A cultural epicentre, that serves the whole region with an incredible calendar of events, great leisure facilities, plus hugely important cultural assets like The Globe, Billingham Forum Theatre, ARC and Preston Park Museum.
- On top of all this, we have big ambitions for our future and a dynamic approach to Place Leadership and building aspirations, working with our partners.

## Opportunities and Challenges

We are a highly polarised Borough – one of the most polarised in the country - where affluent areas sit alongside places of significant deprivation. High value business and residential areas are in close proximity to many social and economic challenges, that affect the opportunities and life chances of a large proportion of our residents.



The **challenges** we face to reduce inequality and disadvantage are many and varied, however as we take a proactive approach and work together with our partners and communities to overcome and address them, they are not insurmountable.

- Our unemployment rate is higher than the national average and child poverty in the Borough is prevalent, with 1-in-4 children in Stockton-on-Tees living in poverty, rising to 1-in-2 children in some areas of the Borough. Attracting investment and creating jobs will continue to be the focus of the Council to increase opportunity and lift families out of poverty.
- Although crime rates in Stockton-on-Tees are higher than the national average, we have seen some improvements in crime reduction. We are successfully working together with our public sector partners and the voluntary sector to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in high crime rate areas, where we are giving residents opportunities to come together and be involved in shaping their area.



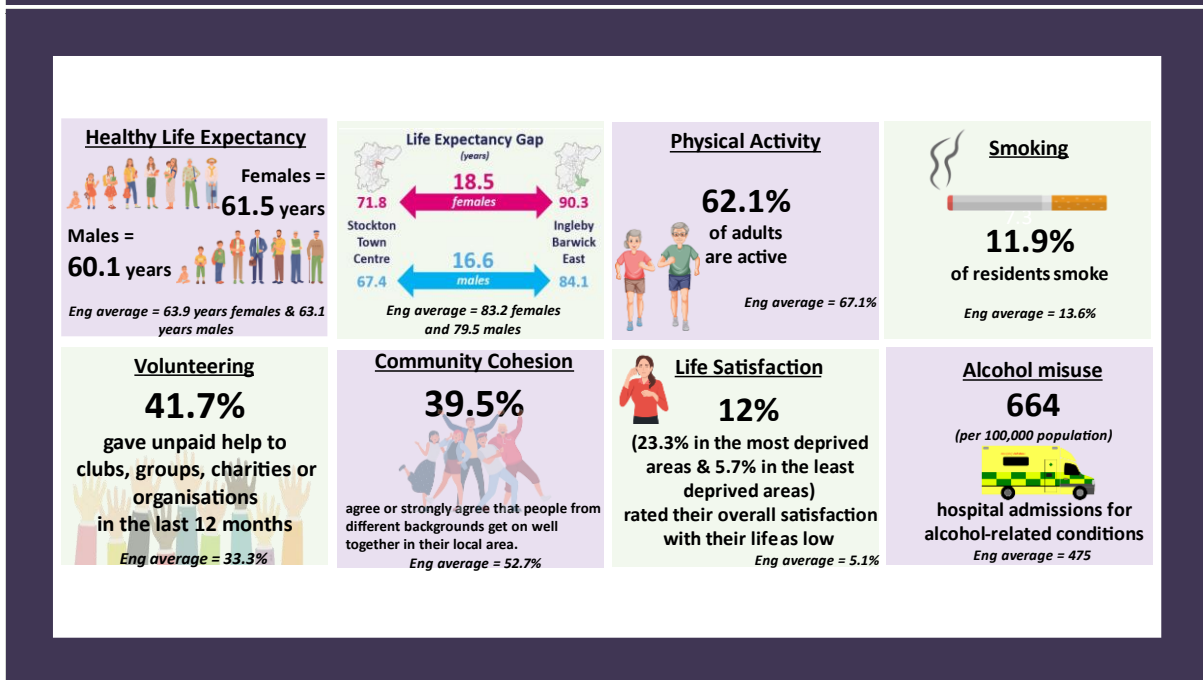
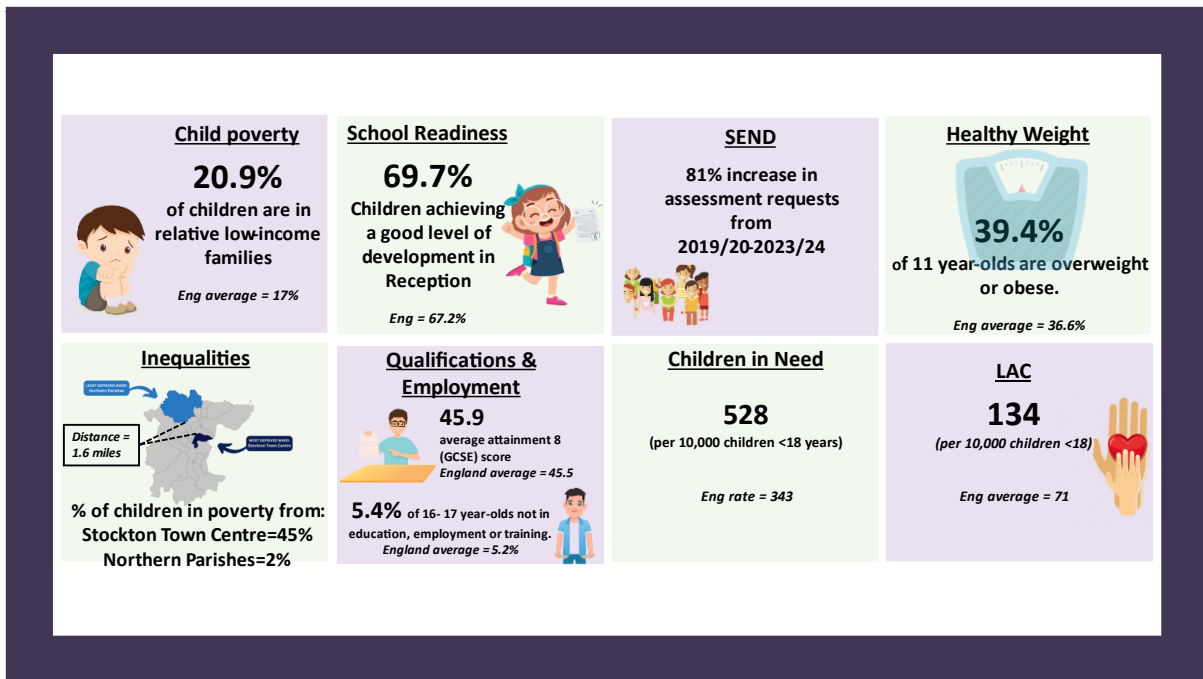
- More than one third of our wards are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country and there is a gap of almost 19 years in average life expectancy for females between Stockton Town Centre ward and Ingleby Barwick East ward. Addressing this starts early, and we have associated challenges around levels of exercise and chronic illness. We're committed to fighting this discrepancy and making sure all people enjoy a healthy and happy life in Stockton-on-Tees.

