



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

Agenda

11 March 2026

Time: 5pm

Location: Council Chamber

Members: Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

Councillors Cook, Dodds, Oliver, Lindridge, Napper, Male and Scarborough

Parish Council Co-opted Member:

S Smith (Greatham Parish Council)
S Lee (Headland Parish Council)
E Hurst (Wynyard Parish Council)

1. Apologies for absence

2. To receive any declarations by members

3. Minutes

3.1. To receive the minutes and decision record of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 (previously published).

4. Budget and policy framework

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

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<https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/democraticservices>

Hartlepool Borough Council

4.1. None

5. Key Decisions

5.1. None.

6. Other items requiring decision

6.1. Hartlepool Cohesion Strategy – Here For You - *Director of Housing, Growth and Communities*

6.2. Review of memorial benches and consideration of guidelines for temporary memorials - *Director of Housing, Growth and Communities*

7. Items for information

7.1. Conservation Area Advisory Committee – *Director of Housing, Growth and Communities*

8. Any other business which the chair considers urgent

For information

Date of next meeting – to be confirmed.

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Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

11th March 2026

Report of: Director (Housing, Growth and Communities)
Subject: HARTLEPOOL COHESION STRATEGY: HERE FOR YOU
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)
- 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 raise awareness of the national and local policy landscape in relation to cohesion, resilience and communities.
- 2.2. To share Hartlepool’s local cohesion strategy ‘Here for You’ to be adopted by Hartlepool Borough Council, acknowledging this is a multi-sector and

stakeholder strategy but that the Council plays a key leadership role to drive this work forward.

3. Background

- 3.1. The bonds that hold society together face growing pressures including social isolation, poverty, pressure on public services, declining trust in democratic institutes, weaker family ties, fear of crime, antisocial behaviour, immigration and asylum challenges, religious and cultural division, political divisions, religious and political extremism, racism, misogyny, and the spread of mis and disinformation. Tensions have become more visible notably seeing riots and protests over 2024 and 2025. (Common Ground 2026).
- 3.2. Hartlepool was the first place to see riots and civil unrest in the summer of 2024, after Southport where sadly three young girls were tragically murdered.
- 3.3. A number of places nationally saw the impact of riots on their communities and the impact that growing tensions and division was having. Engagement with communities and stakeholders provided an understanding of the community impact and there was recurring feedback that 'We saw this coming', representing the community sentiment and feelings.
- 3.4. Hartlepool Borough Council led on coordinated recovery effort after the riots of 2024 and worked across the whole system to understand the impact and consequences as well as what had led to civil unrest and concern.
- 3.5. As part of the recovery process a national expert organization Belong:Social Cohesion and Integration Network were commissioned to lead on a Cohesion Strategy for Hartlepool. Coming alongside local stakeholders, residents and communities to interpret evidence, data, information and conversations to inform a longer-term plan for Hartlepool.
- 3.6. Belong were also commissioned to lead on the development of a national framework on behalf of MHCLG and LGA. Hartlepool were able to benefit from working alongside wider policy development and also learn from other areas of the country as well as sharing practice.

4. National and Policy Context

- 4.1. The evidence and policy landscape for neighbourhoods and communities, particularly around cohesion, resilience and civic leadership has evolved in response to wider societal pressures. It is important that these changes are understood and applied locally to support growth, strengthen communities, and reduce future risk.
- 4.2. Common Ground: Building Cohesive Communities - The guidance provides councils with practical and detailed support. This includes a clear summary of legal obligations, examples of effective tools and strategies for embedding cohesion in council services and gives further resources. It also sets out the practical steps required to develop effective cohesion strategies. Throughout, the guidance draws on examples of good practice from councils and their partner organisations.
- 4.3. Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods - Launched in September 2024, the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods is reviewing the current state of neighbourhoods across England. Examining the role of neighbourhoods in people's lives, quantifying and qualitatively exploring the case for neighbourhood focused regeneration as a contribution to achieving wider social and economic objectives. The Commission is also establishing 'what works' by drawing on both international and domestic evidence, with a particular focus on the most deprived and 'left behind' communities.
- 4.4. The Government's Pride in Place programme commits up to £5bn over the next decade to support long-term, neighbourhood-level regeneration, delivered through Neighbourhood Boards and 10-year regeneration plans. The programme builds on the former Plan for Neighbourhoods, expanding investment to more areas and placing decision-making firmly in local hands, with Boards made up of residents, community leaders and partners tasked with shaping plans that reflect local needs and priorities. Funding focuses on strengthening communities, improving local places and enabling greater empowerment, directing resources to areas facing economic decline, reduced civic assets and limited access to services.
- 4.5. UK Government Resilience Action Plan – The UK Government Resilience Action Plan (2025) sets out a national strategy to strengthen the country's ability to withstand and recover from major risks, including pandemics, cyber-attacks, flooding, infrastructure failures and geopolitical instability. The plan focuses on three priorities: improving the assessment of national risks

through better data and system-wide analysis; enabling individuals, communities, businesses and voluntary groups to take action to strengthen their own resilience; and reinforcing the public-sector resilience system through clearer roles, stronger local leadership and better coordination.

5. Proposals

- 5.1. Here for you (**Appendix 1**) provides a local evidence base to articulate a number of priorities to support communities to build cohesion, increase resilience and retain trust.
- 5.2. The process and methodology for the development of the strategy was diverse and included conversations and listening sessions with a broad representation of Hartlepool communities. Considering a range of opinions, experiences and demographics.
- 5.3. Local work has developed further as the national policy and evidence base has evolved, this enabled increased preparedness to mobilise the Pride in Place Programme more effectively due to the foundations that the recovery and cohesion work has laid.
- 5.4. Here for you will provide a framework to develop a consistent approach to cohesion alongside wider stakeholders including the Hartlepool Board. The strategy will support development and alignment of the cohesion investment priorities of the Pride in Place Programme.
- 5.5. An implementation plan will be developed to begin to address the themes identified within the strategy. This will include development of impact monitoring and outcomes to ensure the work is measurable and effectively evaluated.
- 5.6. Further work will develop aligning to wider policy and evidence including connectivity to emergency planning and preparedness.
- 5.7. Hartlepool will pursue wider opportunities to develop work on mis and disinformation as well as exploration of mechanisms to monitor and respond to community tensions alongside existing work of police colleagues.
- 5.8. Training and skills sharing will be explored to increase skills and knowledge for effective implementation and sustainability of all policy work.

6. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	<p>Hartlepool continues to experience community tensions, social pressures and wider complexities impacting relationships across communities and between the community and organisations. The lack of policy, strategy and evidence will impact on the ability to work towards further measures to mitigate risks, impact, consequences and ability to recover from future stressors, shocks and emergencies.</p> <p>Here for You is 'a moment in time' and should be further developed and applied, this work will need to remain agile to be responsive to local need.</p>
Financial Considerations	<p>The strategy is anticipated to be about 'how' we work rather than what we do. There are no additional funds dedicated to the implementation of the strategy, however other opportunities will be explored to resource programmes as required.</p>
Subsidy Control	N/A
Legal Considerations	<p>There are policies and legislative context that relate to local authority responsibility in relation to cohesion. This has been articulated in the new Common Ground: Building Cohesive Communities; Section 1. This includes relevance under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Community Safety Duty, Prevent Duty and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.</p>
Single Impact Assessment	N/A
Staff Considerations	<p>Staff continue to deal with more complex challenges within our communities, training and development will be part of the implementation planning.</p> <p>Three Community Cohesion and Resilience Officers have been appointed.</p>
Asset Management Considerations	N/A
Environment, Sustainability and Climate	<p>These are key factors and considerations in relation to well-being, resilience and risk to communities.</p>

Change Considerations	
Consultation	<p>(a) All elected members have been provided with the opportunity to contribute to the evidence base that has informed the strategy. This included face-to-face discussions and workshops.</p> <p>(b) 10 workshops / forums / focus groups (including on tension monitoring, and on aligning health impact assessment, restorative justice and cohesion, branding and communications)</p> <p>50 individual structured interviews 8 dialogue events and skill-sharing events (including 'having difficult conversations' sessions for council staff, VCS reps, and local care workers) 34 organisations engaged 470 individuals involved (sometimes just once, for a particular session or conversation, more often on a recurrent basis)</p> <p>(c) A broad range of stakeholders were engaged – this included those in the recovery coordinating governance and beyond.</p>

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. That members agree to endorse Here for You as Hartlepool's cohesion strategy.
- 7.2. That members to champion the principles and themes of the cohesion strategy.
- 7.3. That members acknowledge and note that there is further work to do and that this strategy cannot sit alone to have an impact on some of the risks and challenges communities are facing.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1. To support Hartlepool communities to be resilient and connected for the benefit of everyone.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1. [Common ground: Building cohesive communities | Local Government Association](#)
- 9.2. [No-Short-Cuts-ICON-Report-FINAL.pdf](#)
- 9.3. [Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods](#)
- 9.4. [Pride in Place Strategy - GOV.UK](#)
- 9.5. [UK Government Resilience Action Plan - GOV.UK](#)

10. Contact Officers

Gemma Ptak

Director (Housing, Growth and Communities)

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 24.02.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 24.02.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 25.02.2026

Hartlepool: Here For You

Hartlepool's cohesion strategy for stronger communities

October 2025 to March 2028

Signs of the times

At a Hartlepool community meeting in March 2025, people were asked to describe an incident in their neighbourhood which had troubled and concerned them – and to identify an example of something which had given them hope and optimism.

One group of participants – a mix of white and minority ethnic residents – chose the same event to cover both the 'bad' and the 'good', an example of something which showed the problems which sometimes surface – and also the way to address these problems.

