



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Constitution Committee

Agenda

Date 2 July 2026

Time: 2.00pm
Location: Council Chamber, Hartlepool Civic Centre
Members: Constitution Committee

Councillors Bailey-Fleet, Dunbar, Gaines, G Harrison (C), Holbrook, Little, Male, Napper (VC) and Thompson

1. Apologies for absence

2. To receive any declarations of interest by members

3. Minutes

- 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026 (reconvened on the 17 March 2026)

4. Items requiring decision

- 4.1 New Governance Arrangements - *Monitoring Officer/Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources*

5. Any other business which the chair considers urgent

For Information

Date of next meeting – 17 September at 10.00am

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.





Constitution Committee

Minutes and Decision Record

11 March 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 10:00am

Location: Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Boddy (In the Chair)

Councillors: Dunbar, Napper and Thompson

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive
Alison Sutherland, Executive Director of Children's Services
Laura Gough, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager

22. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillors Bailey-Fleet, Buchan, Dodds, Hargreaves and Little
- Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
- Neil Wilson, Assistant Director of Legal & Governance

23. Declarations of Interest by Members

None.

24. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2026.

Confirmed.

25. Corporate Parent Forum – Proposed Changes - Executive Director, Children’s Services

The Executive Director, Children’s Services submitted a report outlining the recommendations of the Corporate Parent Forum (CPF) and Children’s Services Committee for proposed changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum.

During consideration of the report, the Committee discussed how:

- The CPF could be given more authority/influence
- Councillor engagement and attendance could be encouraged
- The CPF could make recommendations to other relevant Committees

To allow consideration of how additional suggestions might be incorporated into the reviewed Terms of Reference for the Forum, it was agreed that the meeting would be adjourned and reconvened on the 17 March 2026.

26. Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned to be reconvened on the 17 March 2026.

The meeting was reconvened on 17 March 2026 at 4:00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Boddy (In the Chair)

Councillors: Buchan, Dunbar, Napper and Thompson

Officers: Alison Sutherland, Executive Director of Children’s Services
Laura Gough, Assistant Director, Children’s and Families
Neil Wilson, Assistant Director of Legal & Governance
Joan Stevens, Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Manager

27. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Bailey-Fleet, Hargreaves and Little

Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive

Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources

28. Corporate Parent Forum – Proposed Changes - Executive *Director, Children’s Services*

Following consideration of discussions at the meeting on the 11 March 2026, the re-convened meeting on the 17 March 2026 endorsed changes to the remit of the Forum, as recommended by the Children’s Services Committee and Corporate Parent Forum itself. The endorsed changes, as detailed below, to be referred to Full Council for final approval.

Decision

That Full Council considers approval of:

- i) The recommendations of the Constitution Committee in relation to changes to the remit of the Corporate Parent Forum, as detailed below:
 - That the Forum no longer operates as a formal sub-committee of the Children’s Services Committee. Instead, it functions as an internal officer and member-led meeting that reports into the Children’s Services Committee for decision-making.
 - That partnership representation at the Forum be widened 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 be put in place, with a young person chairing the meeting alongside the Lead Member.
 - Increasing the frequency of meetings to six bi-monthly meetings per year to maintain momentum, drive and pace to progress agreed actions.
- ii) The updated Terms of Reference (to be appended to the 19 March 2026 Council report).
- iii) Delegation to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources of authority to amend the Constitution so far as is necessary to put into effect the approved changes.

The meeting concluded at: Time: 4:05pm

CHAIRMAN



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

Subject: Change in Council Governance Arrangements

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 To provide the Committee with an overview of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 (the Act) and its impact on the Council's current Governance arrangements.

3. BACKGROUND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 The Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and includes provisions requiring a change to local authority governance arrangements

4. PHASING OUT OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

- 4.1 In terms of changes to the Council’s governance arrangements, Schedule 29 of the Act amends the Local Government Act 2000 and sets out the circumstances in which a Council that is operating a committee system must or may move to a Leader and Cabinet model.
- 4.2 For the purposes of the Act, the Council’s Committee system is ‘not protected’. This is because it does not meet the below criteria as specified in Schedule 29, paragraph 2(15)

A local authority’s committee system is “protected” if the committee system—

(a) became or remained the local authority’s governance arrangements following a referendum, and the 10 year referendum protection period has not ended on the commencement day, or

(b) became the local authority’s governance arrangements by virtue of a resolution under this Part (but not following a referendum), and the 5 year resolution protection period has not ended on the commencement day.

- 4.3 As the Council’s Committee system is not protected it must move to a Leader and Cabinet model. No Resolution is needed and no referendum is required to be held.
- 4.4 The Council must comply with this duty so that it moves to a Leader and Cabinet system one year following the commencement of Schedule 61 of the Act. Schedule 61 is due to come into force on 29 June 2026. The Council will therefore have one year from this date to transition to a Leader and Cabinet system.
- 4.5 Before the Council implements the new governance arrangements, the Act requires the Council to:
- (a) secure that copies of a document setting out the provisions of the arrangements for its Leader and Cabinet executive are available at its principal office for inspection by members of the public, and
 - (b) publish in one or more newspapers circulating in its area a notice which—
 - (i) states that the authority will be moving to a leader and cabinet executive,
 - (ii) states the date on which the change is to have effect,

- (iii) describes the main features of the change,
- (iv) states that copies of a document setting out the provisions of the arrangements for its leader and cabinet executive are available at the authority's principal office for inspection by members of the public, and
- (v) specifies the address of the authority's principal office.