We have **strong foundations** to build on as we work towards delivering our ambitions.








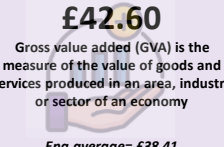
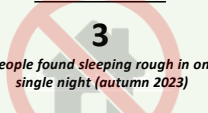

- We are a well-managed council in strong financial health with an excellent track record of delivery. As the economic centre of Tees Valley, with high value clusters and a higher economic output than large northern cities, we are ideally placed to attract investment to grow our business base and our local economy, increasing opportunities for our residents.
- We have a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector, and strong communities that are committed to supporting each other. The number of people who give their time through volunteering sits way above the national average. Alongside this, we have an extensive programme of council activity to break down barriers to opportunity. Our Fairer Stockton-on-Tees commitment and Anti-Poverty Strategy are tackling inequalities and ensuring that we deliver targeted support, including around health inequalities and emotional health and well-being.
- Digital technologies have, and continue to change the way we all live, work and access services. We are a digitally strong borough, sitting well above the national average for Ultrafast broadband coverage, and the number of residents who access the internet. One third of the digital sector in Tees Valley is also located in Stockton-on-Tees – giving us a strong platform for further growth.
- We have high levels of confidence in our town centres and a supply of appropriate brownfield land to be developed, that won't impact on the availability of green space. Our vision for a Care and Health Innovation Zone, along with our excellent transport assets can act as a springboard for investment, increasing economic growth and opportunities for residents.
- As a creative and dynamic events Borough and a place where people want to visit, our thriving cultural offer attracts thousands of visitors each year. Our packed and diverse events programme also provides opportunities for communities to come together, enhancing community cohesion, building pride in place and a sense of belonging.
- We have access to lots of high quality, open green spaces for people to enjoy and for biodiversity to thrive, supporting active and healthy lifestyles through engagement in sport, leisure and options to travel by walking and cycling.

This Plan builds upon our fantastic assets and a strong record of success, whilst also recognising the challenges facing our communities and our economy.

Below is an overview of our key economic statistics...

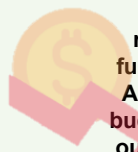


<p><b>Housing</b></p> <p><b>84.4%</b> are satisfied with their accommodation</p>  <p><i>Eng average = 85.1%</i></p>	<p><b>Events</b></p> <p><b>110,000</b> The number of visitors to Stockton-on-Tees each year to attend our events.</p>  <p><i>SIRF 2023 brought £1.7m into the Borough</i></p>	<p><b>Digital inclusion</b></p> <p><b>98.7%</b> of residents are digitally enabled <i>Eng average = 92.2%</i></p> <p><b>85%</b> of all residential &amp; business premises are covered for ultrafast broadband. <i>Eng average = 54%</i></p>	<p><b>Crime</b></p> <p><b>111</b> (per 1,000 population) offences recorded</p>  <p><i>9% decrease on previous year</i></p>
<p><b>Environment</b></p> <p><b>82.5%</b> have made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues</p>  <p><i>Eng average = 85.1%</i></p>	<p><b>Environment</b></p>  <p>Over 1100 hectares of publicly-owned green space, with 6% actively managed for biodiversity</p>	<p><b>Community Safety</b></p>  <p><b>52%</b> feel safe walking alone in their local area after dark</p> <p><i>Eng average = 79.4%</i></p>	<p><b>Recycling</b></p> <p><b>25.2%</b> of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting</p>  <p><i>Eng average = 41.3%</i></p>

