



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Council

19 March 2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Civic Centre Hartlepool

11 March 2025

Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Buchan, Clayton, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Doyle, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Male, Martin-Wells, Moore, Morley, Napper, Nelson, Oliver, Reeve, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Smith, Thompson, Wallace and Young

Madam or Sir,

You are hereby summoned to attend the COUNCIL meeting to be held on THURSDAY, 19 March 2026 at 6.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool to consider the subjects set out in the attached agenda.

Yours faithfully

Denise McGuckin
Chief Executive

Enc



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Council Agenda

19 March 2026 at 6.30pm

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

1. To receive apologies from absent Members;
2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members;
3. To deal with any business required by statute to be done before any other business;
4. To approve the minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 19 February 2026 (reconvened on the 3 March 2026) as the correct record;
5. To answer questions from Members of the Council on the minutes of the last meeting of Council;
6. To deal with any business required by statute to be done;
7. To receive any announcements from the Chair, or the Head of Paid Service;
8. To dispose of business (if any) remaining from the last meeting and to receive the report of any Committee to which such business was referred for consideration;
9. To consider reports from the Council's Committees and to receive questions and answers on any of those reports;
 - a) Corporate Parent Forum (proposed changes) and Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations (Housing Revenue Account (HRA)) – Report of Constitution Committee
10. To consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, and to receive questions and answers on any of those items;

Civic centre evacuation and assembly procedure

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers.

A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

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



11. To consider reports from the Policy Committees:
 - a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework
 - (i) Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2026/27 – Report of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
 - b) proposals for departures from the approved budget and policy framework
12. To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received;
13. To receive the Chief Executive's report and to pass such resolutions thereon as may be deemed necessary;
14. To receive questions from and provide answers to the public in relation to matters of which notice has been given under Rule 9;
15. To answer questions of Members of the Council under Rule 10;
 - a) Questions to the Chairs about recent decisions of Council Committees and Forums without notice under Council Procedure Rule 10.1
 - b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 10.2
 - c) Questions on notice to the Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and Cleveland Fire Authority
 - d) Minutes of the meetings held by Cleveland Fire Authority on 5 December 2025

For information

Date of next meeting – Thursday 21st May at 6.30pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

ITEM (4)

**Minutes of the Council
meeting held on 19 February
2026 (reconvened on the
3 March 2026)**



Council

Minutes and Decision Record

19th February 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 6.30pm

Location: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Deputy Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Bailey-Fleet) presiding

Councillors: Allen, Boddy, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Doyle, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Little, Male, Morley, Napper, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Smith, Wallace and Young.

Also Present:

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive
James Magog, Director of Finance, IT and Digital (Section 151 Officer)
Paul Dixon, Assistant Director – Finance
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and HR
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Gemma Jones, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillors: Buchan, Clayton, Holbrook, Leedham, Martin-Wells, Reeve and Thompson

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest made.

99. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE TO BE DONE BEFORE ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

100. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 5 February 2026 having been laid before Council

RESOLVED – That the minutes be confirmed

101. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL ON THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

None.

102. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

None.

103. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

104. TO DISPOSE OF BUSINESS (IF ANY) REMAINING FROM THE LAST MEETING AND TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF ANY COMMITTEE TO WHICH SUCH BUSINESS WAS REFERRED FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

105. TO CONSIDER REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES AND TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ANY OF THOSE REPORTS

- a) Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 – Report of Audit and Governance Committee

The Chief Executive, on behalf of the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, reported that the Local Government Act 2003 required Full Council to determine a Treasury Management Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy which sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. The recommended strategy had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 27 January 2026; a copy of the report submitted to the Committee was appended to the report.

The following was unanimously agreed by a show of hands.

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27 be approved, including:

- i) The borrowing strategy for 2026/27;
- ii) The investment strategy for 2026/27;
- iii) The prudential indicators; and
- iv) The minimum revenue provision statement.

106. TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS SPECIFIED IN THE SUMMONS TO THE MEETING AND TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ANY OF THOSE ITEMS

None.

107. TO CONSIDER REPORTS FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEES

- (a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework

- (i) Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2028/29 – Report of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

The Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee presented the Capital Strategy for 2026/27 to 2028/29 and Capital Programme new starts 2026/27 to 2026/27. The report considered by Finance and Policy on 10th February 2026 drew together the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, aligning them with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Treasury Management Strategy as an integral part of the Councils Strategic and Financial Planning Framework. The report was appended to the report.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote was taken. The following was unanimously agreed by a show of hands.

RESOLVED:- that the report from the Finance and Policy Committee be noted and that;

1. the Capital Strategy for 2026/27 to 2028/29, at Annex A – Appendix 1 to the report be approved. The strategy was a requirement of the Prudential Capital Code; and
 2. the Capital Programme new starts 2026/27 to 2028/29, as set out at Annex A - Appendix 2 to the report be approved.
- (ii) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 - Statutory Budget and Council Tax Determination – Report of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

Prior to the presentation of the medium term financial strategy 2026/27 report, the Leader of the Council:

- Highlighted the historic nature of tonight's meeting and thanked Councillor Bailey-Feet for being the first ever BAME councillor to chair a meeting of Full Council.
- Emphasised the Council's moral duty to protect Hartlepool's children and stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. Hartlepool having one of the highest numbers of children in care in the country.

It was noted that crisis in social care is not of the Council's making and that the situation in Hartlepool is being made worse by other councils pushing families out of their areas and into towns like Hartlepool because housing is cheaper. People pressured, threatened with homelessness and moved, sometimes in the dead of night with nothing but the clothes they are stood in and who shoulders the costs for helping these people?
Hartlepool!

The Leader of the Council expressed her devastation at the failure of the Labour Government and that the Council faces stark and painful choices. The provisional settlement had failed to reflect Hartlepool's level of need and despite lobbying by the Leader of the Council, alongside Hartlepool's MP, the final settlement had not changed.

The Leader of the Council was clear that it was not right to respond to this injustice by raising core council tax for hard working families to pay more for a crisis they did not create. The choice being to accept this unfairness or fight it. Council asked to adjourn the meeting to allow a united / cross party delegation, including Hartlepool's MP, to take Hartlepool's case once more to Whitehall. The Secretary of State having already agreed to meet a delegation next week.

It was moved by Councillor Hargreaves and seconded by Councillor Scarborough:-

“That upon completion of the remaining business on this agenda, the meeting stand adjourned to a date to be confirmed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Council at which the reconvened meeting shall consider the MTFS as the only item of business.”

During the ongoing debate, a number of elected members spoke in support of the motion to adjourn and sought clarification of the implications of the delay on the setting of the budget. Confirmation provided being that regardless of the outcome of the delegation to Whitehall, the MTFS had to be agreed before the 5th March 2026 to enable council tax bills to be distributed.

Councillor Hargreaves confirmed that all information would be considered from the Director of Finance, IT and Digital and all possible options would be considered, but the burden would not be pushed on to hard working families.

Following closing comments by the Chair, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:-

Those for:-

Councillors: Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Little, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Smith and Wallace

Those against:-

Councillor Cranney

Those abstaining:-

Councillors: Darby, Doyle, Napper and Young

The vote on the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED:- That upon completion of the remaining business on this agenda, the meeting stand adjourned to a date to be confirmed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Council at which the reconvened meeting shall consider the MTFs as the only item of business.

(b) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework

None.

108. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

One motion had been received as follows:

i) Motion: National Year of Reading 2026

While statistics show that fewer people are reading for pleasure than ever before, reading has never mattered more. It expands minds, builds confidence and fuels creativity throughout our lives. This Council believes that literacy is a right, not a privilege, and that every Hartlepool resident should have the opportunity to gain this critical skill.

This Council:

- Notes that the Government has designated 2026 as the National Year of Reading, supported by national partners and charities to encourage reading for pleasure.
- Recognises the benefits of reading for educational attainment, wellbeing and social inclusion, and the strong evidence of its importance in improving life chances.
- Welcomes and supports the National Year of Reading and its campaign objectives and commits to working with partners to promote reading across our communities.
- Commits to ensuring that every child attending a Hartlepool primary school is enrolled as a library member.
- Commits to ensuring that every Hartlepool Borough Council employee is provided with the opportunity to achieve an English Level 2 qualification.
- Will champion the annual Quick Reads initiative, utilising short, accessible books created specifically for non-readers, lapsed readers, people with short attention spans and neurodivergent readers. These are accessible, affordable and gentle in their approach, allowing new or lapsed readers to find their way into the pleasure and fulfilment of reading fiction and non-fiction.

- Will create a mini-library book exchange in every ward in Hartlepool to support communities to access free books and opportunities to exchange books.
- Will continue its commitment to the multi-agency partnership of the Literacy Task Force, delivering the shared vision that everyone will have the literacy skills they need to thrive, aspire and realise their potential across Hartlepool.

In its first year, the Literacy Task Force has:

- Held the first literacy summit in the region, inspiring Redcar & Cleveland to follow suit.
- Convened community literacy panels to review the accessibility of council literature.
- Recruited and trained Literacy Champion volunteers to raise awareness of literacy issues, share resources and best practice, and act as advocates within their networks, including:
 - 48 internal HBC Literacy Champion volunteers
 - 9 elected members trained
 - 2 VCSE representatives
 - Active recruitment ongoing across HBC and the VCSE sector
- Increased the use of readability tools across many HBC departments when developing written communications for Hartlepool residents.
- Ensured that Family Hubs review and revise new resources to be literacy accessible.
- Secured commitments from Jobcentre Plus/DWP to become more literacy accessible.
- Rewritten HBC Council Tax letters to make key information easier to read and more accessible while retaining statutory requirements.
- Reviewed and improved the readability of Hartlepool's Anti-Poverty Strategy public-facing infographic, now published as the Hartlepool Anti-Poverty Plan.
- Applied readability tools within HBC Public Health communications, including regional drug alerts and public information leaflets.
- Worked collaboratively with partners on action plans to improve financial and digital literacy, including convening a business forum to encourage businesses to embed literacy in workforce support and communications.

Hartlepool Borough Council pledges its support towards the National Year of Reading and is committed to increasing reading for pleasure in our communities and inspiring others to get involved.

Council Resolves to:

1. Support the establishment of community mini-library book exchanges in every ward, working with ward councillors, community organisations and volunteers to improve access to free books.

2. Publicly support and actively promote the National Year of Reading 2026 across Hartlepool, working with partners, schools, libraries, VCSE organisations and businesses.
3. Ensure that all children attending Hartlepool primary schools are enrolled as library members, in partnership with schools and library services, with appropriate support for families facing barriers to access.
4. Champion reading for pleasure by supporting initiatives such as Quick Reads, recognising their value for non-readers, lapsed readers, neurodivergent readers and those with limited time or confidence.
5. Commit to workforce literacy by ensuring that all Hartlepool Borough Council employees are offered the opportunity to achieve an English Level 2 qualification, with flexible and inclusive routes to learning.
6. Embed readability and plain-English standards across all council public-facing communications, using recognised readability tools as standard practice.
7. Continue to support and resource the Literacy Task Force as the coordinating body for literacy activity in Hartlepool, aligned to the Council's wider priorities on anti-poverty, health, employment and inclusion.
8. Request that progress on literacy and reading initiatives be reported periodically to the appropriate scrutiny committee, including updates on:
 - Library membership uptake
 - Workforce learning participation
 - Accessibility of council communications
 - Partnership activity and community impact

Council Affirms:

- Hartlepool Borough Council's commitment to increasing reading for pleasure, improving literacy at all stages of life, and ensuring that residents have the skills and confidence they need to thrive, aspire and realise their potential.

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Manor House)

Councillor Brenda Harrison (De Bruce)

Councillor Gary Allen (Victoria)

Councillor Moss Boddy (Rossmere)

Councillor Rachel Creevy (De Bruce)

Councillor Melanie Morley (Foggy Furze)

Councillor Karen Oliver (Victoria)

The motion was moved by Councillor Hargreaves and seconded by Councillor Dodds.

During debate number of elected members expressed support for the motion, the importance of literacy and commended the excellent work that is being undertaken, including the first literacy summit, the establishment of a literacy taskforce and the

town's first Little Library on Worset Lane. The Little Library resulting from work with Keir Construction and their success in winning a Penguin Books competition for the provision of free books.

The importance of establishing a Little Library in each Ward had been recognised and, in an example of true partnership working, the Council, Keir and local businesses have now committed to providing eleven more. Hartlepool will now have one in each Ward, with a further commitment by Penguin Books to provide free books for each of them.

The motion was approved unanimously in its entirety.

109. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

None.

110. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

111. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

- a) Questions to the Chairs about recent decisions of Council Committees and Forums without notice under Council Procedure Rule 10.1

None.

- b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 10.2

None.

- c) Questions on notice to the Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and Cleveland Fire Authority

None.

- d) The minutes of the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel / Cleveland Fire Authority on 11 November 2026 were noted

None.

The meeting was adjourned at concluded at 7.25pm

Upon reconvening the meeting on 3 March 2026, the following Elected Members were in attendance:-

The Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Thompson) presiding

Councillors: Allen, Boddy, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Dodds, Doyle, Feeney, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Little, Male, Morley, Napper, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Scarborough, Smith, Wallace and Young.

Also Present:

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive
James Magog, Director of Finance, IT and Digital (Section 151 Officer)
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance - Corporate & Schools
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and HR
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Gemma Jones, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

Apologies for absent members: Councillors: Bailey-Fleet, Buchan, Clayton, Darby, Dunbar, Hall, Holbrook, Leedham, Martin-Wells, Reeve Roy, and Thompson

112. TO CONSIDER REPORTS FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEES

(ii) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 - Statutory Budget and Council Tax Determination – Report of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

Further to minute 107(a)(ii), the Leader of the Council provided an update on the outcome of the delegation to Whitehall. Representatives presented the facts to the Secretary of State (Hartlepool is the 3rd most deprived Local Authority area in the country with the 3rd highest number of looked after children in care, in the context of the figures and out-of-area placements) and had been optimistic of receiving a better settlement.

The Leader of the Council had been proud to have stood up to the Government, united with Independent colleagues, for a fairer system. The Council's case had, however, been dismissed and the delegation advised that the answer to the care crisis was simply to raise core council tax to the maximum.

To mitigate this government failure, an amended proposal was tabled recommending a 1.98% increase in the Social Care Precept alongside a list of savings.

This represented the lowest increase in the Northeast, whilst achieving three vital things:

- Easing pressure on working families by freezing core council tax.
- Protecting vital services that matter to Hartlepool people.
- Upholding the moral duty to protect vulnerable children and adults.

Doing so while looking forward, with confidence and putting money into public health, more support for homelessness and more help for families facing the cost-of-living crisis.

It was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Smith:-

“That the meeting be adjourned for 15 minutes to allow the content of the tabled amended proposals to be looked at in greater detail”

It was agreed unanimously and there was a short 15 minute adjournment.

Upon being reconvened, a debate ensued that was supportive of the work undertaken in preparing the budget and amendment and officers were thanked for their work. The Leader and MP were commended on working together to standing against the Government and challenge for a fair funding settlement for Hartlepool. In response to concerns regarding the identified savings, an assurance was given that the Director of Finance, IT and Digital had given a reassurance that the savings were realistic, however, it was recognised that here are factors, such as the conflict in the Middle East, that could make some savings difficult to predict (e.g. energy savings).

The amended budget proposals were moved by Councillor Hargreaves and seconded by Councillor Smith:-

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors: Allen, Boddy, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Dodds, Doyle, Feeney, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Little, Male, Morley, Napper, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Scarborough, Smith, Thompson, Wallace and Young.

Those against: None.

Those abstaining: None.

RESOLVED:-

- i) The contents of the report, including that the Core Spending Power increase was based on governments assumption that Councils will increase council tax to the maximum allowable was noted;
- ii) An increase to Council Tax of 1.98%; thus providing £1.113m of recurring funding, be recommended to Council was approved;
- iii) The overall budget proposal set out in the report and appendices, including savings of £6.080m and use of one-off reserves of £1.047m for 2026/27, be recommended to Council was approved;
- iv) The statutory budget calculation for the Council budget as detailed in revised Annex B (attached) and detailed supporting departmental budgets detailed in revised Annex C (attached) were approved;
- v) The statutory Council Tax calculations detailed in revised Annex B (attached), which includes the Council Tax increases approved by the individual precepting bodies were approved;
- vi) That any capital receipts generated be used to fund revenue costs associated with delivery of the Transformation Programme, as required, was approved;
- vii) The robustness advice detailed in section 12 of the report was noted; and
- viii) It was noted that any changes arising from the completion of the NNDR1 and receipt of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement be adjusted in the 2026/27 budget.

The meeting was concluded at 7.15pm

CHAIR

ITEM (9)(a)

**Corporate Parent Forum (proposed
changes) – Report of Constitution
Committee**

and

**Realignment of Committees
And Review of Delegations
(Housing Revenue Account (HRA))
– Report of Constitution Committee**



Council

19 March 2026

Report of: Constitution Committee

Subject: CORPORATE PARENT FORUM (PROPOSED CHANGES) AND REALIGNMENT OF COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF DELEGATIONS (HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA))

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To seek consideration of recommendations regarding:-

- i) Changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum; and
- ii) Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations (Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

2. Corporate Parent Forum (Proposed Changes)

2.1. The Constitution Committee will, on the 11th March 2026, be discussing recommendations from the Corporate Parent Forum and the Children's Services Committee regarding changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum. (the 'Forum'). Details of the suggested changes, and proposed recommendations, to be considered by the Constitution Committee on the 11th March 2026 are outlined in **Appendix A**.

2.2. As the Constitution Committee met after the deadline for circulation of the agenda for today's Full Council meeting, it was not possible to include details of the outcome of the Committee's discussions. Full Council will be provided with an updated on the Constitution Committee's recommendations following its meeting on the 11th March 2025.

3. Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

3.1. The Constitution Committee met on the 11th February 2026 to consider where the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) should report within the Council's scheme of delegation, as set out at Part 3 of the of the Constitution. A copy of the report considered by the Constitution Committee is attached at **Appendix B**.

3.2. 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 Corporate Affairs Committee, however, further discussion was required in relation to whether rent-related decisions should also remain with the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee.

3.3 The Committee at its meeting on the 11th February 2026, discussed further the reporting lines for the HRA and **recommend to Council 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 should be made by the Housing, Growth and Communities Committee.**

4. Recommendations

4.1. That Full Council considers approval of the recommendations of the Constitution Committee in relation to:

- Changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum; and
- Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations (Housing Revenue Account (HRA))

5. Background Papers

5.1. Changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum

Terms of Reference (**Appendix A(1)**)

Children's Services Committee report and minutes – 10 March 2026

Corporate Parent Forum reports and minutes – 17 February 2026

Constitution Committee report and minutes – 11 March 2026

Hartlepool Borough Council Constitution

5.2. Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations (Housing Revenue Account (HRA)):

Constitution – Part 3

Constitution Committee Report and Minutes – 24 October 2025 and 11 February 2026

6. Contact Officers

Hayley Martin

Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk

01429 523002



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

Hartlepool will be a place:
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			
Membership	7 Councillors	Quorum	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

Risk Implications	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.
Financial Considerations	There are no financial considerations. However, wider partners and council officer attendance may have resource implications as we strive to meet our corporate responsibilities.
Subsidy Control	Not applicable.
Legal Considerations	There are no specific legal considerations beyond those outlined in this report.
Single Impact Assessment	Not applicable.
Staff Considerations	The additional two meetings will require administrative support and a meeting room. This has already been sourced departmentally.
Asset Management Considerations	There are no asset management considerations.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	There are no environmental sustainability and climate change considerations.

Consultation	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

Alison Sutherland
 Executive Director of Children's Services

Tel: 01429 284479

Email: Alison.Sutherland@hartlepool.gov.uk

Laura Gough

Assistant Director

Children and Families

Email: Laura.Gough@hartlepool.gov.uk

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.



CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

11th FEBRUARY 2026

Report of: Monitoring Officer/Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources

Subject: Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations – Housing Revenue Account

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider where the Housing Revenue Account should report within the Council's scheme of delegation set out at Part 3 of the of the Constitution.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 On 24 October 2025, Constitution Committee considered a report entitled 'Realignment of Committees and Review of Delegations' which was presented following changes to reporting lines brought about by the senior management restructure.

2.2 The Committee agreed that the Housing Revenue Account should continue to report to Finance and Corporate Services and that the matter should return to this Committee to consider whether rent-related decisions should remain with the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee, with all other decisions reporting to the Housing Growth and Communities Committee.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that Members:

3.2 Determine whether any changes are required to reporting of Housing Revenue Account related matters.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To comply with the recommendation of this committee and to ensure the Constitution is relevant and reflects the updated structure.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

[Constitution – Part 3](#)
[Constitution Committee Report and Minutes – 24 October 2025](#)

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

Hayley Martin
Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 523002

Neil Wilson
Neil.wilson@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 523002

ITEM (11)(a)(i)

**Housing Revenue Account Business
Plan 2026/27 - Report of Finance and
Corporate Affairs Committee**



Council

19 March 2026

Report of: Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

Subject: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN
2026/27

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 enable Members to consider the proposed rent increase for 2026/27 as recommended by Finance and Policy Committee.

3. Background

3.1. On the 10th February 2026, Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee received a report detailing the HRA business plan for 2026/27 and the proposed rent increase of 4.8% for our housing stock. A copy of the report considered by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee is attached at **Appendix A**.

3.2. The report outlined key council HRA priorities, showing how it is intended to:

- Develop and deliver services to our tenants;
- Address key Government policy changes; and
- Grow and develop the HRA portfolio in future years for the benefit of our residents.

3.3. This year's plan providing an update on key priorities, changes made to improve the HRA service and an overview of the financial sustainability of the HRA. Details were also provided of policy changes facing the HRA, HRA performance, key challenges and future priorities, the revised business case and HRA reserves.

3.4. The Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee:

- Noted the overall contents and strategy of the HRA Business 2026/27; and
- In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, endorsed the recommended to Council approval of the 4.8% rent increase for our housing stock for the forthcoming financial year.

4. Proposals

4.1. Government rent policy introduced from 2020/21 allowed for rents to increase by a maximum of 1% plus CPI inflation. Council took a decision to approve a rent freeze at that time and rents remained at their 2019/20 level. In April 2023 Members approved a rent increase of 5% which was below the Government level of 7%. The impact of this reduced rental income and this continues to negatively affect the health of the HRA.

4.2. It is proposed that a rent increase of 4.8% (CPI 3.8% + 1% increase) is approved in line with the current rent policy. The HRA model has assumed this level of increase, and this results in a balanced budget as **Appendix A(1)** demonstrates. Without this proposed rent increase the HRA budget becomes unsustainable and would go into deficit. In January 2026, the Government published the outcome to the consultation on how to implement Rent Convergence; this Government announcement to permit rent convergence from April 2027 is likely to have minimal impact on our rent setting.

4.3. HRA ring-fence means that the HRA reserve can only be used for the purposes of the HRA. It is also the only source of funding available to fund deficits and therefore must be kept at a level which ensures the HRA remains viable. The current HRA reserve at 1st April 2025 is £0.500m and is forecast to remain unchanged owing to ongoing expenditure pressures even if the 4.8% rent increase is approved. The reserve is required to provide financial resilience to withstand future potential shocks, however lack of contributions increases risk in relation to future sustainability. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 section 76 requires that Councils must ensure that the HRA budget does not allow for the HRA Reserve to become 'overdrawn'.

4.4. The Government will provide additional funding for those tenants receiving housing benefit and Universal Credit to meet this increased rent demand. Approximately two thirds of HRA tenants will therefore have all or part of their rent increase funded by the Government. This increase would also likely be

in line with other social housing providers operating in Hartlepool. Providing the rent increase will fund some of the measures being introduced to address the legislation changes highlighted such as delivering an efficient repairs service, improving energy efficiency and tackling damp and mould.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee recommended to Council that the rent increase of 4.8% for 2026/27, as set out in the Finance and Policy Report found at **Appendix A**, be agreed.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

6.1. To ensure the financial health of the Council's HRA is maintained as effectively as possible.

7. Background Papers

7.1. Finance and Corporate Affairs report 10th February 2026.

8. Contact Officers

Kieran Bostock
(01429) 284291
E-mail: kieran.bostock@hartlepool.gov.uk



Hartlepool
Borough Council

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

10TH FEBRUARY 2026

Subject: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS
PLAN UPDATE 2026/27

Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory
Services

Decision Type: Key (DNRS 10/23)

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 This report provides an updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and a performance update of the HRA activity.

2.2 This report sets out rental requirements for 2026/27 and seeks approval to refer this decision to Council.

2.3 The report also seeks approval of the budget for the HRA for 2026/27.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 2026/27 business plan covers key council HRA priorities, showing how it is intended develop and deliver services to our tenants, how we intend to address key Government policy changes and how we intend to grow and develop the HRA portfolio in future years for the benefit of our residents. This year's plan provides an update on our key priorities, changes made to improve the HRA service and an overview of the financial sustainability of the HRA.