A shopkeeper's premises had been sprayed with offensive, hateful graffiti – a racist crime linked to wider disorder in Hartlepool at the end of July 2024 (part of a wave of trouble in different parts of the country following the murder of little girls in the northwest town of Southport). Such actions don't just damage property – they can make people feel vulnerable, targeted and isolated.

In this instance, though, there was a quick and positive response: local people – black and white - let the shopkeeper know they were horrified by what had happened and talked about how much they valued the shop being there. The entire store shutter was repainted and the graffiti covered over by members of Probation's Community Payback Team – men who had committed offences in Hartlepool (although not personally responsible for this crime) and were subsequently making amends by carrying out useful and practical tasks. The anti-graffiti paint and brushes were donated by the newly formed community-based Diversity Network. This initiative was hugely appreciated by the victim and her family, who were delighted both with the end result and the gestures of support. The men themselves spoke equally as positively, describing how this activity made them feel they were genuinely 'giving something back to the community'. And a local councillor described the difference the effort had made, 'not just to the physical space but to the sense of calm and support felt by members of the black and minority ethnic community. It sends a powerful message that we are seen and not alone'.

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Young people at Hartlepool Sixth Form Centre came together to take part in a powerful round table discussions with senior leaders from organisations in the borough, reflecting on the impact of the August 2024 riots, their lived experiences in Hartlepool, and their hopes for a stronger, safer community. The conversation was open, honest, and deeply insightful, with students expressing a strong desire to be part of the solution.

From this dialogue, two impactful projects emerged: a street safety campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting positive behaviours, and a collaboration with Safer Communities to co-create a social media checklist designed to help young people develop critical thinking skills when viewing online content - especially on digital platforms. Students described the experience as empowering and meaningful, and the work has already begun to foster a sense of agency, resilience, and shared responsibility among the young people who took part and their peers.

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In consultation with residents across the borough, workers from a national organisation - Belong: the Cohesion and Integration Network regularly heard about the local council 'not caring', being 'distant', and not sorting out pressing issues. Often, when people complained about 'the council', they were talking not only about Hartlepool Council itself, but other agencies as well. Sometimes, they described the council as 'faceless'.

At the same time, particular workers in the local neighbourhood were named and praised for the ways they knew about peoples' problems and did what they could to help. On further enquiry, it often turned out that these workers were employed by the council, or by agencies working in partnership. The signs and information in the venues providing the services which residents benefitted from and appreciated hadn't made it clear that the council was responsible or involved.

Introduction

The stories highlighted above illustrate real challenges, from hate crime to the misinformation which some people promote on social media – but also the commitment and scope which there is locally to deal with the problems. They show the importance of addressing concerns and issues linked to the changing make-up of the borough – our increasing diversity – and taking steps so that Hartlepool is a place where all residents feel welcome and safe.

They are just a few ‘snapshots’ of the many examples which could have been chosen to show that many people, from different organisations, are working hard to improve local neighbourhoods and develop the borough as a whole.

But at the same time, there is a sense of disconnect and a feeling of distance between many residents and the agencies – council, police and others – whose role is to support and serve the interests of Hartlepool people.

These are issues which need to be addressed.

That’s why this strategy sets out how Hartlepool’s agencies – together with a range of voluntary and community sector (VCS) and faith organisations – are increasing their efforts to close those gaps, build up trust and connections between people, and to honestly recognise the challenges and difficulties that need to be worked through so that we can develop and improve good relations in our borough.

One of the starting points for this document was the rioting in Hartlepool in July 2024 – or, rather, the response to that disorder. There was violence against the police and local shops, and mosques were targeted by some people who were out on the streets. Though they happened in just one area of the borough, and only over a short period of time, these were serious incidents – but Hartlepool’s real spirit was shown by the reaction that followed. Many local people came together to do a big clean-up of the streets, supported by the council. Showing the meaning of ‘solidarity’ and ‘bridge-building’, they organised new community activities and networks to bring people together across lines of difference. Local centres, including the Salaam Centre, showed their value as resilience hubs, providing crisis support and providing and welcoming and inclusive space for people to support each other. Such work proved that people want to find ways of getting on well together, in spite of – because of – all the challenges and problems we face, from health issues to the cost-of-living crisis. People in our borough are showing the way to develop social cohesion – a sense of belonging and social trust across different sections of society.

What is social cohesion?

Cohesion means building strong, connected communities where people from varied backgrounds can live, work, and play together harmoniously. It involves breaking down barriers caused by segregation, prejudice, and inequality, and creating opportunities for people to connect and engage meaningfully with each other. It aims at our place being one where everyone feels valued, included, and empowered to participate.

Another way of thinking about cohesion is that it is the ‘social glue’ in the places where we live, work and socialise. Its presence means that we get on with and trust our neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances. We feel safe and connected to others – a sense of belonging. We often only notice this vital ‘social glue’ by its absence.

We can develop and grow cohesion when people from different backgrounds meet, mix and get along; by developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is welcomed and celebrated; and by creating places where empathy and curiosity about people ‘not like me’ are encouraged.

When this happens, we can move beyond narratives of ‘us’ and ‘them’ towards ideas of kindness, trust and social cohesion between groups.

This strategy for stronger communities is not ‘just’ a council document, or a policy for officials. It’s for the whole place, and for everyone who wants to get involved. There’s commitment to make this strategy come to life from many different organisations, including – especially – different voluntary and community sector organisations that work at grass roots level in local neighbourhoods.

It’s not a ‘standalone’ document, separate to everything else that is going on. The plans set out here benefit from being linked to lots of other initiatives which are underway and in the pipeline. These include the opportunities to refresh engagement in our democracy that will come from local government reorganisation; work going on at a regional level, including through the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office; the improvements to be funded through Hartlepool’s Pride in Place programme; a drive to promote and celebrate our borough through branding and place-making; new opportunities and activities for young people and community members that will come through the recently announced Local Youth Transformation Pilot and the Sport England Place Expansion Partnership; the ambitious plans of the Education Partnership North East (which includes Hartlepool Sixth Form College), including further development of their community engagement; and much more besides

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The fact that this strategy is being launched in an environment where all of these things are happening makes it more likely that the coming years will see effective responses to the challenges that we face, and positive steps forward for our borough of Hartlepool and all our people.

About this strategy

This document results from extensive consultation with Hartlepool residents and discussion between people working with agencies across the borough.

It briefly considers key social issues affecting our borough, then summarises the key themes from the consultation, and offers some considerations about these.

The main section of the strategy is about practical steps to strengthen our communities.

It looks at what agencies are already doing under a range of headings, and then sets out plans for future work, and identifies what difference this will make.

A final section describes how the actions which result from this strategy will be encouraged, overseen and monitored.

The strategy was commissioned by Hartlepool Council, but it is not merely or even mainly a council strategy: the approach it sets out has been shaped by the thoughts and proposals of organisations from the Fire and Rescue Service and Police, educationalists and housing providers, through to grass roots community groups working in different parts of the borough – and the commitment and combined efforts of a wide range of partners will be crucial to implement the approaches set out here.

The Hartlepool Board will track the work, evaluate what has been done and – most importantly – assess what impact it has made, and how it is making a positive difference to the lives of Hartlepool people and communities.

The Hartlepool context

Hartlepool Council, Cleveland Police, the NHS, housing providers, schools and colleges are providing crucial services in our borough – in spite of great pressure on public sector budgets. Management and workers at sites including the port dock and the freeport through to small employers on the Headland and in Hartlepool town centre are seeking to make the most of business opportunities in a challenging context. Day-to-day, grassroots community organisations, faith groups and charities are supporting people in local neighbourhoods with advice, well-being sessions and a range of activities to participate in.

The impact of long term economic and social changes is well understood in the borough. Decades of deindustrialisation led to the eclipse of the shipbuilding and coalmining industries which shaped working lives in the past. Employment patterns now are varied, with some high-paying and secure jobs including in advanced manufacturing, but many more precarious and lower-paid jobs in service sectors, including social care. Hartlepool continues to experience relatively high unemployment rates. With over a third of households classed as fuel-poor, economic hardship and social isolation are serious problems which require sustained intervention. In this context, there are relatively low literacy levels, and barriers of reduced aspiration and ambition for some school students and young people.

Demographic shifts are affecting the borough's people and putting in place challenges for the future. There's a declining working-age population, with an increasing proportion of older people. Those young people who obtain higher-education qualifications often do so by studying away, and then continuing to live where they have studied or moving to bigger cities for employment opportunities. The borough is becoming more diverse, with a small but increasing number of Hartlepool people coming from minority ethnic communities, and the borough – like others in the region and around the country – hosting some people who are migrants and refugees.

With all this, it is not surprising that there are pressures and questions around the issues of peoples' trust in institutions, their feelings of safety and security, the strength of community resilience, the extent of shared values, and peoples' sense of belonging.

Though many of the causes of these pressures and issues are large-scale and structural, from economic trends to international conflicts, there is much that can be done at borough level to support people in challenging times. Organisations and individuals can take initiatives which lead to meaningful improvements locally.

The commitments and actions set out in this strategy result from a simple and clear view by the agencies and groups which have shaped it: Hartlepool is a place where everyone should and can feel they belong and feel safe. In our borough, organisations from the

council to local charities are increasingly showing that they recognise people's needs, and communicating what they are doing in support. It's a place where people are often under pressure, but remain proud. Hartlepool is a place where there are facilities, support and opportunities here, for you.

