

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Monday 15 September 2025

at 10.00 am

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Cook, Little, Male, Oliver (C), Riddle (VC) and C Wallace

Parish Council Co-opted Members:

S Smith (Greatham Parish Council)

L Noble (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 To receive the Minutes and Decision Record of the meeting held on 30 June 2025 (*previously published and circulated*)
- 3.2 To receive the Minutes and Decision Record of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 30 July 2025 (*previously published and circulated*)

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

None.

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Revised Waste Management Policy – Assistant Director (*Neighbourhood Services*)

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2025-26 – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*
- 6.2 Health and Safety Service Plan 2025-26 – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*
- 6.3 Trading Standards Service Plan 2025-26 – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*
- 6.4 Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) – Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 Anti-Social Behaviour Charter – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – 10 November 2025 at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool



NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15TH SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Report of: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES)

Decision Type: Key Decision (DNRS 98/25)

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be;

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide Members with an updated policy for the Council's Waste Management service (Appendix 1) and to seek Neighbourhood Services Committee approval for its adoption.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The existing waste policy consists of a series of terms and conditions regarding what service users can expect of the Council, and what the Council expects of its service users. The policy required updating due to recent changes to waste legislation and the changing use of housing stock within the Borough.

- 3.2 A high turnover of residents in some areas of the Borough has resulted in uncertainty amongst residents around what is required of them with regard to waste management services. Changing demographics, including an increase in households where English is not the first language, has also led to misunderstandings around treatment of waste.
- 3.3 Whilst it is accepted that some landlords are responsible and sensitive to the needs of their tenants and the environment, it is clear that some are not. Irresponsible landlords provide limited waste solutions and information to their tenants which leads to contamination of recycled waste and overflowing residual waste bins.
- 3.4 Overflowing waste bins can cause distress to neighbouring properties, look unsightly, can lead to health issues, and attract vermin. Furthermore, the costs of collection and disposal of any additional waste is likely to fall on the local authority if the waste spills out onto the public highway.
- 3.5 Where bin provision is shared by more than one person or family, accountability for any non-conformance is often difficult to determine and enforce. The result of this is often that the situation deteriorates until the local authority takes action. As this action cannot often be directed at any one person, the local authority often bears the financial impact. This revised policy will make accountability for waste matters more clear, it will increase enforceability, and reduce the burden on the Council.
- 3.6 The main amendments to the revised policy include specific requirements for communal properties, such as houses in multiple occupation (HMO) , flats, sheltered accommodation, etc. This will allow for improvements to be made in relation to waste management activities at these premises, which have, for years, lacked clear ownership of waste-related issues

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the revised Waste Policy document is approved by Committee **(see Appendix 1)**.
- 4.2 If approved, the document will become the basis on which waste management policies and procedures are enforced within the Borough.
- 4.3 The other option considered was to not update the policy but this was discounted as it would not improve the current situation.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	If the policy is not adopted, then the Council will have little influence over how landlords, property owners and tenants deal with their waste. This would likely have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of neighbouring properties and the wider reputation of the Borough.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	Adoption of the revised policy is one of number of interventions under consideration that is intended to help the Council avoid increased costs for waste provision and the clean-up of waste from outside of communal areas, etc. Poor waste management practices have a knock on effect on other Council services, such as street cleansing, housing, anti-social behaviour and civil enforcement teams.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	Not applicable
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	Waste collection legislation is defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. In recent years there have been some significant changes to the legislation around waste management; most notably the introduction of Simpler Recycling which forms part of the Environment Act 2021.
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	The single impact assessment has identified no negative impacts (see Appendix 2)
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	Inappropriate use of waste bins presents a significant burden on the staff of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services. The introduction of this policy is one of a number of measures being considered to help reduce this pressure.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	Not applicable
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	The revised policy will help engagement of residents and businesses in waste minimisation and recycling initiatives, ultimately reducing reliance on natural resources and helping the Authority to achieve challenging recycling targets.

CONSULTATION	Relevant Council Officers have been consulted to provide feedback on the amendments to the policy.
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6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that the revised policy is adopted by Neighbourhood Services Committee.
- 6.2 Subject to 6.1 being approved, it is recommended that the approved policy is published on the Council's website and publicised as appropriate.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The revised policy will help to mitigate issues currently experienced and protect the Council against future demographic and property use changes.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The current policy (Terms of Use) can be found at <https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/usingyourbins>

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 27/08/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 27/08/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 27/08/2025

Waste Collections – Kerbside, **HMO's, Communal and** **Commercial Properties**

UPDATED AUGUST 2025

Contents Page

Introduction	Page 3
New Developments	Page 3
Design Requirements	Page 3
Kerbside Properties	Page 4
Presenting Your Bins	Page 4
Missed Bins	Page 5
Using Your Bins Correctly	Page 5
Excess Waste	Page 6
Assistance With Bins	Page 6
Houses Of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's)	Page 6
Properties With Communal Bins	Page 8
Airbnb's And Commercial Properties	Page 9
Lost/Stolen Bins	Page 9
Repairs	Page 10
Waste Removal Service	Page 10
Bin Sizes	Page 11

Waste Collections – Kerbside, HMO's, Communal and Commercial Properties

Introduction

This document sets out requirements, guidance and considerations to be made by property developers, property managers, landlords and housing associations when planning and maintaining waste collection services.

Collections

Hartlepool Borough Council operates an alternate weekly collection service for refuse and recycling. Collections operate Tuesday to Friday each week (exceptions may take place)

Garden Waste collections operate for part of the year. Residents must subscribe to this service for an annual fee.

Additional ad-hoc collections can be arranged outside of the above schedule, but charges will be made for this.

New Developments

Developers of residential houses/flats/communal properties/house of multiple occupancy (HMOs) should consult with Waste Management early in the planning process and should refer to **Residential Design SPD** and **Guidance for Developers**

Developers are expected to provide and ensure that at the point of first occupancy all new developments have the necessary waste bins/ receptacles to enable the occupier to comply with the waste presentation and collection requirements in operation at that time. Costs associated with this must be met by the developer or landlord and are not the responsibility of the local authority. Please see Developer Guidance for further information [Provision of Waste and Recycling Collection and Storage Facilities to new properties | Developer Guidance Note: Waste and Recycling | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)

Design Requirements

Waste collection vehicles must be able to approach within a maximum distance of 10m of the storage area or designated collection point

Refuse operatives must not have to walk more than 10m with a bin from the collection vehicle to the nearest collection point

Refuse operatives must not be required to walk or wheel bins over grass or up and down stairs/steps

In cul-de-sacs, car parks, etc., there must be significant space for a refuse vehicle to turn around taking into account the size and turning circle of the vehicle

There must be adequate space to store bins securely within the property's boundary or in communal bin storage areas. Bins must not be stored on the highway, including the back street where the property has access to one.

Kerbside Properties

All residents are entitled to receive a fortnightly collection of: -

- 1 x 240 litre bin general waste
- 1 x 240 litre bin recycling

The Council reserves the right to alter the frequency of collection.

Those who sign up to the garden waste subscription service as standard will receive a collection of 1 x 240 litre bin every 4 weeks (8 collections per subscription period). Residents may opt to pay for additional garden waste bins as per the council's garden waste subscription service terms and conditions: <https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/garden-waste-collections>

In addition to the above, UK legislative changes require that by 31st March 2026 all properties will be offered a separate food waste collection. As part of these changes additional receptacles will be introduced.

Larger green bins are available upon request for households that have six or more permanent residents residing at the property or for special circumstances (i.e. resident with special medical needs). Larger grey bins are also available upon request. A charge will be levied for any bin exchange, and this cost must be met by the person requesting it (landlord, management company, resident, etc), and not by the Council. The price of this will be provided upon request.

In rented properties, landlords must provide residents with accurate and up to date information on waste services available to them. The Council can provide electronic copies of leaflets to help with this and may be requested by landlords. Landlords will be required to re-educate tenants as and when new waste services are introduced, when waste services are changed, or if waste services are not working effectively at the property.

Presenting your bins

Residents are required to place bins out at the kerbside, rear of the property (backstreet collections) or agreed collection point by 7.30am on the day of collection, but no earlier than 7.00pm the night before. Please return your bin as soon as possible after collection and always by the end of the day.

Please ensure bins are not placed in front of driveways or where they may cause

an obstruction to the general public

Bins should be easily visible and not hidden by walls, cars or hedges

Crews will not be able to return for any bins that have been presented late, at an incorrect location, or with the wrong items in them.

Bin lids must be in the closed position for collection and not too heavy that the crews cannot move them and/or bin hoist cannot lift them. Only bins provided by Hartlepool Borough Council or bins that meet the specified criteria will be emptied.

Bins must not be stored permanently on the street, including in back streets. Owners and landlords must provide a bin storage plan if they are not able to provide bin storage within the boundary of the property. This plan must provide clear evidence that the bin(s) will not block a footpath or highway, or cause a nuisance to any other party.

Missed bins

If your bin hasn't been collected by 4pm on your scheduled collection day, you may report it as missed. This can be done up to 2 working days after the day of the scheduled collection by calling 01429 523333 or online at www.hartlepool.gov.uk

If the bin is found to be missed, we will return within 5 working days

Anything reported after 2 working days will not be treated as a missed collection and will be collected on the next scheduled collection date. We will not take side waste.

Do not report a bin as missed if:

- The bin was not presented before 7.30am on the collection day
- The bin is too heavy or contains incorrect materials
- The bin was not placed on the pavement area, or as near as possible to the kerbside
- The incorrect bin was placed out for collection
- The bin was blocked by excess waste or side waste
- The crews have not yet serviced your street
- It is earlier than 4pm on your collection day

In the event of part of or a whole street not being serviced due to parked cars, access issues, roadworks, etc., residents are asked to return their bins to the property and present them the following day for 7:30 am.

In the case of a dispute of a missed bin, the vehicle trackers and camera footage will be checked, and the resident will be informed of the outcome

Using your bins correctly

For details of what can and can't be placed in each of your bins visit www.hartlepool.gov.uk/recyclingchecklist or call 01429 523333.

Crews will not return for recycling bins (grey bins) or garden waste bins (brown bins) that are found to be contaminated. The contamination will need to be removed before the next collection. To report an issue with your bin please visit www.hartlepool.gov.uk/binproblem or call 01429 523333

Excess waste

Excess/side waste will not be taken

If you have extra waste, you can:

- take it to the Household Waste Recycling Centre on Burn Road.
- store any extra clean recycling until your next collection day
- call to arrange a one-off collection of up to 3 bins at an extra cost

Assistance with bins

If you require assistance with presenting your bins (elderly, mobility issues, no one else to help) please call 01429 523333. You must meet criteria set out on our website to qualify for help with your bins, and you may need to provide evidence to support your application.

If you are on our assisted collection list, please ensure access is kept clear and any gates are unlocked on collection days, and any pets are kept inside of the property.

This service can be withdrawn if users are found that they no longer meet the criteria.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The policy relates to all HMOs, including:

- ***Small HMOs (Planning Use Class C4): 3–6 unrelated occupants.***
- ***Large HMOs (Sui Generis): 7 or more unrelated occupants.***

It is the responsibility of an HMO landlord to ensure that there are sufficient bins and methods of waste disposal at the property and that tenants are informed of how and when to dispose of household waste. Landlords must provide residents with accurate and up to date information on waste services available to them. The Council can provide electronic copies of leaflets to help with this and may be requested by landlords. Landlords will be required to re-educate tenants as and when new waste services are introduced, when waste services are changed, or if

waste services are not working effectively at the property. Waste collection dates can be found at www.hartlepool.gov.uk/findmybinday

HMOs with five or fewer tenants will be entitled to receive a fortnightly collection of 1 x 240l general waste bin and 1 x 240l recycling bin. For HMOs with 5 tenants or more, we recommend the use of a 360ltr general waste bin for HMO properties. This can be provided, subject to confirmation with the HMO licensing team regarding the permitted number of tenants. Some HMOs, depending on the make-up of the tenants, may generate more waste than the above provision can handle. If this is the case, then the landlord must make provision available for the additional waste, which is likely to be at a cost, to ensure that waste does not cause a nuisance to any person/organisation.

Larger HMOs will need to make adequate provision for storage and disposal of waste, and this will be a condition of any license issued by the HMO licensing team. The exact requirements will be subject to consultation between the waste management team and the HMO licensing team.

The bin storage area should be sized to provide adequate storage and access for all of the bins required for the site. Gates/doors to communal bin storage areas should be designed to open outwards. The bin storage area must be kept clean and clear of waste that is not contained in a bin, in order to ensure that it does not cause a nuisance to any person/organisation.

If the occupants wish to recycle, a recycling bin can also be provided upon the request from the landlord. It will be the responsibility of the landlord to ensure the recycling bins are used correctly. If any recycling bin is found to be contaminated with the wrong items, the bin(s) will not be collected and there will be a charge for them to be emptied as general waste. If such problems persist, the Council may remove the recycling service. If additional general waste capacity is required as a result of withdrawal of the recycling scheme, or for any other reason, then the landlord/management company must make arrangements for a commercial waste collection, for which a charge will be levied.

Landlords or management companies are responsible for ensuring that the bins are retained at the property at all times. The cost of replacement of any bins which are lost or stolen is the responsibility of the landlord or management company. Bins must be stored within the boundary of the property and only be presented outside of the property on the scheduled collection day. Bins must not be stored permanently on the street, including in back streets. Owners and landlords must provide a bin storage plan if they are not able to provide bin storage within the boundary of the property. This plan must provide clear evidence that the bin(s) will not block a footpath or highway, or cause a nuisance to any other party.

Where waste from a HMO is causing a nuisance to others (litter, fly-tipping, side waste, vermin, smells, etc), the Council may take enforcement action against the responsible person/organisation (landlord, management company, etc).

If a tenancy reaches its end and tenants move out, any waste that is left at the

property becomes commercial waste. It is the responsibility of the landlord to dispose of this waste correctly. Please see Waste Removal Services (below).

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in formal enforcement action, including:

- Financial penalties;
- Recovery of costs incurred by the council; and/or
- Referral to housing enforcement teams for potential licensing or planning breaches.

Properties with Communal Bins (flats, apartments, sheltered housing developments, etc)

The developer is encouraged to contact the Waste Management team to discuss any queries they may have with regards to storage areas and/or number or size of containers.

The number of bins required for each material will be dependent upon the number of flats/apartments at any one site

Communal bins should be in a safe and secure storage area to prevent misuse, theft and vandalism

The bin storage area should be sized to provide adequate storage and access for all the communal bins required for the site and gates/doors to communal bin storage areas should be designed to open outwards

If the communal bin storage area is situated in a parking area, there should be sufficient space and appropriate dropped kerbs to ensure that bins can be moved safely without the risk of damage to any parked vehicles.

It is the responsibility of the caretaker or management company to allow the collection crews access to the bin bay or collection point on collection day and to ensure that access is not restricted

If any communal recycling bins are found to be contaminated with the wrong items, the bins will not be collected and there will be a charge for them to be emptied as general waste. The management company must arrange this collection and make payment to Waste Management.

Landlords or management companies are responsible for ensuring that the bins are retained at the property at all times. The cost of replacement of any bins which are lost or stolen is the responsibility of the landlord or management company. Bins must be stored within the boundary of the property and only be presented outside of the property on the scheduled collection day.

Bins must not be stored permanently on the street, including in back streets. Owners and landlords must provide a bin storage plan if they are not able to provide

bin storage within the boundary of the property. This plan must provide clear evidence that the bin(s) will not block a footpath or highway, or cause a nuisance to any other party.

Where waste from communal bins is causing a nuisance to others (litter, fly-tipping, side waste, vermin, smells, etc), the Council may take enforcement action against the responsible person/organisation (landlord, management company, etc).

If a tenancy reaches its end and tenants move out, any waste that is left at the property becomes commercial waste. It is the responsibility of the landlord to dispose of this waste correctly. Please see Waste Removal Services (below)

In rented properties, landlords and/or management companies must provide residents with accurate and up to date information on waste services available to them. The Council can provide electronic copies of leaflets to help with this and may be requested by landlords. Landlords will be required to re-educate tenants as and when new waste services are introduced, when waste services are changed, or if waste services are not working effectively at the property.

Airbnb's and Commercial Properties

Any waste that comes from a commercial activity is business waste. If you use part of your home to run your business, then any waste from that part is business waste.

You must:

- keep waste to a minimum by doing everything you reasonably can to prevent, reuse, recycle or recover waste (in that order)
- sort and store waste securely in a way in which it will not cause harm to humans or the environment
- use a licenced waste carrier, such as the local authority, to collect and dispose of your waste

All of the relevant storage, bin provision and enforcement policies stated above in this policy will apply to Airbnb's and commercial properties, depending on the type of property from which the business is operating.

Lost or stolen bins

Any lost or stolen bins due to them not being taken back on to the property after collection will be subject to a replacement fee at the rate at the time at which they are requested.

Not having a bin is not a reasonable excuse for presenting waste incorrectly, and enforcement action will be taken against those who do so.

Repairs

The council continues to repair damaged bins upon request by residents at no cost. However, if the damage is believed to have been caused by misuse, the resident/landlord will be required to cover the cost of repair/replacement. The Council reserves the right to change this policy and introduce bin repair charges at any time without the need to update this policy document.

Waste Removal Service

Hartlepool Borough Council offers a range of local, efficient and professional waste removal services to both households and businesses. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that all householders and businesses have a duty of care to dispose of their waste responsibly. This means as a householder or business you are responsible for what happens to your waste, even after it has left your property or premises.

Standard Waste Removal Service

Available to households only

- Up to 3 bulky items collected for £26.50, up to 6 items for £53 (concessions are applicable to this service)
- Items must be presented outside for collection, you do not need to wait at home

Premium Waste Removal Service

Available to households and businesses

Any number of items collected, and any type of waste considered

Prices start at £74

Prices quoted above are correct at the time of publishing but will rise annually. The actual price provided at the time of booking will supersede any prices quoted in this document.

Bin Sizes

Capacity	Dimensions		
240 litre bin (2/3 bags)	←580 mm → 	←740 mm → 	↑ 1070 mm ↓
360 litre bin (4/5 bags)	←600 mm → 	←870 mm → 	↑ 1100 mm ↓
1100 litre bin (10/12 bags)	←1360 mm → 	←1070 mm → 	↑ 1465 mm ↓

Guidance for completing this form is available in the “Single Impact Assessment: Toolkit for Officers”, available from the Single Impact Assessment page on the intranet at <https://hbcintranet/Pages/Single-Impact-Assessments.aspx>.

Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

1.1 Lead Department:	DNRS
1.2 Lead Division:	Neighbourhoods
1.3 Title of the proposed action:	
Revised Waste Management Policy	
1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:	
The existing waste policy consists of a series of terms and conditions regarding what service users can expect of the Council and what the Council expects of its service users. The policy required updating due to recent changes to waste legislation and the changing use of housing stock within the Borough.	
1.5 Who else is involved:	
Colleagues from the Housing and Civil Enforcement teams have been involved in the revision of the existing policy.	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

APPENDIX 2

1.6 Who will make the final decision about the proposed action:

Neighbourhood Services Committee

1.7 Which wards will be affected by the proposed action? Tick all that apply

All wards	☒	Hart	☐	Seaton	☐
Burn Valley	☐	Headland & Harbour	☐	Throston	☐
De Bruce	☐	Manor House	☐	Victoria	☐
Fens & Greatham	☐	Rossmere	☐	N/A - Internal council activities	☐
Foggy Furze	☐	Rural West	☐		

1.8 Completed By:

Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Paul Hurwood	Environmental Services Manager	27.08.2025

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date
1.0	P. Hurwood	Initial assessment produced	27.08.2025

Section 2 – Explaining the impact of the proposed action

2.1 What data and evidence has informed this impact assessment?

Improper waste management activities lead to environmental issues, distress for local residents, reputational issues for the local area and the Council and additional unnecessary costs. The Council receives a large volume of complaints about issues resulting from mis-management of waste, such as, but not limited to, waste being presented loose or in plastic bags, fly-tipping of large/bulky/hazardous items in various locations across the borough. Changes to the use of the existing housing stock, including an increasing number of properties sharing communal bins, have led to increased demand on waste services and lack of ownership when complaints are received.

2.2 If there are gaps in evidence or not enough information to assess the impact, how have you addressed this or how will you address it?

Gap(s) Identified	How it / they have or will be addressed
N/A	

2.3 Risk Score

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Age		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 1	Age will have no bearing on a resident or business's access to waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.
Disability		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	The most vulnerable people in society will be protected by the proposed revision, which will place more emphasis and accountability on landlords and management companies to assist residents in rented accommodation.
Gender Reassignment		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 1	Gender reassignment will have no bearing on a resident or business's access to waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Being in a marriage or a civil partnership have no bearing on a resident or business's access to waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Pregnancy and Maternity		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Pregnancy and maternity have no bearing on how residents and businesses access waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.
Race (Ethnicity)		
☒ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☐ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Race has no Bearing on how residents and businesses access waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic. However, those for whom English is not their first language will be further protected by the revised waste policy, which will place more responsibility on housing providers to provide advice, information and the means (eg bins) to manage their waste effectively.