4. KEY POLICY CHANGES AND HRA RESPONSE

- 4.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 is a law that aims to improve safety, standards and operation of social housing in the United Kingdom. It came into effect from April 2024. The act strengthened the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure housing associations are compliant with consumer standards by allowing regular inspections, unlimited fines, proactive enforcement and the ability to create performance improvement plans. The Act also introduced new consumer standards that cover health and safety, landlord transparency and housing management staff qualifications. The act also aims to improve property conditions with the introduction of 'Awaab's Law' in honour of Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 from exposure to damp and mould in his parents' social rented home. A summary of these regulatory changes are as follows:
- 4.2 **Proactive Consumer Regulation:** as a provider of social housing we must meet the revised consumer standards on safety, quality, repairs and tenant engagement. Increased powers have also been provided to the regulator and this results in regular inspections with performance improvement plans and unlimited fines when non-compliance is identified.
- 4.3 The Housing Management Team has set up procedures to meet the revised consumer standards. The complaints policy has been developed in line with the code and has been implemented with regular monitoring and reporting. The annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman was recently completed and signed off by the Ombudsman to confirm compliance.
- 4.4 **Competence and Conduct Standard:** this new standard applies to the skills, experience and behaviour of staff delivering and responsible for housing management services. The Council must ensure that staff within scope have appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to deliver high quality services. Senior housing managers and executives are required to achieve or be working towards a recognised housing management qualification, and the Council must monitor and encourage staff training and development. These requirements come into effect in October 2026.

- 4.5 At present, a process to determine which staff members are in scope is being carried out. Should officers be identified which require additional training the qualification would be funded by the HRA. In addition, a review of existing policies is underway and a system of recording training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has been implemented.
- 4.6 **Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs):** From October 2026 as a social landlord the Council must proactively publish specified information on how we manage homes and from April 2027 tenants can formally request information, and the Council must respond in a timely manner.
- 4.7 Preparation is underway for the publication of this specified information for the April 2027 deadline.
- 4.8 **Expanded Health and Safety duties:** Under the requirements of Awaab's law social housing providers must respond in a timely manner to reports of hazards within the home. With a phased approach to implementation, damp and mould requirements came into effect in October 2025 with further hazards coming into scope from 2026/27. The Council is also required to appoint a Health and Safety lead who is responsible for compliance in the organisation. The Council is required to take a proactive approach to housing conditions and regularly inspecting the stock whilst responding to hazards identified by the tenant in their homes whilst conducting required gas and electrical cyclical safety checks and fire risk assessments where required.
- 4.9 Significant changes to the management of the repairs process and response times have been introduced to comply with the requirements of Awaab's law. The Firmstep system (used to log and manage repair and maintenance jobs) has been revised to ensure repair jobs are logged and responded to in line with the statutory requirements and reports are issued where necessary in a timely fashion. Preparations are underway for future stages of the law being implemented.
- 4.10 **Right to Buy reforms:** there have been several reforms to the right to buy process during 2025 aimed at protecting social housing stock and making replacement stock acquisition or development more viable. These changes have included reducing the maximum right to buy discounts on applications from 21 November 2024, extending the cost floor protection from 15 to 30 years, new build exemptions for the first 35 years and higher eligibility thresholds from 3 to 10 years.
- 4.11 The right to buy procedure has been updated to reflect the changes to right to buy and this is being implemented when any applications are received from tenants.

- 4.12 **Decent Homes:** The existing decent homes standard requires a home to be free from serious hazards (HHSRS), in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services and have a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. As a landlord we are expected to know the condition of our stock and maintain it accordingly. There are planned revisions to the decent Homes Standard aimed at reflecting current housing needs and improving health and safety and energy performance and consultation on these proposed changes closed in September 2025. In addition to this, minimum energy efficiency standards (EPC C) are proposed for social rented properties by 2030.
- 4.13 The Council is implementing a programme of energy efficiency improvements across the older housing stock which is currently below an EPC C rating. In addition, stock condition surveys continue to be carried out and when the revised decent homes standard is announced the Council will assess if the stock meets this standard and if any improvements are required.
- 4.14 In addition we are preparing for changes which are likely to come into effect through the Renters Rights Bill. One of the key changes will be relating to fixed term tenancies which are likely to be abolished for social landlords when the Bill is enacted.

5. HRA PERFORMANCE

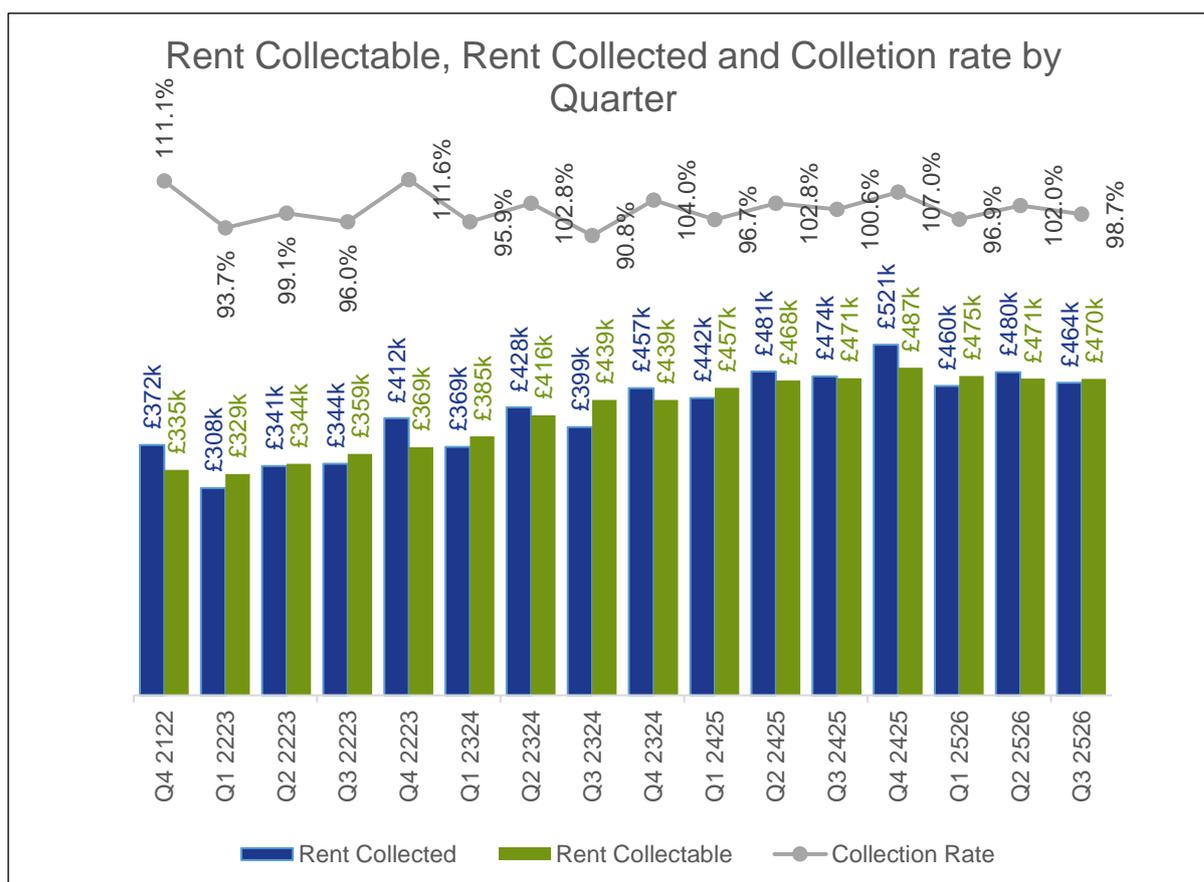
- 5.1 The Council's housing stock now has a total of 355 properties located throughout Hartlepool. Since the last business plan update in January 2025, one home has been sold through Right to Buy.
- 5.2 The Council aims to deliver an effective and efficient housing management service and monitors several indicators to track performance and improve services.

Rent collection

- 5.3 Efficient collection of rent is essential to the financial health and sustainability of the HRA. Table 1 below demonstrates that our rates of rent collection are strong at 98.7% (Q3 25/26) and higher than the average rent collection rate for social housing across the UK which was 97.2%. Often the collection rate in a quarter can exceed 100% due to collection of arrears. Whilst collecting rent is a challenge, the Housing Management Team works with tenants to resolve rent account issues and we engage with tenants to provide affordable payment plans when accounts fall into arrears with the aim of sustaining tenancies. Despite this work it has been necessary to carry out one eviction due to rent arrears since the last report and a Suspended Possession Order granted on rent arrears grounds in another case.

5.4 The Housing Management Team now has access to the Universal Credit Landlord Portal. The portal allows social rented sector landlords to verify and update rent charges, support tenants and manage payments online. We currently have 241 tenants who are claiming Universal Credit in relation to housing costs in the portal. This enables us to more effectively manage rent accounts and work proactively as there is the facility to request direct payments (Alternative Payment Arrangements) and in some cases request arrears payments (Third Party Payments) where payment plans cannot be reached by agreement with tenants or, a tenant continually defaults on what has been previously agreed with the team. This prevents arrears building on accounts, which impacts positively on income collection and the sustainment of tenancies, as we can effectively control the reporting and payment of housing costs on accounts where it is required.

Table 1: Percentage of rent collected per quarter

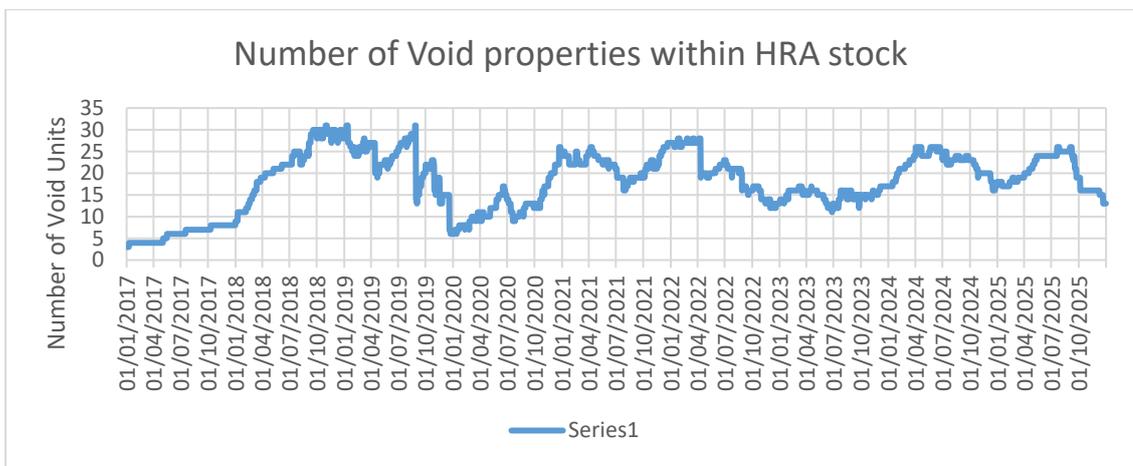


Void management

5.5 To maximise income to the HRA and provide accommodation to meet the needs of local residents we must deliver an affective void management

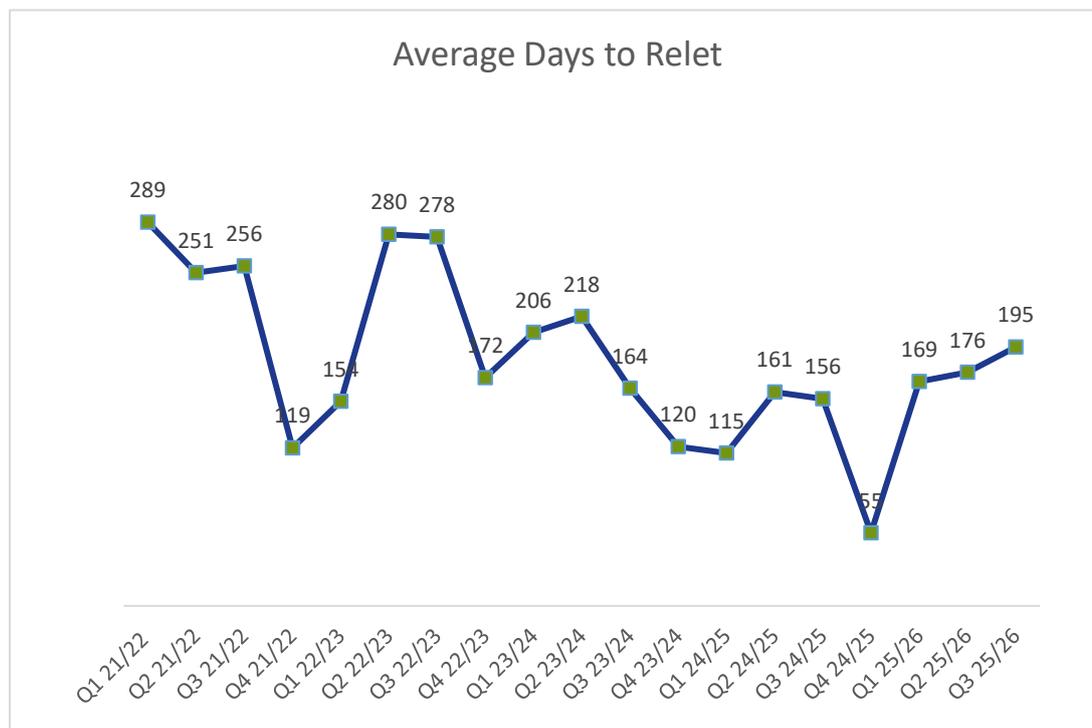
process to ensure that when tenancies end, properties are ready to re-let quickly and that these properties are of a high standard. Table 2 demonstrates that void property numbers have decreased since 2022 levels but fluctuate quarter to quarter with the current void rate being 6% of stock. Works to repair and refurbish properties remains a challenge for a timely turnaround of void properties. In order to address this the Housing Maintenance Team is currently recruiting to several trades, which will assist in improving the void refurbishment timescales.