<p><b>Qualifications</b></p> <p><b>8.7%</b> have no qualifications <i>Eng average = 6.5%</i></p> <p><b>29.5%</b> have a level 4 qualification or above <i>Eng &amp; Wales average = 33.8%</i></p>  	<p><b>Employment</b></p> <p><b>63.4%</b> of residents are satisfied with their current job <i>Eng average = 69.6%</i></p> <p><b>Unemployment</b></p> <p><b>4.7%</b> of residents are currently unemployed. <i>Eng average = 3.9%</i></p>  	<p><b>Income</b></p> <p><b>£25,000</b> is the median income for Stockton-on-Tees residents</p>  <p><i>Eng average = £26,600</i></p>	<p><b>Finances</b></p> <p><b>21%</b> of residents said that they have difficulty managing their finances</p>  <p><i>Eng average = 6.5%</i></p>
<p><b>Businesses</b></p> <p><b>One-third</b> Of the Tees Valley economy is in Stockton-on-Tees</p> <p><b>Digital Businesses</b></p> <p><b>One-third</b> Of Tees Valley's digital businesses are in Stockton-on-Tees</p> 	<p><b>Productivity</b></p> <p><b>£42.60</b> Gross value added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy</p> <p><i>Eng average = £38.41 Tees Valley average = £29.50</i></p> 	<p><b>Homelessness</b></p> <p><b>3</b> People found sleeping rough in one single night (autumn 2023)</p> <p><i>North-East average = 7.41</i></p> 	<p><b>Economic Inactivity</b></p> <p><b>27.0%</b> of the borough's population are classed as economically inactive</p> <p><i>Eng average = 21.4% North-East average = 25.4%</i></p> <p><b>23.1% economically inactive due to ill health</b> <i>Eng average = 26.3%</i></p> 

The Council has consistently delivered a balanced budget

‘Stockton Council is in strong financial health’ Mazars (External Auditors Nov 2023)



**39%** reduction to our funding since 2010. Alongside growing budget pressures for our public services

Place Leadership Board established to work together to meet the needs of our People and our Place.

Frequently working with partners to meet the diverse needs of individual people and communities.



Planned approach to reduce the budget gap and reshape what we do for the better through the Powering Our Future Programme



**£9 million** budget gap over 3 years



**75%** reduction in carbon emissions since 2010

## Priorities and Key Moves to deliver

We have identified a set of inter-connected priorities and Key Moves that will ensure we work together to overcome our Borough's challenges and achieve our shared vision for our communities.

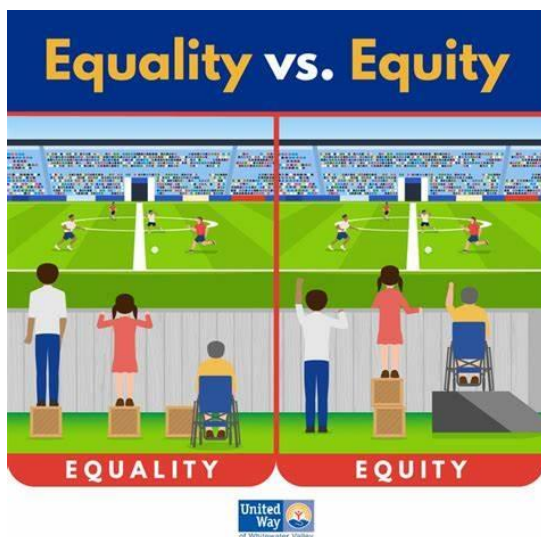
To fully realise these, we will all have a part to play.

Central to everything we do is creating a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing the inequality that exists across the Borough, while improving the health and wellbeing of communities.

### Creating a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing inequality

Our Council Plan builds on the [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework \(2021-2031\)](#) - an ambitious call to action to address the complex issues that can impact quality of life, life chances and life expectancy.

We recognise that a diverse set of responses are required to ensure equity, based on the needs of individuals. As such, we will listen to the needs expressed by individuals and be mindful not to oversimplify. We will also use data and intelligence to make sure we target our activity at the areas of greatest need. This is critical to ensure fairness in communities, and to give all of our children the best start in life.



### Improving population health outcomes

We will focus on interventions in three inter-connected areas, those at a **civic level** (by this we mean the matters controlled by central and local government, such as regulations, fiscal measures, welfare and communication campaigns), alongside those that are **community-based** and **service-based**.

Each of these can make their own impact on health and wellbeing, however we will seek to ensure that together, their impact is greater than the sum of their individual parts. We will do this through a co-ordinated approach to policy setting and delivery using the [Population Intervention Triangle toolkit | Local Government Association](#) approach, which will also support our work around early Intervention and Prevention.

Further detail about our ways of working can also be found in our Design Principles.

## Priority 1: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions

We will support all children to have the best possible start in life, within a safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. We will work hard to prevent children and families from experiencing the impact of poverty, creating a bright and healthy future with a shared sense of belonging. We will support children in our care, as part of our approach to create equality of opportunity for all children and young people in the Borough.

### **Key Moves**

#### **Giving Children and Young People the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive.**

We will ensure that all children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential through our early years, health and wellbeing, childcare and education system. We recognise communities that seek to improve the health and development of its children, are helping to build strong foundations for future economic growth and prosperity and happy, healthy and nurturing families.