Religion or Belief		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Religion or belief have no bearing on the way that people access waste management services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.
Sex		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Sex has no bearing on the way that people access waste management services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

APPENDIX 2

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Sexual Orientation		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Sexual orientation has no impact on the way that residents and businesses access waste services, and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.
Care Leavers (Local)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	All vulnerable service users will have access to more fair waste services if the revised policy is approved.
Armed Forces (Local)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Being a veteran or serving in the armed forces has no impact on the way that residents and businesses access waste services and as such, the proposal will have no negative impact on this characteristic.
Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)		
☒ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☐ No Impact	Likelihood score:1 Impact score:1 Overall score:1	Waste-related issues often fall on tenants. The revised policy will place more responsibility on landlords and management companies, which will have a positive impact on the finances of those in poverty, who may otherwise be expected to pay for replacement bins.

Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

Section 4 - Sign Off

Responsible Officer sign off:	
Name	Paul Hurwood
Job title	Environmental Services Officer
Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	Kieran Bostock
Job title	Assistant Director- Neighbourhood Services.

Once the Single Impact Assessment is completed please send to impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk.

Section 5 - Review (To be completed after implementation)

5.1 Review completed by:		
Name	Job Title	Date review completed

5.2 Did the impact turned out as expected?

5.3 Were the proposed mitigations the correct ones and were they successful in reducing any negative impacts?

5.4 Were there any unexpected outcomes?

5.5 Following the review please identify next steps here (Select one)

- ☐ Additional mitigation required (give details below - 5.6)
- ☐ Original proposed course of action needs to be revisited
- ☐ No further action required

5.6 Additional mitigation(s) or justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

--

Submit form with completed review to impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN
2025-26

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To approve the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2025-26.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Food Standards Agency has a key role in overseeing local authority enforcement activities. They have duties to set and monitor standards of local authorities as well as carry out audits of enforcement activities to ensure that authorities are providing an effective service to protect public health and safety.
- 3.2 On 4 October 2000, the Food Standards Agency issued the document "Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement". The guidance provides information on how local authority enforcement service plans should be structured and what they should contain. Service Plans developed under this guidance will provide the basis on which local authorities will be monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency.

- 3.3 The service planning guidance ensures that key areas of enforcement are covered in local service plans, whilst allowing for the inclusion of locally defined objectives.
- 3.4 The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2025-2026 is available in **Appendix 1** and takes account of the guidance requirements. The Plan details the Service's priorities for 2025-26 and beyond where appropriate. It also highlights how these priorities will be addressed.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The Service Plan for 2025-26 has been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in Service demand.
- 4.2 The Plan covers the following:
- (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The scope and demands on the Food Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development;
 - (v) A review of performance for 2024-25.

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN THE PLAN

- 5.1 The Council is responsible for 777 food premises within the borough, mostly comprising retailers, manufacturers and caterers. The food businesses are predominantly micro, small to medium sized establishments and the majority of these are liable to food hygiene and food standards interventions.
- 5.2 The food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs intervention programmes are risk-based systems that accord with current guidance. The current premises profiles (as at 1st April 2025) are included in the Service Plan.
- 5.3 The intervention programme for 2025-26 comprises scheduled food hygiene and food standards interventions and includes those low risk interventions overdue for inspection. This intervention programme is set out on in the Service Plan.
- 5.4 The Food Standards Agency has introduced a new Food Standards Delivery Model which will enable local authorities to focus their resources on premises presenting the greatest risk. Premises which present a lower risk will receive

less frequent interventions. In the Food Law Code of Practice (published in June 2023) the FSA has stated that there is an implementation period, however the Food Standards Delivery Model was to be introduced by 31.3.25. The FSA has liaised with the various MIS providers to agree a phased rollout programme. Our MIS provider (CIVICA APP) was due to implement the new system in Autumn 2024 however this was delayed. It will now be implemented in Summer 2025. Whilst this is awaited the new rating information is being recorded manually and will be added to the system once it has been updated.

5.5 The introduction of the new risk rating scheme will affect the intervention programme. Figures provided for programmed food standards interventions during 2025-26 were based on figures obtained on 1.4.25.

5.6 The FHRS scheme was launched by the FSA as a FSA / local authority partnership initiative to help consumers choose where to eat out, or shop for food. It was developed with the aim that it would become the single national scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The profile of Hartlepool's food premises is shown below:

Hygiene Rating	No @ 1.4.13	No @ 1.4.14	No @ 1.4.15	No @ 1.4.16	No @ 1.4.17	No @ 1.4.18	No @ 1.4.19	No @ 1.4.20	No @ 1.4.21	No @ 1.4.22	No @ 1.4.23	No @ 1.4.24	No @ 1.4.25
5 Very Good	434 (60.9%)	456 (66.7%)	471 (68.3%)	502 (72.2%)	539 (76.9%)	561 (80.6%)	580 (82.9%)	596 (83.9%)	587 (73.2%)	688 (87.3%)	654 (85.9%)	647 (87.4%)	658 (88.9%)
4 Good	164 (23.0%)	149 (21.8%)	136 (19.7%)	125 (18.0%)	107 (15.3%)	101 (14.5%)	76 (10.9%)	77 (10.8%)	72 (9%)	64 (8.1%)	66 (8.7%)	57 (7.7%)	55 (7.4%)
3 Generally Satisfactory	63 (8.9%)	63 (9.2%)	56 (8.1%)	55 (7.9%)	43 (6.1%)	28 (4.0%)	38 (5.4%)	36 (5.1%)	32 (4%)	35 (4.4%)	32 (4.2%)	33 (4.5%)	25 (3.4%)
2 Improvement Necessary	22 (3.1%)	9 (1.3%)	18 (2.6%)	8 (1.2%)	10 (1.4%)	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%)	4 (0.5%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)
1 Major Improvement Necessary	13 (1.8%)	7 (1.0%)	9 (1.3%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
0 Urgent Improvement Necessary	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Awaiting Inspection	17 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.01%)	111 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sub Total	713	684	690	695	701	696	700	710	802	788	761	740	740
Exempt	49	45	44	45	42	42	37	39	39	39	28	27	27
Excluded	9	10	10	1	1	10	12	2	2	8	6	4	3
Sensitive	32	32	1	8	9	1	1	10	10	2	3	5	7
Total	803	771	745	749	753	749	750	761	853	837	798	776	777
% of premises rated as 3 or above	97.7%	96.1%	98.1%	98.3%	99.1%	99.2%	99.8%	86.2%	97.7%	99.8%	98.8%	99.6%	99.7%

- 5.7 Since the introduction of the FHRs national scheme in 2013 the number of premises that received a hygiene rating of '3' ('Generally Satisfactory') and above has remained consistently high. In 2024-25, the figure was 99.7%.
- 5.8 The service is committed to focussing its resources on carrying out interventions at those businesses which are deemed not to be 'broadly compliant' and has liaised with businesses that have been awarded a hygiene rating of '2' or less offering advice and support. Where appropriate, enforcement action will be taken to secure compliance.
- 5.9 The fall in standards observed after the Covid-19 Pandemic and current cost of living crisis has increased the number of required multiple revisits / re-rating visits. It is anticipated that a higher level of revisits and enforcement will continue to be needed to be undertaken than in previous years.
- 5.10 Under the FHRs there is a procedure that affords food business operators the opportunity to request a re-visit inspection once they have taken action to rectify non-compliances identified during an inspection. In certain circumstances a charge can be levied. At the re-visit the establishment may be re-assessed and given a new hygiene rating.
- 5.11 During 2024-25, 10 businesses submitted applications for a re-rating and all were re-inspected. All demonstrated an improvement in standards and their rating increased following an unannounced inspection. Of these 2 businesses paid for an early inspection.
- 5.12 Service performance during 2024-25 is detailed in the Service Plan. Of note 359 food hygiene, 242 food standards and 7 feed hygiene interventions were completed.
- 5.13 The Council has continued to respond to complaints in the usual manner. The service dealt with 62 complaints relating to the condition of food premises and/or food handling practice.
- 5.14 In addition, 17 complaints were received regarding unfit or out of condition food or extraneous matter. A further 25 complaints concerning the composition or labelling of food items were received. No complaints were received regarding animal feeding stuffs. Investigations into all complaints were undertaken within our target of 2 working days.
- 5.15 No formal enforcement was undertaken in relation to official food controls during the year. Two voluntary surrenders were accepted in relation to imported soft drinks containing Calcium disodium EDTA. This additive is not permitted within the UK as it does not comply with UK food standards and regulations.
- 5.16 During 2024-25 the service participated in six microbiological surveys and took 208 hygiene samples. The majority of hygiene samples examined were reported as being satisfactory, however where poor results were obtained the

premises were revisited and provided with advice and re-sampled as necessary.

- 5.17 A further 18 food standards samples were taken during 2024-25. Two Food Standards Agency (FSA) surveys were carried out and one ad hoc sample was taken following receipt of a Food Alert For Action.
- 5.18 During the FSA Imported Food Survey nine food standards samples were taken. These included spices, dried fruit, seeds and rice flour. The samples were analysed for Sudan Dyes, Pesticides and Aflatoxins; all were deemed to be satisfactory. In addition, six samples of dried fruit were tested as part of the survey. The microbiological quality of these six samples were also deemed to be satisfactory.
- 5.19 Indian takeaway meals were sampled during the FSA Survey of Allergens in Caterers. The focus of the survey was peanuts in Indian Cuisine. All twelve Indian takeaways/restaurants in Hartlepool were contacted and a meal suitable for a person with a peanut allergy requested. Eight samples were obtained and analysed. Three were reported by the Public Analyst to contain peanut proteins at a level sufficient to induce an allergenic reaction in a susceptible person. The presence of protein in the three meals rendered the food injurious to health. Formal action was therefore instigated. A repeat of the survey is planned.
- 5.20 The FSA issued a Food Alert for Action regarding counterfeit Glen's Vodka. This led to officers from the department (Environmental Health and Trading Standards staff) visiting retail premises within the borough. One bottle of questionable source was seized. The Public Analyst reported that the vodka was not genuine Glen's Vodka. As other counterfeit products (vapes) were seized during the visit the Premises Licence was called in for Review and it was revoked by the Licensing Sub Committee. Whilst an appeal was submitted the revocation of the licence was confirmed.
- 5.21 Water obtained from a private supply and used for manufacturing purposes was also sampled and all results were satisfactory. As part of the service's Port Health functions water was collected from 1 vessel visiting Hartlepool and tested for the presence of Legionella bacteria and 11 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates were also issued.
- 5.22 No promotional/campaign work was carried out during 2024-25, however, whenever possible activities that support the Public Health Agenda will take place in 2025-26.
- 5.23 The Public Protection Section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2025-26 we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of food safety risks which will have impact on wider public health outcomes. We will continue to explore how we can

contribute to Public Health Outcomes and source funding streams to support our work.

- 5.24 The implementation of the new Food Standards Delivery Model continues to present a challenge during 2025-26. The FSA's deadline for implementation of the new scheme was 1.4.25, however there was a delay in our MIS provider updating APP and the migration of our data meaning that it will not occur until Summer 2025. Officers received training and are manually completing risk rating of premises following inspections. Until the implementation is complete it is impossible to know how many food standards interventions are due in 2025-26.
- 5.25 We will need to keep abreast of and respond to any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. We will continue to review and update our Food and Feed Quality Management System and Standard Operating Procedures to reflect the changes.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	If the Food Law Enforcement Law Service Plan 2025-26 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	If the Food Law Enforcement Law Service Plan 2025-26 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	No relevant issues
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Neighbourhood Services Committee approves the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2025-26.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2025-26 needs to be adopted to comply with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers for this report.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 30/07/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 31/07/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 09/07/2025



Hartlepool Borough Council

Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2025-26

FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2025-26

INTRODUCTION		
1.	SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	3
1.1	Service Aims and Objectives	4
1.2	Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans	4
2.	BACKGROUND	5
2.1	Profile of the Local Authority	6
2.2	Organisational Structure	6
2.3	Scope of the Food Service	6
2.4	Demands on the Food Service	7
2.5	Enforcement Policy	8
3.	SERVICE DELIVERY	8
3.1.1	Interventions Programme	8
3.2.2	Registration and Approval of Premises	15
3.2.3	Microbiological and Chemical Analysis of Food/Feed	16
3.2.4	Food Inspection	19
3.2.5	Provision of Advice and Information to Food/Feed Businesses	19
3.2.6	Public Health Initiatives	20
3.2.7	Investigation of Food/Feed Complaints	21
3.2.8	Investigation of Cases of Food Poisoning and Outbreak Control	21
3.2.9	Dealing with Food/Feed Safety Incidents	22
3.2.10	Complaints relating to Food/Feed Premises	23
3.3	Complaints Against our Staff/Service	23
3.4	Liaison Arrangements	23
3.5	Home Authority Principle / Primary Authority Scheme	24
4.	RESOURCES	25
4.1	Financial Resources	25
4.2	Staffing Allocation	25
4.3	Staff Development	26
4.4	Equipment and Facilities	27
5.	QUALITY ASSESSMENT	27
6.	PERFORMANCE REVIEW	28
6.1	Overview	28
6.2	Performance Review 2024-25	28
6.2.1	Intervention Programme	28
6.2.2	Registration and Approval of Premises	28
6.2.3	Food Sampling Programme	29
6.2.4	Food Inspection	31
6.2.5	Promotional Work	31
6.2.6	Food Hygiene Rating Scheme	31
6.2.7	FHRS Re-Rating & Promotional Visits	33
6.2.8	Food/Feed Complaints	34
6.2.9	Food Poisoning	34
6.2.10	Food Safety Incidents	34
6.2.11	Enforcement	34
6.2.12	Complaints Against Our Staff/Service / Compliments	34
7.	KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2025-26	35

INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how Hartlepool Borough Council will deliver the food law service. The food law service covers both food and feed enforcement.

The Plan accords with the requirements of the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, and sets out the Council's aims in respect of its food law service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled. Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2025-26, longer-term objectives are identified where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2024-25 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and the Neighbourhood Services Committee has approved previous plans.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

The service aims to ensure:

- that food and drink intended for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed in the borough is without risk to the health or safety of the consumer;
- food and food packaging meets standards of quality, composition and labelling and reputable food businesses are not prejudiced by unfair competition; and
- the effective delivery of its food law service so as to secure appropriate levels of public safety in relation to food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs enforcement.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions and examples of best practice as disseminated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), including Approved Codes of Practice, the Regulators' Code and other relevant guidance shared by Local Government Regulation and Central Government.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Food Law Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Public Protection service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.1 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

Hartlepool will be:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this Food Law Enforcement Service Plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of food hygiene and safety legislation.

This Food Law Enforcement Service Plan contributes towards elements of the Council Plan vision in the following ways:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

Through the effective delivery of its food law service, we aim to secure appropriate levels of public safety in relation to food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs enforcement.

By ensuring that businesses only provide safe products that comply with relevant food safety standards.

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements regarding food hygiene and safety requirements and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid-19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural

reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and again in 2024.

The tourist industry affects recreational opportunities, shopping and leisure facilities, including the provision of food and drink outlets restaurants, bars and cafes. There are currently 777 food establishments in Hartlepool, all of which must be subject to intervention to ensure food safety and standards are being met.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult & Community Based Services Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhood Services Committee
- Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee

The Neighbourhood Services Committee provides political oversight for Food Law enforcement.

The Council is made up of four Departments:

- Children's & Joint Commissioning Services
- Adults & Community Based Services
- Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan is delivered through the Public Protection section of the Regulatory Services division, which is contained within the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Council's Commercial Services team is a constituent part of the Public Protection division contained within the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services department and is responsible for delivery of the food service. The food service covers both food and feed enforcement.

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- programmed interventions of premises for food hygiene, food standards and feed hygiene;

- registration and approval of premises;
- microbiological sampling and chemical analysis of food and animal feed;
- food & feed inspection;
- checks of imported food/feed at retail and catering premises;
- provision of advice, educational materials and courses to food/feed businesses;
- investigation of food and feed related complaints;
- investigation of cases of food and water borne infectious disease, and outbreak control;
- dealing with food/feed safety incidents; and
- promotional and advisory work

Effective performance of the food law service necessitates a range of joint working arrangements with other local authorities and agencies such as the Food Standards Agency (FSA), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) & the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

The Council aims to ensure that effective joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute to the on-going development of those arrangements.

Whilst undertaking food safety interventions, officers are expected to carry out the following additional functions:

- health and safety enforcement where the local authority is the relevant enforcing authority (this includes carrying out hazard spotting in relation to health and safety issues and carrying out priority based health & safety inspections)
- the provision of guidance, advice and enforcement in respect of smoke free legislation in public places;
- the provision of guidance, advice and taking enforcement action in response to certain public health legislation;
- water sampling; including both private and mains supplies & bathing water;
- port health;
- provision of assistance for animal health and welfare inspections, complaint investigation and animal movement issues; and
- acting as a statutory consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

The Council is responsible for 777 food premises within the borough mostly comprising retailers, manufacturers and caterers. The food businesses are predominantly micro or small establishments and the majority of these are liable to food hygiene and food standards interventions.

In addition, the Council is the enforcing authority for 88 registered feed businesses.

The delivery point for the food enforcement service is at:

Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY
Tel: (01429) 266522

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies that occur out of hours. Contact can be made on (01429) 266522, Option 1, followed by Option 2.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, there is a Public Protection Enforcement Policy, which deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service.

The Commercial Services team, which is responsible for food law enforcement, will take account of the 2014 Regulator's Code when carrying out its interactions with food business operators.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1.1 Interventions Programme

The Council has a wide range of duties and powers conferred on it in relation to food law enforcement. The Council must appoint and authorise inspectors, having suitable qualifications and competencies for carrying out duties under the Food Safety Act 1990 and Regulations made under it.

Authorised officers can inspect food at any stage of the production, manufacturing, distribution and retail chain. The Council must draw up and implement an annual programme of risk-based interventions to ensure that food and feeding stuffs are inspected in accordance with relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance.

The Code allows local authorities to choose the most appropriate action to be taken to drive up levels of compliance with food law by food establishments. In so doing, it takes account of the recommendations in the 'Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement'.

Interventions are defined as activities that are designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment. They fall into two categories of either official control or non-official control as follows:

Official Controls include:

- Monitoring
- Surveillance
- Verification;

- Audit;
- Inspection
- Sampling and Analysis;

Interventions which are not Official Controls include:

- Targeted education, advice
- Information and intelligence gathering.

Other activities that monitor, promote and drive-up compliance with food law in food establishments, for instance 'Alternative Enforcement Strategies' for low risk establishments and education and advisory work with businesses away from the premises (e.g. seminars/training events) remain available for local authorities to use.

3.1.2 Broadly Compliant Food Establishments

The Code established the concept of 'Broadly Compliant' food establishments. In respect of food hygiene, "broadly compliant", is defined as an establishment that has an intervention rating score of not more than 10 points under each of the following components:

- Level of (Current) Hygiene Compliance;
- Level of (Current) Structural Compliance; and
- Confidence in Management/Control Systems

"Broadly Compliant", in respect of food standards, is defined as an establishment that has an intervention rating score of 3,4 or 5 for all four Compliance Assessment Risk factors under the new Food Standards Delivery Model scheme. These are:

- Management Systems & Procedures
- Allergen Information
- Current Compliance Level
- Confidence in Management (CIM)

As at the 1st April 2025, 99.7% of businesses in the borough were "Broadly Compliant" with food safety requirements. For food standards 98.3% of businesses achieved broad compliance.

The Food Law Enforcement Plan will help to promote efficient and effective approaches to regulatory inspection and enforcement that will improve regulatory outcomes without imposing unnecessary burdens. The term enforcement does not only refer to formal actions, it can also relate to advisory visits and inspections.

3.2 Service Delivery Mechanisms

3.2.1 Intervention Programme

Local Authorities must document, maintain and implement an interventions programme, which includes all establishments for which they have food law enforcement responsibility.

Interventions carried out for food hygiene, food standards and for feeding stuffs are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and standard operating procedures on food/feed premises inspections and relevant national guidance.

Information on premises liable to interventions is held on the APP computerised system. An intervention schedule is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

The food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs intervention programmes are risk-based systems that accord with current guidance. The current premises profiles (as at 1 April 2025) are shown in the tables below:

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Premises
A	6 months	0
B	12 months	12
C	18 months	82
D	24 months	367
E	36 months or other enforcement	316
Unclassified	Requiring inspection / risk rating	0
No Inspectable Risk (NIR)		0
Total		777

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Premises
A	12 months	1
B	24 months	102
C	36 months or other enforcement	674
Unclassified		0
No Inspectable Risk (NIR)		0
Total		777

*We are currently in the process of implementing the new FSA Food Standards Delivery Model which will make the system more risk based. The risk category and frequency of inspection will change. This will impact the profile of premises. Further details are provided below.

Feed Hygiene:

Registered Activity		No of Premises
R5	Distributor	1
R6	Pet Food Manufacturer	1
R7	Supplier of Surplus Food	10
R8	Transporter	1
R9	Stores	1
R10/11	On Farm Mixer	13
R12	Co Product Producer	2
R13	Livestock Farm	39
R14	Arable Farm	20
Total		88

The intervention programme for 2025-26 comprises the following number of scheduled food hygiene and food standards interventions (this includes the 38 low-risk (Category C) food standards interventions that were overdue for 2024-25.

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Interventions
A	6 months	0
B	12 months	12
C	18 months	46
D	24 months	143
E	36 months or alternative enforcement strategy	122
Unclassified		0
Unrated		0
Total		323

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Interventions
A	12 months	1
B	24 months	47
C	36 months or alternative enforcement	41
Unrated		0
Unclassified		0
Total		89

*The food standards intervention programme will change once we fully implement the new Food Standard Delivery Model.