Table 2: Number of Void Properties



5.6 Table 3 below demonstrates the number of days taken to re-let a void property within our housing stock. This is calculated from the date the property becomes void to the date a new tenancy commences. The current figure of 195 days is significantly higher than the industry target of 2-4 weeks but difficult to let properties such as our older Victorian terraced properties, disproportionately impact on this figure. In addition required refurbishment work is impacting detrimentally on the average days to relet stock. Improvements to the speed of void properties being let will impact on the financial health of the HRA and there will be an emphasis on improving this in 2026/27.

Table 3: Average days to re-let



Lettings

5.7 The Housing Management Team is responsible for allocating and letting Council homes. Between October 2024 and December 2025, there have been 39 properties let. 26 of these properties were advertised and let through Hartlepool Home Search. Other lettings have included mutual exchanges, managed moves and rehousing of resettlement families.

Lettings by band

Table 4: Breakdown of these lettings by priority banding

Band 1+	4%
Band 1	31%
Band 2	15%
Band 3	27%
Band 4	23%

5.8 For context, there were some changes to the priority bands of the Allocation Policy from November 2024 to respond to more local housing need and alleviate homelessness. This was reported and agreed by members of the Finance and Policy Committee on 15th September 2024. Changes included:

- Inclusion of a new Band 1+ to prioritise applicants in temporary accommodation (B&B, hotels, crash pads) above other homeless households who are owed the statutory homeless, prevention or relief duty.
- Category F added to Band 1 for people who need to move on emergency medical grounds to prevent them from having to present as homeless.
- Category added to Band 2 for homeless applicants without a priority need.

5.9 Following this policy change, applicants with no priority need are awarded Band 2; these applicants would have previously been allocated Band 1. This has seen a significant reduction in the number of Band 1 applicants on the waiting list – with more than a 50% reduction from January 2024 to January 2025.

Table 5: Snapshot of Band 1 applicants on the waiting list

	No. Band 1 Applicants
Jan 2024	56
Jan 2025	26
Jan 2026	23

5.10 By allocating and letting 35% of our stock to Band 1+ and Band 1 applicants with these policy changes in place, we are contributing to addressing homeless priorities in the town by providing good quality accommodation to those applicants in the highest level of housing need. Definitions of the five bands are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Lettings by house type

Table 6: Breakdown of property types for the 26 properties let via Hartlepool Home Search from October 2024 and December 2025

1 bed house	4%
2 bed house	50%
3 bed house	31%
2 bed bungalow	7%
1 bed flat	4%
2 bed flat	4%

Average number of bids per property type

- 5.11 The below data sets out the average number of bids placed on Hartlepool Home Search for each property type advertised and let between October 2024 and December 2025 (applicants must place a bid on preferred properties on Hartlepool Home Search to be considered). The data demonstrates the popularity of the new build homes and strong demand for 1 bed accommodation. The data also demonstrates the lack of demand for our older two bed terraced homes, which have very few bids overall.
- 5.12 During the period of October 2024 and December 2025 we had no 4 bed properties become available for first let or relet within our stock to be able to determine demand for this property type however, there are a high number of applicants – 121, currently on the waiting list with a 4 bed need.

Table 7: Average bids per property type

1 bed house (other)	average 78 bids
2 bed house (other)	average 37 bids
3 bed house (new build)	average 118 bids
3 bed house (other)	average 50 bids
2 bed bungalow (new build)	average 126 bids
1 bed flat (other)	average 82 bids
2 bed flat (new build)	average 41 bids

Tenant Survey Results 2025

- 5.13 The tenant participation survey will be a biennial survey to find out tenant views on the service provided by the housing management service and the results inform our Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Satisfaction surveys have been undertaken previously by the service to understand tenant views however, this is our first survey conducted to meet the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, which set out the specific wording of questions.
- 5.14 The survey took place during Q4 2024/25. The link to the survey was given to each tenant and paper copies were also made available. A total of 43 responses were received; equating to a response rate of 14%. Further engagement work will be undertaken to increase future response rates.
- 5.15 The majority of the questions asked how satisfied or dissatisfied tenants were with various aspects of the service provided by the housing management service. In the main, the responses to all questions were of a positive nature with the majority of respondents being satisfied with the service provided.
- 5.16 The first question asked - taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied tenants were with the service provided by the team.

- 89% of respondents indicating they were very satisfied or satisfied.
- 5.17 Over the previous 12 months, 32 respondents indicated that they'd had repairs completed in their home.
- 87% were satisfied with the repairs carried out;
 - 82% were happy with the time taken to complete the repair; and
 - 80% of the total respondents indicated that they felt their home was well maintained and that it was safe.
- 5.18 70% of respondents felt listened to by the service with their views being acted on. Nearly 80% of respondents felt that they were kept informed about the things that matter to them.
- 5.19 When asked if the housing management service made a positive contribution to their neighbourhood two thirds felt that it did.
- 5.20 88% of respondents felt that they were treated fairly and with respect with only one respondent feeling that this was not the case.
- 5.21 Out of all the responses received, 12 tenants had made a complaint to the housing management service in the previous 12 months with only two of these tenants being dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- 5.22 The responses showed that 84% of tenants agreed that the housing management service was providing the service that they expected from a landlord.
- 5.23 Where it has been possible to do so, we have responded to individual issues raised by tenants in their response and have used the overall results of the survey to inform service planning.

Estate Management

- 5.24 The Housing Management Team has implemented a more proactive approach to estate management with regular inspections to identify at an early stage any issues both in communal landscaped and parking areas and in tenants front and rear gardens. Enforcement is being carried out where necessary, but overall the inspections are improving the visual appearance of the areas where Council stock is concentrated and preventing issues escalating. There are 8 active enforcement cases underway for garden maintenance or rubbish in Council properties and this work is resource intensive.

6. KEY CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR THE HRA*Delivering new homes*

- 6.1 One of the key principles of the HRA is to grow the stock, increasing the number of good quality homes and improving the financial robustness of the HRA. Several new build schemes have been implemented in previous years however development of these has stagnated due to rising interest rates and increasing costs. The team is exploring all opportunities to purchase and build new homes in Hartlepool. Any properties proposed by the Council must be approved individually by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee and is subject to a robust business case identifying a surplus of £500 per unit per annum. This ensures that new developments contribute positively to the health and viability of the HRA in the longer term. The house type and quality must meet an identified housing need and to reduce the ongoing maintenance liability. Homes England grant for new properties will be sought on an individual scheme basis to support scheme viability. Subject to demonstrating viability new development schemes will be brought to the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee in 2026 for approval which aim to make best use of Council owned sites to deliver affordable homes that directly meet the needs of Hartlepool residents.
- 6.2 The Council has been successful in securing funding from the Council Housebuilding Support Fund (CHSF), a £5.5 million national revenue funding initiative available until March 2026. This fund is designed to help councils build the capacity and capability needed to develop ambitious bids for the £39 billion, 10-year Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) from 2026 onwards. Hartlepool Council received £75,000 from this fund and this will be matched by £25,000 HRA funding. Work is underway on feasibility, business case development and pre-planning work on potential sites in preparation for bids to be submitted to the SAHP in 2026. Discussions on the pipeline of development sites is underway with Homes England in preparation for future bids to the SAHP. These schemes will be brought to Committee for approval once feasibility work has been completed and if sound business case can be developed.
- 6.3 In addition to the Council house development programme which is in development and following approval from Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee the Council is progressing with the acquisition of 9 affordable rented units from Persimmon Homes. These units once acquired will provide good quality affordable homes to let but also strengthen the financial resilience of the HRA. Due to be let by Q2 2026 this will bring additional income into the HRA and given they are new units, reduced maintenance and void costs.

Improving energy efficiency

- 6.4 Due to the nature of previous property acquisition of empty homes, many of our homes are older stock which tends to perform less well in respect of energy efficiency. The Council has been successful in securing funds through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund where funding is provided to retrofit energy efficiency measures to some of our poorest performing homes throughout the course of the project including air-source heat pumps, solar photovoltaics and insulation. The aim is to improve properties to an EPC B and C; delivering warm, energy-efficient homes, reducing carbon emissions and fuel bills, tackling fuel poverty, and supporting green jobs. The first phase of the project is complete with 30 properties improved to EPC C or above with a total expenditure of £236,175.
- 6.5 An allocation of £529,352 for further capital measures has been secured for the next phase of this project (Warm Homes Social Housing Fund 3) which has commenced with the project match funded by HRA resources. The aim is to improve 30 Council homes and bring them up to EPC C or above by March 2027. Whilst the match funding is a pressure on HRA resources, in particular the major repairs reserve, it facilitates additional investment from grant funding to improve Council homes that would be required in any event to improve the energy efficiency of its homes in line with its obligations to meet relevant standards. Homes England have also approved the use of some of the Councils recycled capital grant from Right to Buy sales to be used to match fund this scheme. This reduces the overall impact on the budget. Subsequent phases of this project if implemented will require additional contributions from the HRA. The Council currently has 110 properties which are below EPC C and will require energy efficiency improvements in coming years.
- 6.6 The primary challenge of the project is encouraging tenant participation, despite the benefits and no cost involved to the tenant. While the scheme may require multiple home visits for inspection and installation of measures it ultimately lowers energy bills and delivers savings for tenants. In the first phase of the scheme only 75% of properties surveyed and approved progressed through to installation stage.

Ensuring safety compliance

- 6.7 There are several challenges to ensure safety compliance in Council stock. The Council already implements a detailed procedure to ensure gas safety compliance, administered to ensure that no gas safety checks become overdue. Additional requirements on electrical safety checks have now come into force. Whilst the Council currently comply with the electrical safety regulations, the new powers allow the Council to use enforcement powers where access will not be granted by the tenant. Access to properties to carry out safety checks is the main barrier to ensuring

compliance. The work to access properties is resource intensive with weekly access attempts and notices; to date this financial year 17 properties have been referred to the team to implement the access enforcement procedure.

- 6.8 The Council also has requirements to ensure fire safety in properties which are between 11-18 meters in height and contain more than one residential dwelling. There are two properties which fall under these requirements in the HRA. Fire Risk Assessments are in place for these properties and are monitored and updated annually to ensure safety compliance. Inspection regimes are also in place for these properties to ensure ongoing compliance.

Repairs, maintenance and stock condition

- 6.9 The Council has the responsibility to maintain its housing stock to a good standard and provide a responsive repairs service. This service is delivered in-house by the Housing Maintenance Team. The HRA is under financial pressure with the costs associated with delivering this service increasing annually, as shown in table 8 below.

Table 8: Average cost of repairs per property

Financial Year	Average cost per dwelling
2021/22	£706
2022/23	£655
2023/24	£1,560
2024/25	£2,053
2025/26 (Part year figures – 10 months)	£1,495 (part year)

**Figures do not include energy efficiency works, disabled adaptations or works to resettlement properties.*

- 6.10 Whilst our housing stock has increased year on year the table demonstrates that the average cost of repair per property has increased since 2021/22. This is due to several factors. Firstly, properties acquired through empty homes funding and refurbished are now requiring more extensive repairs and in addition properties built in 2009/10 are also requiring more significant repairs as the lifespan of some of the elements within the property are coming to an end (such as kitchens and bathrooms). The number of major repairs is therefore significantly higher than in previous years and likely to increase further.
- 6.11 The Housing Management Team are currently carrying out annual inspection visits at all properties. This has resulted in repair issues being identified. This is beneficial to the residents but is resulting in increased

number of repairs and increased costs for the HRA. The cost of carrying out the repairs and building materials has also increased.