What people are saying

Since summer 2024, there has been a range of 'listening' and consultation exercises in the borough. Between February and August 2025, team members from the Belong Network engaged regularly with Hartlepool Council members and council officers, and met with colleagues from relevant agencies and VCS organisations. Belong representatives visited community organisations, youth groups, colleges and schools and had conversations with a wide range of residents. Examples of their activities are listed below:

- Walkabouts with front line workers (*council, police, community organisations*)
- Support on business engagement (*Murray Street*)
- Focus groups with front line workers (*council neighbourhood services workers at Tofts Farm and employees and volunteers with VCS organisations*)
- Focus groups with learners on courses organised by Skills and Development Team (*ESOL, basic skills*)
- Focus group with staff members of 13 (*housing provider*)
- Workshops with school students and Sixth Form College students
- Facilitation of first meetings of Hartlepool's Diversity Network
- Liaison with other organisations, including workshops on aligning public health, restorative justice and cohesion, and on tension monitoring

In total, to the end of July, Belong team members ran ten workshops / forums / focus groups for groups of different sizes; carried out 50 individual structured interviews; ran eight dialogue events and skill-sharing events, including 'having difficult conversations' sessions for council staff and local care workers; engaged a total of 34 organisations; and have connected to 470 individuals (*sometimes just once, for a particular session or conversation, sometimes on a recurrent basis across different meetings and events*).

Key themes that emerged from Belong's consultation with agencies included

- Extensive evidence of services being provided professionally and systematically
- Detailed awareness on the part of elected representatives and public servants of the significant challenges facing many people
- Multiple examples of a strong commitment to Hartlepool and pride in the borough
- Ambitious and positive initiatives for the borough

• Thoughtful insights into Hartlepool’s history, social dynamics and ‘mood’
In Belong’s community engagement, residents spoke often about challenges, issues and feelings which show that our communities are not as strong as they should be:

- Many people told us there is a sense of distance and disconnect between services and positive initiatives and some sections of the community
- There are deep feelings of loss, decline, nostalgia
- There’s a sense amongst some people of having experienced neglect, and of not being cared for, leading to mistrust and isolation
- There are issues to do with low aspiration, including on the part of many young people
- There are concerns about a range of sensitive issues, including race, immigration, uncertainty about ‘others’, social distances, limited opportunities for integration / social mixing, potential tension
- There is often a nervousness or uncertainty about how to handle such issues
- There are multiple social challenges, from deprivation and drug use to mental health problems and community safety – at the same time as a recognition of pressure on services
- Given the ‘distances’ between people – and between people and agencies – and the lack of trust that results, there is scope for peoples’ understandable concerns and anxieties to be shaped into resentments, divisive attitudes, and an openness to misinformation and the disinformation which some opinion-formers are promoting in order to stir divisions
- These factors result in ongoing fragility and vulnerability in community relations

Speaking to residents and agencies, Belong also often heard of more hopeful themes:

- There are many positive initiatives in relation to health, nature, sport, wellbeing, culture and events
- High quality core services are provided by a range of agencies, exemplified for example by Hartlepool’s Children’s Services team being rated as outstanding by Ofsted in 2024, and winning national awards for their work
- People appreciate the contribution of high quality and committed front line workers, both from the public sector and voluntary groups
- People who take up opportunities to participate in education and Skills and Development sessions find it a positive experience, giving them a sense of potential
- Hartlepool people have a strong ‘feel’ for the borough’s history and heritage. They share a sense of the borough changing over time. If this often takes the form of

describing change in regretful ways ('Once it was ... now it is ...'), there is also a sense that things can and should change again, for the better

- There's determination on the part of workers in statutory agencies and people in the voluntary and community sector to respond to evident desires for community, care and connectedness
- As mentioned previously, there is a current opportunity to ensure linkages and mutual reinforcement between a range of current initiatives. The preparedness to collaborate between agencies and the VCS evident in the early meetings of the Hartlepool Board could turn the separate things going on – from improved engagement by education providers to regeneration projects focussed on particular wards – into a 'critical mass' of activity leading to positive material change.

The findings from the work described so far are confirmed by other recent research and listening exercises which have been happening. The 'Our Town' youth survey identified that many young people share the wider concern in the borough about the importance of safety and the need to feel safe; some expressed a sense of vulnerability and anxiety about being targeted or victimised by others because of perceptions about ways in which they are different; and they talked about the problem of isolation and lack of connectedness that results from poor transport provision.

A Health Impact Assessment commissioned by the Hartlepool Public Health Team following the 2024 riots sets out 'key findings' which are entirely consistent with the points made to Belong Team members. The Assessment reported that there were contrasting interpretations of the reasons for the disorder, and different views about the issues which they raise:

- Some people saw them as a symptom of long-standing economic hardship
- Some people saw them as an expression of frustration with local services, or of antipathy to the police
- Some people – especially from minority ethnic backgrounds – experienced the riots as an expression of growing racism and anti-immigrant sentiment

More generally, discussion about the reasons for the disorder highlighted perceptions about the public sector: 'While frontline workers were widely praised, back-office council staff were often seen as distant or ineffective. Minority ethnic residents expressed concern that race and racism were being avoided in public discourse and education. There was also a sense that recovery work was disconnected from the deeper issues of inequality that underpinned the unrest'.

During summer 2025, a major survey was carried out by Hartlepool Opportunities Partnership, the borough's local infrastructure organisation which supports the

voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector. The HOP team ran over 75 events and consultations across every part of Hartlepool, engaging at least 100 people in each ward, and talking to nearly 1500 people.

People's stated priorities confirmed the importance of building stronger communities: the top scoring issues were 'safety and security' at 21 per cent, with 'community togetherness and cohesion' at 17 per cent, and 'regeneration, high streets and heritage' at 14 per cent.

Considerations

All this evidence, repeated in different ways by people across the borough, and which has been tested in feedback sessions with elected councillors from different parties, and with agencies and community groups, shapes a set of positive approaches should be taken to work together for stronger communities in our borough:

- Closing the distances between services and residents, rebuilding trust and connections (*developing 'linking' relationships*)
- Maximising the positive impact which existing assets, services, initiatives and activities can make (*including through promoting restorative approaches to increase confidence in the criminal justice system and contribute to feelings of safety and security, and through pursuing public health-based approaches*)
- Developing services for young people which are fun and enjoyable, and which address issues around aspiration, connection and safety
- Supporting people through change and challenges, including those that result from the increasing diversity of the borough, and issues around the impact of migration (*developing 'bridging' relationships*)
- Handling issues in honest, open and confident ways - including through clearer communication by the council and other agencies
- Increasing opportunities for participation
- Promoting pride within and for the borough

These approaches can be summarised under four broad headings:

- **Close the gaps:** Build connections and links
- **Extend the reach:** Engage wider numbers of people
- **Handle things in healthy ways:** Recognise opportunities and make the most of them. Identify shared challenges and deal with these openly, with confidence and honesty

- **Do it creatively:** Involve and include people through culture, arts, sport, and participation

These approaches can be used to take action in a full range of areas, including **democracy** (leadership, engagement, participation, developing democratic resilience and rebuilding trust and connection); **identity** (promoting pride and heritage, celebrating our cultures, citizenship and belonging, and sharing public spaces); **inclusion and opportunities** (tackling disadvantage, discrimination, racism and other prejudices, and promoting equality and opportunities, including economic opportunities); **safety and security** (building community safety, tackling crime, addressing hate crime and extremism, and using restorative approaches as appropriate); **handling change** (understanding and supporting all sections of the community – older people, young people, all residents in a borough shaped by changing demography, new community members, support to migrants, promoting integration and cohesion, including through ‘grasping the nettle’ and finding appropriate ways to discuss contested issues around race and demographic change, and to stand up to intolerance); **supporting youth and education** (building aspiration and achievement – in schools, colleges, skills and community learning, including through ESOL, and activities and opportunities for young people and community members); **promoting health and well-being** (public health initiatives, social prescribing, people supporting each other and agencies showing that they care and are addressing peoples’ needs).

Agencies can and will use these approaches on the basis of their existing plans. This strategy is not about replacing or undoing all the forward planning that different organisations have already done.

It suggests ways in which activities can be extended and tilted so that we make the most of them to contribute to cohesion.

For example, Hartlepool Council has organised its work and services around three broad themes of people, place and potential, and is refreshing its statement of values and how it promotes and communicates these. Everything in this strategy is consistent with those commitments and approaches – whilst emphasising the importance of opportunities for people to participate and work to close the perceived ‘gap’ between residents and their council – an organisation whose sole purpose is to work for residents’ interests and the good of the borough.

What's happening – and what we will do

Since summer 2024, Hartlepool Council and a wide range of partner organisations have been working together to address issues around cohesion and to strengthen our communities. Initially organised through a 'Silver Recovery Group', agencies and voluntary sector groups have addressed key themes, with overall approaches and oversight provided by elected councillors, and with financial and legal management of the work. These key themes are:

- Welfare and health
- Business and economy
- Young people
- Restorative justice
- Pride in Place
- Diversity
- Media and communications

To build on this track record of collaboration and positive activity, this strategy confirms that these themes should be carried forward to organise future work.

This section of the strategy goes through the themes and, for each one, covers these points:

- Work which has been done to date
- Some examples of future planned work *(the indications given here of commitments now being applied do not cover all the positive steps being taken and planned by agencies and community organisations)*
- How planned work will help Hartlepool progress with the approaches set out above *(close the gaps; extend the reach; handle things in healthy ways; do it creatively)* in a wider range of action areas *(including democracy, identity, inclusion, safety and security, handling change, education and skills development, health and wellbeing)*

Overall approaches to bridging the gaps and rebuilding trust

This strategy recognises the problem of a level of distrust in institutions, and a sense of disconnection between agencies and organisations including the council.

Work to date

Recognising this gap was the first step to closing it, and the ‘recovery’ work since summer 2024 has put an emphasis on partnership working between the council, other agencies, and VCS organisations.

One expression of this is the involvement of a range of the VCS organisations, from long established bodies to the new Diversity Network, in Hartlepool Board.