In addition to the above scheduled inspections, officers will carry out interventions at newly registered premises and other additional workload is generated from requests for a food hygiene re-rating inspection. Officers will also carry out interventions at some mobile food traders, including those visiting the borough in connection with events.

***New Food Standards Delivery Model**

The FSA has developed a new model for the delivery of food standards official controls for LAs. The main proposals involve fundamental changes which are contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (England), which was issued in June 2023, and associated content. The changes include the introduction of a:

- new food standards intervention rating scheme that LA officers will use to evaluate the risk posed by a food business
- new decision matrix to determine the frequency at which food standards official controls should be delivered in line with the outcome of the risk assessment

The food standards intervention rating scheme involves the calculation of a risk profile for food establishments that is based on its 'inherent risk profile' – this considers the inherent risks associated with the business, such as the scale of supply and the potential for product harm and a 'compliance assessment', which considers the FBO's performance and track record.

The new model enables LAs to focus their resources on those businesses creating the greatest risk.

Transitional arrangements applied until 31 March 2025 to enable a phased rollout of the programme. During the transitional period the FSA engaged with Management Information Providers to agree the programme's implementation. It was planned that our MIS provider (CIVICA APP) would implement the new delivery programme in Autumn 2024 however this was delayed until Summer 2025.

We have introduced the new scheme and are manually recording the results whilst we are awaiting the update of our MIS system. Once completed this data can be added.

Figures provided are based on the profile as at 1.4.2025 however they will change once the MIS system is updated.

Approved Establishments:

There are 3 approved food establishments in the borough; a fishery products establishment, a manufacturer of food ingredients and a manufacturer of chicken parmesans.

A fourth premises was formerly approved. It was determined that they have now discontinued activities requiring approval and as such their licence is to be surrendered.

Details of the Approved Premises are given below:

Establishment Name	Type of Approval	Approval Number
W Hodgson (Hartlepool) Limited, Fish Quay, Hartlepool	Fishery Products	HP0002
Kerry Ingredients and Flavours Ltd c/o Kerry Ingredients (UK) Ltd, Unit 6, Park View Industrial Estate, Brenda Road, Hartlepool, TS25 1PE	Meat Products Fishery products Dairy products Rendered Animal Fats & Greaves	HP003
M&S Parmo Ltd, 249 Raby Road, Hartlepool	Meat Products	HP005

These premises are inspected in accordance with our risk rating programme. They are subject to more stringent hygiene provisions than those applied to registered food businesses. These premises require considerably more staff resources for inspection, supervision and advice on meeting enhanced standards. Additionally, there is a need for ongoing specialist training for those who inspect approved premises.

Primary Producers:

The service has 73 primary producers. Inspections are combined with visits to farms for animal welfare and/or feed legislation as far as possible.

Feed Hygiene Intervention Programme 2025-26:

The National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) is responsible for the co-ordination of grant funding allocations for the FSA Feed Delivery Programme. A regional lead feed co-ordinator has been appointed. As a member of the NETSA (North East Trading Standards Association) group Hartlepool Council will receive funding to meet the costs of the following feed inspections:

Feed Hygiene:

Activity	No of Interventions
Distributor (R05)	0
Pet Food Manufacturer (R06)	1
Feed/Materials / Ingredients/Surplus Food (R07)	1
Transporter (R08)	0
Stores (R09)	0
On-farm Mixer (R10/ R11)	0
Co-Product Producer (R12)	1

Livestock Farms (R13)	0
Arable Farms (R14)	0
Total	3

We have also committed to participating in a national sampling programme looking at compliance issues with dog chews. The cost of this sampling will be met by National Trading Standards (NTS). Details are included in 3.2.3 below.

Visits outside of standard hours

An estimated 10% of all programmed interventions relate to premises where it is more appropriate to conduct visits outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to visit these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if necessary, paid overtime provisions. In addition, these arrangements will permit the occasional inspection of premises, which open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours. The Food Law Code of Practice requires inspections of these premises at varying times of operation.

Revisits

All businesses less than satisfactory (with a food hygiene rating of 0,1 and 2) are revisited to ensure that the necessary improvements are carried out. Re-visits and appropriate enforcement for all non-compliant food premises (i.e. hygiene rating less than 3) is a requirement under the Food Law Code of Practice.

As a follow-up to primary inspections, the service undertakes revisits in accordance with current policy.

For the year 2025-26, the intervention programme is expected to generate an estimated 75 revisits. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place as described above to facilitate this.

Hygiene standards in premises declined during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery period. The cost of living crisis further exacerbated this situation. Consequently, the service has had to carry out more revisits to premises. It is anticipated that consistent, high quality programmed interventions by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

The performance against intervention targets for all food hygiene and food standards inspections is reported annually to the Neighbourhood Services Committee via the Service Plan.

Port Health

Hartlepool is a Port Health Authority. To date there has been no significant changes at the Port because of EU exit in that it remains the case that no food or feed enters the port.

Work in relation to imported food control can therefore ordinarily be accommodated within the day-to-day workload of the service, however if circumstances were to change whereby food or feed was imported/exported additional resources would be required which would have an effect on the programmed intervention workload and other service demands.

Since 1st April 2022 and on request we have carried out ship sanitation inspections and certification. We will also undertake water sampling as required. During 2024-25, 11 ship sanitation inspections were undertaken and exemption certificates issued. Water samples were collected from 1 vessel and these were submitted for microbiological examination and testing for the presence of Legionella bacteria.

Fish Quay

There is a Fish Quay within the Authority's area, which provides a market hall although it is not currently operational and there are associated fish processing units, one of which is an approved establishment.

During 2023-24, 25 fishing vessels registered with Hartlepool Borough Council as food business establishments. All fishing vessels were inspected in accordance with directions issued by the Food Standards Agency.

3.2.2 Registration and Approval of Premises

Food and feed business operators must register their establishments with the relevant local authority. This provision allows the service to maintain an up-to-date premises database and facilitates the timely inspection of new premises and, when considered necessary, premises that have changed food/feed business operator or type of use.

The receipt of a food/feed premises registration form initiates an inspection of all new premises. In the case of existing premises, where a change of food/feed business operator is notified, other than at the time of a programmed intervention, an assessment is made of the need for inspection based on the date of the next programmed intervention, premises history, and whether any significant change in the type of business are being notified.

During 2024-25, 104 new registrations were received and all businesses received face-to-face visits and/or were provided with advice. During 2023-24, work was successfully undertaken to ensure that all food business registration forms are up to date.

The number of small food businesses changing hands and requiring re-registration and inspection each year remains at a steady high level of approximately 100, made up of new start up businesses and those changing hands with new incoming proprietors. It is not known what number of businesses will change hands or even cease to trade because of the current economic environment. It is nevertheless anticipated that approximately 100 additional food premises inspections will be generated for new food businesses during 2025-26.

Advising and assisting new proprietors places an extra pressure on the inspection programme in terms of additional inspections required for new starts and businesses changing hands which may not have otherwise been due for inspection and often will require extra support for proprietors.

A competent authority must with some exceptions, approve food business establishments that handle food of animal origin. If an establishment needs approval, it does not need to be registered as well.

Food premises which require approval include those that are producing any, or any combination of the following: minced meat, meat preparations, mechanically separated meat, meat products, live bivalve molluscs, fishery products, raw milk (other than raw cows' milk), dairy products, eggs (not primary production) and egg products, frogs legs and snails, rendered animal fats and greaves, treated stomachs, bladders and intestines, gelatine and collagen and certain cold stores and wholesale markets.

The approval regime necessitates full compliance with the relevant requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and Regulation (EC) 853/2004. There are 3 premises in the Borough which are subject to approval; a fishery products establishment, a manufacturer of food ingredients and a recently approved business that manufactures chicken parmesans.

Since 1 January 2006, feed businesses have been required to be approved or registered with their local authority under the terms of the EC Feed Hygiene Regulation (1831/2005). This legislation relates to nearly all feed businesses. This means, for example, that importers and sellers of feed, hauliers and storage businesses now require approval or registration. Livestock and arable farms growing and selling crops for feed are also within the scope of the provisions of the regulation.

3.2.3 Microbiological and Chemical Analysis of Food/Feed

An annual food/feed sampling programme is undertaken with samples being procured for the purposes of microbiological or chemical analyses. This programme is undertaken in accordance with the service's Food/Feed Sampling Policy.

All officers taking formal samples must follow the guidance contained in and be qualified in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and centrally issued guidance, including that contained in the Food Law Code of Practice/Feed Law Code of Practice and associated Practice Guidance. Follow-up action is carried out in accordance with the service's sampling policy.

Microbiological analysis of food and water samples is undertaken by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Food, Water & Environmental Laboratory based at York. An appointed Public / Agricultural Analyst undertakes chemical analysis.

Sampling allocations from UKHSA are based on a credits system dependant on the type of sample being submitted and examination required.

The baseline allocation for Hartlepool is 8,300 credits for the year 2025-26.

Points are allocated as follows:

Sample type	No of credits
F1:Food Screen	10
F2:Food Basic	25
F3:Food Complex	35
W1:Water Screen	10
W2:Water Basic	20
W3:Water Complex	25
M1:Dairy Products	10
E1:Environmental Screen	10
E2:Environmental Basic	25
E3:Environmental Complex	35
Certification	15

The allocation is subject to annual review. It is possible that the allocation will be reduced if an authority uses substantially less than its allocation.

A sampling programme is produced each year for the start of April to assess the microbiological quality of food, water and environmental surfaces and composition and labelling of food.

The results of the sampling programme carried out during 2024-25 are provided in **6.2.3**.

In addition to local intelligence, the sampling programme for 2025-26 will take account of national and regional surveys and local interventions and the availability of local resources.

Sampling programmes have been agreed with the Food Examiners and Public/Agricultural Analysts. These have regard to the nature of food/feed businesses in Hartlepool and will focus on locally manufactured/processed foods/feed and food/feed targeted because of previous sampling and complaints.

The service aims to meet a national target set in 2007 by the Food Standards Agency, the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) and the Association of Port Health Authorities that imported food should make up 10% of the food samples taken by local and port health authorities.

The sampling plans for 2025-26 are detailed below.

Microbiological Food Sampling Plan 2025-26

April Local Survey – swabs in catering premises	May Study 83 – nuts/seeds/dried fruit/snacks	June Study 83 – nuts/seeds/dried fruit/snacks
July Study 84 – Root vegetables	August Study 84 – Root vegetables	September Study 84 – Root vegetables
October Local Survey – swabs in catering premises	November Study 83 – nuts/seeds/dried fruit/snacks	December Study 83 – nuts/seeds/dried fruit/snacks
January Study 85 - tbc	February Study 85 - tbc	March Raw milk sampling

Food Standards Sampling Plan 2025-26

Survey	Number of Samples
Allergens (peanuts) in meals from restaurants and takeaways (Re samples)	Unknown
FSA Food Standards Directed Sampling Programme 2025/26 – Allergens in loose prepared meals* Gluten free foods from catering establishments	8
FSA Imported Food LA/PHA Sampling Programme*	8
Ad hoc samples arising from emerging priorities identified during the year	tbc

(*Hartlepool has bid to sample certain food commodities as part of the FSA's national food sampling programme and are awaiting confirmation as to whether our bids have been successful.)

Feeding Stuffs Sampling Plan 2025-26

At present feeding stuffs sampling is being given a low priority due to the lack of local manufacturers and packers, accordingly no sampling of animal feeding stuffs was carried out during 2024-25.

We will respond to emerging national or local issues and have agreed to participate in the FSA Feed Delivery National Sampling Project 2025-26. The aim of this sampling project is to understand if there are compliance issues with dog chews, which are commonly fed to many pet dogs and found in a large proportion of homes.

Dog chews have been the subject of several RASFF alerts, with Salmonella contamination being the most common issue. During 2025-26 our sampling plan is as follows:

Survey	Number of Samples
FSA Feed Delivery National Sampling Project 2025-26 – Dog Chews	4

Regional funding provided by the National Trading Standards Board and Food Standards Agency will supplement our sampling budget.

Private Water Supplies

A local brewery uses a private water supply in its food production. Regular sampling is carried out of this supply in accordance with relevant legislative regulations.

3.2.4 Food Inspection

The purpose of food inspection is to check that food complies with food safety requirements and is fit for human consumption and is properly described and labelled. As such, the activity of inspecting food commodities, including imported food where relevant, forms an integral part of the food premises intervention programme. Food inspection activities are undertaken in accordance with national guidelines.

3.2.5 Provision of Advice and Information to Food/Feed Businesses

It is recognised that for most local food businesses contact with an officer of the service provides the best opportunity to obtain information and tailored advice on legislative requirements and good practice. Officers are mindful of this and aim to ensure that when undertaking premises interventions sufficient opportunity exists for food business operators to seek advice.

When providing advice to food businesses, advisory leaflets including those produced by the Food Standards Agency, are made available.

Significant resources have been directed towards assisting businesses to fully implement a documented food safety management system, including Safer Food Better Business (SFBB). The FSA introduced this system to assist smaller catering businesses introduce a documented food safety management system.

Guidance is also prepared and distributed to food businesses relating to changes in legislative requirements. The service also encourages new food/feed business operators and existing businesses to seek guidance and advice on their business. It is estimated that 50 such advisory visits will be carried out during the year.

The Council operates the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme whereby each business is awarded a rating, which reflects the hygiene conditions found at the time of the primary inspection. The business' rating is made available to the public via the Food Standards Agency's website and the business is provided with a sticker to display on their premises. The service has made a commitment to work with businesses to improve their rating; in particular, those awarded a rating of less than '3' (generally satisfactory).

A limited level of promotional work is also undertaken by the service on food safety, with minimal impact on programmed enforcement work. Feeding stuffs advice is available via the Council's web site.

3.2.6 Public Health Initiatives

Wherever possible the service will contribute to the Public Health Framework Outcomes. Examples of initiatives that we have supported include:

1) Government Obesity Strategy

We have supported the Government's Obesity Strategy through awareness raising and are responsible for enforcement of legislation that was introduced in 2022 relating to food and drink high in fat, salt or sugar.

The legislation includes The Calorie Labelling (Out of Home Sector) (England) Regulations 2021 and The Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations 2021. (The latter legislation is intended to restrict retailer promotions on food and drink high in fat, salt or sugar.)

Research has shown that fast food takeaways provide a source of food that is high in fat, salt or sugar. We will continue to work with other regulators, including colleagues in the Planning team to encourage good practice within the takeaway sector. We will support the use of planning measures to restrict the proliferation of hot food takeaways in areas of over concentration, and where vulnerable groups of children and young people are a concern.

All relevant hot food takeaways in Hartlepool have been identified and mapped. The density of local and future provision of takeaways is addressed in the Council's Local Plan.

2) Allergy Awareness

We will continue to use a range of interventions including sampling, provision of information and advice and working in partnership with colleagues in the other North-East local authorities as part of a regional group to raise awareness regarding allergens. We will continue to raise awareness of changes in food labelling legislation relating to foods that are pre-packed for direct sale.

As part of the Regional Work Programme, we have together with the other North-East local authorities produced a range of video clips to raise awareness of allergies and duties placed on food business operators. These videos were promoted during contact with food businesses and by using social media.

We have introduced a single point of contact for people seeking to report allergen related incidents which are then referred to the relevant local authority for investigation. We have also participated in a regional sampling programme specifically looking for allergens.

3.2.7 Investigation of Food / Feed Complaints

The service receives on average 40 complaints each year concerning food/feed, all of which are subject to investigation. During 2024-25, 17 complaints were received concerning food. An initial response is made to these complaints within two working days. Whilst many complaints are investigated with minimal resource requirements, some more complex cases may be resource-intensive and potentially affect programmed intervention workloads.

No complaints were received concerning feed.

All investigations are conducted having regard to the guidance on the 'Home Authority Principle'.

The procedures for receipt and investigation of food/feed complaints are set out in detailed guidance and internal policy documents.

3.2.8 Investigation of Cases of Food Poisoning and Outbreak Control

Incidents of food related infectious disease are investigated in liaison with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) North-East Public Health Team and in the case of outbreaks in accordance with the Outbreak Control Policy.

Where it appears that an outbreak exists the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) or an EHO, will liaise with UKHSA North-East Health Protection Team to determine the need to convene an Outbreak Control Team. Further liaison may be necessary with agencies such as the Food Standards Agency, UKHSA Food, Water and Environmental Laboratory, Public Analyst(s), Anglian Water and Northumbrian Water.

It is estimated that approximately 150 food poisoning notifications are received each year, a large proportion of which are confirmed cases of Campylobacter.

Investigations of foodborne illness and any suspected food poisoning/food borne outbreaks (with the exception of Campylobacter notifications) are undertaken in order to attempt to identify the source of the illness, prevent further spread, raise awareness of hygiene issues and carry out any necessary food hygiene visits or enforcement action.

As relatively little benefit has been demonstrated from the investigation of individual sporadic cases of Campylobacter only those who are in high-risk groups (e.g. food handlers or those who live/work in a residential care home) are routinely investigated. All cases of Campylobacter are followed up with a standard letter and receive an information leaflet.

Any cluster or outbreak identified by UKHSA North-East Public Health Team or the Commercial services team will be investigated following the agreed outbreak investigation arrangements. In the event of any major food poisoning outbreak, a significant burden is likely to be placed on the service and this would inevitably affect the performance of the intervention programme.

3.2.9 Dealing with Food / Feed Safety Incidents

A national alert system exists for the rapid dissemination of information about food and feed hazards and product recalls, this is known as the food/feed alert warning system.

All food and feed alerts received by the service are dealt with in accordance with national guidance and internal quality procedures. Food and feed alert warnings are received by the service from The Food Standards Agency via an electronic mail system. Several officers have also subscribed to receive alerts via their personal mobile phones.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) ensures that a timely and appropriate response is made to each alert.

The out of hours contact telephone number for the service is (01429) 266522, then Option 1, then Option 2.

In the event of a serious local incident, or a wider food safety problem emanating from production in Hartlepool, the Food Standards Agency will be alerted in accordance with guidance.

We continue to receive food alerts for action or information, food allergy alerts and food recall notices throughout the year. Whilst it is difficult to predict with any certainty the number of food safety incidents that will arise based on previous years it is anticipated that approximately 75 food alerts (not including allergy alerts) will be notified in 2025-26, with an estimated 4 or 5 requiring action.

This level of work can ordinarily be accommodated within the day-to-day workload of the service, but incidents that are more serious may require additional resources, which may have an effect on the programmed intervention workload and other service demands.

3.2.10 Complaints relating to Food / Feed Premises

The service investigates all complaints that it receives about food/feed safety and food standards conditions and practices in food/feed businesses.

An initial response to any complaint is made within two working days. In such cases, the confidentiality of the complainant is paramount. All anonymous complaints are also currently investigated.

During 2024-25, 62 complaints about hygiene standards in food premises were received. All were investigated within our 2-day response time.

The purpose of investigation is to determine the validity of the complaint and, where appropriate, to seek to ensure that any deficiency is properly addressed. The general approach is to assist the food/feed business operator in ensuring good standards of compliance, although enforcement action may be necessary where there is failure in the management of food/feed safety, or regulatory non-compliance.

Based on the average number of complaints received during previous years it is estimated that approximately 60 such complaints will be received in 2025-26.

3.3 Complaints against Our Staff/Service

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are contained in the inspection report left at the time of an inspection.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

3.4 Liaison Arrangements

To ensure consistency in enforcement and approach in all food safety matters the service has a number of formal and informal liaison arrangements with other local authorities, Government bodies and local liaison groups.

The service actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Heads of Public Protection Group
- Tees Valley Food Liaison Group
- UKHSA/Local Authority Sampling Group
- Tees Valley Public Health Group

- North East Public Protection Partnership (NEPPP) (representing the 12 North East local authorities)
- North East Trading Standards Liaison Group, which incorporates the
- North East Trading Standards Animal Feed Group (NETSA) (representing the 12 North East local authorities)

There is also liaison with other organisations including the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Trading Standards Institute, Consultant in Communicable Disease, UKHSA, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Defra / Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA), Cleveland Police, OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Officers also work in liaison with other Council departments including the planning services and licensing teams.

3.5 Home Authority Principle / Primary Authority Scheme

The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 introduced Primary Authority agreements. It placed a statutory obligation on the Council to provide a significantly expanded range of Home Authority services to local businesses when requested by that business. There are opportunities for local authorities to recover costs from businesses to provide this premium service.

The Council continues to fully support the National Primary Authority Scheme for businesses. When inspecting businesses which have a primary authority agreement in place with another local authority, officers will have regard to any relevant inspection plans or primary authority advice published on the register.

The Council will contact the Primary Authority and liaise over:

- any proposed formal enforcement action
- service of Notices
- shortcomings in the companies' policies that have wider implications

There are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place with a Hartlepool based trader however the service works closely with some local businesses on an informal basis.

