

Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services Committee Agenda

4 November 2026

Time: 2.00 pm

Location: Council Chamber

Members: Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee
Councillors Buglass (VC), Hughes, Jorgeson, Little,
Napper (C), Oliver and Scarborough

Parish Council Co-opted Members:

L Noble (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)
S Smith (Greatham Parish Council)
R Thompson (Elwick Parish Council)

1. Apologies for absence

2. To receive any declarations of interest by members

3. Minutes

- 3.1 To receive the Minutes and Decision Record of the meeting held on 15 September 2026 (*previously circulated*).

4. Budget And Policy Framework Items

- 4.1 None.

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 been evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.



5. Key Decisions

- 5.1 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*

6. Other Items Requiring Decision

- 6.1 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2026-27 - *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*
- 6.2 Health and Safety Service Plan 2026-27 - *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*
- 6.3 Trading Standards Service Plan 2026-27 - *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

7. Items for information

- 7.1 Civil Enforcement Service Plan – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

8. Any other business which the chair considers urgent

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting: 3 February 2027 at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.



Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee

4th November 2026

Report of: Assistant Director – Neighbourhood Services

Subject: HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)
ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

Decision Type: Key (NRS-127/26)

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)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's recommendation to Full Council that the non-immediate Article 4(1) Direction made by the Council on 24th September 2025 be confirmed so that it comes into force on 1st December 2026. In doing so, the report also addresses part of the motion referred from Council on 25 June 2026 entitled 'Standing Up for Residents: Action on HMOs, Housing Standards and Neighbourhood Protection,' which is set out at **Appendix 1**. A further update on licencing will be considered in December 2026.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 30th June 2025 a report was presented to Neighbourhood Services Committee (now called Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services Committee) entitled ‘Controlling houses in multiple occupation Article 4 consultation’. The report highlighted concerns in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the Borough. The report informed members of a proposed consultation for potentially introducing a HMO Article 4 Direction within the Local Planning Authority (LPA) area of Hartlepool Borough Council. The report detailed that the Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporation, were also undergoing a similar HMO Article 4 Direction process.
- 3.2 The statutory notice invited representations concerning the Direction between 24th September 2025 and 23rd January 2026. A separate information-gathering exercise was undertaken through the Council’s “Your Say” platform between 3 November 2025 and 23 January 2026. Residents and internal and external stakeholders were invited to participate in this process.
- 3.3 A report was taken to Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee on 2nd March 2026 providing detail with regards to the information received during the information gathering consultations.
- 3.4 The Council made a non-immediate Article 4(1) Direction on 24th September 2025 and within that notice specified 1st December 2026 as the date on which the Direction would come into force, subject to confirmation by Full Council. No further representations were received after the close of the formal representations period.
- 3.5 Notice of the Direction was given by local advertisement and by site notice display in each ward within the Borough, notices were inspected monthly for a three-month period and where a notice had been removed, they were replaced. Serving individual notice to land and property owners was considered impracticable due to the high number of owners and the inability to identify interested landowners. A copy of the Direction, notice and map was sent to the Secretary of State on 24th September 2025, which was the date on which notice was first published or displayed. Officers are satisfied that the procedural requirements in Schedule 3 to the GPDO 2015 have been complied with.

4. Proposals

4.1 The number of HMOs in Hartlepool

Data pertaining to HMOs within Hartlepool is set out in **Appendix 2**.

- 4.2 It is not possible for the Council to identify all HMOs in the Borough; some will fall below the threshold of notification for a planning application

or a HMO licence. HMO developers may also not notify the Council of the works and therefore are generally reported by neighbouring residents. This presents a situation whereby the Council is aware of some (if not the majority of) HMOs although there could be many others which it is not aware of, and thus there is likely to be a level of undercounting.

4.3 Licencing data demonstrates that in September 2026 Hartlepool have 77 registered HMO properties.

4.4 HMOs are traditionally developed in existing residential dwellings which are of substantial size that allow effective change of use and conversion. Very few HMOs are purpose-built properties. Because of the geography of Hartlepool, HMOs are therefore mainly located in areas where there is a concentration of those property types (e.g. multi-storey, multi-bedroom, multi-reception room residential dwellings).