Some examples of future planned work

Hartlepool Council is refreshing its approach to communications and will build on its track record of community engagement, in order to better connect and relate to residents and service users. One aspect of this could be promoting the principles which inform ‘Make Every Contact Count’ (MECC) training. Through this public health approach, an organisation’s staff team members use routine interactions to promote health and wellbeing through brief conversations and consistent, concise information.

Acting more widely in line with a proposal in the Health Impact Assessment, the council will increasingly show how community engagement is used to shape decisions.

The Council, and other partners will hold an increased number of community engagement events, including listening and dialogue events. A key vehicle for these could be the development of Neighbourhood Forums currently being considered by Hartlepool Board. Another option would be refreshing the current ‘surgery’ system, which is a key way for elected representatives to hear directly from residents.

Voluntary and community sector organisations already involve over 2000 residents in delivering services, with many more people benefiting from their work. Building on this strong base, organisations will further extend the reach of their services and activities, providing new opportunities for people to participate and to be involved.

Though making use of a shared commitment to the borough’s new infrastructure organisation - Hartlepool Opportunities Partnership - and in other ways, VCS

organisations will increasingly work in partnership and collaboration in order to maximise the positive impact of their programmes and events.

How this will help

Rebuilding trust and connections between agencies and residents will not happen overnight, and cannot be a matter of words and gestures.

To feel worthwhile and to be sustained, improved engagement and participation has to feed through to improved and more responsive service delivery – and to increased levels of awareness and understanding by residents of the issues public services are working on, and the challenges they face.

Welfare and health

Agencies in Hartlepool immediately recognised the importance of addressing welfare and health issues as a central component both of the response to the events of July 2024, and more generally as a central element of work to build stronger communities.

This is an example of Hartlepool leading the way: our borough is one of a relatively small number of areas nationally which handled the events positively through a ‘health’ lens.

The Hartlepool approach recognises the multiple health dimensions of issues linked to community cohesion and resilience. Health issues can feed into divisions and problems in social relations, by leading to isolation and withdrawal. In a way which mirrors this, peoples’ health and well-being can be exacerbated by direct and indirect experience of community tension. Hartlepool agencies recognise the psychological dimensions of poor social relations, and the way that this can provide the ground for disinformation and divisive narratives to take hold. This results in positive awareness of the need to respond to the range of issues with sensitivity and awareness of emotional and psychological factors.

The borough also benefits from the popular and well-co-ordinated ‘Pool Together’ initiative. Building on the kind of mutual support that developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, this plan is about ‘bringing people together, addressing distrust, loneliness and isolation and building collective community action ... a simple but ambitious plan to get us all actively connecting across our streets, neighbourhoods, communities, workplaces and the entire town, "spreading ripples of kindness across the town"’.

Work to date

Agencies have maintained provision of normal health services whilst doing extra to assist people who were affected by issues raised by the July 2024 disorder.

Discussion on this theme has led to an increased emphasis on the need for access to mental health services and well-being support.

Recent recovery work on welfare and health has included the commissioning of the Health Impact Assessment referred to previously.

Some examples of future planned work

Agencies intend to adopt and extend key recommendations from the Health Impact Assessment. These include monitoring and measuring the long-term impact of people affected by or vulnerable to community tensions impacting on their health and wellbeing; strengthening mental health and wellbeing support; and providing emotional and preventative support for young people

Hartlepool's Educational Psychology Team have been commissioned to provide training and support to agencies which may need to deal with 'shock events' and disputed issues.

Pool Together are continuing their programme of activities, and an increasing number of organisations are getting involved. Its September 2025 Week of Action will be a focus for Pool Together to extend further and promote its work.

How this will help

The Health Impact Assessment provides clear evidence of the links between health and wellbeing and good social connections between people. Health problems can lead people to withdraw from each other and from active engagement – but participation in activities from accessible leisure programmes to simple socialising can increase peoples' sense of purpose and generate benefits from having a wider network to relate to.

Business, economy and infrastructure

The recovery group provided and organised practical support to the businesses affected by the July 2024 events, including repair of physical infrastructure, and measures to boost confidence.

Agencies recognise the importance of addressing issues of poverty and deprivation, not only because of the material needs that people have, but as a basis for people to feel more positive about their place and their connections with other people.

Work to date

Opportunities for employment and training have been sustained and extended, with an increasingly diverse range of people signing up to Employment and Skills courses.

A range of statutory and voluntary organisations provide welfare rights advice, seeking to ensure take up of benefits to which Hartlepool people are entitled, as a way of building the maximum possible financial stability in the community.

Community Hubs have been maintained as bases for multi-agency provision, and as welcoming and supportive places for people to access services and activities, and to mix socially and connect with other residents.

Some examples of future planned work

In partnership with businesses and the Combined Authority, the council, other agencies and education providers will continue to bring in investment to offer training and skills development, taking opportunities to extend this provision.

Hartlepool will build on its positive reputation for recognising and addressing literacy challenges.

Efforts will continue to retain and attract employment to the borough.

How this will help

Employment, meeting unmet needs, increasing income and pride, skills development and the connections that come from taking part in activities and accessing services through shared spaces all contribute to cohesion and peoples' wellbeing.

Young people

One illustration of Hartlepool's caring attitude towards young people was a series of immediate decisions in relation to those children and youths who came to be involved in the July 2024 disorder. As detailed in the Health Impact Report, our borough 'was one of the few areas in the country where children involved in the unrest were not formally charged. This outcome reflected strong collaboration between the police and the Council's Community Safety Partnership and was shaped by a "child-first" approach. Each case was individually assessed and dealt with at the most appropriate level, avoiding criminal convictions. All children received youth conditional cautions instead of being brought before the courts. As part of this process, they took part in restorative justice activities, including direct mediation with frontline police officers and meaningful community work. This included helping with the police memorial garden and attending sessions where local residents shared victim impact statements'.

This approach did not involve downplaying the seriousness of the issue, but a determination to find effective ways to deal with the disorder and reduce the risk of future occurrences.

Work to date

A range of positive initiatives to involve young people in sport and cultural activities have been run by grassroots organisations including Transformers and Hartlepool Sport, and include one-off events such as a Kabaddi tournament which ran in Millhouse Leisure Centre in July 2025.

Examples of future planned work

The Education Partnership North East (which includes Hartlepool Sixth Form College) is developing its strategic response to the socio-economic challenges facing Hartlepool and the wider region.

Action will be taken on the proposal in the Health Impact Assessment to provide emotional support for young people in relation to community issues.

There will be new investment in youth facilities and programmes through the Local Youth Transformation Pilot.

The Sport England Place Expansion Partnership will also lead to opportunities for young people – and other community members – to participate in a range of sporting activities, which will be run in ways that enhance and contribute to social cohesion and strong community relations (guidelines and toolkits developed by the Belong network will be used by organisations including StreetGames to help maximise these benefits).

How this will help

Concerning issues about low aspiration levels, relatively poor educational achievement and a sense of isolation and vulnerability on the part of some of our young people are a major priority for us to address. Apart from the unnecessary unhappiness and missed opportunities that these create, they can lead to harm for and by young people who are affected.

These issues can be reduced and minimised – and turned into positive experiences – when colleges and schools positively and proactively engage their students, and involve parents and family members in a shared understanding of the learning that's taking place; when there is a choice of accessible and welcoming activities and facilities to use; and when support is available to young people through any challenges, and to identify steps into training and employment. Youth activities and programmes should be run in

ways that provide appropriate opportunities for connections and links between young people from different backgrounds, helping reduce the concerns, prejudices and sense of vulnerability that some young people face and replacing these feelings with the confidence and skills to handle difference and complexity that will benefit young people and our communities in future.

Restorative justice

Hartlepool's record of using restorative justice approaches in response to evidence of community division is another example of good practice. From the Restorative Circles run in local communities to the decision of our Police and Crime Commissioner to visit and speak to some of those imprisoned for rioting in July 2024, Hartlepool has combined imagination and a commitment to effectively address unacceptable behaviour. As the Health Impact Assessment report states, the restorative justice approach is 'an innovative and highly constructive approach, which allowed young people to take responsibility without criminalisation, supported community healing, and was nationally recognised for its strong evaluation and focus on rebuilding trust'.

Agencies in the borough have reflected on other aspects of how they identify and understand the warning signs of community tensions, averting these where possible and managing them when necessary.

Some people have voiced concerned and supportive criticism about whether July 2024's events could have been avoided, with some VCS representatives stating that 'warning signs' had been evident in the months, weeks, days and hours prior, but that these had been downplayed by officialdom.

Work to date

Any ongoing disagreements between and within organisations about such issues are eclipsed by a shared determination to extend and deepen 'tension monitoring', to build on the existing good practice of daily contact between the police, council colleagues, housing providers and others.

Restorative justice approaches have also been confirmed and extended. The value of these is best illustrated by quotes from people involved: a man who was imprisoned, having served several previous sentences prior to the one he received for his part in the

July 2024 disorder said to community safety professionals, ‘this is the first prison sentence I've actually benefited from, and it's because you've shown an interest in me’. Staff at a local sports centre who engaged in a Restorative Circle following ongoing incidents of anti-social behaviour and criminality, said ‘this is the first time we've felt properly listened to’.

Examples of future planned work

Tension monitoring approaches will be reviewed and refreshed, with opportunities to be involved extended to a range of VCS organisations. There will be ongoing initiatives through the Police and Crime Commissioner's Hate Crime Partnership to address hate crime and celebrate diversity. As part of all this, work will be developed to regularly assess community sentiment and take account of peoples' feelings in our neighbourhoods: new neighbourhood forums could be a key focus. This work will involve more thorough and proactive monitoring of social media, so as to pick up on and take opportunities, where appropriate, to respond to views and questions that are being shared and raised online, as well as to counter mis- and dis-information.