The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

4 RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2025-26 is:

	£ 000
Employees	740
Other Expenditure	55
Public Health Grant	(306)
Other Grant Funding	(35)
Income	<u>(11)</u>
Net Budget	443

This budget is for all services provided by this section including Health & Safety, Animal Health, Trading Standards and resources are allocated in accordance with service demands.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the Council's Public Protection service, including delivery of the food/feed law service, in accordance with the service plan.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for the strategic management of the Food Service.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the food service in 2025-26 are as follows:

Food Hygiene

1 x 0.5 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) (with responsibility also for Port Health, Health and Animal Health and Welfare)

4 x 0.5 FTE EHO* (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility also for Health & Safety)

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

1 x 0.3 FTE Part-time EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

1 x 1 FTE Technical Officer Food (with requisite qualifications and experience)

Food Standards

1 x 0.2 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) (with responsibility also for Port Health, Health and Animal Health and Welfare)

4 x 0.3 FTE EHO* (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

1 x 0.16 FTE Part-time EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for planning service delivery and strategic management of the Food Law Service. These duties are in addition to their general management responsibilities of the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) has responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the Food/Feed Law Service, Port Health, Health & Safety at Work, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health & Welfare.

The EHOs have responsibility for the performance of the food premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the food law service, particularly more complex investigations. In addition, these officers undertake Health & Safety at Work enforcement.

The Technical Officer (Food) is also responsible for interventions, including inspections as well as revisits, investigation of less complex complaints and investigation of incidents of food-borne disease.

Feed Hygiene

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) and the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager are designated as lead officers for imported food / feed control and animal feed enforcement.

The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) allocated resource for carrying out official controls for feed hygiene is 0.25 FTE.

Authorised Trading Standards Officers have responsibility for the performance of the feed premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the feed law service.

Support Services based within the department provide administrative support.

All staff engaged in food/feed safety law enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

Staff undertaking educational and other support duties are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out this work.

4.3 Staff Development

The Council recognises that there is a need to invest in the continuing development of staff. Within the Commercial Services team such development is needed in order to meet the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and more specifically requirements contained in the Food Standard Agency's Food Law Code of Practice.

The qualifications and training of staff engaged in food/feed law enforcement are prescribed and this will be reflected in the Council's policy in respect of appointment and authorisation of officers.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the food/feed law service to maintain their professional competency by undertaking a minimum of 20 hours continuous professional development (CPD) training each year, which may involve inhouse training, attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences. This is also consistent with the requirements of the relevant professional bodies.

The priorities for the service are concerned with ensuring up to date knowledge and awareness of legislation, building capacity within the team including training and development of new staff. Detailed records are maintained by the service relating to all training received by officers.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the food/feed law service. The service has a documented standard operating procedure that ensures the proper maintenance and calibration of equipment and its removal from use if found to be defective.

The service has a computerised performance management system, the Authority Public Protection computer system (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the food/feed law service. A documented database management standard operating procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all food/feed interventions, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the food law service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the food service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking interventions, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

It is possible that the Food Standards Agency will at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

6 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1 Overview

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan, a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2024-25.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of the year 2025-26 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Council approval will be sought.

6.2 Performance Review 2024-25

This section describes performance of the service in key areas during 2024-25.

6.2.1 Intervention Programme

During 2024-25, we successfully completed 359 food hygiene, 242 food standards and 7 feed hygiene interventions.

We met our 2-working day response time for all complaints.

6.2.2 Registration and Approval of Premises

During 2024-25, 104 new food businesses were registered. This was a slight decrease on the previous year when 111 were registered.

Three premises subject to approval were inspected and given relevant guidance. A fourth premises was recently inspected but has now surrendered their approval as the activities requiring approval had discontinued.

6.2.3 Food Sampling Programme

Programmed food sampling in 2024-25 focussed on issues of public safety and took account of local and national priorities.

In total 208 hygiene samples and 18 food standards samples were taken. The results are discussed below:

Hygiene Samples

During 2024-25, the service participated in six microbiological surveys and took 208 hygiene samples.

- Two local surveys focused on the microbiological quality of imported foods. One survey focused on spices and savoury snacks and the other on dried and fresh fruit and nuts. In total 45 samples were taken and the Food Examiner deemed all but five samples to be satisfactory. All unsatisfactory products were re-sampled and satisfactory results were obtained for these products.
- During another local survey 108 hygiene swabs were taken from catering premises, such as schools, cafes and care homes. Five of the swabs were deemed to be unsatisfactory due to high levels of bacteria (Enterobacteriaceae). This is an indication of poor hygiene practices. Advice was given and re-samples with satisfactory results were obtained.
- Three national microbiological surveys were undertaken. These looked at:
 - (i) microbiological quality of cheese

During the survey 12 samples of prepacked cheese were sampled and checked for Listeria. All 12 samples were deemed to be satisfactory by the Food Examiner.

(ii) microbiological quality of tomatoes

During the survey 6 samples of prepacked tomatoes were sampled and checked for the presence of E Coli. All 6 samples were deemed to be satisfactory by the Food Examiner.

(iii) hygiene practices in tattoo/piercing premises

This survey was not related to hygiene in food premises. Nine premises were visited to carry out a survey that looked at hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing. A total of 22 swabs were taken, along with eight samples of green soap. Green soap is used to clean client's skin before treatments. All but one of the 22 swabs were deemed to be satisfactory. Two out of the eight samples of the green soap were deemed to be unsatisfactory, due to high levels of pseudomonas. Visits were made to the premises in question and advice was provided.

- A sample of locally produced raw drinking milk was also taken, and the result of the sample was deemed satisfactory.

Food Standards Sampling

A total of eighteen food standards samples were taken during 2024-25. Two Food Standards Agency (FSA) surveys were carried out and one ad hoc sample was taken in response to a Food Alert for Action. Details are discussed below:

- During the FSA Imported Foods Survey nine food standards samples were taken. These included spices, dried fruit, seeds and rice flour. The samples were analysed for Sudan Dyes, Pesticides and Aflatoxins. All nine samples were deemed to be satisfactory. In addition, six further samples of dried fruit were sent to the Public Analyst as part of the survey. The microbiological quality of these six samples were deemed to be satisfactory.
- A survey looking at Allergens in Caterers was carried out as part of a wider national study looking at allergens in food. The focus of the survey was peanuts in Indian Cuisine.

All twelve takeaways/restaurants serving Indian cuisine in Hartlepool were contacted. A meal suitable for a person with a peanut allergy was requested. Four of the premises said they were unable to provide a suitable meal and the remaining eight meals were sampled.

Of the eight samples taken, three were reported by the Public Analyst to contain peanut proteins at a level sufficient to induce an allergenic reaction in a susceptible person. The presence of peanut protein in the three meals renders the food injurious to health.

Legal action is currently being pursued against the three premises that provided the unsatisfactory results. A repeat of the survey will be conducted again later in the year.

- The FSA issued a Food Alert For Action in July 2024 regarding counterfeit Glen's Vodka. Officers from the department visited retail premises within the borough and one bottle of questionable source was seized. This sample of Glen's Vodka was sent to the Public Analyst for analysis. The Public Analyst reported that the sample contained Iso-Propanol, which is consistent with the alcohol being industrial rather than agricultural confirming that the vodka was not genuine Glen's Vodka.

As other counterfeit products (vapes) were seized during the visit the Premises Licence was called in for review by the Trading Standards team. This action was supported by the Commercial Services team. The Licensing Sub-Committee revoked the Premises Licence and whilst this decision was appealed the appeal was dismissed at the Magistrates' Court. The revocation of the premises licence is now in force.

Sampling continued in relation to private drinking water used by a local brewery. The results of the samples taken were all satisfactory.

A programme of sampling continued to be carried out to assess the microbiological quality of drinking water at premises within the borough and at the port.

Water sampling was also provided upon request to vessels visiting Hartlepool to assess the microbiological quality of drinking water.

6.2.4 Food Inspection

The service undertook no formal seizure of unfit food in the year.

Two voluntary surrenders were accepted from retail stores in respect of soft drinks containing additives (EDTA) which are not permitted in the UK. Calcium disodium EDTA is an additive used in some American imported soft drinks. It is not permitted in drinks within the UK as it does not comply with UK food standards and regulations.

6.2.5 Promotional Work

Food safety promotion whether by advice, education, training or other means is a key part of the food team's strategy in changing behaviour and increasing compliance in businesses.

In February 2006, the Food Standards Agency introduced Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) aimed at assisting smaller catering businesses to introduce a documented food safety management system. Since this time, our resources have been directed towards continuing to assist businesses to fully implement a documented food safety management system.

The team has continued to offer tailored advice and information on request with advisory visits to businesses being carried out during the year.

Circular letters are issued as required to inform food business operators of important food safety matters relevant to their operations e.g. changes in legislation, food alerts etc.

6.2.6 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Hartlepool Council introduced the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' (FHRS) a Food Standards Agency / local authority partnership initiative to help consumers choose where to eat out, or shop for food.

The 'Food Law Code of Practice', requires that a risk rating is undertaken which is used to determine the frequency of intervention for the business. The hygiene rating is derived from the risk rating that is given to a business following every 'primary' inspection.

Of the seven main categories used to determine the overall rating score the following three factors are used to create a hygiene rating:

1. Food Hygiene and Safety
2. Structure and Cleaning
3. Management and Control

These ratings are the only ones that are directly controllable by the business and are the reason they have been used to obtain the food business' hygiene rating.

The total score from the 3 categories is then used to derive the hygiene rating ranging from '0' ('Urgent improvement necessary') through to '5' ('Very Good').

The profile of Hartlepool premises FHSR ratings is shown below.

Hygiene Rating	No @ 1.4.14	No @ 1.4.15	No @ 1.4.16	No @ 1.4.17	No @ 1.4.18	No @ 1.4.19	No @ 1.4.20	No @ 1.4.21	No @ 1.4.22	No @ 1.4.23	No @ 1.4.24	No @ 1.4.25
5 Very Good	456 (66.7%)	471 (68.3%)	502 (72.2%)	539 (76.9%)	561 (80.6%)	580 (82.9%)	596 (83.9%)	587 (73.2%)	688 (87.3%)	654 (85.9%)	647 (87.4%)	658 (88.9%)
4 Good	149 (21.8%)	136 (19.7%)	125 (18.0%)	107 (15.3%)	101 (14.5%)	76 (10.9%)	77 (10.8%)	72 (9%)	64 (8.1%)	66 (8.7%)	57 (7.7%)	55 (7.4%)
3 Generally Satisfactory	63 (9.2%)	56 (8.1%)	55 (7.9%)	43 (6.1%)	28 (4.0%)	38 (5.4%)	36 (5.1%)	32 (4%)	35 (4.4%)	32 (4.2%)	33 (4.5%)	25 (3.4%)
2 Improvement Necessary	9 (1.3%)	18 (2.6%)	8 (1.2%)	10 (1.4%)	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%)	4 (0.5%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)
1 Major Improvement Necessary	7 (1.0%)	9 (1.3%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
0 Urgent Improvement Necessary	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Awaiting Inspection	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.01%)	111 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sub Total	684	690	695	701	696	700	710	802	788	761	740	740
Exempt	45	44	45	42	42	37	39	39	39	28	27	27
Excluded	10	10	1	1	10	12	2	2	8	6	4	3
Sensitive	32	1	8	9	1	1	10	10	2	3	5	7
Total	771	745	749	753	749	750	761	853	837	798	776	777
% of premises rated as 3 or above	97.7%	96.1%	98.1%	98.3%	99.1%	99.2%	99.8%	86.2%	99.8%	98.8%	99.6%	99.7%

Since the introduction of the FHSR national scheme in 2013, the number of premises rated as 3 (Generally Satisfactory) or better has remained consistently high. In 2024/25 the figure was 99.7%.

In their Post Pandemic Recovery Plan, the FSA acknowledged that hygiene standards had anecdotally fallen. This fall in standards has in part been a

consequence of the Covid-19 Pandemic, however it is also reflective of the cost of living crisis and the difficulties businesses are facing e.g. fewer people working in businesses, problems with recruitment and a lack of investment as businesses struggle financially due to the rising costs of utilities and food.

Officers are finding that inspections are taking longer to do with more advice/support being given to operators, and more frequent revisits. There is a requirement under the Food Law Code of Practice that all non-compliant premises (i.e. hygiene rating less than 3) receive a revisit.

The service is committed to focussing its resources on carrying out interventions at those businesses which are deemed not to be 'broadly compliant' and has liaised with businesses that have been awarded a hygiene rating of '2' or less offering advice and support. Where appropriate, enforcement action will be taken to secure compliance.

Under the FHRS, there is a procedure that affords food business operators the opportunity to request a re-visit inspection once they have taken action to rectify non-compliances identified during an inspection. At the re-visit, the establishment may be re-assessed and given a new hygiene rating.

During 2024-25, 10 businesses submitted applications for a re-rating. Further information is provided in **6.2.7**.

The food hygiene ratings are published online at www.food.gov.uk/ratings

6.2.7 FHRS Re-rating & Promotional visits

During 2024-25, officers worked closely with food business operators to improve food hygiene standards in our lowest rated premises. During the year, 10 businesses submitted applications for a FHRS re-rating.

All 10 of these businesses were re-inspected in accordance with the FHRS and all demonstrated an improvement in standards. Five improved from a 4 to a 5, three from a 3 to 5, one from a 2 to a 5 and one from a 2 to a 4.

On 1st April 2018, we introduced a dual system for dealing with re-rating requests. The five constituent members of the Tees Valley Food Liaison Group agreed this system.

The scheme enables food businesses to apply for one free re-rating revisit (as per the original scheme). To qualify they must have carried out the necessary improvements to their business and be willing to wait a minimum of three months from their last inspection (this period is known as a 'stand still' period). Businesses can elect to pay £155 if they wish to be inspected within three months of their inspection. They are also eligible to submit more than one application to be re-rated if they pay the £155 fee. During 2024-25, 2 businesses elected to pay for a re-rating inspection.

6.2.8 Food / Feed Complaints

During the year, the service dealt with 62 complaints relating to the condition of food premises and/or food handling practice (this was a significant increase on previous years, for example during 2019-20, 27 complaints were received). In addition, 17 complaints were received regarding unfit or out of condition food or extraneous matter. A further 25 complaints concerning the composition or labelling of food items were received.

No complaints were received regarding animal feeding stuffs.

Investigations into the above were undertaken within our target of 2 working days.

6.2.9 Food Poisoning

In conjunction with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Hartlepool Council investigates cases of actual or suspected food poisoning and foodborne disease.

The majority of notifiable disease notifications received by the food service were cases of *Campylobacter*, all of which appeared to be sporadic (isolated) cases.

Campylobacter is the most common bacterial cause of food poisoning in England and Wales. National data shows that while the incidence of *Salmonella* infections has steadily declined since the late 1990s those caused by *Campylobacter* had significantly increased. As a result in recent years the FSA and UKHSA has been spearheading campaigns to address this.

6.2.10 Food Safety Incidents

The Service received Food Alerts and a number of Product Recall/Withdrawal notifications and Allergy Alerts from the Food Standards Agency during the year. All Food Alerts requiring action were dealt with expeditiously.

The Service also receives reports from the FSA regarding incidents involving food fraud, which may present a risk to health and require immediate investigation. Most relate to illicit alcohol due to the chemicals used as a substitution for genuine alcohol. In addition, intelligence is received from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) regarding counterfeit alcohol.

6.2.11 Enforcement

No formal enforcement was undertaken in relation to official food controls during the year.

6.2.12 Complaints against Our Staff/Service

No complaints were made against our staff during 2024-25.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2025-26

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the intervention programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable. Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement and/or challenges for 2025-26.

1. The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2025-26, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of food safety risks that will have an impact on wider public health outcomes. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes Framework.
2. The implementation of the new Food Standards Delivery Model continues to present a challenge during 2025-26. The FSA's deadline for implementation of the new scheme was 1.4.25, however there was a delay in our MIS provider updating APP and the migration of our data meaning that it will not occur until Summer 2025. Officers received training and are manually completing risk rating of premises following inspections. Until the implementation is complete it is impossible to know how many food standards interventions are due in 2025-26.
3. We will need to keep abreast of and respond to any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. This may involve reviewing and updating our Quality Management System/Standard Operating Procedures for Food and Feed as appropriate.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN
2025-26

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To approve the Health & Safety Service Plan for 2025-26, which is a requirement under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has a key role in overseeing local authority enforcement activities. They have duties to set and monitor standards of local authorities to ensure that authorities are providing an effective service to protect public health and safety.
- 3.2 The Health & Safety Executive has issued guidance to local authorities, which provides information on how local authority enforcement service plans should be structured and what they should contain.

- 3.3 The service planning guidance ensures that key areas of enforcement are covered in local service plans, whilst allowing for the inclusion of locally defined objectives.
- 3.4 The Health and Safety Enforcement Service Plan for 2025-2026 is available in **Appendix 1** and takes into account the guidance requirements. The Plan details the Service's priorities for 2025-26 and beyond where appropriate. It also highlights how these priorities will be addressed.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The Service Plan for 2025-26 has been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in service demand.
- 4.2 The Plan covers the following:
- (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The background to the Authority, including the scope and demands on the Health and Safety Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development;
 - (v) A review of performance for 2024-25

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN THE PLAN

- 5.1 The Council is the enforcing authority for 1,354 premises within Hartlepool. In planning our intervention programme for 2025-26, we have had regard to the 'National Local Authority Enforcement Code Health and Safety at Work England, Scotland & Wales'.
- 5.2 The majority of businesses we have enforcement responsibility are micro, small or medium employers with many employing less than 5 staff. The table below provides a profile of the premises within the borough.

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/25
Retail Shops	390
Wholesale	24
Offices	128
Catering Services	253
Hotel/residential	15
Residential Care Homes	40
Leisure and Cultural	254
Consumer Services	244
Other (Miscellaneous)	6
Total	1354

- 5.3 HSE provides local authorities with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). The Code is given legal effect as HSE guidance to local authorities under section 18(4) (b) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It is designed to ensure that local authority health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to enforcement.
- 5.4 The Council has a vital role to play in ensuring that the regulatory system is focused on better health and safety outcomes and not purely technical breaches of the law. During 2025-26, we will carry out a range of interventions based on risk, local intelligence, performance history, RIDDOR reports, complaints and local occupational health data.
- 5.5 The Code states that proactive inspection must only be used to target the high-risk activities in those sectors specified by HSE or where intelligence suggests risks are not being effectively managed. HSE have published a Local Authority (LA) Circular LAC 67/2 2025/2026 Work-Year, which sets out guidance to assist LAs in setting priorities and targeting interventions. This contains details of the national priorities. (Not all national priorities have a proactive inspection component).
- 5.6 In delivering their priorities, LAs should ensure their planned regulatory activity is focused on improved outcomes, for example better risk management, improved health as well as reduced injuries to employees or members of the public.
- 5.7 The Code provides flexibility for local authorities to address local priorities alongside the national priorities set by HSE. During interventions, officers will focus on specific risks that are the key causes of serious workplace accidents, injuries and ill health.
- 5.8 Priorities can be addressed during our contact with businesses, including through other areas of work e.g. food inspections, licensing visits and following notifications of local events to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
- 5.9 We have identified the following local priorities:
- Asbestos Management
 - Electrical & Gas Safety in Commercial Premises
 - Cellar Safety
 - Deliveries / Workplace Transport
 - Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis, Asthma
 - Managing Risks from Legionella
 - Hygiene in Tattoo Studios and Salons offering Beauty Treatments e.g. micro-blading, application of semi-permanent make up etc.
- 5.10 During 2024/25, health and safety interventions were carried out at 104 premises. These were risk based and multiple priority topics were covered

during some of these visits. All visits were undertaken in conjunction with food interventions.

- 5.11 In addition to the planned interventions officers carried out 1 revisit to monitor compliance with contraventions identified during these planned interventions. During the year, we worked with new businesses and continued to offer tailored advice and information on request.
- 5.12 During the year the Authority undertook 220 enforcement visits to assess compliance with smoke free legislation that came into force on 1st July 2007, a proportion of which were carried out in conjunction with health and safety interventions.
- 5.13 No planned promotional / campaign work was undertaken during 2024/25 however this work will be undertaken as required during 2025/26.
- 5.14 Special Project - Funeral Directors Visits

In April 2024 all local authorities received a request from the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Local Government and Levelling Up, that we carry out visits to all local funeral homes. This unexpected and unusual request follows the criminal investigation into Legacy Funeral Directors in Hull, and other similar cases.

This project was to “reassure the public that local funeral directors are safe, professional and care for loved ones as we would want”. Although health and safety law applies to funeral directors, there is no sector specific legislation. In 2020 the Competition and Markets Authority recommended that independent regulation was needed, which HM Government has agreed to.

We were asked to do a basic check that funeral directors comply with health and safety legislation regarding buildings, vehicles and equipment.

The greater part of the project was about ensuring the dignity and condition of persons in the funeral directors care; traceability through the funeral procedure and transparency for families.

All 7 funeral directors in the borough were visited in relation to this project and our findings were reported to the government for their consideration.

- 5.15 The service participated in a microbiological survey looking at hygiene practices in tattoo/piercing premises. Nine premises were visited to carry out a survey that looked at hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing.
- 5.16 During 2024-25, water sampling was undertaken from bathing water (swimming pools, spa and hydrotherapy pools) to assess water quality.
- 5.17 As part of the service’s Port Health functions water was collected and examined, including from 1 vessel visiting Hartlepool, which was tested for the

presence of Legionella bacteria. In addition 11 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates were also issued.

