

Housing, Growth and Communities Committee Minutes and Decision Record

30 September 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 10.00 am

Location: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillors Rob Darby (In the Chair)

Councillors Corinne Male

Parish Council Co-opted members: Stephen Smith (Greatham Parish Council) and Colin Grylls (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

Also present: Councillor Karen Oliver as substitute for Councillor Fiona Cook and Councillor Scott Gaiety for Councillor Dave Bruce in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.

Officers: Kieran Bostock, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Suzanne Halliwell, Assistant Director (Housing and Communities)
Javed Khan, Assistant Director (Inclusive Growth)
Sarah Scarr, Coast, Countryside and Heritage Manager
Angela Lucas, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

8. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Fiona Cook, Matthew Dodds and Aaron Roy

9. Declarations of Interest

None

10. Minutes

Minutes from 17th June 2026 – received.

11. Economic Growth Framework (Assistant Director – Inclusive Growth)

The Assistant Director – Inclusive Growth reported the Council's current Inclusive Growth Strategy had reached the end of its period and presented an Economic Growth Framework for endorsement. The proposed framework would provide a common framework for aligning existing and future strategies, organising evidence, supporting decision-making and presenting Hartlepool's economic proposition to residents, businesses, investors and partners.

Members were advised that the framework was based on five growth principles and five strategic themes covering the economy, investment, place, infrastructure and people. It was noted that the framework would complement existing strategies and plans, provide a basis for future priorities and performance measures, and support engagement with residents, businesses, investors and partners. Officers would further develop the supporting delivery arrangements, evidence base and performance framework following endorsement.

A Member highlighted the importance of recognising and promoting Hartlepool's unique characteristics within the Framework and Officers indicated that the proposed Framework was intentionally high-level and focused on the principles and approach to achieving growth. Members were advised that the next stage of work would develop the detail, including place-shaping, the town's identity, and how Hartlepool's assets and opportunities are promoted.

Members expressed concern that the proposed Framework did not specifically set out Member involvement in its development and requested opportunities for councillors to contribute at the earlier stages. Concerns were also raised regarding the need to evaluate the previous Economic Growth Strategy, establish clear stakeholder engagement arrangements, define performance measures and reporting mechanisms, and ensure that supporting strategies and plans were brought back to Committee for consideration prior to implementation. Members also sought clarification on how inclusive growth outcomes would be measured within the proposed Framework.

Officers advised Members that any further development of the evidence would include consultation activities. It was emphasised that the process would involve Councillors and other stakeholders and would not be undertaken in isolation.

Decision

- i) The full principles and themes of the framework were noted.
- ii) The Economic Growth Framework as an overarching structure for organising economic growth activity and informing future strategy, policy development and investment decisions was endorsed.
- iii) Authority be delegated to officers to further develop, implement and maintain the Economic Growth Framework, including the development of supporting evidence, performance measures, delivery arrangements and alignment with relevant strategies and plans, with periodic updates provided to Members.

12. Tides of Change (Assistant Director – Inclusive Growth)

The Assistant Director – Inclusive Growth reported that in 2022 a proposal to develop the Museum of Hartlepool (MOH) project supported by funding from the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) and Tees Valley Combined authority (TVCA) was agreed, as part of the wider Waterfront Programme.

It was reported that, whilst the project had successfully attracted significant external funding the estimated project cost had increased and, as a result, a funding gap of up to £9.8m had been identified. Although some funds were in place, no viable funding solution had been identified to close this gap and given the critical financial position of the Council it was therefore recommended that the project not proceed.

Members asked for clarification on what this meant for the individual projects and were advised that the proposal did not involve abandoning the individual projects. The combined programme would cease in its current form, and alternative opportunities would be explored to progress individual elements through alternative funding streams and delivery mechanisms.

Decision

- i) Members agreed that the Tides of Change programme should not proceed due to the significant increase in project costs, the remaining funding gap, the risk of further cost escalation, the requirement for the Council to underwrite substantial financial liabilities, the uncertainty surrounding the final restoration and maintenance costs of Wingfield Castle, and the overall level of financial risk to the Council
- ii) Members agreed to review the terms of grants offered from ACE, DCMS/Wolfson and the Lloyds register and, where accepting such grants can only be done so without any incurring additional burden to HBC, Agree to review the terms of grants offered from ACE, DCMS/Wolfson and the Lloyds register and, where accepting such grants can only be done so without any incurring additional burden to HBC, authorise the Assistant Director for Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Director of Finance,

IT and Digital and the Director of Legal, Governance and HR, to negotiate any necessary variation to, and where appropriate accept, the identified grant offers.

- iii) Members agreed to explore existing and new opportunities at the site under the Waterfront Programme, reflective of the current economic climate.

13. Out of Area Placements, Refugee Resettlement and Asylum (Assistant Director of Housing and Community)

The Assistant Director of Housing and Community presented a report for information setting out an overview of the out of area placements, asylum dispersal and refugee resettlement in Hartlepool.

Members requested additional information to support the monitoring and evaluation of out-of-area placements, including a breakdown of placing authorities, compliance with statutory notification requirements, the type and location of accommodation being used, and the impact on local communities and schools. It was suggested that consideration be given to the development of an out-of-area placements protocol, similar to the "Key Lines of Enquiry" approach used by some London authorities, and that further information on outcomes, impact on staffing resources and the effectiveness of current arrangements be reported to the Committee. A request was also made for regular, preferably quarterly, update reports to assist Members in their scrutiny role.

A Member also requested a report be presented to the next Committee on HBCs strategy for the National Plan to End Homelessness, including Government funding received or applied for.

The Committee was advised that detailed information on placing authorities and out-of-area placements was available and could be provided in future reports. Members were informed that an agreed Tees Valley protocol was in place in relation to Section 208 compliance, with information sought from placing authorities to provide assurance regarding placements. It was noted that information on schools and wards affected by placements was held but was considered sensitive and therefore not appropriate for publication.

The Committee was also advised that performance and outcome data was routinely reported to the Home Office and that the Council remained compliant with its contractual requirements. In relation to out-of-area placements, officers outlined the processes for liaison with placing authorities, monitoring notifications and undertaking due diligence, whilst noting ongoing discussions with national bodies regarding placement practices.

In response to a query from a Member regarding out-of-area placements into Hartlepool, the Committee was advised that the placing authority remains

responsible for the initial placement costs and, where a household becomes homeless within two years, for providing subsequent assistance. Members were informed that officers contacted households where notification of a placement was received and have, on occasion, successfully challenged placements that were not considered to be in the family's best interests. Concern was expressed that some placements occur without notification, limiting the Council's ability to engage with and support affected households. Officers confirmed that these concerns continue to be raised with London authorities and the MHCLG, which is gathering information on the issue.

Decision

Members noted the contents of the report.

14. Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent
None

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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