For children in the earliest years of life, prevention and early intervention will focus on strengthening relationships and connections – between parents and their children, the wider community and the services that provide help and support in communities. In doing so, we will support our early years providers, schools and wider teams to collaborate fully, to ensure that quality and inclusivity are at the heart of everything we do. This will ensure that all children and families thrive and develop skills for life. As set out in our [Best Start in Life Strategy](#), we will also:

- Support children and families with the development of early speech, language and communication, while supporting families to provide a positive and healthy home learning environment.
- Encourage access to high quality, inclusive and affordable Early Years education and increase the provision of childcare settings to enable more working parents to access free childcare.
- Support schools to provide wraparound services before and after school, alongside enrichment activities that promote healthy and active lives.
- Ensure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have their needs met, and that we are a Borough where everyone is included regardless of their need, background or vulnerability. In doing so, we will aim to provide support for children in a local school or setting (where possible) without the need to travel long distances to have their needs supported.
- Working with our partners, we will support good attendance, reduce exclusions and make attendance a priority. We will take a targeted approach to engage with families in a school setting and bring appropriate services together that enable children and young people to access school with support that allows them to thrive.
- We will work with Schools and Post-16 providers to increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training at ages 16-18 years, helping to grow their ambitions and meeting the needs of local employers.

#### **A safe community for all children and young people**

We will develop our partnership approach to address serious youth violence and build feelings of safety for all Children and Young People.

We will take a Child First approach, as set out in the [Youth Justice Plan](#), which will see us:

- Prioritise the interests of children, including their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential.
- Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their social involvement, leading to safer communities and fewer victims.
- Encouraging children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.
- Promoting a childhood removed from the justice system, using prevention and diversion.

### **Preventing children and families from experiencing the impact of poverty and taking a targeted approach to reduce the number of children in poverty.**

We will address the emerging issues at home and in school that directly affect children, young people and their families or carers. This will include:

- Maximising free school meals take up and ensuring that the council's school meal provision offers healthy and nutritious options for a balanced diet.
- Implementing a school uniform affordability action plan and the targeted promotion of Healthy Starts Vouchers to increase take up amongst eligible families.
- Continuing to deliver our Holidays Are Fun programme in partnership with the VCSE. Providing activities and healthy meals during school holidays.
- Continue to bring together key stakeholders from across our Borough as a network to address issues relating to our children who maybe in poverty.

### **Support for Children in Our Care**

As Corporate Parents, we are committed to supporting the children we care for and care leavers to have happy and healthy childhoods, achieve their full potential and have a successful adulthood. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how we will do this by focusing on Safe and Stable Homes, built on love – where children and young people feel safe, secure and cared for. Specifically, we will focus on:

- Providing opportunities to achieve and progress in education, employment and training.
- Creating connections and building communities through networks with opportunities to participate and have fun.
- Supporting children and young people to share their views, wishes and feelings and ensuring we listen, feedback and take action.
- Promoting healthy lives through physical and emotional health and wellbeing - now and in the future.
- Preparing and supporting our care experienced young people for adult lives.
- Supporting and advocating for our children and young people and challenging others to do the same.

### **A bright future and a sense of belonging**

We will support all of our children and young people to have high aspirations for their future in our Borough and to have fulfilled lives. This will take place through our high-quality education settings, alongside a range of sport, leisure and cultural opportunities for children and families. We will also help our young people to explore opportunities across different employment sectors and build a positive, meaningful future for themselves in the Borough.



For our children and young people with complex needs and who need additional support, we will ensure there is a shared responsibility to develop and implement a 'Preparing for Adulthood' pathway. This will support young people during their transition, ensuring that agencies work together so they can move through life stages as seamlessly as possible.

Young people will also have their voice heard and be involved in making a difference, for example through Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) which is an award-winning youth-led movement, working together with us to make the Borough a great place to grow up in.

We all have a part to play... how can you help give our children and young people the best start in life?

The support of a strong community can create a nurturing environment that has a profound effect on children's wellbeing and development, laying the foundations for a bright future. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Get involved with our Family Hubs in Billingham, Redhill, Stockton and Thornaby to support and benefit from advice, activity sessions, parenting workshops and much more.
- Volunteer with the Independent Visitors Scheme to spend time with young people in our care who would benefit from a friendship with an adult who can offer support, role model qualities and share in doing fun activities with time away from their placement.
- Encourage school attendance and help increase attainment for the young people in your life, perhaps become a School Governor to ensure high standards of achievement across the Borough's schools.
- Encourage and support children to play and keep moving, making the best use of our leisure services and outdoor spaces.
- Encourage and support students aged 16-18 in the Borough, and raise awareness of the local opportunities available to them as they enter the world of work.

## Priority 2: Healthy & Resilient Communities

**We will ensure that our diverse communities can live happy and healthy lives, and that we support those who are experiencing poverty. We will strive to ensure that our residents are resilient, independent and where ever possible, economically active. We will support residents to be safe and connected to each other in their homes and communities.**

### Key Moves

**Ensuring Happy and Healthy lives for all, we will work hard to reduce health inequalities.**

We recognise that health inequalities are mostly shaped by the social determinants of health, and we will be proactive in addressing this by focusing action on the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. This will include a preventative approach to support healthy lives and communities, and for those experiencing complex and multiple needs, we will look for all opportunities to better coordinate and deliver holistic support and care.