- 5.18 No promotional/campaign work was carried out during 2024/25, however, whenever possible activities that support the Public Health Agenda will take place in 2025/26.
- 5.19 During 2024-25, the Council continued to respond to any health and safety complaints in the usual manner. The service carried out 35 visits in response to 38 complaints / service requests relating to health and safety conditions and working practice. The initial response to these requests was undertaken within our target of 2 working days.
- 5.20 The service received 26 accident notifications during the year. After applying selection criteria based on national guidance, 2 of these notifications were selected for further investigation.
- 5.21 With regards enforcement action under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and associated legislation, no legal proceedings was undertaken during 2024-25. Two prohibition notices were served for lifting equipment at a garage.
- 5.22 Local authorities are required to assess whether there is sufficient capacity within the authority to undertake their statutory duties and to deliver an effective service. The Service Plan sets out the resources determined necessary to deliver the health and safety service in 2025-26.
- 5.23 The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2025-26, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of health and safety risks. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes Framework.
- 5.24 We will need to keep abreast of, and respond to, any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. We will review and update our Quality Management System and Standard Operating Procedures for Health and Safety as appropriate.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	If the Health and Safety Service Plan 2025-26 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	If the Health and Safety Service Plan 2025-26 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	No relevant issues
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Neighbourhood Services Committee approves the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2025-26.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Health and Safety Service Plan 2025-26 needs to be adopted to comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 There are no background papers for this report.

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 30/07/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 31/07/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 09/07/2025



Hartlepool Borough Council

Health & Safety Service Plan 2025-26

HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2025-26

INTRODUCTION	3
1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	
1.1 Service Aims and Objectives	3
1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans	4
2. BACKGROUND	5
2.1 Profile of the Local Authority	6
2.2 Organisational Structure	6
2.3 Scope of the Health and Safety Service	6
2.4 Demands on the Health and Safety Service	7
2.5 Enforcement Policy	8
3. SERVICE DELIVERY	8
3.1 Regulatory Reform	8
3.2 Interventions	9
3.2.1 Proactive Interventions including Inspections	10
3.2.2 Delivery of Priorities	11
3.2.3 Unrated Premises	15
3.2.4 Combined Food & Health and Safety Interventions	15
3.3 Reactive Interventions	15
3.3.1 Health and Safety Complaints and Service Requests	15
3.3.2 Dealing with Matters of Evident Concern	16
3.3.3 Accidents/Disease/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations	16
3.3.4 Supporting Businesses & Others	17
3.3.5 Safety Advisory Group (SAG)	17
3.3.6 Public Health Promotional/ Campaign Work	17
3.3.7 Sampling	18
3.4 Complaints against our Staff	18
3.5 Liaison Arrangements	19
3.6 Lead Authority Partnership Scheme / Primary Authority Scheme	20
4. RESOURCES	20
4.1 Financial	20
4.2 Staffing Allocation	21
4.3 Staff Development	22
4.4 Equipment and Facilities	22
5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT	22
6. REVIEW OF 2024-25 HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN	22
6.1 Review against the Service Plan	22
6.2 Performance Review 2024-25	23
6.2.1 Health and Safety Interventions	23
6.2.2 Promotional / Campaign Work	23
6.2.3 Special Project – Funeral Directors	23
6.2.4 Health and Safety Complaints and Requests for Service	24
6.2.5 Complaints against our Staff	24
6.2.6 Accidents/Disease/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations	24
6.2.7 Formal Enforcement Action	24

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT / CHALLENGES FOR 2025-26 24**INTRODUCTION**

This Service Plan details how the health and safety service will be delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Plan accords with the requirements of the mandatory guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA).

In May 2013, HSE published the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). The Code is designed to ensure that LA health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to their regulatory interventions. It sets out the Government expectations of a risk-based approach to targeting. Whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to the wider public health agenda.

This Plan sets out the Council's aims in respect of its health and safety enforcement service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled.

Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2025-26 longer-term objectives are identified, where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2024-25 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:**

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions from the Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA), Approved Codes of Practice, the Regulators' Code, and any other relevant guidance.

1.2.1 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Public Protection service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.1 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

Hartlepool will be

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of health and safety legislation.

This Health & Safety Service Plan contributes towards elements of the Council Plan vision in the following ways:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

By ensuring that businesses meet their obligations as regards health and safety the wellbeing of both employees and the public will be protected;

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements with regard to health, safety and welfare requirements, and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Health & Safety Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious

settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid 19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Over the past 20-25 years, Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and 2023.

The tourist industry impacts upon recreational opportunities, shopping facilities and leisure facilities including the provision of food and drink outlets. There are currently 1354¹ businesses in Hartlepool for which the Council is the enforcing authority.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult & Community Based Services Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhood Services Committee
- Regeneration Services Committee

The Neighbourhood Services Committee provides political oversight for health and safety law enforcement.

The Council is made up of four Departments:

- Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
- Adult and Community Based Services
- Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance & HR

The health and safety service is delivered through the Public Protection section of the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

1 Total number of premises as at 01/4/2025

2.3 Scope of the Health and Safety Service

The Council's Commercial Services team is a constituent part of the Development, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department and is responsible for delivery of the health and safety service. Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Carrying out interventions including inspections;
- Investigating concerns/complaints regarding health and safety and associated issues;
- Investigating workplace accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences;
- Providing advice and information;
- Taking action (formal and informal) to ensure compliance with legislation;
- Responding to asbestos notifications;
- Registering premises and persons offering personal treatments e.g. body piercing, tattooing, acupuncture etc.;
- Acting as a Statutory Consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003; and
- Enforcing smoke-free legislation in public places.

To achieve strategic aims and objectives it is necessary to work in partnership with other local authorities, the Health and Safety Executive and businesses. The Council aims to ensure that these joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute and are committed to the ongoing development of these arrangements.

2.4 Demands on the Health and Safety Service

The Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities are the principal enforcing authorities for Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSAWA) in Great Britain.

The primary purpose of the HSAWA is to control risks from work activities. The role of the HSE and LAs is to ensure that duty holders manage and control these risks and thus prevent harm to employees and to the public.

The type of premises/nature of work activity falling to local authorities for enforcement is dictated by Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1989 with further guidance provided by Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA), which is the formal enforcement liaison committee between the HSE and LAs.

There are currently 1,354 premises in Hartlepool for which the Council is the Enforcing Authority for Health and Safety. Such premises include retailers, wholesalers, offices, catering premises (including hotels and guesthouses), leisure and consumer services and residential care homes. The businesses are predominantly micro/small (employing less than 10 employees).

Other premises within the borough, including premises within local authority control, are within the enforcing remit of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

The table below provides a profile of the premises within the borough.

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/25
Retail Shops	390
Wholesale	24
Offices	128
Catering Services	253
Hotel/residential	15
Residential Care Homes	40
Leisure and Cultural	254
Consumer Services	244
Other (Miscellaneous)	6
Total	1354

The delivery point for the health and safety enforcement service is at:
Civic Centre
Victoria Road
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY
Telephone: (01429) 266522

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies, which occur out of hours. Contact can be made on (01429) 266522, then Option 1, then Option 2.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, a Public Protection Enforcement Policy deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service. This policy applies to health and safety enforcement.

The Health and Safety Executive Enforcement Management Model (EMM) will be used to inform the service's decision-making process. Officers also have reference to the HSE's Enforcement Guide and the Work Related Deaths Protocol.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

The Council is committed to meeting its obligations under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

3.1 Regulatory Reform

There have been significant changes in regulatory approach in recent years. The key objective is to free up business growth by transforming regulatory enforcement.

In drawing up this service plan, we are setting out the approach we intend to take to comply with the National Local Authority Enforcement Code Health and Safety at Work England, Scotland & Wales' (the Code). This is to ensure that we use a risk-based, targeted and proportionate approach to our interventions and enforcement in accordance with the principles of good regulation, which requires enforcement to be demonstrably targeted, proportionate, consistent, transparent and accountable.

The Code acknowledges that whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to a wider public health agenda.

The Code provides direction to local authorities on meeting these requirements, and reporting on compliance. To assist local authority's understand and implement the code, supplementary guidance is published annually.

The Service Plan sets out the risks, which we consider we need to address and the range of interventions that we will use to influence behavioural change in the way business manages or undertakes its work.

Officers carrying out regulatory interventions will ensure that every effort is made to reduce administrative burdens on business. At the same time, they will take efficient, effective and proportionate enforcement, concentrating on poor performers who present the highest risk to the health and safety of workers and the public.

Hartlepool Council is an active member of the Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group. Through this group, the five local authorities collectively target work areas based on:

- national priorities
- local priorities based on intelligence and evidence

As appropriate, a joint work plan is prepared and we aim to deliver this along with other interventions that are required at a local level.

This service plan sets out the activities that the service intends to carry out in 2025-26 to meet this requirement within the resources available. The programme will be delivered using the following interventions:

3.2 Interventions

As part of the Code HSE will monitor report and direct the approach of local authority regulatory intervention. This guidance supports HSE in this process

by requiring local authorities to carefully consider how they target their inspections and investigations in a manner that is:

- Reactive – typically investigative actions, undertaken in response to a specific incident or complaint or visits in response to requests for assistance,

or

- Proactive – inspections that are not triggered in response to a single specific incident or concern but result from a wider consideration of local intelligence or national trends that identify poor performers.

There is a range of intervention types available for the regulation of Health and Safety at Work. LAs should use the full range of interventions to influence behaviours and the proportionate management of risk. These include:

a. Proactive interventions:

- This involves influencing and engaging with stakeholders and with the workforce and working with those at risk.
- Working with other regulators including HSE, other LA regulators, the Police and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) etc.
- Creating knowledge and awareness of health and safety risks and encouraging behaviour change through:
 - education and awareness
 - best practice
 - recognising good performance
 - proactive inspection (restricted to activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed)

b. Reactive interventions:

- incident and ill-health investigation
- dealing with issues of concern that are raised and complaints

Health and safety interventions are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and standard operating procedures and relevant national guidance i.e. the Code.

Information on premises liable to health and safety interventions is held on the APP computerised system. An intervention programme is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

During 2025-26, we will carry out a range of interventions based on risk, local intelligence, performance history, RIDDOR reports, complaints and national occupational health data.

3.2.1 Proactive interventions including inspections

HSE provides LAs with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). Local Authority (LA) Circular (LAC 67/2- 2025/2026 Work-Year is guidance under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSAWA) and replaces LAC 67/2 (rev 13) and all earlier versions.

The Code states that proactive inspection must only be used to target the high-risk activities in those sectors specified by HSE or where intelligence suggests risks are not being effectively managed.

Proactive inspections should only be used for:

- a) Specific projects/programmes of inspections identified by HSE for LA attention;
- b) High risk premises / activities within the specific LA enforced sectors published by HSE (Annex B of LAC 67/2 provides a list of higher risk activities/sectors suitable for targeting for proactive inspection(the List”),
- c) Locally identified potential poor performers. This is where specific local intelligence indicates that a business is failing to effectively manage risk.

In all circumstances, local authorities have the discretion as to whether or not proactive inspection is the most appropriate intervention using their local knowledge/intelligence of the dutyholder.

3.2.2 Delivery of priorities

In delivering their priorities, local authorities should ensure their planned regulatory activity is focussed on outcomes. The Code provides flexibility for local authorities to address local priorities alongside the national priorities set by HSE. Having identified their evidence-based priorities local authorities are directed to address them using the whole range of regulatory interventions but preserve proactive inspection only for activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed.

Priorities are presented in the Code in 2 distinct sections, one focussing on health and the other safety. These national priorities have been collated from intelligence.

a) National priorities

LAC 67/2 – 2025/206 Work-Year identifies the following national priorities:

Section 1 – Health Topics

Occupational Lung Disease**1. Asbestos – Duty to Manage**

In premises likely to contain asbestos (i.e. built before 2000) regulators should draw duty holders' attention to their duty to manage and the relevant guidance/webpages – www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/

LA EHOs should focus their attention on determining how every relevant duty holders' premises they enter is managing asbestos.

2. Respirable silica dust.

Dust, containing harmful respirable crystalline silica (RCS), can be generated during common operations such as block cutting, chasing brickwork and cutting concrete floors.

During visits, LAs may come across minor construction work that is generating significant quantities of silica dust that may give rise to a matter of evident concern. Poor standards should be addressed with duty holders and appropriate enforcement action taken.

3. Legionella

a. Spa pools and hot tubs in the holiday sector

LAs should raise awareness of the risks of display spa pools and hot tubs and promote careful management to ensure that water quality does not encourage microbial growth and pose risks to service users or people in the vicinity of the spa pools or hot tubs.

b) Cooling towers located in built-up areas

Cooling towers can have the potential to spread aerosol several hundred metres from the source, which in a built up area, can potentially expose very large numbers of person's offsite. LAs should satisfy themselves that Legionella risks from cooling towers located in built-up areas are being appropriately managed.

3. Work Related Stress (WRS)

This year the national priority covers 2 aspects of linked work, continuing to raise awareness of work-related stress and mental health and the impact it can have on workers and the 'Working Minds' campaign..

EHOs should continue raising awareness with employers and their workers about the necessary tools to prevent work related stress and help support good mental health at work.

4. Violence and Aggression

Health and Safety Regulators, including EHOs are asked to highlight, with dutyholders in sales and health and social care sectors, the importance of suitable and sufficient risk assessments to identify hazards and control the risk from workplace violence and aggression and implement effective control measures to reduce the risks so far as reasonably practicable.

5. Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

Health and Safety Regulators, including EHOs are required to raise duty holder awareness of the regulatory requirement to ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments for manual handling activities have been undertaken where appropriate. Focus should be given to retail premises and residential care homes (excluding people/person handling risks for manual handling).

6. Noise in the Workplace

Where Local Authority EHOs see hearing protection in use, and they are confident that it is a mandatory requirement within that workplace, they are asked to:

- Check the condition and use of the hearing protection
- Check the duty-holder is providing hearing health surveillance for the affected employees.

7. Visitor attractions to prevent or control ill health arising from animal contact**8. Planned Preventive Maintenance**

Planned preventative maintenance (PPM) of work equipment is essential to the reduction of serious injuries and fatalities in the workplace.

LA health and safety regulators are asked to raise awareness with local duty holders of their statutory duties and signpost to relevant guidance material.

9. Inflatable amusement devices

There has been a number of serious incidents where inflatable amusement devices have collapsed or blown away in windy conditions. Inflatables can be found at many premises that fall to LAs for enforcement, and LAs should raise awareness of the general risks associated with the operation of such devices.

10. Trampoline Parks – improved information provision and supervision of users.

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of accidents occurring at the parks, involving both children and adults, which resulted in a specified major injury (fracture) as well as a small number which resulted in life-changing injuries. LA health and safety regulators are asked to highlight, with their duty holders, the importance of ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient standard operating procedures in place to ensure the safety of users, spectators, employees, and others.

11. Safety in Motorsport and Motor Leisure Industries

LAs are asked to focus upon health risks. E.g. noise, ventilation, gas safety. Where RIDDOR or concern are received by the LA an inspection visit is recommended.

12. Provision of licensable adventure activities without an AALA licence

The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulation 2008 (as amended) 1989 requires anyone who provides facilities for adventure activities to under 18s in return for payment to hold a licence.

Local authority enforcement officers are asked to be alert to providers in their local area who may be operating without a licence, and to take appropriate action.

Not all national priorities have a proactive inspection component. Many of the above will be discussed during routine contact with duty holders e.g. during routine food interventions, following complaints or accident investigations or when providing advice in respect of events notified to Hartlepool's Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

b) Regional Priorities

We will work in partnership with the other Tees Valley Authorities and HSE where appropriate to deliver local awareness based initiatives and enforcement.

All members of the Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group have agreed to seek opportunities to engage with the public health agenda with particular emphasis on improving health in the workplace. Best practice and opportunities for partnership work concerning public health will be shared. The group will also carry out consistency exercises and training activities identified as necessary during the year.

c) Local Priorities

We recognise that we have a vital role to play in ensuring that the regulatory system is focused on better health and safety outcomes and not purely technical breaches of the law. During interventions, officers will focus on specific risks, which are the key causes of serious workplace accidents, injuries and ill health in our community.

Using local based intelligence we have identified the following priorities, which can be addressed during our contact with businesses, including through other areas of, work e.g. food inspections and licensing visits.

Priority Topics

- Asbestos Management
- Electrical & Gas Safety in Commercial Premises
- Cellar Safety
- Deliveries / Workplace Transport
- Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis, Asthma
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Hygiene in Tattoo Studios and Salons offering Beauty Treatments e.g. Micro blading, application of semi-permanent make-up etc.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality interventions by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

An estimated 10% of interventions are within premises where it is more appropriate to conduct interventions outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to inspect these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if necessary, paid overtime. In addition, these arrangements will permit the occasional intervention at premises that open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours.

Revisits will be carried out to check compliance with all statutory notices also where contraventions have been identified that may lead to risks to health and safety. Revisits other than for statutory notices will be made at officer's discretion.

The intervention programme for 2025/26 is expected to generate 5 revisits. As safety standards may have fallen during the COVID-19 Pandemic and/or cost of living crisis, this figure could however be significantly higher. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place to facilitate this.

The performance against targets for all health and safety interventions is reported annually to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in the Health and Safety Service Plan.

3.2.3 Unrated Premises

We endeavour to maintain an accurate database of health and safety premises in the Borough (so far as is possible given that there is no longer a requirement for premises to notify their presence to LAs) and record information to enable the completion of statutory returns to the HSE's Local Authority Unit. Currently there is no national guidance on how to address unrated premises, with the exception that premises must not receive an inspection without a reason.

We aim to identify businesses that fit in with national, regional and local priorities (e.g. by business directories, information from business rates and other intelligence) so that we can focus our interventions on those that present the greatest risk.

3.2.4 Combined Food & Health and Safety Interventions

We currently provide a combined food safety and health and safety service and have done so for many years to maximize resource use. Our planned approach does not result in an increase of proactive health and safety inspections, which is in accordance with government mandate.

3.3 Reactive Interventions

3.3.1 Health and Safety Complaints and Service Requests

In order to target those businesses that are poor performers and not meeting the requirements under health and safety legislation we will place significant emphasis on reactive work such as dealing with complaints, accidents and incidents.

It is intended that every complaint / request for service be responded to within 2 working days. The initial response is determined after assessment of the information received and is based on the risk arising from the conditions that are the subject of the complaint.

Complaints are investigated in accordance with established procedures. The potential actions that are available vary from the provision of advice, often after liaison with the business, to full prosecution procedures in line with the Council's Public Protection Enforcement Policy. Officers also have regard to the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) when making enforcement decisions.

This reactive work is variable and unpredictable in nature and volume and includes complaints about poor working conditions, safety concerns and smoke free complaints. Based on the previous two years data it is estimated that 30 complaints / service requests will result in a visit being carried out.

3.3.2 Dealing with Matters of Evident Concern

The Code acknowledges that there will be other reasons that local authorities undertake site visits to businesses, for example food hygiene or licensing, and there will be circumstances when officers may become aware of a significant health and safety issue. Local authorities are directed to deal with such matters at the time of the initial visit wherever possible and factor it into their assessment of how the company is managing its risks, rating the premises accordingly.

Information relating to action taken in dealing with matters of evident concern has not previously been recorded as it forms part of the officer's role, but it is estimated as likely to require reactive health and safety interventions during approximately 30% of food safety inspections.

3.3.3 Accident/Disease/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

Some accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences must be reported under the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). To co-ordinate the reporting of these incidents nationally there is an online RIDDOR reporting system. Fatal and specified injuries can also be reported by telephone.

Once a notification is received, it is accessed from a secure website. This work involves administrative resource to filter, download, direct and redirect incidents. Once accepted a decision by a senior officer is made as to whether

6.2 APPENDIX 1

the matter requires further investigation using selection criteria. The investigation selection criteria are based on national guidance.

In some cases, incidents can have a considerable impact on planned work as there is a need to react immediately. For example, accidents involving a fatality, major and/or multiple injury and those likely to affect the public will require immediate response, including out of hours if necessary.

The following data from the last ten years gives some indication of the likely workload:

Year	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
No. of reported accidents	47	72	50	58	46	29	14	27	32	31	26
No. requiring investigation	9	15	6	2	1	4	0	4	0	5	2

NB. Investigations may take several months to complete and can span financial years.

3.3.4 Supporting Businesses & Others

In support of local economic development and growth, the Council considers that providing advice and support to business, especially new business start-ups, to help them to comply with the requirements of legislation, is one of our core activities.

For health and safety issues the Council has a policy of offering comprehensive and usefully tailored advice to any business for which we are, or are likely to become, the enforcing authority. Feedback from businesses indicates that they value this type of contact.

Advice will be available during the course of routine visits and interventions, through information publications such as leaflets and booklets and in response to queries.

Advisory visits, which are undertaken, are distinct from regulatory visits and are, made at the convenience of the business without recourse to the section 20 regulatory powers of entry provided by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Our focus may be broader than specific health and safety outcomes as advice and support given can influence wider public health outcomes/health inequalities. In 2023/24, we worked with 41 new businesses.

3.3.5 Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

We provide advice on event management through the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). This is a multi-agency non-statutory body, coordinated by the local authority, that provides advice and guidance to event organisers on public

safety at events, particularly those that are large, complex or carry a significant risk. The SAG ensures that events are planned and managed safely and legally. Event plans and risk assessments are reviewed and advice is provided to the event organiser(s) where concerns exist, including signposting to the Council and/or HSE website accordingly.