4.5 **What would the Article 4 Direction do**

The Direction would withdraw the permitted development right under Class L of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the GPDO 2015 for development consisting of a change of use from Class C3 to Class C4 within the defined area. It would not prohibit HMOs, affect existing lawful use or remove the need to establish that a material change of use has occurred.

4.6 Not every alteration in the way a dwelling is occupied will necessarily constitute a material change of use. Whether a material change has occurred is a question of fact and degree, having regard to the character of the use and its planning consequences. Where the change from Class C3 to Class C4 constitutes a material change of use, and the Direction is in force, planning permission will be required. Each case will be considered on its individual facts.

4.7 **The justification for an Article 4 Direction**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2026 directs under national decision-making policy DM10 (removal of permitted development rights), that the use of Article 4 directions should:

- a. Be limited to situations where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of the area (for example, safeguarding against the demolition of local facilities, preventing an over-concentration of uses, which could affect the quality of life, such as small Houses in Multiple Occupation, or supporting the vitality and viability of parts of town centres);
- b. Be based on robust evidence; and
- c. Apply to the smallest area required to mitigate the evidenced harm.

- 4.8 The HMO Article 4 Direction is considered necessary to protect local amenity and the wellbeing of residents across the borough.
- 4.9 Whilst the Council is likely to be aware of the vast majority of the large HMOs above the planning threshold, there are concerns that all other smaller HMOs are not coming under the control and monitoring of planning. This could lead to a position whereby the true impact of HMOs is not being effectively considered and/or controlled and the harm to resident amenity and wellbeing is not properly understood and managed.
- 4.10 Bringing in an Article 4 Direction would give the Council more decision-making power and therefore greater potential to manage the overall quality, location and number of HMOs and better ensure residential amenity and wellbeing is maintained and/or enhanced.
- 4.11 Information relating to the level of complaints associated with HMOs is set out in **Appendix 3**. Even a small number of complaints can cause significant harm to residents and the wider community, with potential impacts on physical and mental wellbeing. Although it is difficult to quantify harm, the evidence indicates that harm can arise and, where harm is identified, the Council has a duty to mitigate it. An HMO Article 4 Direction is one measure to assist in achieving that duty.
- 4.12 It is considered appropriate to implement a HMO Article 4 Direction across the borough of Hartlepool, except those areas covered by the Hartlepool Development Corporation. If a HMO Article 4 Direction were implemented only in the wards where there are currently known HMOs, developers could seek to provide HMOs in the remaining wards. It is therefore necessary to implement a HMO Article 4 Direction across the whole borough so that the Council can better manage HMO standards and the amenity of neighbouring property occupiers.

4.13 **Proposal**

Confirmation of the Direction would enable the Council to assess the planning effects of proposed material changes of use from Class C3 to Class C4, including their location, concentration and impacts on residential amenity and neighbourhood character.

4.14 **Other option considered and why it was discounted**

The option of not confirming the Direction has been considered and discounted. Under that option, the permitted development right in Class L would remain available and the Council would generally be unable to assess the planning effects of a material change of use from Class C3 to Class C4 through a planning application. Officers consider that this would not adequately address the evidenced planning concerns identified in this report.

5. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	No relevant issues.
Financial Considerations	There are no financial considerations at this stage.
Subsidy Control	N/A
Legal Considerations	<p>Article 1 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. This assessment should weigh the benefits of the HMO Article 4 Direction against its interference with property owners' rights. The HMO Article 4 Direction has been subject to public consultation, providing owners, residents and other interested parties with an opportunity to make representations. The process of a non-immediate HMO Article 4 Direction also provides advance notice before the HMO Article 4 Direction takes effect.</p> <p>The HMO Article 4 Direction does not prevent HMOs coming forward and thus officers consider that the human rights of property owners remains. In addition, the human rights of existing and future residents are not negatively impacted upon.</p> <p>It is only possible for a Local Planning Authority to implement a HMO Article 4 Direction in the area for which it has the relevant legal duties and responsibilities. Therefore, the HMO Article 4 Direction can only apply within the borough of Hartlepool, but not within the part of the borough that lies within the Hartlepool Development Corporation area.</p> <p>Key legislation pertinent to this report are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town and Country Planning Act 1990, particularly sections 55 and 108; • Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, particularly article 4, Class L of Part 3 of Schedule 2 and Schedule 3; • Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended; • Town and Country Planning (Compensation) (No. 3) (England) Regulations 2010; <p>Human Rights Act 1998 and Article 1 of the First Protocol to the ECHR.</p>