Through delivery of our [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) and the [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework \(2021-2031\)](#), we will improve physical and mental health support and shape local places that give people the best possible chance to be healthy. We will work alongside our diverse communities to understand their strengths, where they need support, and how to appropriately tailor this support.

Working with partners and communities to improve and build health, we will:

- Support all children and families to have the best start in life, for example by ensuring access to health and wellbeing support as early as possible.
- Ensure everyone can access a healthy standard of living, for example providing support for skills, education and training to give people better access to job opportunities, particularly for communities facing barriers such as those living with a disability or long-term health condition.
- Support everyone to live in healthy and sustainable places and communities, for example ensuring that our public realm (including town and village centres, parks, nature reserves and connecting pathways) supports active and healthy lifestyles. This includes incentivising safe and accessible options for active travel, as well as involvement with sport and physical activity.
- Helping everyone live long and healthy lives, for example increasing access to screening and immunisations and creating the conditions and support for healthy lives through tackling harm from alcohol and drug misuse and smoking.

### Working with our residents to build resilience and independence in their own homes

We want to support more of our residents to remain in their own homes for longer, and we will work with individuals to co-produce support plans, focussing on the things they want to achieve in their daily lives. Alongside this, we will work with providers to ensure that all services received by our residents are good quality, safe and reliable.

We recognise the invaluable role that carers play to support their loved ones in communities, and we will ensure they receive the support they need to maintain their own independence and wellbeing.

Our work with communities will strengthen resilience through evidence-based public health initiatives, fostering community networks and supporting education on emergency preparedness, including the health and environmental effects of the climate change emergency as well as future pandemics. Communities most likely to be negatively impacted will be prioritised and we will seek to build on factors that promote good health and wellbeing and prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support.

### **Building safe and connected communities**

We will take all opportunities to embed co-production into our ways of working to build strong and connected communities. Through our Communities Mission, we will empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, whilst, respecting the rights of local communities to get involved as much or as little as they are able or wish to. This will include close working with our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.

Our approach will see us work with communities to tackle the contributing causes to social isolation and loneliness and encouraging and facilitating more ways to connect within the community, whilst providing support for people at greatest risk and promoting good mental wellbeing.

We will also ensure that our communities are better connected. Working with transport partners, we will ensure that the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan supports social equity through good connectivity across all modes of travel, that it promotes safety and security for all.

We will continue to work with our partners through the Safer Stockton Partnership, to make Stockton-on-Tees a safer place, where people are protected from serious harm and live in communities that are safe and welcoming. We will take an intelligence-led, neighbourhood-based approach to manage the impact of serious and organised crime. Alongside this, we will reduce offending rates of the most prolific offenders and address issues of serious violence. Our close work with communities will ensure that we protect the most vulnerable, identifying those at risk and preventing them from being drawn into harm, whilst pursuing and prosecuting those who exploit the vulnerable.

### **Supporting those who are experiencing poverty and work with communities to reduce the impact of poverty**

Living in poverty can prevent our residents reaching their potential and can impact on people's educational attainment, employment, civic engagement and their health and wellbeing.

Through our [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#), we will support those directly affected by poverty by offering opportunities, support, advice, and information. We recognise that achieving our goal will not be quick or easy, nor is it something we can do alone. Our shared ambition is one which places both our communities and partners at the core of our delivery plan. It will see us focus our efforts on tackling food insecurity and poverty, reducing fuel poverty and supporting income maximisation. We will also ensure that we undertake Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) where required to ensure that we have an evidence-based approach which analyses the impact on groups with different characteristics, including poverty.

We all have a part to play... how can you help build healthy and resilient communities?

We all have a stake in ensuring our communities are places where people can live happily and healthily at every stage of life, and there are many ways you can do your bit, from supporting those experiencing ill-health or reducing social isolation of vulnerable people, to maintaining your own active lifestyle. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Engage with organisations such as [Cultivate Tees Valley](#) to work on a community garden that boosts food security and helps improve mental health by working outside together outside together.
- Volunteer with clean-up and litter picking groups in your area, and meet new, like minded friends.
- Make the most of active amenities across the borough, like Tees Active Centres, Shape The Play for football inspired fitness and well-being, ParkPlay for fun and games for all ages.
- Offer your time to transport someone who needs to access medical appointments or social groups through the [Volunteer Driver Scheme](#)
- Know your neighbours - especially those who may be vulnerable, and advise them on the help that's available through local initiatives such as: [Warm Homes Healthy People](#), [Community Spaces](#) or [The Bread and Butter Thing](#).

### Priority 3: A Great Place to Live, Work and Visit

**We will make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit - a Borough that residents can be proud of. It will be a vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy.**

We want Stockton-on-Tees to be a place of choice for younger generations to live, work, play and grow - providing an environment where they can thrive. Creating a great place to live will include an emphasis on children and young people growing up feeling safe, utilising green spaces and building their ambitions around exciting and fulfilled lives in our Borough.