3.3.6 Public Health Promotional/Campaign Work

During 2024-25, we did not carry out any public health promotional campaign work. We did however continue to do joint visits with the Council's licensing team/advisory visits to persons registering to undertake Acupuncture, Ear Piercing, Electrolysis & Tattooing.

3.3.7 Sampling

Water Sampling

During 2024/25 water sampling was undertaken from swimming pools and spa pools to monitor water quality. Sampling was also undertaken at the port and marina, including from 1 vessel visiting Hartlepool. These samples were taken upon request and were in relation to microbiological examination for the presence of *Legionella* and to assess water quality.

In addition, 11 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates were issued. In 2025-26, samples may again be taken from premises or vessels in response to health and safety concerns or as part of the Port Health function.

During 2024/25 we participated in a national study looking at the following:

Hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing.

Nine premises were visited to carry out a survey that looked at hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing. A total of 22 swabs were taken, Along with eight samples of green soap. Green soap is used to clean client's skin before treatments. All but one of the 22 swabs were deemed to be satisfactory. Two out of the eight samples of the green soap were deemed to be unsatisfactory, due to high levels of *Pseudomonas* bacteria. As part of the survey advice was provided to businesses.

During 2025/26 we will participate in relevant sampling surveys.

3.4 Complaints against our Staff

The Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel was set up to enable a business to challenge specific health and safety regulatory advice provided by HSE or Local Authority Inspectors, that they believe to be unreasonable or disproportionate. Before raising an issue with the panel, businesses are expected to have first tried to resolve the matter with the relevant inspector and their manager.

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are contained in the inspection report left at the time of an inspection.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

3.5 Liaison Arrangements

The Council actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group;
- Tees Valley Public Protection Heads of Service Group;
- North East Public Protection Partnership;
- North of England Regulatory Liaison Group.

The Authority receives and takes cognisance of guidance from a number of bodies but principally the Health and Safety Executive, Local Authority Unit the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

The service acts as a Statutory Consultee for applications relating to Premises Licences made under the Licensing Act 2003 and are consultees for commercial planning applications.

3.6 Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) / Primary Authority Scheme

It is the Council's policy to comply with HSE's mandatory guidance in respect of the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) and Primary Authority Scheme. In particular, the Council will contact the Lead/Primary Authority and liaise over:

- local intelligence (adverse defect or insurance reports etc.);
- issues arising in connection with inspection plans;
- any proposed formal enforcement action;
- service of Prohibition Notices;
- shortcomings in the companies policies that have wide implications; and
- death, major injury, work related ill health or dangerous occurrences reportable under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

This will help determine a proportionate and consistent response and ensure that any national implications can be considered.

In Hartlepool, there are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place; however, we continue to work closely with local businesses on an

informal basis. The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2025-26 is:

	£ 000
Employees	740
Other Expenditure	55
Public Health Grant	(306)
Other Grant Funding	(35)
Income	(11)
Net Budget	443

This budget is for other services provided by this section including Food, Animal Health, Trading Standards and Licensing resources are allocated in accordance with service demands. The figures do not include the budget for administrative / support services which are now incorporated into the overall budget.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the Authority is required to set out their commitment, priorities and planned interventions; and put in place the capacity, management infrastructure, performance and information systems to deliver an effective service and comply with their statutory duties; operate systems to train, appoint, authorise, monitor and maintain a competent inspectorate.

The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the health and safety service.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for ensuring the strategic delivery of the Council's Public Protection service, including delivery of the health and safety service, in accordance with the service plan.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the service in 2025/26 are as follows:

1 x 0.20 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) (with responsibility also for Food, Port Health, Feed Hygiene and Animal Health)

4 x 0.20 FTE EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience)*

1 x 0.10 FTE Part-time EHO

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

These are considered to be the minimum resources required to deliver the commitments set out in this Plan and to comply with the S18 Standard. The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for strategic service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, in addition to other services and general management responsibilities as a member of the Development, Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services Management Team.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) has responsibility for the operational service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, Food, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health and Welfare.

The EHOs are responsible for carrying out the health and safety premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the health and safety service and will undertake complex investigations. In addition, these officers undertake food and other enforcement work.

The Public Protection Support Services team provides administrative support.

All staff engaged in health and safety law enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

4.3 Staff Development

The Council is committed to the training and personal development of its employees. During the annual appraisal process the formal identification of the training needs of staff members is linked with the development needs of the service. Competence standards in respect of regulatory skills, knowledge and development needs are assessed.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the health and safety service to maintain their professional competency. This is achieved in a variety of ways including through attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences, by vocational visits, directed reading and E learning.

Detailed records are maintained relating to all training received by officers.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the health and safety service.

The service has a computerised performance management system, Authority Public Protection (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the health and safety service.

A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all health and safety activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the health and safety service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the health and safety service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking inspections, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

It is possible that the Health and Safety Executive will at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

6 REVIEW OF 2024-25 HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan, a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2024-25.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of 2025-26 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Corporate Plan will be incorporated into the service plan.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Member approval will be sought.

6.2 Performance Review 2024-2025

This section describes performance of the service in key areas.

6.2.1 Health & Safety Interventions

In total interventions were carried out at 104 premises. These were risk based and multiple priority topics were covered during some visits.

Below is a summary of the type of topics covered during the intervention visits:

- Asbestos Management
- Gas Safety in Commercial Kitchens
- Deliveries / Workplace Transport
- Cellar Safety
- Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Falls from Heights
- Violence at Work

In addition, officers made 1 revisit to monitor compliance with contraventions identified during planned interventions.

It appears that the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis is having an impact on standards. Periods of closure and financial pressures has resulted in some businesses failing to carry out essential maintenance / repairs, consequently there has been an increase in the number of contraventions found. We anticipate that this trend of reduction in standards is likely to continue until the economic climate improves.

During 2024/25, the Authority undertook 220 enforcement visits to assess compliance with smoke free legislation that came into force on 1st July 2007, a proportion of which were carried out in conjunction with health and safety inspections.

6.2.2 Promotional/Campaign Work

Routine promotional/campaign work did not take place in 2024-25.

6.2.3 Special Project – Funeral Directors

In April 2024 all local authorities received a request from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services at the Ministry of Justice and the Minister for Local Government and Levelling Up, that we carry out visits to all local funeral homes. This unexpected and unusual request followed the criminal investigation into Legacy Funeral Directors in Hull, and other similar cases.

This project was to “reassure the public that local funeral directors are safe, professional and care for loved ones as we would want”. We were asked to do a basic check that funeral directors comply with health and safety legislation regarding buildings, vehicles and equipment.

The greater part of the project was about ensuring the dignity and condition of persons in the funeral directors care, traceability through the funeral procedure and transparency for families.

We were also asked to gather information on funeral plans and to report our findings to the Financial Conduct Authority.

Where appropriate, advice was to be provided to funeral directors and if we suspected or uncovered criminal activity, we would liaise with Cleveland Police.

Although health and safety law applies to funeral directors, there is no sector specific legislation. In 2020 the Competition and Markets Authority recommended that independent regulation was needed, which HM Government has agreed to.

Hartlepool Borough Council officers completed visits to all 7 Funeral Directors within the Borough. Whilst no serious issues were identified our findings were reported to the two government departments for their consideration.

6.2.4 Health and Safety Complaints & Requests for Service

During the year, the service carried out 35 visits in response to 38 complaints / service requests relating to health and safety conditions and working practice. The initial response to these requests have been undertaken all within our target of 2 working days.

Officers responded to all statutory consultations relating to applications made under the Licensing Act 2003.

Comments were also made to the SAG in relation to event management. Where necessary advice was provided to event organisers.

6.2.5 Complaints against our Staff

No complaints were made against our staff during 2024-25.

6.2.6 Accidents/Diseases/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

The service received 26 accident notifications during the year. After applying selection criteria based on national guidance, 2 of these notifications were selected for further investigation.

6.2.7 Formal Enforcement Action

With regards enforcement action under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation no legal proceedings were undertaken during 2024/25. Two prohibition notices for lifting equipment at a garage.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2025-26

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the intervention programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable.

Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement that are to be progressed during 2025-26.

1. The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2025-26, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of health and safety risks. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes.
2. We will keep abreast of, and respond to, any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. We will review and update our Quality Management System/Standard Operating Procedures for Health & Safety as appropriate.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15TH SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2025/26

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key Decision

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where people will be safe and protected from harm.
- that has an inclusive and growing economy.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2025/26.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Trading Standards operates within the Public Protection section and has a wide range of enforcement responsibilities including product safety, underage sales, weights and measures, and counterfeiting. It also plays a significant role in, amongst other things, the detection and prevention of doorstep crime, illicit tobacco, cowboy roofers and builders, and other scams.

3.2 Trading Standards publish an annual Service Plan detailing the previous performance of the Service, the main challenges facing it and a plan of work to be undertaken in the forthcoming year.

3.3 The Service Plan details the Trading Standards priorities for 2025/26 and highlights how these priorities will be addressed.

3.4 The Service Plan for 2025/26 is attached as **Appendix 1**.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The Service Plan for 2025/26 has been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in Service demand.
- 4.2 The Plan covers the following:
- (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The scope and demands on the Trading Standards Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development; and
 - (v) A review of performance for 2024/25.

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN THE PLAN

- 5.1 Prioritising Service Delivery – Resources are allocated in accordance with identified priorities. In 2025/26 these will be:
- 5.2 High Priority
- 5.2.1 *Rogue Traders* – Doorstep crime, cowboy builders and other types of scams can cost local residents hundreds, or even thousands, of pounds. Trading Standards work closely with a number of agencies to help protect the vulnerable from this type of crime.
- 5.2.2 *Scams and Cons* – Unscrupulous traders routinely prey on the vulnerable and elderly by taking advantage of their goodwill. Most people regularly receive unsolicited letters telephone calls or e-mails offering services that are 'too good to be true'. Sadly, on some occasions, consumers are drawn into these scams and pay for goods or services that either never arrive, or are not what was initially described. In many cases, making one purchase opens up the consumer to many other scams and therefore problems can escalate even more. Trading Standards aim to identify common scams and notify consumers through press releases and other mass media.
- 5.2.3 *Product Safety* – Consumers are entitled to assume that all products they purchase will be safe. Trading Standards is responsible for the monitoring, sampling and testing of consumer products to ensure they do not pose a risk.

5.3 Medium Priority

- 5.3.1 Those subject areas identified as 'medium priority' are still cause for significant concern, but are considered to offer a lesser degree of harm (to health and/or wealth) for the general public than those other issues identified as 'high priority'.
- 5.3.2 *Tackling Underage Sales* – The illegal sale of alcohol and other age-restricted products to children not only contributes significantly towards anti-social behaviour in Hartlepool, but can also represent a serious risk to the health and well-being of the children involved.
- 5.3.3 Underage sales has moved from being a high priority to a medium priority following a reduction in complaints from the general public and a significant investment of time and resources over recent years to educate retailers about their obligations and the consequences of non-compliance.
- 5.3.4 *Counterfeiting and illicit tobacco* – The illegal copying and distribution of intellectual property such as computer software, designer clothing and jewellery continues to be a significant issue in Hartlepool. Counterfeiting is bad for business – it takes money away from local retailers who sell genuine products and puts it into the hands of local and national criminals – with little or no local benefit for the Borough. Counterfeiting is often carried out by large organised crime units who are also engaged in other types of criminal activity such as drugs and smuggling.
- 5.3.5 Trading Standards works closely with HMRC, the Police and trade mark holders to identify and prosecute those who sell counterfeit products.
- 5.3.6 *Animal Welfare* – The Trading Standards Team is responsible for carrying out animal welfare checks at farms and other similar establishments. This work is important both for the welfare of the animals, and also for public health, as many of the animals are bred for human consumption.
- 5.3.7 In addition, there has been a significant local, regional and national increase in complaints about illegal puppy farms. Puppies can now cost more than £2,500 each and have become a focus for organised crime groups as well as others who simply see the profit to be made from breeding and selling as many litters as possible.
- 5.3.8 Dog breeding is a licensable activity, administered by the Council's Licensing Team, but as the element of criminality has increased, it is now appropriate for Trading Standards to take an investigative role to identify those illegally profiting from this trade.
- 5.3.9 As such, animal welfare is a priority area for the Trading Standards Team in 2025/26.

5.4 Low Priority

5.4.1 *False Descriptions* – Most consumer purchases are made on the basis of the description they are given by either the manufacturer or retailer. In some cases descriptions are deliberately or negligently misleading – causing consumers to make purchase decisions that they may not have made otherwise. Once money has been handed over it can, on occasion, be very difficult to get back other than to go through the court system. Trading Standards investigates complaints about traders who falsely describe goods and look for the accuracy of descriptions during routine interventions.

5.4.2 *Weights and Measures* – Many products are still sold by either weight or by length and consumers expect that they will receive the quantity stated. For some products, such as petrol, the value of goods is so high that even a small error in the accuracy of a measuring machine may lead to significant consumer loss.

5.4.3 Trading Standards officers are 'Weights and Measures Inspectors' and routinely carry out checks on weighing and measuring equipment with the support of officers from Durham County Council.

5.4.4 *Misleading Pricing* – Most products are now sold with no price marking on them – bar codes having replaced price stickers. This has made it extremely difficult to check whether the price stated on a shelf is actually the price charged at the checkout. For some purchases, there may be 'hidden extras' that can significantly inflate the final price of goods or services.

5.5 Responding to Change

5.5.1 As the retail environment continues to change, Trading Standards is required to remain vigilant and respond to new threats and challenges. The continued growth of internet sales means that Trading Standards must now monitor the *virtual* High Street and ensure that consumers remain protected.

5.6 Social Media

5.6.1 Whereas counterfeit goods were once only found at car boot sales or from the 'back of a lorry', social media has now become a significant source of illegal goods.

5.6.2 Trading Standards in Hartlepool has its own social media profile whereby sites that are suspected of selling counterfeit goods receive a Trading Standards 'post' informing the account holder, and anyone visiting the site, that Trading Standards are monitoring the site.

5.6.3 While this approach usually has an immediate positive impact, some social media users have responded by changing the way in which their accounts operate and interact with potential purchasers. Trading Standards has, in turn, had to adapt its approach in order to continue its monitoring of this growing sales platform.

5.6.4 The Trading Standards Service has a 'standalone' computer that can be used to monitor social media and other websites without giving away their identity. Where problems are identified traders are contacted and, where appropriate, test purchases can be made to establish whether legal requirements are being complied with. In some cases, this is followed up by the seizure of criminal property and other evidence.

5.7 Protecting the Vulnerable

5.7.1 Trading Standards has continued to promote No Cold Call Zones as a means of reducing the number of traders that visit people on their doorsteps. Since 2016, the number of zones has increased from 7 to 56 and over 11,000 'Say No to Doorstep Traders' stickers have been issued, free of charge, to local residents.

5.7.2 The Service has been working closely with other Council departments and external organisations such as banks and post offices, to ensure that they are aware of the risks that rogue traders can pose to their clients and what can be done to help them.

5.7.3 A significant amount of work has also been undertaken in relation to mail order and telephone scams with free 'call blockers' being supplied to those considered most vulnerable.

5.7.4 As victims can sometimes become repeat targets, Trading Standards Officers can install covert CCTV cameras into victim's homes in order to provide some reassurance and help identify any rogue traders who return.

5.8 Public Health

5.8.1 The Trading Standards Team undertakes a range of activities designed to protect public health.

5.8.2 The sale and supply of counterfeit or smuggled tobacco continues to be a significant issue in Hartlepool and the North East as a whole.

5.8.3 During 2024/25 Officers have continued to enforce a wide range of legislation around the sale of counterfeit or otherwise illicit tobacco. Officers seized 7860 illegal cigarettes and 7.9kg of illegal tobacco from the market with a combined street value of approximately £2,913.

5.8.4 The Trading Standards team will continue to focus on premises suspected of selling counterfeit and illicit tobacco premises and take formal action where needed.

5.8.5 The team also monitors the sale of alternative tobacco products. There are strict rules governing the composition and marketing of 'nicotine delivery devices' such as e-liquids and vapes (which are age restricted products) and the team has been working with local retailers, and several manufacturers to ensure legal compliance.

5.8.6 During 2024/25 officers removed 589 illegal vapes with a street value of £5890 from the market.

5.8.7 Following the introduction of The Environmental Protection (Single-Use Vapes) (England) Regulations 2024 which came into force on the 1st June 2025 the team are working to enforce the strict rules governing the composition and marketing of ‘nicotine delivery devices’ such as e-liquids and vapes (which are age restricted products) by working with local retailers, and several manufacturers to ensure legal compliance with the new requirements.

5.9 Enforcement Action

5.9.1 On some occasions, formal legal action is taken against traders. During 2024/25 the following formal legal action was taken:

- One prosecution under The Fraud Act 2006 and The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.
- Five Closure Orders imposed by virtue of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- One Closure Extension Order imposed by virtue of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	No relevant issues
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	No relevant issues
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That Neighbourhood Services Committee approves the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2025/26.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Trading Standards Service Plan sets out the priorities for, and methods of, service delivery in 2025/26.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 There are no background papers for this report.

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 21/08/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 19/08/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 19/08/2025



Hartlepool Borough Council

Trading Standards Service Plan

2025/26

TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2025/26

INTRODUCTION

1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Overall Vision
- 1.2 Service Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Profile of the Local Authority
- 2.2 Organisational Structure
- 2.3 Scope of the Trading Standards Service
- 2.4 Demands on the Trading Standards Service
- 2.5 Intelligence Operating Model
- 2.6 Enforcement Policy

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

- 3.1 Proactive Work
- 3.2 Trading Standards Interventions
- 3.3 Advice & Guidance
- 3.4 Acting as Statutory Consultee
- 3.5 Local programmes/initiatives
- 3.6 E-Crime
- 3.7 Sampling
- 3.8 Test Purchasing
- 3.9 Reactive Work
- 3.10 Complaints and Requests for Service
- 3.11 Liaison Arrangements
- 3.12 Regional Enforcement
- 3.13 Primary Authority Scheme
- 3.14 Financial Fraud Advocates

4. RESOURCES

- 4.1 Financial
- 4.2 Staffing Allocation
- 4.3 Staff Development
- 4.4 Equipment and Facilities
- 4.5 Working with Others

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

6. PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2024/25

- 6.1 Overview
- 6.2 Public Health
- 6.3 Underage Sales
- 6.4 E-Crime
- 6.5 Sampling

- 6.6 Promotional / Campaign Work and Publicity
- 6.7 Doorstep Crime
- 6.8 Serious Violence and Knife Crime
- 6.9 Formal Enforcement Action
- 6.10 Responding to Complaints
- 6.11 Complaints against our Staff

7. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT / KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2025/26

INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how the Trading Standards Service will be delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council.

Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2025/26, longer-term objectives are identified where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2024/25 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and previous plans have been approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

1 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Overall Vision

The Council's overall vision is that Hartlepool will be a place...

- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives;
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm;
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all;
- With a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community;
- That has an inclusive and growing economy; and
- That is sustainable, clean, safe and green.

1.2 Service Aims and Objectives

Hartlepool Borough Council aims:

- To carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- To supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- To encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- To actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and

- To ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions and examples of best practice as disseminated by Local Government Regulation, Chartered Trading Standards Institute and Central Government.

1.3 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool's Community Strategy - the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Hartlepool's Council Plan 2030
- Trading Standards Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Trading Standards Service's contribution to corporate objectives.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 92,338 of which ethnic minorities comprise 3.5% (2021 census).

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid 19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these

industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Over the past 20 years Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and repeated the well-received successful event in 2023.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Policy Committee
- Adult & Community Based Services Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhood Services Committee
- Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee

The Neighbourhood Services Committee provides political oversight for Trading Standards law enforcement.

The Council is made up of four Departments:

- Children's & Joint Commissioning Services
- Adults & Community Based Services
- Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR

The Trading Standards Service Plan is delivered through the Public Protection Section contained within the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services division, which is contained within the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

2.3 Scope of the Trading Standards Service

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Investigating complaints relating to consumer protection issues;
- Carrying out programmed test purchase exercises to monitor trader compliance with relevant legislation – including underage sales;
- Taking samples of consumer products for testing and analysis
- Carrying out programmed interventions;
- Providing advice and information to both consumers and traders;
- Taking action (formal and informal) to ensure compliance with legislation;
- Acting as a statutory consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003;

- Ensuring appropriate standards of animal welfare at farms and other relevant premises; and
- Enforcing smoke free legislation in public places;

To achieve its strategic aims and objectives it is necessary to work in partnership with other organisations and agencies such as local authorities, Cleveland Police, Her Majesties Revenues & Customs (HMRC) and local businesses. The Council aims to ensure that these joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the Service contribute, and are committed to, the ongoing development of these arrangements.

2.4 Demands on the Trading Standards Service

The Trading Standards Service is the principal enforcing authority for approximately 500 statutory instruments relating to consumer protection.

With limited resources it is necessary to prioritise proactive work. Prioritisation takes account of a range of factors including public concerns, business concerns, degree of risk to the public, complaint trends, government concerns at a national level (as expressed through the National Trading Standards Board) and local councillors concerns – each of which helps establish which enforcement areas should take priority over others.

The current priority areas for the Trading Standards Service are: -

High Priority

Rogue Traders – Doorstep crime and cowboy builders can cost local residents hundreds or even thousands of pounds. Trading Standards work closely with a number of agencies to help protect the vulnerable from this type of crime.