- 6.12 In addition to general repairs we have seen increased costs in relation to tackling damp and mould particularly in older terraced properties. A serious approach is taken to this issue, providing a responsive service to tackle any causes of damp and mould in tenants' homes in line with the requirements of Awaab's Law. This approach includes the installation of mechanical ventilation systems to ventilate properties and tackle condensation and carrying out any structural works required to a property. This action is resulting in increased costs for the HRA and is pressure that is likely to continue. Table 9 demonstrates the year-on-year increase relating to tackling damp and mould in Council properties, which has a negative impact on the financial position of the HRA.

Table 9: Costs of damp and mould related interventions

Year	Cost
2021/22	£11,561
2022/23	£31,008
2023/24	£41,700
2024/25	£90,855
2025/26 (costs to date)	£118,616

- 6.13 To inform the Council's long term stock investment plan and to understand the condition of the housing stock we are completing detailed stock condition surveys using Kycloud surveying software. This is a requirement of the new Safety and Quality Consumer Standard published by the regulator for social housing in April 2024. The standard requires Registered Providers to have an 'accurate record of condition of their homes at an individual property level, based on a physical assessment of all homes'.
- 6.14 To date 47% of Council homes have been inspected and had full stock condition survey conducted. There is a programme in place to complete all surveys in a 5-year rolling period with weekly inspections being conducted. There are challenges accessing properties and many failed appointments where access is not granted by the tenant. This results in additional workload for the Housing Management Team and additional cost. Communication with tenants highlighting the importance of the surveys and the need to grant access will be done through the next tenant newsletter.

Delivering disabled adaptations

- 6.15 There has been 2 major adaptations in our homes in 2025/26 to date which include a level access shower and a ground floor extension to provide a bedroom. The cost of these adaptations is approximately

£50,000. To meet the needs of Council tenants in their homes we may be required to carry out adaptations to the housing stock, which can range from minor adaptations such as handrails to major adaptations which could include property extensions. The HRA is required to fund reasonable adaptations where they have been approved following an Occupational Therapist assessment (Equality Act 2010).

- 6.16 Disabled Facilities Grant funding for such adaptations is not permitted due to HRA self-financing regulations, and this therefore becomes a financial risk to the HRA. In addition, there is uncertainty around the number of adaptations that may be required each year as this depends on the changing needs of tenants. A budget funded from existing major repairs reserve has therefore been allocated for this work, but this does place increasing financial pressure on the HRA.

Loss of homes through Right to Buy

- 6.17 We continue to plan for the loss of homes through Right to Buy (RTB), with one sale this financial year to date. The impact of each RTB sale will be detrimental to the HRA, with a typical average loss of net rent income of approximately £2,300 per house and an average overhanging debt of £38,000 i.e. the HRA is left with outstanding debt without rental income to cover the cost of borrowing. This is particularly challenging for Hartlepool as these properties cross-subsidise the empty properties. Due to already implemented legislation changes, the forecast RTB sales have been reduced to one per year in the business plan. There is a further government consultation currently underway regarding right to buy legislation and should discounts be even less favorable to tenants in the future, fewer Right to Buys are likely to progress, therefore helping the financial viability of the HRA.

Tenancy management and support

- 6.18 We continue to see an increase in the rise of intensive tenancy support cases with increasing case complexity, which frequently requires a reactive response. Current cases involve multiple factors including welfare and safeguarding concerns, poor mental and physical health, bereavement, domestic abuse, addiction and financial instability. In many cases this has led to tenancy management issues such as poor living standards/cleanliness, gardens not being maintained, a build-up of rubbish in and around the home, hoarding, non-payment of rent and a lack of engagement for cyclical maintenance like annual gas safety checks.
- 6.19 As the tenancy management issues are often intrinsically linked, the team holds a monthly meeting to specifically discuss cases when the issues are cross cutting between the 'People' and 'Place' service areas within housing management. This includes ongoing support cases to ensure a coordinated approach is taken and we take a person-centered approach in

the work we do to support the individual or family – with the ultimate objective of sustaining tenancies. This is alongside discussing current cases where our tenant(s) have been a victim of crime and cases involving potential breaches of tenancy for example, abandonment, ASB, fly-tipping, poor garden maintenance, property damage and non-payment of rechargeable repairs.

- 6.20 Whilst the current Housing Management Team structure has capacity to be responsive and deliver this support, this will need to be kept under review and as the Council's housing stock increases. Any additional staff required would be funded directly from the HRA.
- 6.21 A policy to reflect the management of households with complex needs is being developed to set out our approach to tenancy management and support, which also fits with the government agenda of getting to know your tenants. Alongside this, we are looking at ways of improving the delivery of services to those households with specific support needs. This is to ensure we are recognising earlier and appropriately recording vulnerabilities and, responding effectively with reasonable adjustments where appropriate, in an effort to identify what works best to support individuals and families with complex needs living in Council homes and, taking a proactive approach where there is the greatest risk of tenancy failure.
- 6.22 We have continued our annual home inspection programme and have conducted 90 visits between October 2024 and December 2025. This programme forms part of our approach in getting to know our customers and maintaining communication with our tenants.
- 6.23 The inspection visits have been the catalyst to change in several cases and have included practical advice on tenancy management matters, welfare support and rehousing, as well as more formal referrals to services like Hartlepool Citizens Advice, Occupational Therapy, Adult Social Care / Let's Connect and to the Children's Hub, as part of a package of support.
- 6.24 This regular programme of inspection visits has directly contributed to the increase in cases where intensive management support has been required.
- 6.25 There is currently staffing resource in place to conduct the annual home inspections up until March 2027. This will also need to be kept under review as we are likely to need to continue with this approach. The visits have been invaluable in many cases and are instrumental in the delivery of the housing management service, building relationships with tenants and in supporting us with ensuring we meet the Government's new and emerging guidance and legislation.

Responding to Anti-Social Behaviour

- 6.26 A Service Level Agreement (SLA) exists between the Council's Housing Management Team and Hartlepool Anti-social Behaviour Unit for the provision of Tenancy Enforcement Services. Under this SLA the Anti-social Behaviour Unit provides a provision for Tenancy Enforcement regarding the Council's residential housing stock and, for residential properties which are privately owned, but which are managed and let by the Council through its Quality Homes Social Lettings Agency.
- 6.27 Under the SLA the Anti-social Behaviour Unit support in:
- (a) Investigating and resolving anti-social behaviour and hate incidents involving Council managed housing stock.
 - (b) Investigating and resolving breaches of the Council's tenancy agreement.
 - (c) Provision of advice and victim support for tenants of Council managed housing stock who have experienced anti-social behaviour or hate.
 - (d) Provision of tenancy enforcement for residential properties which are owned, managed and let by Hartlepool Borough Council.
 - (e) Provision of tenancy enforcement for residential properties which are privately owned, but which are managed and let by Hartlepool Borough Council through the Council's Quality Homes Social Lettings Agency.
- 6.28 Between 1st October 2024 and 31st December 2025, the Anti-social Behaviour Unit investigated a total of 38 complaints, relating to 21 addresses, under the SLA. This meant that during this date period a total of 5.9% of council managed residential properties were subject to a tenancy enforcement complaint.
- 6.29 Of the 30 complaints that are now closed from this date period, 14 complaints resulted in a proven breach of tenancy with appropriate action being taken. This included:- police action being taken, possession being obtained, tenancies being terminated, tenancy warnings issued and support and target hardening being provided. The remaining 16 complaints were closed with no further action. This was due to no further complaints being made by complainants, and/or no evidence being obtained regarding the allegation after investigation.

7. COMPLAINTS UPDATE

- 7.1 In line with the new regulations and requirements of the Complaint Handling Code, members of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on the 8th September 2025 approved a report with the Chair providing a Governing Body response to the housing management service complaints overview for 2024/25 as the Member Responsible for Complaints. The next annual report including the Annual self-assessment and annual complaints performance and service improvement report will be submitted to Committee by September 2026.

7.2 As an interim update and as the table below demonstrates for this financial year to date, there has been 9 service requests where dissatisfaction was expressed by a tenant, but the issue resolved by the service. In addition, there has been 7 stage 1 complaints since April 2025. 6 related to the repair service and one regarding re-housing. There has been 1 stage 2 complaint to date, which was not upheld.

Table 10: Complaints Overview

Year	Number of service requests	Number of complaints	Number of stage 1 complaints	Number of stage 2 complaints	Number upheld or partially upheld at stage 2	Percentage upheld or partially upheld	Refusals	Complaints referred to Housing Ombudsman
2023/24	n/a	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
2024/25	21	7	7	1	1	100%	0	0
2025/26 (to date)	9	7	7	1	0	0	0	0

Year	Stage 1 responses within 10 working days	Percentage of stage 1 responses within 10 working days	Stage 2 responses within 20 working days	Percentage stage 2 responses within 20 working days
2023/24	1	100%	n/a	n/a
2024/25	6	83%	1	100%
2025/26	7	100%	0	0%

7.3 All complaint responses have been responded to within the required timescales. The aim of the policy is to continuously improve the service and to learn from the complaints. Particular attention is therefore being given to the delivery of the repairs service to improve the customer experience and ensure repair work is arranged and followed up in a timely manner.

8. REVISED BUSINESS CASE

8.1 The Council uses a financial model to facilitate the budget and business planning process, forecasting over a 40-year period and is a member of a 'HRA User Group' with 26 other Councils. This has been beneficial for ensuring key assumptions used in the model are reasonable and up to date. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to update the original business case assumptions in line with the actual experience and updating variables for rent levels and inflation experienced in previous

years. A summary of this business case and budget for 2026/27 is set out in **Appendix 1**.

8.2 In recent years there have been several factors which have put the HRA under extreme pressure but have been managed through the prudent and resilient business case model underpinning it. This, however, is becoming increasingly difficult and some adjustments to the business plan will be necessary to ensure continued sustainability. These pressure factors include new Government policies and an increasingly challenging operating environment. The main factors have been summarised above but include:

- Cost inflation out of sync with retail price index (RPI);
- Cost inflation out of sync with consumer price index (CPI);
- Right to Buy levels;
- Cost of repairs;
- Rent arrears and the impact of benefit changes;
- Void Levels which impact on rent and repairs;
- Interest rate changes;
- Requirements around Decent Homes standard including safeguarding against damp and mould within our properties and;
- The cost of delivering disabled adaptations in our properties.

8.3 In addition to the pressures highlighted above, there are several factors which create additional pressure on the financial viability of the HRA and reduce the ability to make prudent voluntary contributions to the Major Repairs Reserve, resulting in increased risk in future years:

- Capital financing costs are increasing and are likely to remain high in future years.
- The staff pay award, and other inflationary pressures have an impact as the management charges for each HRA property are fixed.
- Higher repairs and capital costs associated with major repairs and adaptations have an impact on overall resources and impact on the fixed asset charge to the HRA.

Rent setting for 2026/27

8.4 Government rent policy introduced from 2020/21 allowed for rents to increase by a maximum of 1% plus CPI inflation. Council took a decision to approve a rent freeze at that time and rents remained at their 2019/20 level. In April 2023 Members approved a rent increase of 5% which was below the Government level of 7%. The impact of this reduced rental income and this continues to negatively affect the health of the HRA.

8.5 It is proposed that a rent increase of 4.8% (CPI 3.8% + 1% increase) is approved in line with the current rent policy. The HRA model has assumed

this level of increase, and this results in a balanced budget as **Appendix 1** demonstrates. Without this proposed rent increase the HRA budget becomes unsustainable and would go into deficit. Rent Convergence consultation is underway, with the outcome of this is expected at the end of January 2026, this is likely to have minimal impact on our rent setting.

- 8.6 The Government will provide additional funding for those tenants receiving housing benefit and Universal Credit to meet this increased rent demand. Approximately two thirds of HRA tenants will therefore have all or part of their rent increase funded by the Government. This increase would also likely be in line with other social housing providers operating in Hartlepool. Providing the rent increase will fund some of the measures being introduced to address the legislation changes highlighted such as delivering an efficient repairs service, improving energy efficiency and tackling damp and mould.