#### **Key Moves**

#### **Our Borough will be a place to be proud of, for communities and business**

We will focus on Place Making and working with communities to improve the places and spaces that impact people's lives, including:

- Delivery of the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint to create inspiring and attractive public spaces and facilities, including the Stockton Waterfront Urban Park, renovated historic Town Hall, alongside a vibrant and distinct retail offer and fresh opportunities to live, work and enjoy right at the heart of our Borough.
- Delivering the masterplan for Billingham to transform the town centre, providing a new residential community, alongside quality public realm that is connected to a revitalised retail area, and linking residents better with enhanced leisure and sports facilities including the new Billingham Sports Hub.
- Delivering our vision for a Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone, which will become a nationally significant site, offering improved infrastructure for health services, medical and social care innovation, with integrated employment and housing offers.
- Implementing the Thornaby Town Deal aspirations and rejuvenating Thornaby Town Centre, including: new leisure facilities, a redeveloped Golden Eagle site and revitalised housing that is accessible and affordable. We will also strengthen links to our other towns and promote active lifestyles through improved cycling and walking routes, alongside delivery of world class engineering and construction training facilities in partnership with NETA Training.
- Maintaining and improving our beautiful local heritage and cultural assets by enhancing historic Yarm High Street's public spaces and enriching its cultural and leisure offer through major improvement and museum extension works at Preston Park.

#### **A vibrant and diverse place – the playground of the Tees Valley**

We have a strong reputation for delivering distinctive, creative and varied events that contribute to our community and economic ambitions. The notion that Stockton-on-Tees is 'an events Borough' has been established over 30 years. It carries the passions and beliefs of our communities, connecting the six towns and connecting generations, cultures and backgrounds to celebrate together, promoting a sense of pride and togetherness. Our festivals and events improve well-being and can be a source of inspiration, a way to learn, grow and build confidence and make new friendships.

To further develop our reputation as a lively and dynamic Borough, that becomes the 'Playground of the Tees Valley' and where people's quality of life is enriched, we will:

- Continue to grow our reputation as a leading presenter of world class outdoor street arts, including international artists and premiere shows.
- Curate a programme of nationally significant largescale events, including the activation and animation of the River Tees and Stockton Waterfront.
- Empower and enable events across our Borough which unite and connect people and our communities, promoting acceptance and respect and building stronger communities through the delivery of local events and celebrations.
- Grow and attract new visitors to the Borough generating direct economic impact in terms of visitor spend and trading, changing perceptions about our Borough and helping us create a compelling offer for inward investment.
- Create exceptional events and exciting experiences, that are inclusive, relevant and diverse and which provide opportunities for participation and volunteering for residents, communities and groups.
- Maximise use of our sport and leisure facilities, including those that offer something different and attract visitors from further afield, such as Tees Barrage International White Water Centre and Air Trail.

### **A great place to live and call home**

We will continue to work with our partners to inform delivery of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan and ensure that the transport network supports inclusivity and creates ease of movement between town centres, places of work, leisure and interest. This will include enhancing the active travel offer, to promote more cycling and walking as a practical choice for everyday journeys, as well as improving bus priority and train station facilities.

We will support the development of aspirational and affordable homes that meet the needs of our residents, set within attractive locations and surrounded by enviable local services.

As part of our approach to support vibrant and healthy communities, we will take advantage of opportunities to make best use of green space, improve energy efficiency and air quality. This will include working with developers and other partners to influence design and delivery, as well as raising awareness about the health impacts of poor air quality and promoting behaviours that can have a positive impact.

Reducing crime and perceptions of crime are crucial in creating great places to live. We will identify those areas with the highest instances of anti-social behaviour and work with perpetrators, as well as communities to support behaviour change and take appropriate action against all persistent offenders. We will also work with businesses to promote safe and welcoming environments that support their companies and their workers to thrive in the Borough.

### **An environment that is well looked after, with outdoor spaces to enjoy and connect local amenities**

We will support an environment that communities want to look after and enjoy, including clean streets, well maintained buildings and green spaces. Our open spaces will be attractive and accessible, including public realm in our town centres, as well as our parks, cemeteries, nature reserves and other grounds. We will support approaches to enhance and maintain these areas for communities to enjoy and keep active. Our approach will also be environmentally sustainable, as we care for our wider environment and enhance biodiversity, as part of our approach to adapt to the impact of climate change.

Promoting active travel will be integral to our approach. We will reduce the barriers that stop people from choosing to travel actively to work and town centres; delivering improvements in walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure that will support active travel.

We will progress a transformation review of Waste Services, to enable changes that are efficient and sustainable, reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill and supporting an increase in recycling. Our approach aligns with national policy and the [Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Strategy](#), which can maximise environmental benefits and resources from waste.

We all have a part to play... how can you help create a great place to live, work and visit?

Our Borough has a long and proud history of community spirit, where residents care about the places and spaces they live, and regularly make active contributions. For example by supporting community safety, caring for your area and much more. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Present your bin, recycling and green waste in the right way and in a timely fashion to help our Community Services teams keep our streets clean.
- Encourage participation by spreading the word about events, activities and community groups to your friends, family and neighbours when chatting or on social media.
- Embrace active travel options, especially for shorter journeys – these are better for the environment, whilst also helping to stay fit and healthy.
- Take steps to insulate your home, or look out for information and support that can help with home energy efficiency.
- Be proud of Stockton-on-Tees. Talk about and share the success stories of the Borough and its people to showcase Stockton-on-Tees as a great place to live, work and visit.