Scams and Cons – Unscrupulous traders routinely prey on the vulnerable and elderly by taking advantage of their goodwill. Most people regularly receive unsolicited letters, telephone calls, text messages or e-mails offering services that are ‘too good to be true’. Sadly, on some occasions, consumers are drawn into these scams and pay for goods or services that either never arrive or are not what was initially described. In many cases, making one purchase opens up the consumer to many other scams and problems can escalate. Trading Standards aims to identify common scams and notify consumers through press releases and other mass media.

Where a company can be identified, formal action would be commenced against them.

Product Safety – Consumers are entitled to assume that all products they purchase will be safe. Trading Standards is responsible for the monitoring, sampling and testing of consumer products to ensure they do not pose a risk.

Medium Priority

Tackling Underage Sales - The illegal sale of alcohol and other age-restricted products to children not only contributes significantly towards anti-social behaviour in Hartlepool but can also represent a serious risk to the health and well-being of the children involved.

Trading Standards and licensing officers work closely with Cleveland Police and other agencies to target premises that are thought to sell to children and uses underage volunteers to identify where offences are being committed.

Counterfeiting and illicit tobacco – The supply of counterfeit tobacco products and designer clothing continue to be a significant issue in Hartlepool. Counterfeiting is bad for business – it takes money away from local retailers who sell genuine products and puts it into the hands of local and national criminals with little or no local benefit for the town. Counterfeiting is often carried out by large organised crime units who are also engaged in other types of criminal activity such as drugs and smuggling.

Trading Standards works closely with HMRC, the Police and trade mark holders to identify and prosecute those who sell counterfeit products. Significant intelligence is received in relation to counterfeit tobacco products.

Animal Welfare – Trading Standards Officers are responsible for carrying out inspections of farm premises to ensure that animals that may end up in the food chain are looked after correctly. There has also been a significant increase in the illegal sale of puppies as a result of the very high prices that are now being charged (commonly £2000 per puppy for many breeds).

Low Priority

Weights and Measures – Many products are still sold by either weight or by length and consumers expect that they will receive the quantity stated. For some products, such as petrol, the value of goods is so high that even a small error in the accuracy of a measuring machine may lead to significant consumer loss.

Trading Standards officers are 'Weights and Measures Inspectors' and routinely carry out checks on weighing and measuring equipment.

Due to the specialist nature of weights and measures compliance, an arrangement has been entered into with Durham County Council for them to undertake inspections at factory sites and other premises in Hartlepool where specialist testing equipment is required.

Misleading Pricing – Most products are now sold with no price marking on them bar codes having replaced price stickers. This has made it extremely difficult to check whether the price stated on a shelf is actually the price charged at the checkout. For some purchases, there may be 'hidden extras' that can significantly inflate the final price of goods or services.

Trading Standards staff routinely check the accuracy of price indications in shops and respond to complaints about misleading price indications.

False Descriptions – Most consumer purchases are made on the basis of the description they are given by either the manufacturer or retailer. In some cases descriptions are deliberately or negligently misleading – causing consumers to make purchase decisions that they may not have made otherwise. Once money has been handed over it can, on occasion, be very difficult to get back other than to go through the court system. Trading Standards investigates complaints about traders who falsely describe goods and look for the accuracy of descriptions during routine interventions.

2.5 Intelligence Operating Model

In addition to the identification of local priorities, the Trading Standards Service also contributes towards the development of regional and national priorities through Regional and National Tasking Groups.

The purpose of these groups is to identify those specific areas of concern that have a cross border impact and which, if tackled on a regional or national level, can benefit consumers everywhere.

The Intelligence Operating Model introduces a national intelligence framework to support regional and national enforcement through the collection and utilisation of information and data to inform work planning processes. Hartlepool Trading Standards will continue to both contribute and benefit from this Model.

2.6 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, there is a Public Protection Enforcement Policy that deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service.

The Trading Standards Service will take account of the 2014 Regulator's Code when carrying out its interactions with the business community.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Proactive Work

3.2 Trading Standards Interventions

As pressure on the Service has continued to grow in areas such as doorstep crime, the ability to maintain a high level of routine inspections has been seriously challenged. As such, proactive inspections will be targeted where consumer risk is considered to be high because of intelligence received; a high numbers of complaints etc; or where new businesses have been established that may well not be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities.

On-line retailing continues to flourish and therefore it is necessary to monitor internet retailers to ensure consumers are receiving a fair deal and that products are safe.

Opening a line of communication with new businesses early will ensure that they can set up their operations as efficiently and effectively as possible without having to 'catch up' with their legal compliance at a later date.

Information on premises liable to Trading Standards interventions is held on the APP computer system. An intervention programme is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality programmed interventions by the Service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

Revisits will be carried out to check compliance where contraventions have been identified.

3.3 Advice and Guidance

The Trading Standards Service works closely with the national Consumer Advice helpline which is now being operated by the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to provide a comprehensive advice and guidance service. Consumers in need of advice regarding the civil law will be serviced by Citizen's Advice but where issues are raised that may have a broader local impact, or there may be a criminal element to the complaint, the local Trading Standards Service will be alerted and, if appropriate, an investigation commenced.

In most cases the Trading Standards Service will look to work in partnership with local businesses to ensure they are fully aware of their legal obligations and how best to achieve legal compliance. Such advice is offered free of charge and can be made available at a time to suit the trader.

Trading Standards staff also regularly provide advice sessions to local community groups on issues such as doorstep crime, rogue traders and 'the work of Trading Standards'.

Recent surveys carried out by the Government have indicated that businesses and retailers value visits by Trading Standards staff as being an important source of up to date advice and information.

The Council considers that assistance to business, in order to help them to comply with the requirements of legislation, is one of our core activities. For Trading Standards issues the Council has a policy of offering comprehensive advice to any business for which it is, or is likely to become, the enforcing authority.

Advice will be available during the course of routine visits and interventions, through information leaflets and booklets, in response to queries and through the Council's website.

3.4 Acting as Statutory Consultee

Trading Standards is a statutory 'Responsible Authority' under the Licensing Act 2003. This means that every application for a licence to supply alcohol or offer other regulated entertainment must be submitted to the Trading Standards Service who will consider the application in terms of its likely impact on the Act's 'licensing objectives'. For Trading Standards this primarily means the protection of children from harm and officers use their expertise in detecting and preventing underage sales to work with prospective licensees and ensure operating procedures are put in place to prevent the sale of alcohol to children.

3.5 Local programmes/initiatives

Trading Standards will be conducting a range of projects and surveys during 2025/26 in order to improve consumer protection and to raise consumer confidence. These will include: -

Protecting the Most Vulnerable – Complaints continue about rogue roofers, cowboy builders and telephone/postal scams that have targeted the elderly and vulnerable and scammed them out of money for poor quality or, sometimes, non-existent work and non-existent prize money.

Trading Standards officers will continue to work to raise awareness amongst targeted groups and identify and prosecute the traders involved.

The Team continues to work with the Police and local banks to promote the national 'Banking Protocol'. The protocol involves training bank staff to recognise when their customers may be the victim of an ongoing scam and where appropriate they can dial 999 and the local Police force has committed to treat the incident as an emergency – sending officers/Trading Standards Officers direct to the bank to assist.

The Trading Standards Team will also continue to promote No Cold Call Zones and set them up where there is an identified demand. At the end of 2024/25 Hartlepool still had 56 NCCZ's (an increase from just 7 in 2016) and there is a target that five more will be created during 2025/26.

Officers will continue to offer awareness raising presentations to neighbourhood and community groups and will promote the 'No Cold Calling' stickers that are available free of charge.

The Trading Standards Team works closely with the National Scams Team which provides details of Hartlepool consumers who have been found on scammer's databases. Trading Standards Officers will continue to contact and offer support to victims identified this way.

3.6 E-Crime – Using the internet to buy goods and services is now commonplace and rogue traders have used this as an opportunity to sell counterfeit and dangerous goods to the unsuspecting public.

Trading Standards secured national funding to purchase specialist equipment that allows local officers to identify and target rogue e-traders operating in Hartlepool.

Officers will be conducting regular monitoring of internet sites that have a Hartlepool connection and, working with other agencies, specifically the Regional Investigations Team, test purchases will be made to generate evidence for formal legal action where such steps are considered appropriate.

Social media sites have become a popular forum for the sale of counterfeit goods and, in response, the Trading Standards Service has created a Facebook 'profile'. Suspected sellers of counterfeit goods receive a 'post' from Trading Standards advising that their activities are being monitored.

This acts as a deterrent for those sellers who had not considered the potential consequences of their activities. For those who ignore the warnings, Trading Standards is able to have sites 'taken down' by Facebook. For those who continue to trade using alternative pages, investigation and prosecution will follow.

Rogue Traders, who traditionally cold called unsuspecting home owners, are now using Social Media and approved trader platforms to reach a wider audience who are already considering building work on their property. Using these sites and professional appearing accounts creates an air of legitimacy for their business making it appear they are able to do any work and get more customers approaching them. Only after traders take large deposits and start the work do the problems arise. Work is ongoing to develop consumer advice to warn of the dangers and checks that should be undertaken by would be customers.

3.7 Sampling

In order to protect the public it is essential that potential problems, particularly safety related, can be identified before they cause damage or harm.

One way of achieving this is through the sampling of consumer products to ensure they comply with relevant safety standards or with the descriptions being applied to them.

Product Safety – Trading Standards will be purchasing a wide range of consumer products to test for compliance with appropriate safety standards. Products to be tested are usually identified as a consequence of national issues, products that have a history of problems or from safety complaints. Testing during 2025/26 will concentrate on product safety.

3.8 Test Purchasing

Trading Standards (or underage volunteers under the supervision of Trading Standards officers) will carry out test purchases at premises where there is reason to suspect that illegal activity may be taking place.

Test purchasing is used to test a trader's procedures and establishes whether a trader is engaging in a certain activity, the way in which they do it and provides the best possible evidence for potential formal action.

3.9 Reactive Work

3.10 Trading Standards Complaints and Service Requests

It is intended that every complaint/request for service is responded to within two working days.

The majority of consumer complaints are forwarded to the Trading Standards Service via the 'Citizen's Advice Consumer Service' (CACS) – a national consumer hotline funded by central government. CACS provide scripted advice that can resolve many of the simplest complaints but the more complex matters, or those requiring a potential criminal investigation, are referred on to the local Trading Standards department.

The initial response is determined after assessment of the information received, and is based on the risk arising from the conditions that are the subject of the complaint.

The potential actions that are available vary from the provision of advice, often after liaison with the business, to full prosecution procedures in line with the Public Protection Enforcement Policy.

3.11 Liaison Arrangements

The Council actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Public Protection Heads of Service Group
- North East Public Protection Partnership (NEPPP)
- North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA)
- Various multi-agency intelligence networks
- Multi Agency Approach to Fraud group

3.12 Regional Enforcement

Hartlepool's Trading Standards manager sits as an executive member of the North Eastern Trading Standards Association (NETSA) and contributes to the regional enforcement activity planned by it.

In addition there is a National Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) which is now directly funded by a levy on the Banking industry and a Regional Investigations Team (previously 'Scambusters'), funded via the National Trading Standards Board, that targets criminal activity at a regional and national level.

To assist with the work of these two teams NETSA also manages the work of a Regional Intelligence Analyst whose role is to gather and disseminate intelligence to NETSA members, the IMLT and the regional Investigations Team.

3.13 Primary Authority Scheme

It is the Council's policy to comply with the Local Better Regulation Office's Primary Authority Scheme.

In particular the Council will contact the Primary Authority and liaise over:

- any proposed formal enforcement action
- service of Notices
- shortcomings in the companies policies that have wider implications

In Hartlepool, there are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place with a Hartlepool based trader however the service works closely with some local businesses on an informal basis.

The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

3.14 Financial Fraud Advocate

Trading Standards Teams within the Cleveland Police Force area have agreed to fund a project in collaboration with the Cleveland PCC to fund Financial Fraud Advocates to assist victims of financial frauds in our Boroughs.

The Advocates act on behalf of the victim and approach banks to recuperate money under the Contingent Reimbursement Model which was implemented to reduce the financial impact of scams from authorised push payment frauds.

The Advocates have been funded using money recovered from criminals prosecuted by the team using the Proceeds of Crime Act.

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2025-26 is:

	£ 000
Employees	740
Other Expenditure	55
Public Health Grant	(306)
Other Grant Funding	(35)
Income	<u>(11)</u>
Net Budget	443

This budget is for all services provided by this section including Food, Health & Safety, Animal Health and Trading Standards with resources being allocated in accordance with service demands.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Trading Standards Service in accordance with the Service Plan.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for planning service delivery and management of the Trading Standards Service, Food, Licensing, Public Health, Private Sector Housing, Water Quality, Health & Safety, Animal Health and Welfare, Environmental Protection, Emergency Planning and Community Safety as well as general management responsibilities as a member of the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services department.

The Trading Standards & Licensing Manager has responsibility for the day to day supervision of the Trading Standards and Licensing Service and, having the requisite qualifications and experience, is designated as the authority's Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures.

Senior Trading Standards officers are responsible for carrying out the Trading Standards premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the Trading Standards service and will undertake complex investigations.

The Technical Officer (Trading Standards) officer post advertised and filled after the Graduate Trading Standards Officer gained their professional qualification and filled a vacant Senior Trading Standards Officer post. This officer will gain experience by assisting qualified officers with team tasks and eventually undertaking their own investigations.

Administrative support is provided by a dedicated Support Services team.

All staff engaged in Trading Standards law enforcement activity will be suitably trained and qualified and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the Trading Standards Service in 2024/25 are as follows:

1 x 0.2 FTE Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

1 x 0.5 FTE Trading Standards & Licensing Manager (with responsibility also for Licensing)

3 x Senior Trading Standards Officers

1 x Technical Officer (Trading Standards)

4.3 Staff Development

The Council is committed to the training and personal development of its employees and has in place Personal Development Plans for all members of staff.

The Staff Training Plan allows for the formal identification of the training needs of staff members in terms of personal development linked with the development needs of the service on an annual basis.

The Training Plan clearly prioritises training requirements of individual staff members will be developed and reviewed bi-annually.

Detailed records are maintained by the service relating to all training received by officers.

The new Technical Officer (Trading Standards) has completed the Regulatory Compliance Officer Level 4 qualification and will be undertaking training and gaining experience with the qualified officers on the breadth of Trading Standards' remit.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the Trading Standards Service.

The service has a computerised performance management system, Authority Public Protection (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the Trading Standards Service. A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all

Trading Standards activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

The team have regard to the National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model using IDB to input and share intelligence with colleagues around the country and with other agencies.

4.5 Working with Others

Durham County Council undertakes the majority of Hartlepool's weights and measures inspections and maintains the specialist equipment necessary to meet statutory metrology requirements.

The Team agreed to participate Operation Zernius which is a national Trading Standards project aimed at identifying and addressing non-compliances in the Estate and Letting Agents Sector. The project included both an inspection of the physical premises and any social media / website publications to ensure compliance with legislation including the Consumer Rights Act and Tenants fees legislation to ensure consumers are fully informed of charges or fees and helping to provide a level playing field for agents. This Operation was established in 2023/24 with the inspections and partnership working continuing into 2025/26.

In 2024/2025 inspections took place to determine the level of compliance of Letting and Estate Agents both onsite and on their websites. Matters inspected included Client Money Protection scheme membership, member of redress scheme, displaying tenant fees as required by Consumer Rights Act 2015 and putting deposits into an approved scheme. Three local agents were inspected with one found to be non-compliant. Advice to bring that business into compliance was issued.

The team regularly work with a variety of operation partners such as the Police, HMRC and Immigration as and when the need arises. In 2024/25 Hartlepool took part in a multi agency operation with the NE Regional Organised Crime Unit and Immigration to conduct intelligence led visits to barber shops in the town. One visit led to the seizure of counterfeit and illicit cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the Trading Standards Service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the Trading Standards Service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

Specifically the Trading Standards & Licensing Manager will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking interventions, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the intervention as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

6 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1 Overview - It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan a review has been conducted of performance against those targets.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of the year 2025/26 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Corporate Plan will be incorporated into the service plan.

6.2 Public Health

The Trading Standards Team undertakes a range of activities designed to protect public health.

The sale and supply of counterfeit or smuggled tobacco continues to be a significant issue in Hartlepool and the North East as a whole.

During 2024/25 Officers have continued to enforce a wide range of legislation around the sale of counterfeit or otherwise illicit tobacco. Officers seized 7860 illegal cigarettes and 7.9kg of illegal tobacco from the market with a combined street value of approximately £2,913.

The Trading Standards team will continue to focus on premises suspected of selling counterfeit and illicit tobacco premises and take formal action where needed.

During 2024/25 officers removed 589 illegal vapes with a street value of £5890 from the market.

The Trading Standards Team will continue to utilise the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to obtain prompt closure orders for problem premises

The Team also carries out checks on the safety of products made available for sale to the general public. These may be visual checks of the product and its labelling or the purchase of the product for testing at an accredited laboratory.

Trading Standards have been commissioned by Public Health to inspect medical weighing equipment used within the community, during 2024/25 the team tested 62 pieces of equipment. Of the 62, 44 were baby weighers. There was an 8% failure rate in this round of testing.

Targeted complaint led product sampling and testing will continue to take place throughout 2024/25.

6.3 Underage Sales

During 2024/25 in intelligence led underage sales operation took place. The focus of this operations was retail premises selling cigarettes, alcohol and vape products. Two sales were made which were followed up with enforcement activity and licence reviews were applicable.

Underage sales test purchasing will continue in 2025/26.

6.4 E-Crime

Officers continued to monitor websites during 2024/25 and social media, such as Facebook, continues to be a significant source of counterfeit goods.

Counterfeit sellers can either sell directly from their own site or advertise their goods through a 'Selling Page' operated by a third party.

The Trading Standards Team continues to have a Facebook presence which allows it to interact with other Facebook users and this is used to identify where social media sites are being used to sell counterfeit, or otherwise illegal, goods. Due to the ever evolving world of social media, sites such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Whatsapp are now being used more than Facebook. This has created challenges for the team which are still being worked on.

As discussed in 3.6, many rogue traders are now using approved trader platforms and Social Media to promote their business. This allows them to have an online presence with polished profiles to gain access to a wider audience with less effort. Being on sites such as Check-a-Trade, gives them an air of legitimacy meaning unsuspecting consumers are more likely to employ them. This is also increasing the demographic range of their potential victims to include younger homeowners looking to have extensive home improvement works completed. Traders have been known to take large deposits and never

return or start work and request more money before walking off jobs leaving the consumer with a half finished project and no funds left to complete the project.

In addition to social media, the internet continues to be used for the sale of general goods which creates difficulties when faulty goods are delivered or goods fail to arrive. Complaining to 'virtual' traders, who are often not based in the UK, is often not as easy as returning to a shop. Where difficulties arise, consumers are generally referred to the Citizen's Advice Consumer Service for advice and guidance.

On those occasions where criminal offences may have been committed by internet sellers, Trading Standards Officers must undertake investigations that can be far more complicated than when dealing with traditional, fixed site retailers. Internet sellers can be based anywhere in the world and even obtaining the genuine name and address of a trader can be a challenge.

National and regional relationships have been, and continue to be, established with larger internet retailers and service providers to allow for the effective investigation and resolution of criminal and civil matters.

6.5 Sampling

No complaint led sampling was carried out by the team in 2024/25.

In 2024/2025 the Trading Standards Team took part in a regional project - Retail Monitoring of Packaged Goods 2024/25. Due to the cost-of-living crisis' continuing impact upon the country couple with food prices still being high following relatively sharp rises over the latest two years it is vital that consumers receive the quantity of product they have paid for.

As consumers will be unaware of short weight food purchases Trading Standards Teams adopt a proactive approach to short measure products. Visits to three Hartlepool Supermarkets were conducted with batches of food products subjected to reference tests to determine if average and minimum quantity laws as set out in the Packaged Goods Regulations 2006 were being complied with.

In total 36 product lines were selected and batches of products assessed and weighed. Of those 36 batches of food products 7 failed to comply with Packaged Goods regulations due to insufficient quantities.

Non-compliances were raised with the premises themselves but also with the companies head office and the Primary Authority Trading Standards departments. Further non-compliances may be dealt with by way of formal action including prosecution.

6.6 Promotional/Campaign Work and Publicity

Four presentations were given to community groups in 2024/25. Presentations are free of charge and are an integral part of promoting the work we do in trying

to give members of the public information to help protect themselves. We welcome further promotional opportunities throughout 2025/26.

Press releases are generally published following legal action including but not limited to Prosecutions and Closure Orders.

6.7 Doorstep Crime/Scams

The Team continues to focus resources on preventing the vulnerable from becoming victims of unscrupulous traders and identifying and prosecuting those found to be responsible.

'No Cold Calling' stickers continue to be made available that can be placed in a front door or window advising prospective callers that they are not welcome. The sticker also provides the homeowner with a valuable 'aide memoire' on what to do if a cold caller ignores the sticker. Over 13,000 have been issued to Hartlepool residents since the initiative began in 2015.

As detailed in paragraph 3.5 above, 56 No Cold Call Zones (NCCZ's) have been created. The team continue to promote them with a view to establishing a further five in 2025/26.

The Trading Standards Service also works closely with the National Scams Team which routinely sends details of Hartlepool consumers who have been found to be on scammer's databases.