5. IMPLEMENTING THE REQUIRED CHANGES

5.1 Officers are progressing preparatory work, including the development of a project plan to support the transition, implementation, and necessary constitutional changes. This will include Member briefings and opportunities for Members to provide input as proposals are developed. The work will be reported through the Constitution Committee in due course and Members will be kept informed and have appropriate oversight throughout the process.

5.2 Best practice by other local authorities that have moved from a Committee System to a Leader and Cabinet model of governance has indicated the establishment of an overarching programme board, into which a number of key programme areas and workstreams feed. It is proposed that Constitution Committee act as the programme board. In addition it is proposed that the Committee set up a working group (with at least 3 Elected Members) to work with officers on the various workstreams:

1. Governance & Constitution

Establish the new governance framework, including a revised Constitution, executive decision-making arrangements, and updated delegations.

Outcome: Leader and Cabinet model formally approved and implemented.

2. Scrutiny, Audit & Assurance

Strengthen oversight arrangements to ensure robust challenge and accountability of executive decisions.

Outcome: Effective scrutiny function and compliant Audit Committee.

3. Member Roles & Development

Define new roles for Members and provide training to support effective decision-making and scrutiny.

Outcome: Members confident in their responsibilities within the new system.

4. Decision-Making & Reporting

Introduce clear, consistent processes to ensure decisions are lawful, transparent, and evidence-based.

Outcome: Strong governance framework with clear audit trails, updated delegations.

5. Community & Neighbourhood Governance

Ensure community engagement and empowerment are embedded within the new arrangements.

Outcome: Clear link between community input and Council decision-making.

6. Policy, Partnerships & Devolution

Align governance arrangements with regional structures, including the Tees Valley Combined Authority/HDC etc.

Outcome: Coherent political and strategic alignment with external partners.

7. Workforce & Capacity

Ensure officers are equipped and structured to support executive governance.

Outcome: Clear officer roles and sufficient capacity.

8. Communications & Engagement

Provide clear communication to Members, staff, and residents about the changes.

Outcome: Maintained public confidence and reduced risk of confusion or challenge.

6. TIMESCALES

6.1 The implementation period commences on 29 June 2026 and therefore we have until 29 June 2027 to change our governance arrangements. However it is proposed that we complete the transition by the Council’s next Annual Meeting in May 2027 ready for the start of the new municipal year. There would seem to be little point in appointing committees and a Leader to operate under a committee system of governance which, within a month would need to change to a Leader and Cabinet system.

The following timeline is suggested to inform the Council’s process:

Key Activity	Milestone Target Date	Key Deliverable
Full Council	June 2026	Full Council informed of requirement to change Council’s governance arrangements.
Constitution Committee	July 2026	Report on change of governance arrangements from May 2027. Present programme approach, project governance, timetable, and next steps and agree to the establishment of a

Key Activity	Milestone Target Date	Key Deliverable
		Working group (comprising at least 3 Members).
Working Group – governance arrangements	August 2026	Working group meet to consider project governance, timetable, and next steps Recommendations will feed into programme areas.
Senior Management Teams/ELT	August 2026	Briefings with senior management team to present programme approach, project governance, timetable, and next steps. Recommendations will feed into programme areas.
Constitution Committee	September 2027	Provide progress / update report on programme areas.
<p>At this point work undertaken via Constitution Committee Working Group and Officers</p> <p>September to December 2026</p>		
Constitution Committee	February 2027	Provide progress / update report on programme areas.
Constitution Committee	April 2027	Provide final report on proposed changes to governance arrangements and the Constitution for approval by Committee
Publication of new provisions	May 2027	Publish resolution of the new provisions (s.9KC LGA 2000 as amended by Schedule 29 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026)
Constitution 'on deposit'	May 2027	Place new Constitution on deposit for public inspection
Annual Council	May 2027	New Constitution takes effect and formal change to Cabinet/Leader governance system

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

Risk Implications	There are timescale risks, as the implementation period is limited to a year. However, the project plan will support the transition and manage this risk.
Financial Considerations	There are no financial considerations. However, council officer attendance may have resource implications as we implement the required changes. There is no new-burdens funding associated with this.

Subsidy Control	Not applicable.
Legal Considerations	As outlined in the report.
Single Impact Assessment	Not applicable.
Staff Considerations	Council officer attendance may have resource implications as we implement the required changes.
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	Full Council have been made aware of the changes on 25 June 2026.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (a) note the requirement to change to a Leader and Cabinet governance model before 29 June 2027;
- (b) approve the approach and timescales outlined.
- (c) agree to the establishment of a working group, comprising of at least 3 Elected Members, to consider proposals in relation to the implementation of the new governance model.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To ensure the Council implement the new governance arrangements in accordance with the requirements of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026.
- 9.2 There are no alternative options presented as the Council has no choice but to make this change.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2026/23/contents/enacted>

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

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