## **Priority 4: An inclusive economy**

**We will continue to grow the economy of Stockton-on-Tees and cement our role as the well-connected, economic heart of the Tees Valley. We will ensure that all of our residents can benefit from secure and sustainable economic opportunities.**

Our long-term approach will encourage sustained economic growth across the Borough, and a more equitable distribution of the wealth that we generate. We will focus equally on economic growth, inclusivity and skills development, through a complementary set of themes that develop new economic roles with well paid, good quality jobs, to ensure we become a place recognised for good work, fair pay and responsible business ownership.

### **Key Moves**

#### **Delivering and sustaining economic growth.**

We will rapidly grow and broaden the employment, business, skills and enterprise base. Our interventions will help businesses to grow faster and to better innovate, whilst also developing new economic roles and functions in Stockton-on-Tees.

We will encourage inward investment from companies that have good and fair operating principles, with benefits to the Borough through the creation of well paid jobs. We will work with businesses to maximise their local impact through their company commitments to things like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental Social and Governance criteria (ESG) and the growing B-Corp movement that seeks to increase the positive impact companies make on workers, communities, customers and the planet.

Through our communications messaging and activity we will work closely with our partners to change the image and investor perceptions of Stockton-on-Tees so we can grow the Borough's profile as a place to live, work and invest.

#### **Ensuring all of our residents can benefit from economic opportunities by delivering and embedding a fairer distribution of wealth.**

Stockton-on-Tees will be recognised place of good work and fair pay. We will strive to ensure that as many employers as possible offer safe and supportive workplaces, that promote and support staff health and wellbeing.

We will support our residents to access secure and sustainable employment, by helping them to develop and make the most of their skills. We will focus efforts on communities that have more prevalent issues with lower skills and lower wages, as well as people facing barriers to employment, such as those living with a disability or those with long term health conditions.

We will work with our local companies to increase their positive impact on local communities, the local environment and supply chains, ensuring that more wealth is retained here and circulates locally. Stockton-on-Tees will be recognised place of responsible business and local ownership.

We will also build on community strengths and grow resilience, by helping to put more economic assets in the hands of our local communities and by encouraging communities to invest and spend with local companies to promote growth.



## **Cementing our role as the well-connected, economic heart of Tees Valley.**

We will work with our partners to deliver our shared strategic transport priorities, including improved connectivity and enhanced infrastructure for our residents, workers and visitors. This will include: new and improved railway stations and providing attractive options for active travel through cycleways and pathways.

Our highway infrastructure will be well maintained, so road users can move around with ease and ensure inward investment continues to flourish. We will also work with communities and providers to increase the use of public transport and ensure options are available that promote inclusion by meeting the needs of communities.

We will maximise our digital strengths, ensuring that digital infrastructure and skills are an enabler for growth across all sectors. This will see us make the most of our high levels of ultrafast broadband and digital inclusion across the borough. We will also build on our established digital cluster, and harness expertise to develop new innovations in care-tech and health-tech that support delivery of our ambitions for a Care and Health Innovation Zone.

### We all have a part to play... How can you support the continued growth of an Inclusive Economy?

There's a big role to play for all of us, by promoting our Borough as a place where business, innovation and careers can thrive, and where there's an expectation of equity and fairness. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our key moves for this priority and help make our vision a reality:

- Support local businesses and shop close to home, helping local companies to succeed, create job opportunities and increase the impact of the 'Stockton-on-Tees £'.
- Become a Stockton-on-Tees Business Ambassador, and talk up your town with confidence and pride, using some of the tools provided by the Council and our partners.
- Boost your skills and knowledge by taking a course with any of the great providers operating across the Borough, this might support your future employment or lead you to a new hobby to enjoy with like-minded people.
- If you run a business, explore Social Responsibility opportunities that will mutually benefit your business, local people and the environment.
- Think about starting your own business, in an area that supports your community or local supply chain. There's lots of support available from [Financial assistance and support for business - Stockton-on-Tees Borough / Council](https://www.investstocktonontees.co.uk/business-growth)

## Priority 5: A Sustainable Council

**We will 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.**

### **Key Moves**

External auditors have recognised us as a well-managed council that consistently delivers a balanced budget, a position we will maintain.

Our bold and ambitious Transformation Mission, delivered as part of the Powering Our Future programme is key to achieve this. 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. In doing so, we will move away from reactive and fragmented support, whilst enhancing joined up working between public services, communities and individuals. Over time, we will shift the balance of Council resources upstream towards activities that tackle the root causes of more complex issues for individuals and families.

Alongside new ways of working and configuration of services, our Transformation Programme will maximise council income, for example through fees and charges. This will enable a balanced budget, whilst also being more sustainable for communities.

The Council's land and property portfolio will be optimised for community benefit and income generation, recognising the increasing need for financial and environmental sustainability. We will ensure that all council assets are suitable for delivering the services that communities need or contribute to the financial stability of the council. A Corporate Property Review will strategically assess assets to optimise their use, deliver financial savings and generate new income streams.

As an anchor institution in the Borough, the Council has a significant impact through our role as an employer, commissioner and purchaser of goods and services. In-keeping with our commitments set out in the Fairer Stockton on Tees Framework, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy, we will ensure that we continue to operate in ways that are fair, equitable and promote a positive local impact. This will include reducing our energy demand and accelerating a shift towards sustainable energy, whilst reducing harmful emissions and working towards a cleaner environment – for example maximising the use of solar power at the Council's new offices in Dunedin House and looking at alternative fuels to power council fleet.