9. HRA RESERVE

- 9.1 The HRA ring-fence means that the HRA reserve can only be used for the purposes of the HRA. It is also the only source of funding available to fund deficits and therefore must be kept at a level which ensures the HRA remains viable. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 section 76 requires that Councils must ensure that the HRA budget does not allow for the HRA Reserve to become 'overdrawn'.
- 9.2 In 2018/19 there was a £0.190m depletion of the HRA reserve, which was a significant reduction in a single financial year and not sustainable. This position was stabilised in 2019/20 and 2020/21, when the HRA reserve was largely reinstated. The current HRA reserve at 1st April 2025 is £0.500m and is forecast to remain unchanged owing to ongoing expenditure pressures even if the 4.8% rent increase is approved. The reserve is required to provide financial resilience to withstand future potential shocks, however lack of contributions increases risk in relation to future sustainability.

Robustness advice

- 9.3 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 section 76 requires that Councils must ensure that the HRA budget does not allow for the HRA Reserve to become 'overdrawn'.
- 9.4 To ensure this position does not arise a robust approach is taken to assess forecast HRA income and costs. On this basis the recommended 4.8% rent increase provides the most robust and sustainable basis for the HRA and the continued delivery of the Council's housing objectives.

Capital implications

- 9.5 The Council was successful in its bid to the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Phase 3 as part of the TVCA led consortium application. The Council is required to contribute match funding of £225,000, equating to 50% of the total cost of works over a two-year programme. As this relates to the Council's social housing stock, the HRA would fund this from the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR). Funding has also been approved to acquire 9 units into the HRA and the cost of this scheme has been factored into the overall capital budget.
- 9.6 The HRA capital programme and approved resources are outlined in **Appendix 1** along with proposed additions to the capital programme for 2026/27.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	All risks are set out in section 6.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	Outlined in sections 8 & 9.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	Legislative changes set out in Section 4.
SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Set out in Appendix 3 .
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There is currently sufficient staff to operate the HRA. Should additional staff be needed as the HRA stock grows or workloads increase due to policy pressures this will be identified in future reports and costs covered by the HRA.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	All housing related asset management considerations have been detailed in the report.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	The Warm Homes Social Housing Fund work detailed in section 6 contributes towards improving the sustainability of the housing stock.
CONSULTATION	None.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 Members are asked to note the overall contents and strategy of the HRA Business Plan 2026/27.
- 11.2 Members are asked to agree to the recommended rent increase of 4.8% for 2026/27 and refer the decision to Council for approval.
- 11.3 Members are also asked to approve the full HRA revenue and capital budget for 2026/27 detailed in **Appendix 1**.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To ensure the financial health of the Council’s HRA is maintained as effectively as possible.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Finance and Policy Committee report 10th February 2025.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 14.1 Kieran Bostock
Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: (01429) 284291
E-mail: kieran.bostock@hartlepool.gov.uk
- 14.2 Tim Wynn
Strategic Asset Manager
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: (01429) 523386
E-mail: tim.wynn@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 28.01.26
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 28.01.26
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 28.01.26

HRA Budget 2026/27**Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2026/27**

	2026/27 BUDGET £'000
Rent Increase 4.8%	
Income	
Dwelling Rents	(2,085)
Non-dwelling Rents - Other Income	(30)
Charges for services and facilities	(3)
Income sub total	(2,118)
Expenditure	
Repairs and maintenance	650
Supervision and management (Note 2)	548
Rents, rates, taxes and other charges	24
Right to Buy Reserve	5
Depreciation (Major Repairs Allowance (Note 3))	431
Discretionary Housing Payments	4
	1,662
Debt Management	13
Expenditure sub total	1,675
Net cost of services	(443)
Interest payable	465
HRA investment income	(22)
	443
HRA Operating (Surplus) / Deficit for the year	0
HRA Balance B/F (Note 4)	(500)
HRA Balance C/F	(500)

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Capital Resources 2026/27

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/25	Revised Budget 2025/26 at Q3	Resources rephased into future	26/27 Budget	27/28 Budget	28/29 Budget	Total Capital Programme	Funding Source						
										S106	Major Repairs reserve	Prudential Borrowing	TVCA Grant	Capital Receipt	RCCO/ corporate resources	Total Funding
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
S106	Affordable Housing	913	0	0	913	225		688	913	913						913
7182	Empty Homes - Phase 3	618	103	0	515	0		515	515			618				618
7726	Resettlement Accommodation	1306	1306	0	0	0	0	0	0			435	632		239	1,306
8106	New Build	370	1	0	369	0		369	369			370				370
8799	Major Repairs	510	103	107	300	100	100	100	300		510					510
9294	HRA Adaptations	441	41	100	300	100	100	100	300		441					441
9520	Social Housing Decarbonisation Phase3	450	0	225	225	225			225		113		225	112		450
NEW	Purchase of 9 new properties	965	0	965	0	0			0		518		241		206	965
COUNCIL HOUSING - CAPITAL SCHEMES		5,573	1,554	1,397	2,622	650	200	1,772	2,622	1,431	1,064	1,664	857	318	239	5,573

HRA BUSINESS PLAN MODEL 2026/27

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£'000	£'000	£'000
RENT INCREASE	4.8%	3.8%	3.5%
Dwelling rent	(2,085)	(2,208)	(2,309)
Other Income	(33)	(34)	(34)
TOTAL INCOME	(2,118)	(2,242)	(2,343)
Revenue Costs	1,662	1,772	1,873
Capital Charges	456	470	470
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,118	2,242	2,343
(SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	0	0	0

Housing Waiting List Priority Band Definitions

Banding Assessment (from 11th November 2024)

A Banding system is used to assess housing need. Current housing circumstances are assessed and applicant given the Band which reflects how urgently they need to move.

There are 4 Bands.

Band 1+

- People owed the relief duty and in priority need currently placed in temporary accommodation.

Band 1

- People living in Hartlepool who are losing their home due to a Council led demolition or regeneration scheme.
- People assessed as statutorily homeless and in priority need.
- People who are owed the homelessness prevention or relief duty and in priority need.
- People at risk of domestic abuse.
- People leaving HM Armed Forces community.
- People who need to move on emergency medical grounds.

Band 2

- People who need to move on urgent medical grounds.
- People who are owed the homelessness prevention or relief duty but not in priority need.
- People assessed as ready for independent living.
- A household with a child in need or Care Leaver.
- Adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents/foster carers.
- People living in unacceptable housing conditions.
- Applicants who are under-occupying 3 or 4+ bedroom family homes (social rented) by 1 or more bedrooms.
- People who are overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms.
- HM Armed Forces Personnel identified as having an urgent need for housing within 5 years of discharge.

Band 3

- People who need to move due to high medical grounds.
- People who need to move on hardship grounds.
- People sharing facilities with persons not of the same household.
- People who are overcrowded by 1 or more bedroom.

Band 4

- People whose current home is adequate to meet their housing needs.
- People who have refused a reasonable offer of accommodation or worsened their own circumstances.
- People who are in rent arrears or have any housing related debt at the time that they apply to the housing register.
- People with recent unspent convictions* or history of anti-social behaviour** at the time that they apply to the housing register.
- People who do not meet the local connection criteria to Hartlepool.

** Recent unspent convictions will be considered those that have occurred in the 2 years prior to their housing application.*

*** Anti-social behaviour that has occurred more than 2 years prior to their housing application will be disregarded.*

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

Appendix 3

Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

1.1 Lead Department:	Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
1.2 Lead Division:	Estates & Asset Management Section

1.3 Title of the proposed action:
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2026/27

1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:
The action proposes the overall budget setting and rent setting for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2026/27.

1.5 Who else is involved:
The action is proposed by, and will be delivered by, the Council.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee and Council.

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

All wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seaton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burn Valley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headland & Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Throston	<input type="checkbox"/>
De Bruce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Victoria	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fens & Greatham	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rossmere	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A - Internal council activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foggy Furze	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural West	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1.8 Completed By:

Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Amy Waller	Principal Housing Officer (Place)	19/01/2026

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Section 2 – Explaining the impact of the proposed action

2.1 What data and evidence has informed this impact assessment?

Quarterly monitoring data which is collated to support the HRA business plan has been used to inform the proposals within this report and this impact assessment. The data used covers a wide range of housing management functions including income (rent collection) and costs (repairs and maintenance, management costs) to establish the overall budget position and resilience of the Housing Revenue Account for the Council's housing stock. Tenant and housing need data has also been collated to inform the report and this SIA.

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

Gap(s) Identified	How it / they have or will be addressed
None identified	Not applicable

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

2.3 Risk Score

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Age		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: 2 Impact score:2 Overall score:4	As part of the Council’s housing stock there is a provision of bungalows for older persons. The approval of the recommendations within the report allow the HRA to continue to be sustainable and offer these properties for affordable rent to the older residents of Hartlepool. There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed rent increase will adversely impact on any specific age group.
Disability		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	The financial sustainability of the HRA helps the Council to fund disabled adaptations where required in its homes, this will have a positive impact on those residents living within the Council’s housing stock who require adaptations to enable them to continue living in their home and sustain their tenancy.
Gender Reassignment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Pregnancy and Maternity		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Race (Ethnicity)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score:2 Impact score:2 Overall score:4	
Religion or Belief		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Sex		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Sexual Orientation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Care Leavers (Local)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Armed Forces (Local)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: Impact score: Overall score:	
Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score:2 Impact score:2 Overall score:4	Whilst the accommodation that the Council provides at an affordable rent has a positive impact on those in poverty or disadvantage in Hartlepool, the proposed rent increase may have a negative financial impact on some Council tenants. Approximately 2/3rds of tenants receive Housing Benefit or a payment of Housing Costs from Universal Credit so the increase will be funded by Government in full/part. The Housing Management Team works with any tenant in financial difficulty to support them through the rent recovery process – being proactive in reporting housing costs to Universal Credit through the Landlord Portal, updating Housing Benefit claims directly with the service, applying for Discretionary

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

		Housing Payments, welfare support and making referrals to organisations for debt, budgeting and benefits advice.
--	--	--

Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

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

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

Section 4 - Sign Off

Responsible Officer sign off:	
Name	Amy Waller
Job title	Principal Housing Officer (Place)
Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	
Job title	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

Section 5 - Review (To be completed after implementation)

5.1 Review completed by:		
Name	Job Title	Date review completed

5.2 Did the impact turned out as expected?

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

5.4 Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

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

5.6 Additional mitigation(s) or justification

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

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

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

ITEM (13)

Chief Executive's Business Report



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Council

19 March 2026

Report of: Chief Executive
Subject: BUSINESS REPORT

1. PAY POLICY 2026/2027

Under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, Full Council is required to approve a Pay Policy Statement on an annual basis. The updated document for 2026/27 is attached at **Appendix A** for Council's consideration.

Full Council is requested to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 which is attached as **Appendix A**.

2. HARTLEPOOL FINANCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP – APPOINTMENT OF PARTNERSHIP REPRESENTATIVE

The Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership brings together key organisations across the town committed to tackling poverty, improving financial resilience, and ensuring that Hartlepool residents have access to the right advice, support, and opportunities. It operates as a collaborative forum where issues are identified, best practice is shared, and practical solutions are developed to improve outcomes for our community.

Council was asked to nominate a suitable representative to join the partnership as political lead.

Members are asked to approve the nomination of Councillor Gary Allen



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Pay Policy Statement
2026/27

Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 National and other Conditions of Service	3
3 Pay Structure	4
4 Remuneration on Appointment	5
5 Senior Management Remuneration	6
6 Additional Benefits	7
7 Changes to Salaries	9
8 Payments to all Employees upon Termination of Employment	9
9 Lowest Paid Employees	10
10 Employment or Engagement of Former Employees	11
11 Employment of Individuals under a Contract For Services	12
12 Income Tax and National Insurance	12
13 Use of Agency Workers	13
14 Apprentices	13
15 Use of Zero Hours Contracts	13
16 Contractors	13
17 Gender Pay Gap Information	14

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Pay Policy Statement explains Hartlepool Borough Council’s approach to employee pay, as required by Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 and associated Government guidance. It applies to all employees except those working in schools with delegated budgets. The Statement is reviewed and approved by Full Council each year and is published on the Council’s website as soon as possible after approval.
- 1.2 Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all employees are paid fairly and transparently, in line with relevant employment legislation.
- 1.3 For 2026/27, the Council’s total pay budget is £89.2m (excluding school staff) including on-costs. The Council employs 2116 staff, not including those directly employed by schools, across a wide range of roles.
- 1.4 As Hartlepool’s largest employer and with around 78% of staff living in the town the Council plays a significant role in the local economy and in reducing inequality. The Council is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community

2. NATIONAL AND OTHER CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

- 2.1 The relevant National Conditions of Service, as set out in Table 1, form part of employees’ contracts of employment.

