



Hartlepool  
Borough Council

# Constitution Committee

## Agenda

11th March 2026

Time: 10.00am

Location: Committee Room B

Members: Constitution Committee

Councillors Bailey-Fleet, Boddy (VC), Buchan, Dodds, Dunbar, Hargreaves (C), Little, Napper and Thompson.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

### **2. To receive any declarations of interest by members**

### **3. Minutes**

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

### **4. Items requiring decision**

4.1 Corporate Parent Forum – Proposed Changes – *Executive Director, Children's Services*

### **5. Any other business which the chair considers urgent**

#### **For Information**

Date of next meeting – to be confirmed

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# Constitution Committee

## Minutes and Decision Record

11 February 2026

### Meeting commenced

**Time:** 10:00am

**Location:** Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### Present:

Councillor: Hargreaves (In the Chair)

Councillors: Boddy, Buchan, Little, Napper and Thompson.

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive  
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources  
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager

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### 18. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bailey-Fleet, Dodds and Dunbar.

### 19. Declarations of Interest by Members

None.

### 20. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2025.

Confirmed.

## 21. Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – *Monitoring Officer / Director of Legal, Governance and Hyman Resources*

The Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources presented a report that sought consideration of where the Housing Revenue Account should report within the Council's scheme of delegation.

Proposed changes to reporting lines, following the senior management restructure, had been considered by the Constitution Committee at its meeting on the 24 October 2025. The Committee had agreed that the HRA should continue to be reported to the Finance and Policy Committee, however, further discussion was required in relation to whether rent-related decisions should also remain with the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee.

Following further discussion in relation to the reporting lines for the HRA, it was agreed that all HRA decisions relating to rent should remain with the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee within the Council's scheme of delegation. All other decisions relating to the HRA would be made by the Housing, Growth and Communities Committee.

### **Decision**

- i) That all decisions relating to HRA rents continue to sit with the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee within the Council's scheme of delegation, and that all other HRA-related decisions be delegated to the Housing, Growth and Communities Committee.
- ii) That these proposals be referred to Full Council for determination.

The meeting concluded at: Time: 10.10am

CHAIRMAN



# Constitution Committee

11 March 2026

**Report of:** Executive Director, Children’s Services  
**Subject:** Corporate Parent Forum – Proposed Changes  
**Decision Type:** Non Key Decision

## 1. Council Plan Priority

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

## 2. Purpose of Report

2.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee of the recent recommendations made by the Corporate Parent Forum and the Children’s Services Committee regarding proposed changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum. (the ‘Forum’).

## 3. Background

3.1. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority or is under 25 and spent at least 13 weeks in care after their 14th birthday, the Authority assumes the role of their Corporate Parent. A child remains looked after until they return home, are adopted, or reach the age of 18. Local authorities must also continue to provide support to care leavers up to the age of 25.

- 3.2. The legislation relevant to this is the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (section 1), Children Act 1989 (part 3), The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, and The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010. Statutory guidance and corporate parenting principles for looked-after children and care leavers has been issued by the Department for Education.
- 3.3. It is the shared responsibility of the entire Council, elected members, officers, and partner agencies, to ensure that children in our care and care leavers receive the highest standard of support and protection so they can reach their full potential. Our core aim is to ensure these children achieve outcomes comparable to those who do not require our intervention, in line with the statutory corporate parenting responsibilities set out by the Department for Education.
- 3.4. The Forum is a sub-committee of the Children’s Services Committee. The Constitution states that:

*“Children’s Services Committee also has a Sub-Committee ‘Corporate Parent Forum’ which is made up of the members of Children’s Services Committee and other non-voting members, which include foster carers and formerly looked after children. The Corporate Parent Forum is responsible for the development, implementation and review of the Council’s Corporate Parent strategies and policies in order to ensure that the Council’s duty as a ‘Corporate Parent’ is discharged properly, effectively and consistently.”*

The membership and remit is set out below:

**Corporate Parent Forum**

Corporate Parent Forum Membership			
<b>Membership</b>	7 Councillors	<b>Quorum</b>	3 Councillors

No	Corporate Parent Forum Function
1	Responsibility for the formulation, development, implementation and review of the Council’s Corporate Parent Strategies and policies in order to ensure that the Council’s duty as a ‘Corporate Parent’ is discharged properly, effectively and consistently.
2	To advise and make recommendations to the Authority’s decision-making bodies and other partner agencies on any issues that affect children and young people who are Looked After by Hartlepool Borough Council.
3	To oversee the exercise of the Authority’s responsibilities as Corporate Parent and ensure that the interests of Looked After Children are appropriately reflected in all the Authority’s policies and the work of the Children’s Strategic Partnership.

