



Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee Minutes and Decision Record

8 September 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 10.00 am

Location: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Graham Harrison (In the Chair)

Councillors Jim Lindridge, Amanda Napper, John Nelson, Aaron Roy and Christine Wiley

Parish Council Co-opted members: Minna Ireland and Chris Robson

Also present:

Officers: Matt Wilton, Chief Executive

Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and HR

James Magog, Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Jill Harrison, Executive Director of Adult and Community Services

Alison Sutherland, Executive Director of Children's Services

Kieran Bostock, Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services

Suzanne Halliwell, Assistant Director (Housing and Community)

Scott Parkes, Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Catherine Grimwood, Performance and Partnerships Manager

Jo Stubbs, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

7. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillors Matthew Dodds, Martin Scarborough, Christopher Wallace and Mike Young

8. Declarations of Interest

None

9. Minutes

Minutes from 24 June 2026 – received.

10. Budget Monitoring Report 2026/27 Quarter 1 (*Director of Finance, IT and Digital*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To inform members of the following:

- I. General Fund forecast revenue outturn for 2026/27
- II. Reserves position and forecasts
- III. Housing Revenue Account forecast outturn for 2026/27
- IV. Corporate Income Collection Performance
- V. Capital Programme Monitoring 2026/27

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Finance, IT and Digital reported that the cost pressures reported to Committee throughout 2025/26 had increased into the 2026/27 financial year. This was due to inflationary and on-going increased demand, areas of income shortfall and significant pressures within children and adult social care services.

The report detailed the latest 2026/27 budget forecast position for the Council. The overspend forecast was higher than it had ever been with a forecast in-year deficit of close to £6m, and an effective deficit of £7m given reserves were used to initially balance the budget. The Director of Finance, IT and Digital highlighted that the council did not have sufficient available reserves to fund this deficit position and as such urgent action was needed within the council to control spend. The Director also set out that the position will have a serious detrimental impact on next year's budget position. The report detailed individual outturns for all departments and the position relating to budget savings monitoring, dedicated schools grant and reserves. The Housing Revenue Account was forecast to be balanced for the financial year.

Reference was made to the recent pay settlement. The Director of Finance, IT and Digital confirmed that this had been factored into the figures included in the report.

Decision

- I. That the 2026/27 forecast outturn position of £5.680m overspend and accompanying financial performance for the year be noted
- II. That the virements noted in the report be approved
- III. That the forecast use of reserves be noted
- IV. That the 2026/27 forecast outturn in relation to the Housing Revenue Account detailed in the report be noted
- V. That the capital programme position be noted and that the budget variations be approved
- VI. That the acceptance of grant funding for the Town Centre Crime & Safety funding application to TVCA and the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk Capital Fund' funding application be approved should the applications be successful.

11. Housing Management Service Complaints Policy: Annual Performance Monitoring Report (*Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*)

Type of decision

Key

Purpose of report

- a. To present the updated Housing Management Service Complaints Policy following the policy review undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman as part of the Ombudsman's duty to monitor compliance with the Complaint Handling Code
- b. To present the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2025/26 and to seek a governing body response to this ensuring that Committee has scrutinised the organisation's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Issue(s) for consideration

Social Landlords are legally obliged to follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. It requires them to submit an annual submission of their performance and to have a Member responsible for Complaints on their governing body. A standalone Housing Management Service Complaints

Policy had been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the Code, a copy of which was appended to the report. This version had been updated to reflect the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman made following the development of the original policy in 2024.

Members were also referred to the self-assessment, a copy of which was attached at Appendix 2. The Annual Performance Report identifies that a total of 6 complaints had been received during 2025/26, 1 of which had progressed to Stage 2. It was noted that while the number of complaints was similar to the previous year there had been a significant drop in the number of service requests. The Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) confirmed that all complaints had been thoroughly investigated and most were now closed with the only complaint that remained open being that referred to the housing ombudsman.

Decision

- I. That the changes to the Housing Management Complaints Policy following the implementation of the 11 recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman be approved
- II. That the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2025/26 be reviewed and a formal response in writing be provided from the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee in writing for publication as the governing body.

12. Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2025-26 (*Monitoring Report*)

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To inform Committee of the 2025/26 outturn position in relation to corporate complaints and those complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Legal, Governance and HR presented the outturn position in relation to Corporate Complaints and those considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). During 2025/26 42 corporate complaints had been made, 14 of which were upheld. In the same period 21 complaints or enquiries had been made against Hartlepool Borough Council to the LGSCO, 1 of which was investigated and upheld. Hartlepool compares favourably with the other 11 North East Authorities with the lowest 'upheld' rate in the region.

The Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy had also been reviewed and was available on the Council website.

Decision

That the update on complaints received during 2025/26 and the update to the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy be noted.

13. Corporate Procurement Report on Contracts (*Director of Finance, IT and Digital*)

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To satisfy the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with regard to receiving and examining reports on the outcome of contract letting procedures including those where the lowest/highest price is not payable/receivable and receiving and examining reports on any exemptions granted in respect of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Issue(s) for consideration

Information was provided to members in respect of contracts recently awarded by the Council valued over £60 thousand. Details of Contract Rules exemptions were also given and commercial information in respect of tenders received and any confidential information relating to Contract Procedure Rule exemptions or contract extensions. In response to a member query the Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services confirmed that quality control applied to all road repairs whether in-house or via an external provider with a 1-year guarantee on completed works.

Decision

That the report be noted

7. Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent

A member paid tribute to the calibre of the Council officers of whom the public should be proud. The Chair thanked her for her comments.

The meeting concluded at 10:20am

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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