Table 1 – National Conditions of Service

Condition of Service	Type of Employees
Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Executives	Chief Executive
Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Officers in Local Authorities	Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant Directors and some senior managers
The Soulbury Committee	Educational Improvement Professionals, Educational Psychologists and Young People’s/Community Service Managers
Conditions Of Service for School Teachers in England And Wales ¹	Head Teachers, Deputy/Assistant Head Teachers, all Leadership, Leading Practitioners, Teachers, (Qualified and Unqualified)
Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers	Youth and Community Workers

Condition of Service	Type of Employees
National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services ('Green Book')– Part 2 only	All other employees

Some employees remain on different conditions of service where this is required for legal reasons, such as following TUPE transfers.

- 2.2 The Council's Single Status Agreement applies automatically to NJC employees. Sections 1 (paragraphs 1.1.3 and 1.1.4), 3 (sub-section 3.5), 5–9 and 12–16 of Part 2 of that Agreement apply to all employees where their national conditions do not address a particular matter.
- 2.3 The 'Youth and Community Workers' national agreement confirmed a 3.2% increase to all spinal column points from 1 September 2025. For Soulbury staff, a 3.2% offer from 1 September 2025 has been made by National Employers but has been rejected by the Soulbury Officers' Side. The offer remains on the table and agreement has not yet been reached.
- 2.4 The 'NJC for Local Government Services' (Green Book) National Employers have agreed a 3.2% increase on all spinal column points from 1 April 2025. The same 3.2% increase has been agreed by the National Employers for Chief Executives and Chief Officers.

3. PAY STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The Council's local pay structure is based on the nationally negotiated pay rates set out in the relevant conditions of service.
- 3.2 National pay awards are automatically applied to employees covered by the national conditions of service listed in Table 1.
- 3.3 Employees who remain on pre-transfer (e.g. TUPE) terms and conditions are **not entitled** to Green Book pay awards where:
 - the maximum of their pre-transfer pay band is higher than the maximum of the equivalent Council pay band, and/or
 - they are still eligible for increments within their pre-transfer pay band because they have not reached the maximum point.
 - entitled to Green Book pay awards in all other circumstances.
- 3.4 All other pay-related allowances are set either nationally or locally, following the appropriate collective bargaining arrangements.
- 3.5 When determining grading structures and setting pay levels for posts not covered by national pay grades, the Council balances value for money with the need to attract and retain employees capable of delivering high-quality

services. The Council must also comply with pay-related legislation, including equal pay, the national minimum wage and the national living wage.

- 3.6 Senior roles covered by 'JNC for Chief Executives and JNC for Chief Officers' are evaluated using the LGA Senior Managers Job Evaluation Scheme. NJC roles are evaluated using the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme. Both schemes ensure fair and consistent grading. For legal or historical reasons, a small number of employees remain on pay arrangements that do not align with current structures (e.g., following TUPE transfers).
- 3.7 There are no job evaluation schemes for Teachers, Youth and Community Workers or Soulbury staff. These employees are placed within nationally defined grading structures.
- 3.8 The Council reviews external pay market information as appropriate to ensure its pay structures remain aligned with relevant labour market conditions.
- 3.9 Periodic equal pay audits are undertaken and pay structures and allowances are reviewed where necessary.

4. REMUNERATION ON APPOINTMENT

- 4.1 All new appointments are made in line with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy. Employees will normally be appointed at the lowest spinal column point of the relevant pay band unless there is an objectively justified reason to appoint at a higher point.
- 4.2 Appointments to all officer posts except those covered in Section 5 are the responsibility of the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, or their nominee. These appointments cannot be made by Elected Members.
- 4.3 Where an employee is redeployed into a lower-graded role due to ill health (supported by Occupational Health) or as an alternative to redundancy, they will normally be placed on the highest spinal column point of the lower grade to minimise financial loss. Where applicable, salary protection will apply in accordance with the Council's Single Status Agreement.
- 4.4 In some circumstances, external labour market conditions may require the Council to take account of market pay levels when setting starting salaries or applying market forces supplements to attract or retain employees with specific skills or experience.
- 4.5 The Council does not offer "golden hello" or similar incentive payments on appointment. The only exception is the use of market forces supplements, where applicable, and where these have been approved in line with the provisions set out in Table 3.

5. SENIOR MANAGEMENT REMUNERATION

5.1 This Pay Policy Statement covers 'Chief Officers,' as defined by the Localism Act 2011 (Section 43 (2)) and established in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as detailed below:

- the Head of Paid Service (Section 4(1), Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- the Monitoring Officer (Section 5(1), Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- statutory chief officers (Section 2(6), Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- non-statutory chief officers (Section 2(7), Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- deputy chief officers (Section 2(8), Local Government and Housing Act 1989)

Within Hartlepool Borough Council, this definition includes employees on JNC for Chief Executives, JNC for Chief Officers and NJC for Local Government Services, as well as individuals on alternative terms and conditions where these apply following TUPE or similar transfers.

5.2 Appointments to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service, Directors, and other Chief Officer roles are made in line with the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules. Full Council must approve appointments to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service, the s151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer. Directors and other Chief Officers are appointed by the Council's Appointments Panel. The Council will not create any new posts with a salary exceeding £100,000 without the prior approval of Full Council.

5.3 The salary bands for Senior Management, effective from 1 April 2026, are shown below.

Table 2 – Salary Bands of 'Senior Management'

Role	Annual Salary Band as at 1 April 2026	No of Points in Pay Band
Chief Executive	£171,760*	1
Executive Directors	£123,298 - £135,406	6
Directors	£108,936 - £118,680	4
Director of Public Health	£95,623 - £102,304	3
Chief Officer – Band A	£95,623 - £102,304	3
Chief Officer – Band B	£85,605 - £92,285	3
Chief Officer – Band C	£72,245 - £82,266	4
Chief Officer – Band D	£66,014 - £68,804	3

*upon appointment of the new Chief executive the salary will be £155,000

5.4 For Chief Officer posts below Director level, the Council operates a series of pay bands that provide flexibility while ensuring a competitive and transparent approach to attracting and retaining high calibre staff.

- 5.5 Increments are awarded automatically each year where applicable, in line with the relevant pay band.
- 5.6 Details of Senior Management roles and remuneration are published on the Council’s website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

6. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- 6.1 Employees receive or have access to a range of additional benefits, as set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Additional Benefits

Employees	Additional Benefit
All officers involved in delivering local, Parliamentary and/or European elections and/or referenda	Duty payments in connection with elections as determined locally in consultation with the other Tees Valley Councils and/or by statute depending on the duties concerned.
Employees in Development Scheme posts	Progression through pay bands where pre-determined progression criteria are met.
All employees whose pay reduces as a consequence of organisational change, job evaluation or redeployment	The pay protection arrangements detailed in the Council’s Single Status Agreement apply to all employees as a means of assisting employees to adjust to a reduction in pay arising from organisational change, job evaluation or redeployment. At the end of the year protection period the standard pay arrangements apply.
All employees who are members of public sector pension schemes	<p>The Council operates the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) and the NHS Pension Scheme (PHPS) and makes employer pension contributions, as required, for all employees who elect to participate in one of the above schemes.</p> <p>The employer pension contributions from 1 April 2025 are as follows:</p> <p>Local Government Pension Scheme -12.4% of pensionable pay</p> <p>Teachers’ Pension Scheme - 28.68% of pensionable pay</p>

Employees	Additional Benefit
	<p>NHS Pension Scheme – 14.38% of pensionable pay via direct payroll deductions. An additional 5.6% contribution is paid on invoice by HBC and a further 3.8% is paid by DHSC.</p> <p>The contribution rates are regularly reviewed and set by actuaries advising the various Pension Funds.</p>
<p>All employees in posts where there are particular recruitment and/or retention difficulties</p>	<p>While standard pay bands are normally sufficient to attract and retain staff, in specific circumstances a market forces supplement may be applied.</p> <p>A business case must be prepared (and reviewed regularly) to support such payments. Supplements are approved by Members for posts covered by the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, and by the Chief Executive for all other posts.</p> <p>These arrangements follow the provisions of the Council's Single Status Agreement.</p>
<p>Employees registered and in receipt of Childcare Vouchers via the Council run Scheme on 5 April 2018.</p>	<p>Able to continue to access the Council's Childcare Voucher scheme through a salary sacrifice arrangement in accordance with His Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) rules and at no cost to the Council.</p>
<p>All employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme</p>	<p>Able to access a Shared Cost Salary Sacrifice AVC scheme.</p>
<p>All employees (excluding those with less than 6 months service with the Council and those without the appropriate fixed term contract length)</p>	<p>Able to access via Vivup, the Council's Employee Benefits Platform, a range of schemes through a salary sacrifice arrangement in accordance with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rules and at no cost to the Council.</p> <p>Home and Electronics Cycle to Work Bike Shop Tuskers – Car Lease NHS Fleet – Car Lease Car Loan Scheme</p>

Employees	Additional Benefit
All employees	The Council pay a range of allowances/premium payments as detailed in National Conditions of Service (see Table 1).
All employees employed under the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services conditions of service	The Council pay a range of allowances/premium payments as detailed in the Council's Single Status Agreement subject to employees meeting the criteria for payment.

7. CHANGES TO SALARIES

7.1 Employee salaries will only change in the following circumstances:

- when provisions set out in Table 3 apply
- promotion
- significant changes to an employee's role that result in a different pay band (as confirmed through an appropriate job evaluation process, where applicable)
- the award of an honorarium or ex-gratia payment to recognise duties or circumstances not covered by existing conditions of service
- annual progression of up to one increment within an established pay band, subject to service
- changes to an employee's working arrangements

7.2 The Council does not operate performance-related pay or bonus schemes and does not place any element of basic salary 'at risk' to be earned back through performance or achievement of objectives.

8. PAYMENTS TO ALL EMPLOYEES UPON TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

8.1 Employees who leave the Council will receive any payments to which they are entitled under their contract of employment, applicable terms and conditions, and relevant policies relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme. This includes any payments due under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 and the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) (Injury Allowances) Regulations 2011.

8.2 Under the Council's Constitution, applications for voluntary redundancy or early retirement that do not generate sufficient savings to recover all associated costs (including pay in lieu, redundancy compensation, pension strain costs, holiday pay, and any applicable fees or allowances) within a pay-back period of 3.05 years must, if Officers wish to pursue, be considered

by the Appeals Sub-Committee and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

- 8.3 All other early retirement applications are determined by officers, in line with the same 3.05-year pay-back requirement. This approach reflects previous Audit Commission guidance and has provided an effective and efficient framework for decision-making.
- 8.4 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, any Special Severance Payment ² exceeding £100,000 must be approved by Full Council before it can be authorised.
- 8.5 The Government's Statutory Guidance on the Making and Disclosure of Special Severance Payments by Local Authorities (May 2022) applies to discretionary, non-statutory payments only. It does not apply to payments that an employee is legally entitled to receive, including statutory redundancy pay or contractual entitlements.
- 8.6 As the national guidance is framed around a Leader and Cabinet model, the Council has established the following local governance process for Special Severance Payments:
- payments of £100,000 and above must be approved by Full Council
 - payments of £20,000 and above must be approved and signed off by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, with recorded approval from the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Leader of the Council
 - payments below £20,000 will be approved in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation
- 8.7 In line with statutory guidance, any Special Severance Payment relating to the Head of Paid Service will require approval by a Panel that includes two independent persons.

9. LOWEST PAID EMPLOYEES

- 9.1 From 1 April 2025, the Council defines its lowest paid employees as those remunerated at spinal column point 3 of the NJC for Local Government Services pay structure (equivalent to £24,796 per annum or £12.85 per hour), subject to any nationally agreed pay award.
- 9.2 Since the implementation of the Council's Single Status Agreement on 1 April 2007, the lowest paid employees have been appointed to roles evaluated under the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme, ensuring they are remunerated fairly and consistently.

¹ Special severance payments are additional, discretionary sums paid on top of statutory or contractual redundancy or severance entitlements

- 9.3 The relationship between the pay of the lowest paid employees and senior management is determined through the processes set out in this Policy Statement for establishing pay and grading structures.
- 9.4 The Council’s median pay multiple—calculated in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015—is the ratio between the taxable earnings of the highest-paid employee (the Chief Executive) and the median taxable earnings of the overall workforce.
- 9.5 The 2025 ‘pay multiple’ with comparative data is detailed in Table 5.