- 3.5. The Corporate Parenting Forum currently meets four times a year and benefits from strong representation from a range of partner agencies. The Forum has made significant progress to date, including securing key assurances from partners and delivering impactful presentations and awareness-raising activities led by the Children in Care Council. However, there is further opportunity to strengthen its effectiveness by introducing several changes to the format and frequency of the meetings.

#### 4. Recommendations of Childrens Services Committee and Corporate Parent Forum

- 4.1. Both the Forum and the Children’s Services Committee have recently considered reports proposing changes to the format of the Corporate Parenting Forum.in recognition of the increasing challenges facing Children’s Services and partner agencies. These challenges include rising demand and greater complexity of need, issues with placement stability and sufficiency, pressures relating to the recruitment and retention of carers, and the wide-ranging challenges faced by care leavers, particularly around employment, education and training, access to health services, and securing suitable housing.

To support this change, it is recommended that the Forum will retain the functions as set out at section 3.4 but no longer operate as a formal sub-committee of the Children’s Services Committee. Instead, it will function as an internal officer and member-led meeting that reports to the Committee and makes recommendations for consideration and approval.

- 4.2. As part of the review, the terms of reference for the meeting (**Appendix 1**) have been updated, and it is recommended that the Forum be expanded to include a representative from every Council directorate, specifically officers with appropriate decision-making authority. Furthermore, it is recommended that partnership representation be broadened to include, for example, colleagues from the Hartlepool Further Education college, wider health services, police, fire, and the voluntary and independent sector. The aim is to develop dedicated Champions for key areas such as Housing and Accommodation, Training and Education, Employment and Apprenticeships, Health, and Leisure, among others with further detail to be developed within the Forum.
- 4.3. The aim is to strengthen the voices of children in our care and care leavers by introducing a co-chairing arrangement, with a young person chairing the meeting alongside the Lead Member (Chair of Children’s Services Committee). It is also recommended that we broaden the role of the Children in Care Council representatives to enable them to speak on behalf of all

children in our care, supported through targeted voice and participation activities.

- 4.4. It is further recommended that the meeting frequency increases to six bi-monthly meetings per year to maintain momentum and drive continued progress on agreed actions.
- 4.5. These recommendations are made to safeguard the children and young people who attend, contribute to, and co-chair the Forum, and to create a setting that better supports their voice, participation, and engagement.
- 4.6. Alternative Options

An alternative option is that the Forum remains a sub-committee of Children’s Services Committee. This option is not recommended for the reasons set out above.

## 5. Other Considerations/Implications

<b>Risk Implications</b>	There are no risks associated with these decisions, they are intended to strengthen the Forum and ensure appropriate safeguards for children and young people who attend.
<b>Financial Considerations</b>	There are no financial considerations. However, wider partners and council officer attendance may have resource implications as we strive to meet our corporate responsibilities.
<b>Subsidy Control</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Legal Considerations</b>	There are no specific legal considerations beyond those outlined in this report.
<b>Single Impact Assessment</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Staff Considerations</b>	The additional two meetings will require administrative support and a meeting room. This has already been sourced departmentally.
<b>Asset Management Considerations</b>	There are no asset management considerations.
<b>Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations</b>	There are no environmental sustainability and climate change considerations.
<b>Consultation</b>	The Corporate Parenting Forum and the Children’s Services Committee have been consulted on the proposed changes. Both are in agreement.

## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1. It is recommended that Constitution Committee endorses the recommendations of the Children’s Services Committee and the Corporate Parent Forum as set out below and refers the recommendations to Full Council for final approval:
- that the Forum will no longer operate as a formal sub-committee of the Children’s Services Committee. Instead, it will function as an internal officer and member-led meeting that reports into the Children’s Services Committee for decision-making.
  - Terms of Reference set out at **Appendix 1**.
  - widening partnership representation at the Forum to include colleagues from, for example, the Hartlepool Further Education college, wider health services, police, fire and the voluntary and independent sector.
  - a co-chairing arrangement with a young person chairing the meeting alongside the Lead Member.
  - the meeting frequency increases to six bi-monthly meetings per year to maintain momentum, drive and pace to progress agreed actions.

## 7. Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1. The Forum is a critical body that brings together all relevant partners with the authority to make decisions that improve, promote and champion the needs and wellbeing of children in our care and care leavers. It is essential the Forum has the necessary powers to operate effectively and fulfil its responsibilities in line with legislation and in the best interests of children and young people. The proposed changes will provide the framework needed to support this.