Officers contact, and subsequently visit, these victims to provide help and support. Where appropriate, other agencies, such as Adult Safeguarding Teams, are brought in to provide ongoing professional support.

6.8 Serious Violence and Knife Crime

Knife crime continues to be an issue of serious concern and whilst Hartlepool has not been as seriously affected as some other areas of the country, the sale of illegal knives and the sale of knives to children are issues that must not be ignored or overlooked.

The Trading Standards team will be monitoring the retail market for illegal knives (such as 'zombie knives') and will take action if anything is discovered.

The Trading Standards team will continue to support National Campaigns such as Operation Sceptre, Operation Sceptre, is a national campaign which takes place twice a year, supporting the work Cleveland Police carry out all year round to ensure residents are safe from knife crime in the community.

6.9 Formal Enforcement Action

In line with our enforcement policy on some occasions it is necessary to prosecute for serious or repeat offences.

In May 2024, Darren Graham, who was operating as a self employed landscape gardener in Hartlepool, pleaded guilty to offences to Fraud Act 2006 and Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 offences following an investigation by the department. Graham took over £3,820 from two elderly neighbours for landscaping work and after an initial start, never returned to complete it. Graham received a 26-week prison sentence suspended for 12 months and was ordered to complete 200 hours unpaid work. He was also told he must pay a total of £4,420 in compensation to the victims and pay £600 investigation costs.

Hartlepool has been subject to a range of premises that are intent on supplying illicit tobacco products. In 2024/2025 greater emphasis was placed on Closure Orders made possible by virtue of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These orders can be applied for at the Magistrates Court and if granted force that problem premises to close for a period of time (typically 3 months) the following premises have been subject to Closure Orders:

- 29 Murray Street
- 45 Murray Street
- 29 Murray Street (Extension)
- 40 Murray Street
- 45 Murray Street
- 15 Murray Street

6.10 Responding to Complaints

115 complaints were received in 2024/25 which is an increase of four on the previous year. Trading Standards enforcement landscape has dramatically changed in recent years, the team focus their resources on lengthy complex criminal investigations. Previously all consumer enquiries including civil matters would have been recorded on our complaints database, due to service pressures these complaints are now retained on the Citizens Advice Portal and thus the figures are not produced within our service plan.

6.11 Complaints against Our Staff

No complaints were made against our staff during 2024/25.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2025/26

1. The Public Protection Service continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount.

2. There are significant changes taking place at a national level as the Government presses forward with regulatory reform. The National Trading Standards Board has been established which identifies national priorities and increases Regional and Sub-Regional co-ordination including the funding of the North Eastern Regional Investigations Team. The Trading Standards & Licensing Manager sits on the management board of this Team which, due to tightening budgets, remains under pressure to reduce costs and contribute towards national projects as and when required.
3. Serious doorstep crime continues to be a major concern and responding to complaints is extremely resource intensive. Due to the significant consumer detriment involved, tackling rogue traders remains the highest of priorities which may mean that responding to other areas of responsibility has to be delayed.
4. The Trading Standards Landscape has changed dramatically over recent years and events such as EU Exit, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the cost of living crisis have altered the Trading Standards working regime:

COVID-19 – The coronavirus pandemic fundamentally altered our lives, including how we interact with one another. Lots of small business struggled during pandemic but also a lot of home based traders flourished. Trading Standards were required to establish a relationship with these new and evolving traders to ensure compliance. Trading Standards services need to get behind small honest traders who want to help build the UK economy and deal with rogue traders who are acting illegally and are undercutting genuine UK businesses.

EU Exit – Trading Standards need to provide support, advice and guidance to businesses through the transition period and as new legislation and opportunities arise. As a service we need to support businesses to diversify and adapt to the new circumstances and legislative framework.

Cost of living - Trading Standards is key to protecting people especially the most vulnerable, during the cost of living crisis when every penny counts and they cannot afford to lose money through fraud or scams. The Cost of Living crisis will likely exacerbate consumer problems in some areas where individuals seek out to find the cheapest products which could be unsafe imports, illicit tobacco, or counterfeits

5. Following the disposable vape ban on 1st June 2025 the team will continue working to enforce the strict rules governing the composition and marketing of 'nicotine delivery devices' such as e-liquids and vapes (which are age restricted products) by working with local retailers, and several manufacturers to ensure legal compliance with the new requirements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS (PSPO'S)

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Decision Type: Non Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To inform Members of Neighbourhood Services Committee about the use of Public Space Protection Orders and to seek the views of the committee in relation to conducting a public consultation to include new Town Centre and Back Lane Orders.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) were introduced by The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 and give local authorities additional powers to deal with anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 Councils can use PSPO's to prohibit specified activities and / or require certain things to be done in defined areas in order to stop or prevent anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3 The breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence (maximum £1,000 fine) but can be dealt with through the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice (maximum £100) .
- 3.4 Council's may only introduce PSPO's where there is, or there is likely to be persistent anti-social behaviour in a particular location.

- 3.5 PSPO's have a maximum duration of three years but may be renewed for a further 3-year period and this renewal process can be applied indefinitely.
- 3.6 PSPO's are not intended to be used to tackle specific individuals or properties (as other legislation exists for such purposes) but rather identified areas.
- 3.7 PSPO's criminalise certain activities in public spaces and limit, prohibit, what the public may or may not, do in specific public areas. Local authorities must therefore be careful to balance the rights of its citizens to enjoy open spaces against the need to protect them from anti-social behaviour.
- 3.8 In order to ensure that the balance is achieved, the anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing act 2014 lists certain conditions that must be met before a PSPO can be introduced.
- 3.9 The first condition is that:-
- (a) activities carried out in a public place within the authority's area must have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality,
 - (b) It is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.
- 3.10 The second condition is that the effect, or likely effect of the activities -
- (a) Is, or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature.
 - (b) Is, or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable, and
 - (c) Justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.
- 3.11 Breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence, subject to a fine on conviction of up to £1,000 however, where possible a warning would first be issued before the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice(FPN). Payment of the FPN discharges liability to conviction of the offence. It is the failure to comply with the request to stop the activity, or to do what is required by the Order, by an authorised officer, which leads to the offence being committed.

Enforcement

- 3.12 PSPO's are limited to enforcement by Police Officers or designated authorised council officers. In Hartlepool, this role would predominantly fall to Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) and would be used as an additional extension of powers they currently use for dealing with environmental and anti-social behaviour issues.
- 3.13 The recent anti-social behaviour issues, which have been well documented in the town centre have given cause to examine if more could be done to

support the actions already identified and developed in the Town Centre Action Plan. A number of Safer Hartlepool partners including Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner have indicated they would be supportive of creating a town centre PSPO and further consideration should be given to developing a PSPO given that many of our neighbouring local authorities already have such arrangements in place.

- 3.14 There is however an element of caution with such a proposal given that authorised local authority officers do not have the power to demand names and address of a perpetrator and would need assistance and Police support in cases where an individual's identity is required.
- 3.15 Most actions are dealt with by a Fixed Penalty fine in order to discharge liability of conviction. However further consideration would also need to be given to the effectiveness of this type of enforcement and the impact and behavioural changes this would have on some of the individuals we would likely be dealing with. Many lead complicated, chaotic lifestyles and need engagement to address addictions before meaningful and noticeable behavioural change could take place.
- 3.16 The extra duties additional areas and more frequent patrols may require further resource to manage the additional workload. The Local authority Enforcement Team already have a high service demand and care would need to be taken to ensure any additional work areas would not have a detrimental impact on other existing enforcement areas.
- 3.17 The additional duties of enforcing some anti-social behaviour matters have already been included within CEO's existing pay grade, however the change in duties may require a further review and amendment to current risk assessments and working practices.
- 3.18 Hartlepool already have two Public Space Protection Order which were introduced in 2020 and renewed for a further 3-year period in Oct 2023. The first PSPO predominantly replaced and superseded the former Dog Control Order and exists across a number of areas of the Borough including, parks and open spaces and a number of beaches. The second PSPO refers to a number of alley gated locations. Both have been renewed following consultation and having received on-going public support.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 There is an opportunity to consider if a further town centre PSPO is required having received support from Safer Hartlepool Partners that similar schemes have successfully been introduced to tackle anti-social behaviour issues.
- 4.2 There is already evidence of activity taking place which is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. There is therefore justification that creating a PSPO meets the requirement of the Act.

- 4.3 The creation of a town centre PSPO would likely replicate a similar area to that already identified as part of the Tees Valley Combined Authorities Shared Prosperity Funding (as shown as **Appendix A**). This funding is already having a positive impact on tackling serious violence and retail crime in the town centre with additional and visible Police and local authority patrols.
- 4.4 The recent issues of reported anti-social behaviour at The Ramp would also be included within the defined PSPO area. The PSPO would provide further support and assist with the measures already identified and developed from the subsequent Action Plan now in place.
- 4.5 A PSPO would provide Civil Enforcement Officers with a number of additional powers, allowing greater flexibility to enforce restrictions by the most appropriate legislation available.
- 4.6 There are, however, some limitations to a PSPO. The perpetrators of anti-social behaviour often have complex and chaotic lifestyles, driven by addictions. Managing behaviour by issuing a FPN, may not be the most effective method of managing such an individual's behaviour.
- 4.7 The limitations and restricted enforcement powers of a CEO (for offences where confirmation of name and address is required) may not work as effectively as the current arrangement and powers Police Officers have.
- 4.8 Any proposal and consultation would need to include some management of expectation and an understanding that PSPO's will not solve all the issues we are experiencing but they should help address some of those issues and compliment the powers already available from existing legislation at our disposal.
- 4.9 A town centre PSPO would likely include prohibitions on:
- (a) groups of people acting in a manner likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.
 - (b) being verbally abusive
 - (c) drinking alcohol (unless from licensed premises) and refusing to hand over alcohol on request.
 - (d) Injecting, inhaling, ingesting, smoking or otherwise using intoxicating substances
 - (e) urinating, defecating spitting in a public place
 - (f) littering and rummaging bins
 - (g) riding skateboards, scooters, e-bikes etc. in a manner likely to cause damage to property, nuisance or annoyance.
 - (h) begging and busking
 - (i) Approaching members of public for subscriptions or charity donations without holding a licence to do so.
- 4.10 A separate PSPO which would cover Back Lanes within Hartlepool Borough would likely include issues such as:

- (a) waste collection,
- (b) vehicle / caravan and trailer obstruction issues
- (c) littering
- (d) Property upkeep – e.g. maintaining property to allow accessibility within the back lane, prevent overgrown foliage and ensuring secured access to a property.

4.11 In order to progress both PSPO's a period of consultation would be necessary, which could see further additional areas requested for consideration of inclusion.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 It is a legal requirement that before a PSPO can be adopted, the Council must consult with the Police and the Police & Crime Commissioner. In addition, it must consult with 'whatever community representatives it thinks appropriate' including any specific groups that may have a particular interest in a relevant activity or location.

5.2 It is proposed that the consultation period would run for 2 months During October & November with a further report to be presented to Committee in January following the evaluation of the consultation.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	There are no risk implications
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	There may be insufficient resource for the Enforcement Team to take on this additional duty without impacting on other areas of services delivery. Consequently, additional resources may be required.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	N/A
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	A PSPO would be created under Section 59 of the Anti-social behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Head of Legal Services would be asked to prepare and advertise any Order as part of the formal legal process once the consultation process is complete and any perceived issues of concern have been considered for inclusion.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are no child and family poverty issues at this stage but may be reviewed after the results of the consultation have been evaluated.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no equality and diversity issues at this stage but may be reviewed after the results of the consultation have been evaluated.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	Appointed authorised officers would be designated to issue Fixed Penalties. It is envisaged this role will fall predominantly to HBC Civil Enforcement Officers.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are no environmental, sustainability or climate change considerations
CONSULTATION	No consultation has taken place at this stage, but the results will be reported in a later updated report to this committee.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That Members note the process for establishing two PSPO's and that a period of public consultation takes place to consider establishing a town centre PSPO and a separate and additional PSPO to cover specific issues in designated Back Streets of Hartlepool.
- 7.2 The results of such a consultation be reported to Members following evaluation.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To reflect the statutory requirements of establishing a PSPO.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Public Space Protection Order – Neighbourhood Services Committee Oct 2023
- 9.2 Public Space Protection Order – Neighbourhood Services Committee Dec 2020

- 9.3 Public Space Protection Order – Neighbourhood Services Committee July 2020
- 9.4 Public Space Protection Order – Neighbourhood Services Committee Jan 2019
- 9.5 Public Space Protection Order – Neighbourhood Services Committee June 2018

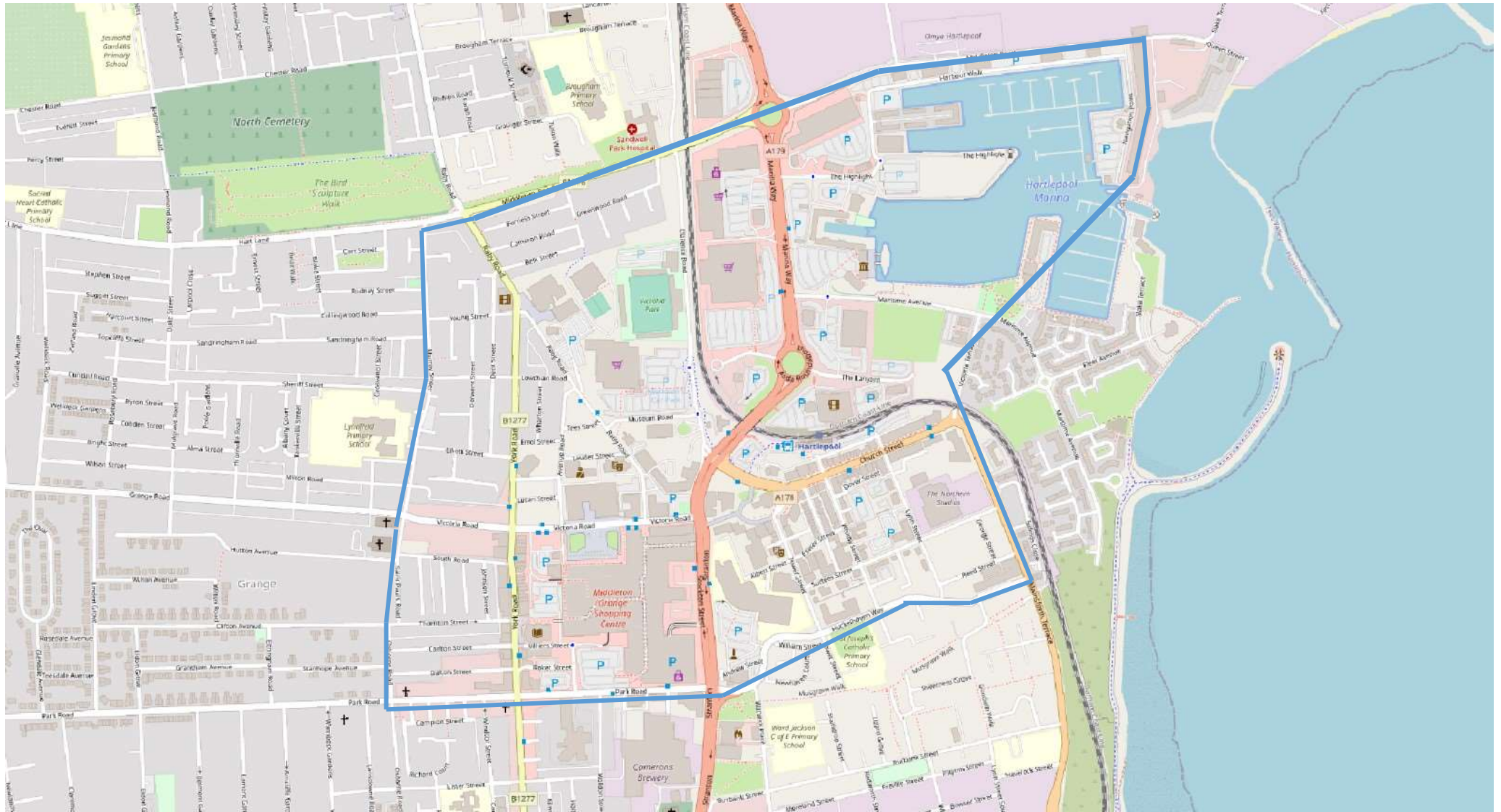
10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 27.08.2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 27.08.2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 27.08.2025

Hartlepool UKSPF Project Area



NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2025



Subject: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CHARTER

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To adopt the Cleveland Anti-Social Behaviour Charter.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has been working with partners to develop across Cleveland Anti-social Behaviour Charter. This is a commitment by criminal justice and community safety organisations across Cleveland to the minimum level of service that victims of anti-social behaviour should expect to receive when making a report.
- 3.2 This forms part of the OPCC Police and Crime Plan priority to ensure the right support for victims and vulnerable people, and it is hoped will also increase community confidence by clearly setting out service level expectations.

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN THE CHARTER

- 4.1 The Cleveland Antisocial Behaviour Charter is attached in **Appendix 1** of the report.
- 4.2 This charter is a commitment by organisations across Cleveland to protect the right to feel safe in your home and community. To work together to resolve

issues of antisocial behaviour (ASB.) and to make sure the victims voice is at the heart of what we do.

4.3 This charter sets out what we will do and what the victim can expect from us when reporting ASB against the person.

4.4 This charter makes the following commitments:

- The officer allocated to deal with your report will contact you within five working days, excluding weekends and bank holidays. The officer will assess your case. He/she will make sure that cases, where there is a higher risk of harm, are dealt with more quickly.
- If the case takes some time, you will receive regular updates. Updates will take place at least monthly.
- When the case ends - or it cannot be progressed any further - you will receive a final update from the officer dealing with your case.
- You have the right to be given updates on your case and to be told when important decisions are taken. You also have the right, at certain stages of the justice process, to ask for decisions to be looked at again.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	. No relevant issues
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	No relevant issues
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues
CONSULTATION	No relevant issues

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Neighbourhood Services Committee agree to the adoption of the Cleveland Antisocial Behavior Charter.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Adopting the ASB Charter is good practice and demonstrates the minimum level of service that victims of anti-social behaviour should expect to receive when making a report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers for this report.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 26/08/2025
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 26/08/2025
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 27/08/2025

Cleveland Antisocial Behaviour Charter

This charter is a commitment by organisations across Cleveland to protect your right to feel safe in your home and community.

We will work together to resolve issues of antisocial behaviour (ASB.)

We will involve you in how we respond to your case and make sure your voice is at the heart of what we do.

This charter sets out what we will do and what you can expect from us when reporting ASB against the person.

1. The right to be able to understand and be understood

You have the right to be given information about what happens after you report ASB in a way which is easy to understand.

You also have the right to get help so that you can clearly understand the information.

If you need to give a witness statement or be interviewed, you have the right to have extra support to help you through this.

2. The right to have details of the incident recorded without justifiable delay

You have the right to have your incident recorded as soon as possible.

3. The right to be referred to support services and to have support tailored to your needs

You have the right to be referred to support services.

This includes the right to contact support services directly and to have your needs assessed. This is so that services and support can be tailored to your needs.

4. The right to be given information about any investigation or prosecution

This charter makes the following commitments:

- The officer allocated to deal with your report will contact you within five working days, excluding weekends and bank holidays. The officer will assess your case. He/she will make sure that cases, where there is a higher risk of harm, are dealt with more quickly.
- If the case takes some time, you will receive regular updates. Updates will take place at least monthly.

- When the case ends - or it cannot be progressed any further - you will receive a final update from the officer dealing with your case.
- You have the right to be given updates on your case and to be told when important decisions are taken. You also have the right, at certain stages of the justice process, to ask for decisions to be looked at again.

5. The right to make a Victim Impact Statement

If your case goes to court, you have the right to make a Victim Impact Statement (VIS.)

This statement explains in your own words how ASB incidents have affected you. This can be physically, emotionally, financially or in any other way.

The VIS is considered by the judge or magistrates when deciding on any punishment. It also helps service providers see what additional support you and/or your family may need.

To help decide whether you want to make a VIS, you have the right to be provided with information about it.

If you decide to make a VIS, you will be asked whether you want to read your statement in court or to have it read on your behalf. You can request a copy of the VIS. You can also make an additional statement to reflect any changes around how the ASB has impacted you/your family.

6. The right to be given information about the outcome of the case and appeals

You have the right to be told about the outcome of the case. Outcomes may include informal action, sanctions or prosecution.

If formal legal action is taken, and the defendant is convicted, you have the right to have the sentence explained to you.

If the offender appeals against their conviction or sentence, you have the right to be told about the appeal and its outcome.

At the end of the case, you have the right to be told the outcome. This includes a summary of the reasons for the decision if they are available. The outcome should be given to you as soon as possible after the end of any proceedings.

7. The right to make a complaint about your rights not being met

If you believe that your rights have not been met, you have the right to make a complaint through the organisation's published complaints process.

8. The right to ask for an Antisocial Behaviour Case Review

An ASB Case Review is **NOT** a complaints procedure.

You have the right to ask for an ASB Case Review through the process published by your local authority.

You can do this if you have reported the same ASB issue at least three times in the past six months and the issue is still taking place.

The ASB Case Review involves all of the agencies, who have been dealing with your case. The independent review looks at whether anything further can be done to resolve your issues with ASB.