We will also continue to lead by example, encouraging other organisations in the Borough to maximise their local impact.

We all have a part to play... how can you help us to be a sustainable council that has a positive impact across all parts of the Borough?

While the onus is on us to deliver this priority, there are also things communities can do to help us. Here are some of the things you might want to consider:

- Volunteer with community schemes that interest you, the more people we have involved means the more of us that have an active stake in the development of services and the future of our Borough.

- Think about contacting us online if you can, this costs the Council less money and frees up our resources to help more vulnerable residents who need face-to-face contact most.
- Use our online reporting platform to make us aware of issues at an early stage, so we can address any issues before they get worse.
- Look at ways to reduce our energy demand and support a positive natural environment when using council buildings and public spaces, this will help reduce harmful emissions whilst supporting a more sustainable environment.
- You know your communities and your place best, so please share your ideas for doing things differently in your area – thinking about opportunities for community action or ownership.

## **Powering Our Future – a new Mission Statement and Design Principles for the Council**

To ensure we are set up to achieve the priorities in this plan, we have developed a new, cross-cutting Mission Statement for the Council to Power Our Future.

Our **Mission Statement** is:

- We will be a bold, brave and innovative Council.
- Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place where everyone is proud to live and work, and where our communities flourish and people feel they belong.
- We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.

Our Mission Statement is underpinned by 5 supporting Missions, that provide a high level picture of success:

**Communities Powering Our Future** - we will empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.

**Place-Making Powering Our Future** - we will lead the renewal of our six towns where it's needed, and work with communities on the improvements they want to see, to ensure they are vibrant spaces that attract residents, shoppers, leisure visitors and businesses.

**Partnerships Powering Our Future** – we will collaborate with other organisations for the benefit of our residents and communities.

**Transformation Powering Our Future** - we will improve the way we work and deliver efficient, effective and value for money services within available financial resources.

**Colleagues Powering Our Future** – we will enable and empower our workforce to do the best they can for our communities.

A set of **Design Principles** will act as 'guard rails' for the Council and be embedded across our ways of working to deliver our Mission Statement and Council Plan priorities. They are:

### Reduce inequality and prioritise prevention

We talk to and listen to people to understand their needs, prioritising tackling the causes of inequality rather than tackling its effects.

For example... *Extensive consultation with the travelling community has informed the development and delivery of a new on-site Community Hub and the bespoke services they can access there, including health advice and services, employment advice and welfare rights.*

### Put communities at the heart of everything we do

The starting point for developing any new project or designing a service is always our communities and we make sure everything we do is planned with their best interests at the forefront.

For example... *We use data and insights to understand the customer when re-designing a service and test prototype designs with them for feedback on how we can make them better, such as with the Making it Real Board in Adult Services.*

#### Enable communities to help and support each other

There are a lot of talented individuals and groups in our Borough who work together to deliver much of the activity and support our communities need. We continuously look for opportunities to encourage this and acknowledge that we aren't always best placed to provide the support an individual or community needs - where this is the case, we work with partners and help others to do this.

For example... *Community support networks are designed into our support and referral services.*

#### Have a 'place-based' approach

We work closely with our partners to deliver services that help make our Borough a better place to live, work and visit. We coordinate activity which contributes to good quality that is accessible and affordable; environmental sustainability; a growing economy, and a thriving leisure and culture offer.

For example... *We involve communities in deciding how best to invest in their neighbourhood using the funds we have available.*

#### Have efficient processes and be digital by design

We look for opportunities to deliver services and communicate with our communities digitally, unless we know that the communities we need to reach are digitally excluded.

For example... *We seek to communicate with our customers digitally through e-mail, text and social media rather than sending letters or calling them.*

#### Use data and intelligence to inform our decisions

We capture data and intelligence and review it regularly to help us forward plan and make the right decisions. We use data and intelligence to evaluate to monitor the impact of our services and functions, always striving for continuous improvement.

For example... *We will use behaviours intelligence gathered from regular surveys to direct and inform the targeted communication and engagement campaigns for the introduction of new waste services.*

## **What will success look like?**

Working closely with our communities and partners will help us meet the needs of our residents and make Stockton-on-Tees a place we can all be proud of.

It will give our children the best start in life by reducing the number of children who live in poverty, ensuring they have a good level of development and are ready for school when they reach reception age, while also supporting children to achieve outstanding educational attainment. It will also support more of our school leavers to remain in education, help them gain employment and/or training to provide opportunities for a better future.

Meeting the objectives set out in this Plan will ensure that our residents feel like they belong to their community, help them to manage their finances better and focus on improving their health and wellbeing so they can live for longer and in good health.

The Plan highlights how we can make the Borough a better place to live, by reducing crime rates and in turn changing perceptions of our Borough, ensuring that residents and visitors feel safe at all times. The success of this plan will be measured by how happy our residents are with the Borough, including whether they are happy with their employment, accommodation and whether they feel worthwhile.

Stockton-on-Tees is already the heart of the Tees Valley economy, however, if the improvements set out in this Plan are met, we can increase the employment rate for our residents and improve our already impressive regional economic performance.

Due to growing financial pressures that public services are dealing with, we will need to ensure that the improvements we make are affordable and efficient. We will also work in partnership with other organisations and with the community to ensure this is feasible.