## 8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Terms of Reference (**Appendix 1**)  
Children’s Services Committee report and minutes – 10 March 2026  
Corporate Parent Forum reports and minutes – 17 February 2026  
Hartlepool Borough Council Constitution

## 9. Contact Officers

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Executive Director of Children’s Services  
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Children and Families  
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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 18.02.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 18.02.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 18.02.2026

## **Corporate Parenting Forum Terms of Reference, January 2026**

Date: 10 January 2026

Version: 1, Draft

### **1. Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Forum**

The Corporate Parenting Forum is the principal mechanism through which all corporate parents – which includes elected members, council officers, partner agencies, and commissioned services - demonstrate their commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in care and for care leavers.

Corporate Parenting is a shared responsibility amongst all partners who hold both a statutory and moral duty to safeguard and support these children.

**1.1** The Corporate Parenting Forum ensures that services meet their needs and aspirations by:

- Providing high-quality care and nurturing relationships that build self-esteem, confidence and resilience.
- Ensuring access to excellent education tailored to individual needs and abilities.
- Promoting health, wellbeing, and fitness, alongside opportunities for hobbies and personal development.
- Supporting life skills development, citizenship and preparation for independence.
- Creating pathways to education, employment, and training, including work experience, apprenticeships and mentoring.
- Facilitating a successful transition to adulthood, including suitable accommodation, skills for life and ongoing support.

### **2. Responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Forum**

#### **2.1 Champion Corporate Parenting**

- Ensure all corporate parents understand and actively fulfil their role and responsibilities.
- Organise mandatory annual training for elected members, officers and wider partners on corporate parenting principles, roles, responsibilities and best practice.

## 2.2 Strategic Leadership & Accountability

- Provide clear strategic direction aligned with the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Hartlepool's Pledge to Children in Care.
- Review and influence policy, commissioning and service delivery to improve outcomes.

## 2.3 Performance Monitoring & Continuous Improvement

- Receive and scrutinise quarterly performance reports (Corporate Parenting Scorecard) and identify areas for improvement.
- Benchmark against sector-leading practice and learn from other local authorities.
- Measure impact of the forum's impact on outcomes for children and care leavers.

## 2.4 Voice of Children & Young People

- Engage with the Children in Care Council and with care leavers to ensure their views and lived experiences shape services.
- Establish feedback loops so young people see how their input influences decisions.

## 2.5 Celebration & Recognition

- Promote achievement and aspirations through celebration events and recognition schemes.
- Deliver an Annual Corporate Parenting Summit bringing together elected members, all associated partners, and young people.

## 2.6 Workforce & Opportunities

- Champion specialist council-based work placements and apprenticeships for care-experienced young people.
- Provide tailored career guidance, CV writing sessions, and interview preparation support.
- Explore mentoring programmes and partnerships with local businesses.
- Offer guaranteed interviews for care-experienced applicants for council jobs and apprenticeships.

## 2.7 Inspection & Compliance

- Meet with Ofsted inspectors as appropriate and contribute to inspection readiness.

## 2.8 Annual Planning & Reporting

- Agree an annual work plan based on strategic priorities and review progress regularly.
- Submit mid-year and an annual report to the Children's Services Committee, Children's Services Strategic Partnership and to full Council.

### **3. Membership**

Membership reflects the principle that Corporate Parenting is a shared responsibility across all statutory partners and relevant stakeholders.

- Chair: Lead Member for Children and Families
- Vice Chair: Appointed by the Forum
- Councillors: Politically proportionate representation
- Executive Director of Children's Services
- Chief Executive, Children's Services Trust
- Assistant Director, Children and Families
- Non-Executive Director(s), Children's Services Trust
- Foster Carer Representative
- Care Leaver Representative
- Children in Care Council Representative
- Housing Representative
- Health Representative
- Virtual School Head
- Head of Service, Children in Our Care
- Police Representative
- Voluntary Sector Representative
- Education Provider Representative

### **4. Frequency of Meetings**

A minimum of 6 meetings per year (bi-monthly) to maintain momentum and oversight.

### **5. Governance & Accountability**

The Forum will hold all Corporate Parents accountable and responsible for their contribution to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Hartlepool Pledge.

Regular reports will be presented to the Children's Services Committee, Children's Services Strategic Partnership and full Council.

## **6. Administration**

The agenda will be set by the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services in line with the Corporate Parenting work plan.

The PA's will provide administrative support, circulate agendas five clear days in advance, and manage minutes. Minutes will be restricted to Corporate Parenting Forum members and stakeholders; and external requests will be considered on a need-to-know basis.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and approved by full Council.