	In addition, officers considered the Communities and Local Government Circular 08/2010 and the Explanatory Memorandum to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No. 2) (England) Order 2010 (2010 No. 2134) and the Town and Country Planning (Compensation) (No. 3) (England) Regulations 2010 (2010 No.2135).
Single Impact Assessment	See Appendix 4 .
Staff Considerations	The HMO Article 4 Direction is likely to lead to a significant increase in the investigation and enforcement of alleged breaches of this provision. Furthermore, the investigation of alleged breaches of this nature is expected to be particularly challenging as the evidence of a breach will involve seeking to establish how many unrelated people are living in a property at a particular time and historically. There is currently limited capacity in Planning Enforcement to accommodate this additional workload and therefore if the HMO Article 4 Direction is brought into place then the increase in workload will be monitored and if additional staff capacity is required a business case will be put forward.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	<p>The Council made the non-immediate Direction on 24th September 2025. Notice of the Direction invited representations between 24th September 2025 and 25th September 2026. The notice identified 1st December 2026 as the proposed date on which the Direction would come into force, subject to confirmation.</p> <p>A separate information-gathering consultation was undertaken between 3rd November 2025 and 23rd January 2026. Residents as well as internal and external stakeholders were consulted and the HBC “Your Say” platform was utilised to obtain and analyse information. Events/meetings were arranged upon request.</p>

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. That the Committee, having considered the representations received and the evidence contained in this report and its appendices, recommends that Full Council confirms the non-immediate Article 4(1) Direction made on 24th September 2025, with the Direction to come into force on 1st December 2026.
- 6.2. That, if the Direction is confirmed by Full Council, authority is delegated to the Director for Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources, to complete the statutory notification and publication requirements.
- 6.3. That the Committee agrees the terms of the motion referred from Council on 25 June 2026 and provides an update on Article 4 to Council in accordance with the terms of that motion.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1. To ensure that the HMO Article 4 Direction is confirmed lawfully.
- 7.2. The introduction of a HMO Article 4 Direction will enable the Council to control the location and quality of new HMOs. This will help deliver the Council aspiration of providing high quality, affordable housing for all
- 7.3. To address the motion referred from Council on 25 June 2026.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Neighbourhood Services Committee 30.06.25 | Hartlepool Borough Council
- 8.2. Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee 02.03.26 | Hartlepool Borough Council
- 8.2. [Council Minutes 25.06.2026](#)

9. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 02/10/2026

Motion: Standing Up for Residents: Action on HMOs, Housing Standards and Neighbourhood Protection

Council Notes:

The growing concern expressed by residents across the borough regarding the impact of poorly managed HMOs and the increasing pressure placed on established residential communities.

Persistent complaints from residents relating to anti-social behaviour, waste and litter issues, parking pressures, noise nuisance, poor housing management and the loss of balanced neighbourhoods.

That many residents have repeatedly called on the Council to take stronger action to improve standards in the private rented sector and protect community amenity.

- That substantial work has already been undertaken by the Council in relation to: additional HMO licensing, Selective Landlord Licensing, Article 4 Directions, and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents relating to housing and neighbourhood management.
- That consultation on Article 4 proposals is currently underway and further evidence gathering work relating to Selective Landlord Licensing is continuing.