How this will help

Effective work to address criminal behaviour arising from and causing community divisions will help ensure that people feel safer in our borough.

Hartlepool is leading the way in showing that what works is a combination of robust policing and enforcement as appropriate, together with engagement which involves understanding peoples' reasons and motivations; providing opportunities to face up to those in a meaningful way; and to take steps to put things right.

Pride in place

During the consultation that shaped this strategy, many residents raised complaints and shared negative views about aspects of life in Hartlepool: services not being as accessible as they should be, poor transport links, the pressures resulting from economic change and the cost-of-living-crisis.

But any negative view that a worker from outside the borough might raise was met with a defence of Hartlepool, a reminder of all the positives the place has to offer, and an insistence on the need for Hartlepool people to be recognised and valued.

This combination of positions shows that Hartlepool people are proud of their place. Even when residents are making criticisms, these are a form of ambition, a desire to see improvements. If deindustrialisation and the fraying of social fabric has put our pride under pressure, the task now is to confirm all the things that people can be positive about – and honest about the challenges and problems the borough faces.

Work to date

The knock to the town's reputation and image which July 2024 created was the spur for many people to assert the value of community spirit. As a Hartlepool community worker said at the time, 'the events made us feel even more passionate about supporting our community ... a large group of residents gathered by 9 am the morning after the riots to start the clean-up, with volunteers being helped on with teas and coffees from other members of the community ... it was a shining light out of what had been a horrible night within the community, but it really shows that the majority in Hartlepool want what's best'.

The work of promoting Hartlepool's pride, history, heritage and positive community spirit is taking place in wider and sustained ways. Creative projects are underway to refresh the way we tell our story and celebrate our history and identity. Over £600,000 is coming to the borough from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to fund the Tides of Change programme, including redeveloping the Museum of Hartlepool and restoring the borough's paddle steamer museum ship PS Wingfield Castle. Other initiatives which will open up opportunities to take part in culture and sport include improvements at the Art Gallery to the new leisure centre and health facility on the Marina.

At local level, there has been installation of CCTV and lighting and the cutting back of bushes to make walking routes and parks safer: such work will be rolled out further including through using new funds which the council and partner organisations draw into the borough.

Examples of future planned work

2026 will see confident and proactive work to promote Hartlepool's facilities and opportunities, first of all to our borough's residents, but also more widely.

Funding for important work will come from the government's Pride in Place strategy. The core objectives of this initiative are entirely in line with the strategy that has been developed in Hartlepool:

- To build stronger communities. All places should have strong relationships and a collective sense of belonging to their community. This helps bring people together to build community cohesion and resilience, helping people to feel proud of their area and safe in their neighbourhood.
- To create thriving places: vibrant neighbourhoods and communities with busy high streets, a good range of local amenities and high-quality physical infrastructure.
- To empower people to take back control; Everybody should be empowered and in control of their lives and have a say over the future of their community.

How this will help

Initiatives promoted through Pride in Place will have a positive impact in our local communities, and encouraging participation and engagement will help build connections and trust between residents and the agencies involved in the programme.

Honesty about the challenges we face does not take away from the positives we should promote. Making the most of what Hartlepool offers, and celebrating our identity and rich history can contribute to a deserved and helpful sense of pride in our place.

Diversity

Our borough is changing in small but significant ways. Compared to most places, including in the north east, Hartlepool's minority ethnic population is relatively small.

The fact that it has increased over recent years has generated discussion and consideration in the borough. As with some of the other issues covered in this strategy, there are different views and feelings amongst people, and these can depend on factors such as position, experience and pre-existing views.

Many people who have moved to the borough, or who have come here for a short while, dispersed whilst legal applications for refugee status are being considered, emphasise the many positives of our place: its location by the sea, the welcome and friendliness they have experienced, and the opportunities they can see.

Many life-long Hartlepool people are either not affected by demographic changes, or are relaxed about them, or see them as entirely positive, with the contributions to culture and to the workforce that new community members are offering.

Others have concerns about the impact on public services of immigration and asylum dispersal, and have questions and sometimes anxieties about how they personally – and the community as a whole – will and should handle the dynamics that result from increasing diversity.

Concerns, questions and anxieties are understandable.

Who responds to them?

The community engagement work which fed into this strategy shows that some people in agencies have felt a reluctance, nervousness, lack of confidence in discussing racialised issues. They have not wanted to make tricky issues worse.

In this context, a small number of people – particularly influential opinion-formers from outside Hartlepool, even internationally – have been able to connect to concerns and questions and turn them into divisive attitudes, stirring prejudice and racism.

It is not only black and minority ethnic residents who have felt a growing anti-immigrant mood in the town as a result.

The responses to this have included people ‘going along’ with the antipathy and opposition, and finding that they respond to developments reported in the news, as well as to misinformation and disinformation, with ever deeper worry.

Others have begun work to build understanding on the basis of honesty and fact-finding, and to find ways to bring people together in ways which build understanding – which does not always mean agreement.

New community organisations centred on minority ethnic community members have developed – not to separate people out, but with a conscious intention to build links and make a success of our diversity, and to show that difference can be handled and need not lead to divisions and dispute.

Work to date

Many discussions on these kinds of issues took place in the days and weeks after the July 2024 rioting.

Different views were expressed, showing the challenge of arriving at a shared view even on a particular event. As the Health Impact Assessment states, people had disaggregated experiences, and their varied interpretations depended on factors including ethnicity, personal outlooks, and the extent of contact which they had with people who were directly involved.

One focus for consideration was whether the disorder was racist or ‘far-right’, as was widely reported of the wave of rioting across the UK as a whole.

In Hartlepool, many people from agencies and the community saw other factors as key: frustration about general living conditions, the draw of excitement, the opportunity to be in lively confrontation with the police and – it seemed to some at the time – to get away with that. Such factors are the main ones that people who were arrested for involvement have talked about.

At the same time, there was an undeniable content of racism at work on the day, with mosques targeted and many black and minority ethnic feeling targeted and vulnerable.

There's been thoughtful consideration of these different views through the listening programmes which have been run since summer 2024. This has included alertness to the differential impacts on different sections of community. And it's led to new opportunities for agencies to hear voices from the community, particularly from marginalised groups.

Examples of future planned work

Building on this experience, agencies and community organisations will continue to promote healthy conversations about the challenges and opportunities that result from demographic changes in our borough, and to tackle racism and prejudice as part of this.

It's important to find the effective ways to do this – not just through talk and discussion, but through participatory activities, culture and sport. Partnership working and honest exchange is important – not just between people who agree but, more importantly, between people who see things differently.

Work is underway to develop the 'Welcome to Hartlepool guide for anyone new to the borough.

How this will help

Whatever national policies are developed and implemented on issues such as migration, people in Hartlepool want to handle the resulting issues in ways which are positive for our borough, avoiding tension and disruption and building up good relationships, integration and cohesion.

Media and communications

It's important to communicate and promote the work set out in this strategy in ways which are clear, accessible and authentic. This means transparency, openness and honesty about challenging issues, and positivity about the good things that are happening and the positive directions that many people are taking.

This approach is the antidote to the impact of the misinformation and demoralisation which some people seem to want to spread.

Work to date

Steps are already underway on communications strategies to rebuild trust in local services. This isn't just a matter of words and presentation, but about dialogue and assertion. Hartlepool Council, for example, aims to correct the earlier problem of its 'limited visibility' even when – especially when – its people are doing good work. As part of this, it will address the issues in what the Health Impact Assessment described as perceptions of a 'risk averse' communications approach, which is understandable in

relation to complex and tricky issues, but which itself carries the risks of further undermining trust and deepening institutional disengagement.

Future planned work

Effective communications will have a tone which understands the need for emotional ‘containment’ as well as information-sharing (as described in the Health Impact Assessment). This means avoiding ‘hype’ and acknowledging the challenges, so that communication feels honest, balanced and reliable.

Communications should be personalised, putting forward a ‘human face’ on behalf of the council and other agencies, and sharing information in accessible language and – wherever possible – in a direct and engaging tone.

Plans for crisis communications are being developed, as our society is one in which any town or borough can expect to experience ‘shock’ events, usually from the ripples of things that happen elsewhere.

How this will help

The need for such ‘crisis’ steps will be reduced insofar as the media and communications work of local agencies involves a sustained push back against misinformation, including on social media’ brings in trusted local voices; and shifts the balance from top-down messaging toward more participatory forms of communication, including the community engagement events and dialogue sessions mentioned earlier.

Governance, impact measurement and evaluation: how we will know that the steps we are taking are working

Hartlepool Board will oversee the implementation of Hartlepool’s cohesion strategy. This new body will also govern the local delivery of the Pride in Place programme, which will see £20 million spent on neighbourhood improvements, with spend from an additional ‘impact fund’ of one-and-a-half-million beginning with in months. The Board will develop to take on other responsibilities, with the ambition of connecting and linking a range of positive initiatives so as to ensure they are reinforcing each other for maximum positive benefit. The Board draws representatives from the council, key agencies, the community sector and faith groups.

To support the Board in monitoring and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of Hartlepool’s cohesion strategy for stronger communities, partners will record and report the activity and outputs resulting from future planned work, e.g. number of events held, numbers and profile of people attending etc.

In addition, partners will identify and agree a range of factors to measure which relate to each of the following components which contribute to stronger communities.

Wherever possible, these will be factors which agencies already collect information on, or which can be assessed through the use of proxy indicators: it is not intended to generate a new apparatus of large-scale surveys in relation to this strategy.

They should also be factors which can be measured recurrently, on a regular basis, in line with agencies' existing practice, so as to track developments on these factors over time.