Table 5 – ‘Pay Multiple’

Date	Taxable earnings of the highest paid employee	Median taxable earnings of the whole of the Council’s workforce	Pay multiple based upon the taxable earnings of the highest paid employee
31 March 2020	£138,855	£19,988	6.95
31 March 2021 *	£122,548	£20,487	5.98
31 March 2022	£137,173	£20,014	6.53
31 March 2023	£138,879	£22,659	6.13
31 March 2024	£143,744	£24,942	5.76
31 March 2025	£147,341	£26,270	5.61

N.B. The pay multiple changes each year as a consequence of a combination of the taxable earnings of the highest paid employee increasing due to incremental progression within the pay band, the time they are in post and the median taxable earnings of the whole of the Council’s workforce changing.

* The pay multiple at 31 March 2021 reflects total taxable pay paid to the highest paid employee, which includes a part year impact at the Chief Executive pay level. If the post holder has been Chief Executive for the full year the pay multiple would be 6.6.

10. EMPLOYMENT OR ENGAGEMENT OF FORMER EMPLOYEES

- 10.1 The Council will not normally re-employ or engage, under either a contract of service or a contract for services, any individual who has previously left the organisation with a severance, early-retirement or redundancy payment under voluntary arrangements, unless it is demonstrably in the Council’s best interests or there are exceptional circumstances to justify this, and the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has given approval.
- 10.2 The Council must also comply with equality legislation and therefore cannot operate a blanket policy preventing the re-employment of individuals who have accessed a pension on leaving previous public-sector employment, nor

can it apply less favourable terms to such applicants. All applicants will be assessed and appointed on merit.

- 10.3 Any proposed appointment under this provision will only be considered once all standard recruitment policies and procedures have been fully exhausted and must comply with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.
- 10.4 Appointments to the posts of Head of Paid Service, Directors, and Chief Officers reporting to a Director or the Head of Paid Service must be approved by Elected Members.
- 10.5 For all other posts, the Chief Executive, in their capacity as Head of Paid Service, will formally approve the appointment.
- 10.6 The employment of individuals who are already in receipt of a local government pension is governed by the rules of the Teesside Pension Fund.

11. EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS ALREADY UNDER A CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

- 11.1 The Council does not generally support engaging individuals under a contract for services where pension or National Insurance contributions are not required, as it aligns with the Government's commitment to preventing tax avoidance and recognises that such arrangements may disadvantage other taxpayers or parts of the public sector.
- 11.2 However, there may be exceptional circumstances where this type of engagement represents the most effective and efficient way of meeting the Council's needs. In such cases, formal approval will be sought from Members for posts covered by the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, and from the Chief Executive, in their capacity as Head of Paid Service, for all other posts.
- 11.3 Any engagement of individuals under a contract for services will be procured through the appropriate procurement process, will include all necessary IR35 checks, and will comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to ensure value for money.

12. INCOME TAX AND NATIONAL INSURANCE

- 12.1 The Council does not enter into arrangements with individual employees to minimise their tax and national insurance contributions other than via salary sacrifice schemes in accordance with His Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) rules.

13. USE OF AGENCY WORKERS

- 13.1 The Council does not ordinarily support the use of agency workers. However, in certain circumstances this may be the most effective and efficient way to meet service needs. Where this applies, formal approval must be obtained from the relevant Assistant Director.
- 13.2 Agency workers engaged by the Council will receive pay equivalent to that of comparable employees once they have completed 12 weeks of qualifying service.

14. APPRENTICES

- 14.1 Apprentices are paid the appropriate national minimum wage (depending upon individual circumstances).
- 14.2 Employees who already hold a substantive post and undertake an apprenticeship as part of their existing duties will continue to receive their normal contractual pay.

15. USE OF ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

- 15.1 The Council does not generally support the use of zero-hour contracts and has taken steps to discontinue them, except where an individual employee has expressly asked to remain on such a contract.
- 15.2 There may be situations where an employee requests to be employed on a zero-hour basis. In these cases, the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources must consult with the Chief Executive before any such contract is approved.
- 15.3 Employees engaged on zero-hour contracts are employed on either a permanent or fixed-term basis, may request a review of their contracted hours at any point after six months in post, and are not restricted from taking up employment with other organisations.

16. CONTRACTORS

- 16.1 The Council requires all contractors to comply with national minimum wage and national living wage legislation. All new or extended Council contracts will be encouraged to pay at least spinal column point 3 of the NJC for Local Government Services pay structure and to avoid the use of zero-hour contracts.
- 16.2 The Council will also encourage local employers with 250 or more employees to publish their pay multiple.

17. GENDER PAY GAP INFORMATION

- 17.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, all local authorities with more than 250 employees must publish annual gender pay gap data based on a snapshot date of 31 March from the previous year. This information is published on the Council's website each year.
- 17.2 The gender pay gap represents the average difference in hourly pay between male and female employees. The Council is required to publish both mean and median pay differences, as well as the proportion of men and women in each pay quartile.
- 17.3 Although the regulations require reporting on bonus payments by gender, the Council does not operate any bonus schemes. As a result, no reporting is required under these headings.

ITEM (14)

Questions from the Public

Public questions for Council

Meeting Date: 19 March 2026

1.	From: Oliver Huermann
	To: Leader of the Council
	Question What specific actions is Hartlepool Borough Council currently taking to increase electoral turnout among 16 to 25 year olds in the borough, and does the Council support the principles and proposed reforms contained within the Representation of the People Bill aimed at improving voter registration and democratic participation?
2.	From: Freddie Minton
	To: Chair of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services Committee
	Question: What steps is the council taking to support the reinstatement of a regular and direct rail service between Seaton Carew and stations beyond Newcastle such as the MetroCentre, given that it is such an important link for young people who can't necessarily drive and rely on public transport, and will it work with rail operators to secure a reliable and guaranteed level of service at Seaton Carew station?

ITEM (15)(d)

**Minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland
Fire Authority held on 5 December 2025**

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

5 DECEMBER 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Mary Ovens, Steve Kay, David Taylor

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, John Gardner, Stefan Houghton, Andrew Sherris, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Community Protection

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning

Assistant Director of Assets

PROTECTION TEAM

Joe Boardman – Fire Safety Inspector

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

James Sudron – Cleveland Acting Secretary (Observing)

Chris Porter – Cleveland Acting Chair (Observing)

APOLOGIES:

ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

Cllr Chris Wallace - Hartlepool Borough Council

Cllrs Naweed Hussain, Dennis McCabe - Middlesbrough Council

67. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary meeting on 17 October 2025 be confirmed.

69. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 21 November 2025 and the Executive Committee meetings on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.

70. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

71. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

71.1 Protection Departmental Presentation

Members received a presentation outlining the roles in the Fire Safety Team and took the opportunity to ask question specifically relating to the Authority's Risk Based Inspection Programme, Building Regulations and Enforcements.

The Chair thanked the Area Manager - Prevention, Protection & Planning (AM-PPP) and Fire Safety Inspector Joe Boardman for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the presentation.

71.2 Cyber Security Presentation

The Assistant Director of Assets (ADA) provided Members with a Cyber Security presentation outlining the latest guidance from NFCC and information on keeping data secure. He also gave assurance that the Authority was 100% compliant following the Cyber Assessment Framework recent assessment.

The ACFO-SPPR informed Members that the Brigade hoped to see efficiencies from moving towards paperless meeting from April 2026 which for the Authority would include electronic payslips and reports. Following discussion, Members supported the cost benefits from being paperless but were reluctant to have a Brigade email address to access MyView and SharePoint.

The ADA agreed to look into providing access to electronic papers and payslips using local authority email addresses and report to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Cyber Security Presentation be noted.**
- (ii) That Members receive a further report on accessing MyView / SharePoint using local authority email addresses to support the Brigade's move towards becoming paperless by April 2026.**

71.3 Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25 containing details relating to financial, governance and operational matters.

This document is a statutory requirement produced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 and had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 21 November 2025.

He referred Members to the one-page infographic on page 13 capturing the Brigade's key performance for 2024/25, which Members had requested the previous year when the new style document was launched. He also referred Members to CRMP priority 3 which highlighted that arson remained a massive issue for the Brigade with rates 548% higher than the national average and a concerning 25% year on year increase. Members discussed the on-going efforts to address arson across the four districts and the CFO confirmed the Arson Strategy would be reviewed in the new year.

RESOLVED – That, as recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee on 21 November 2025, the Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25 be approved.

71.4 Cleveland Fire Brigade Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30

The ACFO – SPPR provided an update on the progress of the Brigade’s 2026-30 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which was nearing the end of the 12-week consultation period (7 December 2025).

She reported that as of that date 1,937 survey responses had been received since it was launched on 15 September which was over four times the response of previous years. Staff were currently being consulted on a new ‘purpose’ statement to replace the previous Vision and Mission and a working group had been established to develop an action plan to replace the annual Service Plan and detail how each priority will be delivered.

RESOLVED – That the progress of the CRMP 2026-30 be noted.

71.5 Principles for Responding to Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination & Victimisation

Members considered a National Joint Council circular providing a set of principles for raising and responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation misconduct claims and received details of the Brigade’s current approach and future steps.

Circular NJC6/2026 was published by the National Joint Council (NJC) on 11 November 2025 and outlines a set of principles established by the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) to be used by fire and rescue services responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation claims. These include:

- Leadership accountability
- Collective responsibility
- Working together
- Effective training
- Robust processes
- Identify recurring patterns
- Providing support for everyone
- Balancing confidentiality with victim communication
- Continuous improvement
- Legal compliance

The CFO gave Members assurance that the Brigade’s Values & Ethical Behaviours Framework and Dignity at Work Policy set clear expectation for all staff and confirmed that clear reporting routes, impartial investigations and confidential reporting were already in place. Future plans include the launch of the Dignity at Work and Culture training programme for all staff and managers in 2026 which aims to strengthen existing arrangements.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the National Joint Council circular on Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation at Appendix 1 be noted,**
- (ii) That Members noted the Brigade’s current arrangements for dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation and the future plans to strengthen how claims are handled.**

71.6 Information Pack

71.6.1 National Joint Circulars

71.6.2 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

72. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

72.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29

The Treasurer provided Members with an update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 – 2028/29 which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 28 November and detailed a forecast budget deficit of between £6.014m and £2.973m for the next three years, dependent on the level of council tax increase, and three interdependent proposals for managing the deficit. The updated report covered:

- Key Dates & Funding Announcements Impacting on 2026/27 budget
- Chancellors Budget 26 November 2025
- Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27
- Reserves Strategy
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)

The Treasurer reported that since the last report to the Authority on 13 October 2025 the Chancellors budget had taken place and while there was no direct mention of the fire service the 4.1% increase on the national living wage puts immediate financial pressure on pay spines and pay awards. He informed Members that they may need to consider increasing the pay award provision in the budget.

He also confirmed that the Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2026/27 to 2028/29 had now been published confirming the £5 Band D Council Tax referendum limit and £58m additional funding for the fire service nationally as a result of the new funding floor. In addition, a review of the Fire Funding Formula is expected to take place ahead of the next Spending Review which would hopefully see Cleveland receive a fairer settlement.

The Treasurer referred Members to para 6.10 and highlighted the additional one-off income of £0.863m from the investment strategy which he proposed be earmarked as a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) for 2025/26 to provide greater financial resilience for the Authority.

He also reported that the AMP had been re-phased to identify savings of £630,000 towards the upgrades to the fire behaviour training units estimated at £1m by removing schemes to provide new towers at Stockton, Hartlepool, Loftus, Coulby and Yarm. He confirmed that £100k remained in the AMP for the repair of existing towers at Hartlepool and Stockton.

The Treasurer informed Members that as the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement was not expected until week commencing 15 December 2025, he would be holding a Budget Seminar on 16 January 2026 to provide a detailed update to Members. He acknowledged that the Authority's early strategic planning decisions (detailed in Appendix 1) had been incredibly helpful and he gave assurance that the Authority was in good place to manage whatever comes out in the settlement.

72.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29 cont.

RESOLVED - That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 28 November 2025 Members approved the following proposals, subject to final confirmation as part of the final MTFS report to be considered on 13 February 2026:

- (i) That the Voluntary Revenue Provision strategy detailed in paragraphs 6.10 to 6.14 be approved.**
- (ii) That the Reserves Strategy detailed at section 7 be approved.**
- (iii) That the Asset Management Plan changes detailed in section 8 approved.**

73. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION ORDER) 2006

RESOLVED - “That Under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information and namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.”

74. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.

The CFO provided Members with a confidential update relating to the complaint referenced at Min. No. 65.1.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**