Council believes:

- Residents deserve clean, safe and well-managed neighbourhoods.
- Responsible landlords should be supported, while poor management and irresponsible practices should be robustly challenged.
- The Council should continue to use the planning, licensing and enforcement powers available to it to improve housing standards and protect residential communities.
- Work already underway to develop these measures should not be delayed, weakened or abandoned.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Continue and complete without delay all current work relating to: additional HMO licensing, Selective Landlord Licensing, Article 4 Directions, and associated Supplementary Planning Documents.
2. Ensure that all consultation, evidence gathering and statutory processes are concluded as quickly as reasonably practicable and brought forward for formal member consideration.
3. Bring forward recommendations for implementation where supported by the evidence and consultation outcomes.

4. Prioritise enforcement activity against rogue landlords, persistent offenders and properties associated with serious or repeated antisocial behaviour or environmental nuisance.
5. Reaffirm the Council's commitment to protecting residential communities, improving standards in the private rented sector and supporting residents affected by poorly managed accommodation.
6. Request a formal progress report to members within six months setting out progress made, consultation outcomes, next steps and indicative implementation timescales.

Signed by Councillors Scarborough, Hall, Jorgeon, Clayton, B Harrison, Thompson, Wallace, Male, Cook, Nelson, Oliver, Dunbar, Dodds and Holbrook.

DATA PERTAINING TO HMOS WITHIN HARTLEPOOL.**Houses in Multiple Occupation in Hartlepool**

The Council can obtain information and may be made aware of HMOs in the borough in numerous ways, as set out below.

Table 1 - information sources

Office of National Statistics (ONS)	ONS record numerous metrics of demographics, population information and dwelling types. In terms of identifying HMO's they use the type of heating to judge multi-occupancy.
The licensing regime	HMO Licence Applications are required for a property occupied by 5 or more persons, from 2 or more separate households. Applications for a license are made by the HMO operator to the Council. The HMO licensing process seeks to ensure that the property meets minimum legal standards based around property conditions (e.g. fire safety, kitchen, and bathing facilities) and that the license holder is a fit and proper person. If granted the license will be valid for a maximum of 5 years.
The planning regime	Applications for planning permission are made by the HMO operator to the Council. Any property under the threshold (e.g. 6 persons) is classed as "Permitted Development" and planning permission is not normally required.
The general public	Members of the public may make the Council aware of any works which they deem to be a HMO. In this instance either the Development Management or Housing Standards Team will subsequently investigate and judge whether an application is required or whether the works do not constitute a HMO.

In some cases, the same HMO may appear on the planning register and on the licensed register but, depending on the nature of the HMO it may only appear on one. As a result, it is difficult to accurately quantify a specific amount of known HMOs; we will observe a range of numbers.

Office of National Statistics (ONS) information

Table 2 – ONS data from the 2021 dataset, number of HMOs by type of central heating in household.

Local Authority	HMOs	Estimated Total Dwellings	% HMO of Total Dwellings
Darlington	75	52,128	0.14%
Hartlepool	49	44,316	0.11%
Middlesbrough	459	64,033	0.71%
Redcar & Cleveland	21	65,542	0.03%
Stockton-on-Tees	134	88,448	0.15%

The table above reflects a position whereby the borough has 49 HMOs, which is the second lowest as a % in the Tees Valley, by comparison according to the ONS metric. The dataset does not allow officers to understand ward level or individual property addresses; it is purely on a borough level.

Whilst the data identifies 49 HMOs in the borough an element of caution should be attached to this. There is likely to be undercounting in the census as HMO occupants are the least likely to respond. However, this undercounting risk should be applied across the whole Tees Valley dataset.

HMO Licensing data

The Council's licensing team continually receive, process and determine applications for HMO licenses on an ongoing basis. The team record the applications received and licenses granted and then monitor.

Table 3 – HBC licensing data

Date	Number of Licensed HMOS
March 2023	48
September 2024	48
October 2025	63
June 2026	69
September 2026	77

Planning application data

The Development Management team are required to record the applications received and to make them publicly available on the Planning Register. This is a valuable source of evidence by providing details on where HMOs are located within the borough.

Not all planning applications for HMOs are approved and thus not subsequently developed and some applications are approved and are not progressed by the developer. In light of this, the most appropriate data to collect is "approved planning applications" and to assume that these applications have been implemented and a HMO is subsequently in operation at that property.