In addition to this collection and consideration of statistical information, partners will hold regular listening sessions with residents and service users from different parts of the borough in order to discuss and reflect on the factors, and on how people are feeling about them.

Factors and indicators to measure

Democratic resilience

Measures could include levels of voter turnout; expressions of confidence on the part of key elected representatives about the quality of local democratic process and their preparedness to address key issues in Hartlepool; the outcomes of peer review exercises.

Participation

General measures could include the numbers of people attending key facilities and events, and the numbers of people engaged with and volunteering for VCS organisations, and the extent of 'reach' of these organisations.

Neighbourliness and belonging

Measures could include results from the annual residents' survey, alongside qualitative information from the listening sessions.

Respect and good relations

Measures could include survey results, qualitative information from the listening sessions, and information on hate crimes and incidents from the police and other agencies, and consideration of trends and issues identified through tension monitoring and community sentiment analysis.

Trust, safety and security

Measures could include survey results, alongside supplementary information from the police and Police and Crime Commissioner's engagement work, alongside qualitative information from the listening sessions.

Information on these factors will be considered by the council and partner organisations alongside information on a range of additional influences on cohesion:

- The quality and health of social infrastructure, including the voluntary and community sector
- Socio-demographic trends
- The impact of particular events and developments, including the ‘ripple effect’ of national and international issues

Thank you: *This strategy was developed through the inputs of people from a wide range of organisations and agencies which work in and for Hartlepool, and was informed by the views of hundreds of local people who took time to speak with the team from Belong – the cohesion and integration network.*

Belong appreciates the honesty which everyone showed in these discussions.

Whatever differences of view there were about particular policy areas, the consultation was shaped by everyone’s commitment to improving Hartlepool for all its people.



Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

11th March 2026

Report of: Director (Housing, Growth and Communities)

Subject: REVIEW OF MEMORIAL BENCHES AND CONSIDERATION OF GUIDELINES FOR TEMPORARY MEMORIALS

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. The purpose of this report is to agree an approach to the siting of memorial benches around the borough, and more widely consider how memorials and tributes are managed.

3. Background

3.1. During the public consultations on the conservation areas in Seaton Carew and the Headland several residents expressed concerns regarding the proliferation of memorial benches in these areas. This reflected anecdotal evidence pick up by officers at other times. This led to an investigation into the issue and the completion of a review of these benches across the town. To fully understand the current situation, and until suitable future arrangements have been agreed, new applications for memorial benches have been paused.

3.2. An audit was undertaken to understand the number of benches in each location, their condition and how many of them had a dedication.

3.3. The locations where memorial benches are generally placed are:

- a) The Headland (115)
- b) Seaton Promenade (112)
- c) Ward Jackson Park (48)

There are also a handful of other spaces across the town where they are found such as Seaton Park, Rossmere Park and Burn Valley Gardens.

3.4. Seaton Carew and the Headland in particular are overwhelmed with benches. So much so that you cannot walk between some, and in other cases they obstruct access for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Other issues include challenges maintaining the areas around the benches. It is often difficult to remove litter, clean and weed the paths, because they are placed so close together.

3.5. There are no detailed records relating to ownership of the benches already installed. A person is sent information regarding the upkeep of a bench when it is purchased (see **Appendix 1**). Unfortunately records have not been retained to identify the owner of a bench therefore it has not been possible to remind them of their obligation to look after their bench.

3.6. As well as the high number of benches present in popular locations there is also an issue with:

- a) the condition of some benches, and
- b) the number of tributes that have been attached, either permanently or at the time of a significant date.

Photographs are provided in **Appendix 2**, to show the challenges.

4. Proposals

4.1. Given the condition of some of the benches and the lack of records available it is considered that action is required to address the current situation. It is proposed that:

a) Notices are attached to benches in the worst condition asking individuals to get in touch with the council so information can be provided in order for them to bring the bench up to an agreed standard or to have the bench removed.

b) Should an individual not wish to carry out work to the bench, or it is beyond a state of repair, it will be offered back to them or the opportunity would be given to retain the plaque, if that would be preferred.

c) If no individuals come forward claiming ownership, the bench would be removed and stored, along with the plaque for an agreed period and then disposed of.

4.2. Prior to carrying out the above a communication plan would be agreed to notify the public that these proposed actions will begin, so individuals will have prior warning that they may receive a notice, and to remind those who have purchased benches in the past of the agreement to maintain it.

4.3. The process for removal of benches via notices is known to be used by other local authorities to address similar situations. It is considered that this is the only practical option to warn people of the issue, given the incomplete records that are currently held.

4.4. Feedback from residents and the recent audit has concluded that given the high number of benches now in situ, there is a need to look at other options for people to remember loved ones and how the council currently manages temporary memorials.

5. Alternative memorial options to benches

5.1. The high number of benches in some areas of the town has reached a point where it is not possible to install any more. It is therefore proposed that alternative options should be investigated. At the moment benches are dedicated to individuals who have died. Introducing different forms of memorialisation

would provide an opportunity for people to celebrate or mark other life events, for examples marriages or births.

5.2. These alternative solutions could include:

A Memory Tree, such as the one recently installed at Stranton Cemetery. Made from Corten steel these trees offer an opportunity to remember a loved one or mark a significant life event by purchasing an engraved leaf to be securely placed on the tree. A tree, located in a park or open space, would provide open access to the memorial and an identified place for individuals to remember or celebrate.

Alternative style benches, where benches are installed with an option for multiple plaques to be placed on them. This reduces the number of benches in popular areas, discourages the provision of mementoes on benches as people seek to individualise their own. It also provides more control over the maintenance of each one, providing the opportunity to lease a plaque for a set period of time and renew it after that. This would offer an ongoing income towards the maintenance of the bench which would be carried out by the council.

Tree planting in public spaces, enabling individuals to purchase a tree. This would allow people to commemorate an event in a sustainable way that supports the environment in Hartlepool. In developing this further consideration would need to be given as to how each tree is identified, to ensure that this fits in with the surrounding area, for example, in many situations it would not be appropriate to have a dedication plaque on each tree, but this might be something that could be recorded elsewhere. Should a tree be vandalised or did not grow, thought would need to be given as to how trees are replaced, and the resource implications for this.

6. Temporary Memorials

6.1. The high number of benches in some areas of the town has reached a point where it is not possible to install any more. It is therefore proposed that alternative options should be investigated. At the moment benches are dedicated to individuals who have died. Introducing different forms of memorialisation would provide an opportunity for people to celebrate or mark other life events, for examples marriages or births.

6.2. Whilst memorials are seen on benches, a connected issue is more informal memorials that can develop on sites where there has been a road traffic accident or an incident where an individual is tragically harmed. It is considered that given the review that is currently being carried out, this is an opportunity to develop a policy which will help the council deal with such matters, on council owned land, in the future.

6.3. It is accepted that the grieving process is a private and emotional process of which the council has no wish to interfere or intrude, especially in the immediate days after an event. The development of a policy is not to result in the immediate removal of a memorial, but to control the establishment of something which could cause upset to others, or provide a distraction, for example if located on or close to a road. It is proposed that it would cover the following principles:

- a) After an incident an officer of the council would liaise with appropriate parties to discuss any memorials and their location.
- b) At an appropriate time, a discussion regarding the length of time a temporary memorial could remain in a location would be agreed.
- c) A notice would be placed on any temporary memorial to let individuals know when it would be removed, and where any items would be kept for a period of one month, should someone wish to retrieve these.
- d) If, on the anniversary of an incident, a temporary memorial is put in place, officers would again liaise with relevant parties to discuss the appropriate length of time this could remain.
- e) Where memorial sites are close to roads an assessment would be carried out by appropriate officers and suggestions made in order to ensure they would not impact on road safety.
- f) Where memorial sites are close to properties, residents' views may be taken into consideration in deciding where items are placed and the length of time they should remain.
- g) If a bench, tree or similar more permanent memorial is requested in a location, this would be considered on a case by case basis.
- h) Information would be provided to relevant parties regarding opportunities for a more permanent memorial, through the options which existed at the time.

6.4. It is proposed that developing a policy, based on these principles, would provide officers and other individuals involved in this process, a clear steer as to how to proceed.

7. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	The maintenance of each bench is down to the person that paid for its installation. The level of maintenance varies greatly but as each bench sits on council owned land most claims come directly to the council. There is no way of passing the liability back to the owners of the benches, because no signed agreements are available indicating ownership. It is therefore good practice to ensure that benches are in a good state of repair.
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Financial Considerations	<p>There is a continued need to invest in maintaining some of the benches. Unless a bench is completely broken it can be easier to repair it, as a lack of ownership information makes it extremely difficult to communicate that repairs or removal are necessary. If it cannot be repaired it will be removed, at a cost to the council.</p> <p>The proposed review of benches should remove some of these pressures. Alternative solutions to benches also allow an opportunity to consider long-term maintenance and costs from the start of the implementation, so these can be accounted for.</p>
Subsidy Control	N/A
Legal Considerations	<p>There are potential considerations regarding the liabilities faced over challenges such as the removal of a bench if there is a dispute over the condition between the council and the owner, in particular when ownership details are not available. Every effort will be made to ensure that owners are contacted and given sufficient time to make representations, prior to removing any benches.</p>
Single Impact Assessment	<p>It is possible for anyone to pay to install a bench in a location agreed with the Council. Officers review the wording on any plaques to make sure it is not derogatory or inflammatory in any way. Similar principles would apply to any new form of memorial.</p>
Staff Considerations	<p>The cost of any installation is covered in the purchase price. As noted above, there are costs to the service if a bench needs to be removed or cleaned e.g. graffiti.</p> <p>As with benches, such costs would be accommodated in any new memorial proposals developed.</p>
Asset Management Considerations	<p>All benches are placed on council owned land. The same principles would be used for any new form of memorial.</p>
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	<p>The benches installed are either made from a mix of hard wood or cast iron and hardwood. All the hardwood is responsibly sourced but can still have an impact on the original habitat, through the felling, processing and transportation to the UK.</p>

	Consideration to the impact on the environment of any new memorials would be taken into account as part of the development process.
Consultation	<p>Internal consultation has been carried out with officers responsible for the installation of benches.</p> <p>Information has been drawn from other consultations where benches have been mentioned, for example the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for Seaton Carew and the Headland.</p> <p>Once an agreed way forward with alternative options for memorial benches is decided, consultation will be carried out, where appropriate regarding types of memorials and their locations.</p>

8. Recommendations

8.1. In light of the audit that has been completed it is recommended that Members

- a) Agree to the removal of any benches which are in a state of disrepair and offer these back to the owners, along with the plaques as outlined in para 4.1.
- b) Approve the new draft agreement, provided in **Appendix 3**, for the installation of any future benches or other memorials (this could include celebratory events) that are installed.
- c) Agree to officers investigating alternative options to benches to allow individuals to celebrate life events and loved ones.
- d) Approve the development of a policy regarding the establishment, management and removal of temporary memorials.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

9.1. This will ensure that the council:

- a) Can provide a selection of benches for use that are safe and in good general condition.
- b) Can take a more strategic approach to the location of benches in the future.
- c) Can improve the records it has with regard to information on the parties responsible for the benches and any other memorials on its land.