Table 4 shows how many planning applications were approved from 1st April 2022 to 27th September 2026.

Table 4 - Planning application data, excluding re consultations and discharge of conditions.

Application	No of Lettings	Ward	Approved	LPA
2022 Planning applications submitted (2)				
H/2022/	2	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2022/	12	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
2023 Planning applications submitted (6)				
H/2023/	6/7	Burn Valley	Yes	HDC
H/2023/	8	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2023/	4 bed on upper floors. (Commercial so needed permission despite only being for 4 beds).	Victoria	Yes	HBC
H/2023/	7	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2023/	7	Headland and Harbour	Yes	HBC
H/2023/	8	Burn Valley	Yes on appeal	HBC
2024 Planning applications submitted (4)				
H/2024/	13	Burn Valley	Yes	HDC
H/2024/	6	Victoria	Yes	HBC
H/2024/	6	Victoria	Yes	HBC
H/2024/	12	Foggy Furze	Yes	HBC
2025 Planning applications submitted, with no property duplication. (12)				
H/2025/	26	Burn Valley	Yes	HDC
H/2025/	8	Burn Valley	Yes	HDC
H/2025/	No more than 6	Burn Valley	Yes	LDC
H/2025/	8	Victoria	Yes	HDC
H/2025/	6	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2025/	16	Burn Valley	Approved	HDC
H/2025/	8	Burn Valley	Approved	HDC
H/2025/	6	Headland and Harbour	Yes	HBC
H/2025/	6	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2025/	4	Headland and Harbour	Yes	HBC
H/2025/	6	Victoria	Withdrawn	HBC
H/2025/	6	Burn Valley	No	HBC
2026 Planning applications submitted (9 months of 2026) (8)				
H/2026/	up to 6no.	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2026/	6	Victoria	Yes	HBC
H/2026/	8	Burn Valley	Pending	HBC
H/2026/	8	Victoria	pending	HBC
H/2026/	6	Victoria	Yes	HBC
H/2026/	5	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2026/	5	Burn Valley	Yes	HBC
H/2026/	6	Victoria	Pending	HBC

NB - Full planning reference has been removed to allow anonymity of property. A full data set has been viewed by officers.

HBC officer engagement relating to complaints associated with Houses in Multiple Occupation**Public Protection**

The Council's Environmental Protection team deal with noise complaints and log the type of property these are made against. Where a large number of complaints are being made in association with HMOs, it could be an indication of anti-social behavior linked to HMOs. Where HMOs require planning permission, Public Protection request conditions for noise attenuation between the applicant property and adjoining residential properties, which appears to be being complied with as there does not appear to be an issue with noise complaints at these properties. In October 2024 there were 4 records of noise complaints received in relation to registered HMOs and the impression of officers is that these relate to comings and goings through a communal entrance rather than noise transference from habitable rooms. In September 2026 the Environmental Health manager for Environmental Protection is not aware of any active complaints.

Licensing

In October 2024 the Private Sector Housing team, who deal with HMO licensing, advise they rarely receive complaints about HMOs and find the majority are well-managed and maintained this remains the case as of September 2026.

Highways

In October 2024 the Council's Traffic and Transport team advise that they had no knowledge of any specific HMO parking issues, as parking complaints are difficult to attribute to individual properties and are more often an issue in areas reliant on on-street parking. Some areas in Hartlepool are subject to residents' parking restrictions to address on-street parking pressures. In some areas these restrictions were removed as they have not proved successful and residents have been reluctant to pay for permits, particularly as there is limited enforcement of the restrictions.

In September 2026 the Council's Traffic and Transport set out that there are some known issues with HMO's, but they particularly relate to short term lets where contractors reside and where HMOs are rented to young professionals who at times can often have more cars than those who reside in a HMO that may be on a lower income. It was considered that there are parking demand issues in areas with HMO's however this is not directly attributed to HMO occupant. It can often be the case that over time car ownership has increased in areas where parking provision was provided at a time when car ownership was much lower.

Waste/Refuse

The Council's Waste Management team are consulted on planning applications for HMOs, and they provide advice and guidance on the schemes but rarely raise concerns, as provision is generally made for refuse storage. If excess waste being inadequately stored by occupants of HMOs were causing issues, it is expected that Cleansing, Waste Management or those Council teams with relevant enforcement powers would be raising concerns in this regard but to date, this is rarely the case.

NB – Information gathering occurred throughout 2024 prior to formal consultation.

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>.

Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

1.1 Lead Department:	Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services
1.2 Lead Division:	Land use Policy
1.3 Title of the proposed action:	
Confirmation of the Article 4 Direction- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	
1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:	
<p>Confirmation of an Article 4 Direction in relation to HMO's, the direction will apply to the whole of Hartlepool excluding the areas where the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HMDC) are acting as the local planning authority. The intention of the HMO Article 4 Direction is to improve the standards of new HMO accommodation and reduce any potential detrimental impacts on HMO occupiers, neighbours and the local area.</p> <p>The Article 4 Direction will remove permitted development rights relating to the change of use of a building from Class C3 (dwelling houses) to Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation). Planning permission will be required for all such development.</p>	

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

1.5 Who else is involved:

Internal consultation has been undertaken across multiple departments.

The following formal consultation periods were undertaken via HBC's online platform 'Your Say' where the documents were made available and an electronic survey was provided for comments. The Land Use Policy element of the council's website provided a link to the Your Say consultation platform. An email was sent to 359 consultees on the Land Use Policy database:

Information gathering consultation - Monday 3rd November 2025 to Monday 23rd January 2026 (12 weeks).

Statutory 12 month consultation 24th September 2025 – 25th September 2026

A paper copy of the survey for the HMO Article 4 Direction was available for review by members of the public in The Civic Centre and Library from 24/09/25-23/01/26.

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

Members at Full Council on 19th November 2026.

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

All wards	☒	Hart	☐	Seaton	☐
Burn Valley	☐	Headland & Harbour	☐	Throston	☐
De Bruce	☐	Manor House	☐	Victoria	☐
Fens & Greatham	☐	Rossmere	☐	N/A - Internal council activities	☐
Foggy Furze	☐	Rural West	☐		

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

1.8 Completed By:		
Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Samantha Lindley Discussed with Ami Capper and Laura Aldreson	GIS and Land Use Policy Technician, Senior Land Use Policy Officer and Land Use Policy Officer	17/09/2026

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date
1.0	Samantha Lindley	Original Version	17/09/2026

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?

- Comments received during the formal consultation periods were undertaken via HBC's online platform 'Your Say' during the following periods.
- Comments made by elected members during Planning Committee meetings were noted.
- Internal consultation has been undertaken with staff from across the organisation, including but not limited to Highways, Public protection (noise complaints), Licencing, Housing, Planning enforcement, Waste/Refuse and Legal Services.
- Hartlepool Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2026 (SHMA)
- Informal responses received - 1st September 2025 to 1st May 2026
- The Houses in Multiple occupancy research paper October 2024- Hartlepool
- Neighbourhood Services Committee report 30th June 2025 (Article 4 Direction).
- Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee report 2nd March 2026
- Licencing data
- Planning register data
- Hartlepool (E06000001) - ONS
- <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn00708/>
- Assessing housing need | Hartlepool Home Search Allocation Policy | Hartlepool Borough Council
- Hartlepool care leaver offer | Hartlepool Borough Council
- duty-to-refer-north-east-procedure

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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
<p>The number of small HMO's in Hartlepool across the borough prior to the Article 4 Direction implementation and Socio-economic profiling of their occupants.</p>	<p>Small HMOs converted under permitted development (C3-C4), have not had any reporting or recording obligations to the Local Authority, as such it is not possible to calculate how many there were in the Local Authority area.</p> <p>It would be difficult to determine that the number of HMOs available in the market has reduced as a result of the Article 4 Direction. As planning permission will now need to be sought for all HMO's where a material change of use occurs, quantative data across the borough will be captured going forward.</p> <p>Socio-economic profiling of HMO occupants is not captured via existing data collection processes and there is no business case to require that data.</p>