- d) Take time to look at alternative options to benches so individuals can celebrate life events as well as remember loved ones that have passed.

10. Background Papers

10.1. None

11. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 10.02.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 11.02.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 10.02.2026

APPENDIX 1

Information currently sent to individuals who purchase a memorial bench

- *The Local Authority does not accept any responsibility for the maintenance of the memorial bench/plaque or for any repairs in the event of any act of vandalism or other damage howsoever caused, should the memorial bench/plaque be damaged beyond repair, the Local Authority reserves the right to remove the memorial bench/plaque and not replace it.*
- *If located on the sea front it is not unusual for the bench to show signs of rust on the metal work within the first year of installation. Advice can be provided regarding future refurbishment of the bench for which the purchaser will be liable for any costs involved.*
- *The bench would remain in situ for the life of the bench and only removed if vandalised / damaged beyond repair*
- *The memorial plaques must be those as supplied by Stranton Cemetery, alternatives may be acceptable if approved by the local authority.*
- *Although the Local Authority has no objection to fresh floral tributes being placed upon the memorial bench in recognition of anniversaries etc, we respectfully request that all such fresh floral tributes be removed within one week. Artificial floral tributes, trinkets, photographs and all other such memorabilia are not permitted to be placed on the bench either temporarily or permanently and will be removed.*

APPENDIX 2

Examples of benches in a state of disrepair and with tributes attached



APPENDIX 3

Draft application for the installation of new memorial benches and plaques.

Parks & Open Spaces

Bench No. _____

Civic Centre
Victoria Road



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Memorial Seat/Plaque Application Form

Name of Applicant (known as the Donor)

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone No. E-mail

Preferred Location (*Exact location subject to agreement with Hartlepool Council*)

.....
.....

Plaque Inscription (please print clearly and use BLOCK CAPITALS *wording is subject to approval*).

.....
.....

Signing this application form will confirm your agreement to the **Terms and Conditions of the Donated Memorial Seats** (see over)

Signature Date of Acceptance

Data Protection: *We need your personal data in order to provide you with Council services that you apply for or receive from us and also for where we are required to use information in order to meet our statutory obligations. We will only collect the personal data that is absolutely necessary and any information we collect about you will be strictly in accordance with the Data Protection legislation and other statutory obligations which we are bound by.*

For Office Use Only:

Bench Number Fee £ Date of Expiry

Location of Bench

Installed on

Donated Memorial Seats – Terms and Conditions Seats

1. Memorial seats are donated for a fixed term of 10 years from the Date of Acceptance (as shown on Donor's signed Memorial Seat Application Form. After 10 years, the Donor has the option to renew their donation by way of a new seat or have the existing one refurbished for a further ten year period **(subject to the condition of the seat, the Council shall have absolute discretion as to whether the seat can be refurbished)**. Charges will be based on current rates at the time of renewal. The Council will contact the Donor towards the end of the 10 year period.
2. It is the responsibility of the Donor to contact the Council with any change of address, otherwise the Council will use the Donor's last known address. If this proves to be incorrect the Council is not obliged to pursue this matter further and the seat will be removed by the Council following the expiry of the 10 year period.
3. Once donated the seat becomes the property of the Council and will remain so for the life of the seat.
4. **No maintenance will be carried out on any seat donated under this Agreement.** The seats installed are designed to require no maintenance.
5. The memorial seat must be purchased from Hartlepool Council. No other seat will be allowed to be sited.
6. The memorial seat can only be removed from its location or re-located by a representative of the Council. The Council will liaise with the Donor regarding removal or re-location of the seat. However, the Council shall have absolute discretion as to removal and/or relocation of the seat.
7. **The Council will not be liable for the loss, damage or deterioration of the memorial seat. The Council will look to offer a replacement seat to the Donor but this will be at the standard charge applicable at the time.**
8. The Council will try and accommodate the Donor's preference for the seat location but the final location will be at the discretion of the Council.
9. The Council shall not be held accountable for any future works or planning alterations/changes to the location of the seat or the surrounding areas in the event that the seat needs to be relocated as a result of such works.
10. **Unauthorised items are not permitted.**

Plaques

1. Only plaques ordered via Hartlepool Council can be fixed onto a memorial seat.
2. The Council reserves the right to reject any inscription which it considers to be unsuitable or offensive.
3. The inscription on the plaque, once it has been manufactured, may not be altered or amended by anyone other than a representative of the Council. The Council will remove any such plaque which has been altered without the permission of the Council.
4. If the Donor wishes to make changes to the wording on the plaque after it has been produced or installed, the Donor will be charged for supplying the replacement plaque.

5. If the Donor wishes to add a further plaque to the seat after it has been installed, this is subject to agreement with the Council, the purchase of a further plaque from the Council and the original donation period of ten years will not be extended.
6. The Council will not be liable for the cost of replacing a plaque if it should become stolen, damaged or vandalised. However, the Donor may pay for a replacement plaque, which the Council will fix to the seat free of charge.

Payment

1. Payment **must** be made at the time of the application, prior to the installation of the bench. Cheques to be made payable to Hartlepool Council.



Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

11th March 2026

Report of: Director (Housing, Growth and Communities)
Subject: CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Decision Type: For Information

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)

2. Purpose of Report

2.1. This report provides details on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee which has recently started to meet again. It provides information on the background of the group and the proposed work plan for future months see **Appendix 1**.

3. Background

3.1. A meeting of Adult and Community Based Services Committee in March 2025 considered draft documents relating to the Headland and Seaton Carew Conservation Areas. During discussions members proposed that a Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) should be introduced, to provide those scrutinising conservation issues with independent comments.

3.2. CAACs originate from previous national planning policy which proposed local planning authorities should consider setting up such groups to, ‘assist in formulating policies for the conservation area (or for several conservation

areas in a particular neighbourhood), and also as a source of advice on planning and other applications which could affect an area'. It suggests that committees should consist 'mainly of people who are not members of the authority; local residential and business interests should be fully represented. In addition to local historical, civic and amenity societies, and local chambers of commerce'.

3.3. The purpose of a CAAC is to support the development of conservation policies and practice by bringing a wider perspective of interest and informed opinion to bear upon the management of the built heritage. A CAAC is intended to operate within the existing legislative and policy advice framework relating to the built heritage.

3.4. In 2005 a CAAC was established in Hartlepool with the remit of commenting on strategic conservation issues. The Committee met on a quarterly basis with the last meeting held in March 2020. Given the previous successful committee which was in place, this has been revived to meet the request of the committee. Those groups which were previously part of the CAAC, were approached to step up again and be part of the group, along with a new opportunity for residents to take part.

3.5. The Terms of Reference and Remit of the committee is provided in **Appendix 2**. These were developed when the service was part of Adult and Community Based Services. They will be updated to reflect the new departmental arrangements and taken to the next available CAAC for agreement.

3.6. The committee is chaired by the current Chair of this committee, with the council's Heritage Champion sitting as the Vice-Chair. A core group of committee members was established, reflecting community groups who have previously taken part and business interests, these representative comprise,

- Elwick Parish Council
- Greatham Parish Council
- Hartlepool Civic Society
- Headland Parish Council
- Park Residents Association
- Northern School of Art
- Business representatives from Seaton Carew and West Park.

Alongside this core group a call out was made to residents who had an interest in conservation areas, via a press release and letters to residents

groups to asking them to reach out to their members. It was proposed that to be a member they,

- must live, work or own property in a conservation area or have another demonstrable interest in it, such as being a regular visitor, a relevant professional qualification i.e. architect or building surveyor, or have good knowledge of Hartlepool's built heritage,
- will be required to briefly to set out their reasons for being on the committee and how they can help positively to meet its objectives and responsibilities.

Applications from interested parties were reviewed by the core members of the CAAC at its first meeting, and eight people were invited to participate in the committee. The selection was based on a review of the applications and a majority vote.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. At the first meeting of the committee in November there was an open discussion regarding the topics that the group may wish to consider. These were then formulated into a programme for further meetings which was agreed at the second meeting of the group in January.
- 4.2. The proposed programme sets out the topics that were highlighted as issues of interest in the first meeting of the committee. Alongside these are proposals for how these could be covered including suggestions of potential speakers and site visits.
- 4.3. During the discussions on the topics to be covered it was highlighted that communication, and in particular how information is passed on to residents, is a cross-cutting issues which is covered by most of the topics. Officers have noted this and will include this in future presentations. In addition, consideration will also be given to developing a small subgroup to focus on this issue and feedback to the group.
- 4.4. In planning the programme an allowance has been made to ensure that there is sufficient time to discuss each item at a meeting, alongside considering any minutes, and ad hoc items that may need to be considered.

5. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	N/A
Financial Considerations	N/A
Subsidy Control	N/A
Legal Considerations	The committee is an advisory group.
Single Impact Assessment	N/A
Staff Considerations	The committee is supported by existing staff as part of their roles.
Asset Management Considerations	There is council land within conservation areas. This group provides an opportunity for an independent voice to be consulted, where appropriate, to changes on that land.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	N/A
Consultation	The group offers a chance for those with an interest in conservation to hear from individuals within conservation areas.

6. Recommendations

6.1. It is recommended that committee note the report for information.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

7.1. Members requested a report be brought to this committee for consideration.

8. Background Papers

8.1. Conservation Area Management Plans, Adult & Community Based Services Committee, 20th March 2025.

9. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 09.02.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 09.02.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 09.02.2026

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME

APPENDIX 1

Topic	Suggested Discussion Points
Historic England Places Panel Action Plan <i>January</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the document and action plan. • Agree elements of the action plan the committee may wish to consider further as future topics for meetings.
Conservation Areas (Three sessions) <i>March May June</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker from Historic England providing an overview on conservation areas. • Review proposed draft brief to produce an appraisal and management plan for Church Street, Conservation Area. • Consider priorities for reviewing remaining conservation areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to the Headland • Review Action Plan for Headland and agree topics for future committee meetings.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to Seaton Carew • Review Action Plan for Seaton Carew and agree topics for future committee meetings.
Conservation and Regeneration with a focus on Church Street <i>August</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to review development areas and buildings in and around Church Street. • Speakers from HBC Development & Growth and / or Hartlepool Development Corporation.
Shop Front and Commercial Frontages Design Guidance <i>October</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker from Planning Policy to provide an overview on Supplementary Planning Documents. • Review existing Shop Front and Commercial Frontages Design Guidance.
Community Engagement in conservation areas <i>December</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing information provided on conservation areas and listed buildings • Consider gaps in information and how this could be solved. • Consider how information can be shared on home improvements with a focus on energy efficiency. •
Heritage at Risk <i>February</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing list of assets considered to be 'at risk' both locally and on the Historic England register.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider additions and deletions.
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APPENDIX 2

Hartlepool Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

Background

Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAACs) originate from previous national planning policy which proposed local planning authorities should consider setting up such groups to,

‘Assist in formulating policies for the conservation area (or for several conservation areas in a particular neighbourhood), and also as a source of advice on planning and other applications which could affect an area’.

It suggested that committees should consist

‘Mainly of people who are not members of the authority; local residential and business interests should be fully represented. In addition to local historical, civic and amenity societies, and local chambers of commerce’.

The purpose of a CAAC is to support the development of conservation policies and practice by bringing a wider perspective of interest and informed opinion to bear upon the management of the built heritage. A CAAC is intended to operate within the existing legislative and policy advice framework relating to the built heritage.

The aims of the CAAC are to,

1. Provide an independent voice on conservation issues;
2. Support the development of conservation policy;
3. Raise awareness of conservation issues;
4. Ensure conservation in Hartlepool aligns with local and national policies and priorities; and
5. Operate independently of the Council’s formal decision-making structures, and to provide advisory and non-binding recommendations to assist the Housing, Growth and Communities Committee to discharge its functions.

Introduction

These Terms of Reference outline the aims of the Hartlepool CAAC, along with roles, responsibilities, and areas of work. Developed to guide the committee, this document will be reviewed annually, to ensure it remains relevant.

The CAAC seeks to bring together a cross section of representatives from all wards in Hartlepool with an interest in conservation, including relevant groups/associations, businesses and residents. The committee will provide comment and direction on

strategic conservation matters across the town, aiming to promote positive dialogue and support constructive conservation

The CAAC will comment on strategic conservation issues, covering the following areas,

Policy

- Advise on any new policy emerging from central government, and the local plan.
- Comment on the integration of conservation into other relevant Council policies and strategies.

Conservation Area Appraisals

- Advise on prioritising which conservation areas should be appraised.
- Should an appraisal be commissioned the committee would feed into this process commenting on the development of any brief, issues raised during the appraisal and have oversight of the delivery of any subsequent work which is recommended.

Development Management

- Comment on development briefs in or near to conservation areas.
- Comment on Supplementary Planning Documents that include conservation matters.

Leaflets on Conservation Issues

- Review the provision of leaflets and advise on areas where there is pressure to provide further information.
- Comment on any new leaflets or other forms of information sharing, for example, webpages.

Grant Schemes

- Should any new grant schemes be offered within the conservation areas the committee will advise on priorities for funding.
- Should there be an opportunity to bid for grant funding for built heritage, the committee will comment on this, including indicative priorities.

Public Realm

- Provide comment on major public realm schemes located within or next to conservation areas or listed buildings.

Locally Listed Buildings

- There is currently a list of 'Locally Listed Buildings' in Hartlepool. These are recognised within the planning process as undesignated heritage assets. From time to time this list is updated and added to, through thematic reviews of building types or when assets are highlighted as part of the planning process. The committee will comment on this process.

Membership

Members of the CAAC serve in an advisory capacity only. They are not members or co-opted members of the Council within the meaning of Section 49(7) of the Local Government Act 2000 or Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011.

CAAC members do not have voting rights on any matter of the Council.

Chair

The committee will be chaired by a councillor, nominated by the Chair of Adult & Community Based Services Committee.

The vice-chair of the committee will be the council's Heritage Champion.

Core Membership

The core membership of the committee will include representatives of groups or organisations in the town who are located within a conservation area or have an interest in conservation. The Chairs/representatives of the following organisations will be approached and asked to nominate a representative,

- Elwick Parish Council
- Greatham Parish Council
- Hartlepool Civic Society
- Headland Parish Council
- Park Residents Association
- Northern School of Art

Business representatives will be sought from the following areas via nominations from Hartlepool Business Forum and Hartlepool Tourism Forum,

- Church Street
- Stranton
- Seaton Carew

Resident Membership

Up to eight residents or individuals with an interest in the town's conservation will sit on the committee. These individuals will be selected by the core members of the committee. To be considered for one of these positions individuals,

- must live, work or own property in a conservation area or have another demonstrable interest in it, such as being a regular visitor, a relevant professional qualification i.e. architect or building surveyor, or have good knowledge of Hartlepool's built heritage, and
- will be required to briefly set out their reasons for being on the committee and how they can help positively to meet its objectives and responsibilities.

Submissions for resident membership will be managed by the council. These will be presented to core members of the committee to agree by consensus or majority vote.

Term Serving on Committee

Apart from the Chair, all members must stand down after two years, after which they can then put themselves forward for re-joining. There is no limit to the number of times members can stand down and put themselves forward for re-joining.

The processes outlined above will be followed in renewing committee membership with Chairs of representative groups approached and invitations opened to residents.

The Chair of the committee would change in line with changes in the council's democratic processes, i.e. elections, changes to committee chairs etc.

Officer Support

Officers of the council will attend to provide support, present items to the committee and answer questions. Those attending will not have any voting rights.

Standards of Behaviour

CAAC members are not subject to the Members' Code of Conduct but as a representative of the CAAC, whether in meetings or working on behalf of the committee the following guidelines outline what is expected:

- **Accountability:** to work openly and honestly.
- **Commitment:** to attend every meeting where possible, and to be properly prepared for meetings by reading any paperwork beforehand.
- **High Quality Debate:** to remain focussed, strategic and to contribute positively to discussions and work with other participants to achieve consensus. The committee is not to be used to air individual grievances or complaints.
- **Honesty and Integrity:** to act with honesty, objectivity and integrity in achieving consensus through debate, and to respect the confidentiality of the information provided, where relevant.
- **Objectivity:** to consider what is in the best interests for the common good of Hartlepool and to weigh this along with the interests of their organisation and themselves when making decisions.
- **Representative:** to effectively raise areas of strategic concern and contribute their experience and expertise to discussions and decisions to achieve good workable solutions.
- **Respect for others:** to respect, listen and to take into account the views of other participants regardless of their gender, race, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation or any other status.

Members can be asked, at the discretion of the Chair, not to attend meetings of the committee if they do not adhere to these TOR.

Administrative Support and Operation of the Committee

Administrative Support

Hartlepool Borough Council will provide the support for the committee by,

- producing agendas and minutes of meetings, and
- arranging meetings and venues, including on-line.

Operation of the Committee

Attendance; All committee members are expected to attend and actively participate in all meetings.

Interests; Each member is required to declare any personal interest (direct or indirect) in any agenda items and shall take no part in the discussion or recommendation process about that item.

Meeting frequency; The committee will meet bi-monthly. Additional meetings may be convened as required.

Agenda; The agenda will be set by the Chair for each meeting.

Proposing discussions; Any suggested items for discussion at the meeting should first be communicated to the Chair, 10 days before the meeting, who will decide whether to add to the agenda or not.

Papers; Any papers for the meetings will be circulated at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Decision making; Decisions will be made by consensus where possible, or by majority vote if required. Each member has one vote. The chair will have the deciding vote, if required.

Quorum; A third of members, or rounded up in case of an odd number, must be present for decisions to be valid.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act gives everyone the right to access information that is held by public authorities. Hartlepool Borough Council has developed guidance to help staff comply with the act. The CAAC will work within this policy when giving out information to committee members and the public.

Updating the Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference can be amended following consultation with the members of the committee.

A simple majority of votes in favour or against will determine the success of the proposed changes.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.