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

2.3 Risk Score

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Age		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Probable 3 Impact score: Minor 2 Overall score: Amber 6	<p>The SHMA 2026 identified a significant need for one-bedroom houses with a recommendation for a 30% allocation of new affordable homes to be provided as 1 bed affordable rent units. HMO'S provide affordable accommodation for those on low incomes, this can directly affect young persons under the age of 35, where those receiving housing benefit receive only £66.50 weekly for shared accommodation or £94.60 for a one-bedroom house or flat and persons of all ages that fall into the low-income bracket.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the Article 4 Direction does not prohibit the provision of HMO accommodation in the borough.</p> <p>There is deemed to be no negative impact regarding age as HMO's will still be available as a form of housing but will now require planning permission. The Council's housing department and multi agencies are subject to a statutory duty to refer, regarding homelessness or the threat of being homeless where persons of any age are unable to secure housing and have additional support services in place to prevent homelessness via the housing advice team who can also signpost to other agency support and charitable organisations.</p>
Disability		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Possible 2 Impact score: Negligible 1 Overall score: Green 2	<p>The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on this group, as it has no impact on the range of housing provision within the borough. It will only require the need for planning permission.</p>

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Gender Reassignment		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on those subject to gender reassignment and their housing need.
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on marital status and any associated housing need.
Pregnancy and Maternity		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on this group or their housing need.
Race (Ethnicity)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on race or ethnicity in relation to housing need.

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Religion or Belief		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	The Article 4 Direction will have no impact on religion or belief in relation to housing need.
Sex		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Probable 3 Impact score: Minor 2 Overall score: Amber 6	<p>The SHMA 2026 identified a significant need for one-bedroom houses with a recommendation for a 30% allocation of new affordable homes to be provided as 1-bed affordable rented units. There is no evidence in Hartlepool to suggest this is for a specific gender.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the Article 4 Direction does not prohibit the provision of HMO accommodation in the borough, it would now require planning permission.</p> <p>There is deemed to be no negative impact regarding sex as HMO's will still be available as a form of housing but will now require planning permission. The Council's housing department and multi agencies are subject to a statutory duty to refer, regarding homelessness or the threat of being homeless where persons of any sex are unable to secure housing and have additional support services in place to prevent homelessness via the housing advice team who can also signpost to other agency support and charitable organisations.</p>

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Sexual Orientation		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Negligible 1 Impact score: Hardly Ever 1 Overall score: Green 1	There is no evidence to suggest that the Article 4 Direction will impact upon this group
Care Leavers (Local)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Probable 3 Impact score: Minor 1 Overall score: Green 3	<p>Currently there is no published Sufficiency Strategy for looked after children and care leavers regarding their housing need (current or predicted). However, there is an undertaking to remedy this via the transformation works stream in development with the Assistant Director for Housing and Community. This will complement the sufficiency for Child In Our Care that is in place but does not go into demand level data regarding housing for this group, any required mitigating factors would be formulated in response to that wider piece of work when it has been finalised.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the Article 4 Direction does not prohibit the provision of HMO accommodation in the borough.</p> <p>There is deemed to be no negative impact regarding care leavers as HMOs will still be available as a form of housing but will now require planning permission. The council has a significant Care leavers provisions in place relating to housing support.</p>

☐

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
Armed Forces (Local)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Probable 3 Impact score: Minor 1 Overall score: Green 3	<p>The SHMA 2026 details no specific strategic policy is required for veterans in Hartlepool due to the low numbers of serving/veteran armed forces personnel in the borough.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the Article 4 Direction does not prohibit the provision of HMO accommodation in the borough.</p> <p>There is deemed to be no negative impact regarding armed forces personnel as HMOs will still be available as a form of housing.</p>
Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)		
☐ Positive Impact ☐ Negative Impact ☒ No Impact	Likelihood score: Probable 3 Impact score: Minor 2 Overall score: Amber 6	<p>The SHMA 2026 identified a significant need for one-bedroom houses with a recommendation for a 30% allocation of new affordable homes to be provided as 1-bed affordable rented units. HMOs provide affordable accommodation for those on low incomes; young persons (under the age of 35) receiving housing benefit receive only £66.50 weekly for shared accommodation or £94.60 for a one-bedroom house or flat, and persons of all ages that fall into the low-income bracket.</p> <p>There is deemed to be no negative impact on local persons suffering poverty and disadvantage as the Council are subject to a statutory duty to refer homelessness or the threat of being homeless and have additional support services in place to prevent homelessness via the housing advice team who can also signpost to other agency support and charitable organisations, mitigating any known impacts</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the Article 4 Direction does not prohibit the provision of HMO accommodation in the borough.</p>

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

		There is deemed to be no negative impact regarding poverty and disadvantaged groups, as HMO's will still be available as a form of housing but will now require planning permission
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Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer
None				

Justification If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here
None

Section 4 - Sign Off

Responsible Officer sign off:	
Name	Helen Smith (28.09.2026)
Job title	Land Use Policy Team Leader
Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	Scott Parkes
Job title	Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services

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

Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

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

--

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



Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee

4 November 2026

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Subject: FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN
2026-27

Decision Type: Non Key

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

2.1. To approve the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2026-27.

3. Background

3.1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a key role in overseeing local authority enforcement activities. They have duties to set and monitor standards of local authorities as well as carry out audits of enforcement activities to ensure that authorities are providing an effective service to protect public health and safety.

- 3.2. On 4 October 2000, the Food Standards Agency issued the document “Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement”. The guidance provides information on how local authority enforcement service plans should be structured and what they should contain. Service Plans developed under this guidance will provide the basis on which local authorities will be monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency.
- 3.3. The service planning guidance ensures that key areas of enforcement are covered in local service plans, whilst allowing for the inclusion of locally defined objectives.
- 3.4. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2026/2027 is available in **Appendix 1** and takes account of the guidance requirements. The Plan details the Service’s priorities for 2026/27 and beyond where appropriate. It also highlights how these priorities will be addressed.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The Service Plan for 2026/27 has been updated to reflect last year’s performance and reflect changes in Service demand.
- 4.2 The Plan covers the following:
 - (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The scope and demands on the Food Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development;
 - (v) A review

5. Summary of main issues raised in the Plan.

- 5.1 The Council is responsible for 773 food premises within the borough mostly comprising retailers, manufacturers and caterers. The food businesses are predominantly micro, small to medium sized establishments and the majority of these are liable to food hygiene and food standards interventions.
- 5.2 The food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs intervention programmes are risk-based systems that accord with current guidance. The current premises profiles (as at 1st April 2026) are included in the Service Plan.

- 5.3 The intervention programme for 2026/27 comprises scheduled food hygiene and food standards interventions. This intervention programme is set out on in the Service Plan.
- 5.4 During 2026/27 Childminders will be added to the official control programme. We expect an additional 40-50 inspections to be added to the inspection programme during 2026-27. (This is in addition to any newly registered food businesses).
- 5.5 The FSA recently introduced a new Food Standards Delivery Model which enables local authorities to focus their resources on premises presenting the greatest risk. Transitional arrangements applied until 31 March 2025 to enable a phased rollout of the programme. During the transitional period FSA engaged with Management Information Providers (MIS) to agree the programme's implementation. We have now fully implemented the delivery programme and updated our MIS system.
- 5.6 The FHRS scheme was launched by the FSA as a FSA / local authority partnership initiative to help consumers choose where to eat out, or shop for food. It was developed with the aim that it would become the single national scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- 5.7 The profile of Hartlepool's food premises is provided in **Appendix 1**. (Page 31). Since the introduction of the FHRS national scheme in 2013 the number of premises that received a hygiene rating of '3' ('Generally Satisfactory') and above has remained consistently high. In 2025/26, the figure was 99.9%.
- 5.8 The service is committed to focussing its resources on carrying out interventions at those businesses which are deemed not to be 'broadly compliant' and has liaised with businesses that have been awarded a hygiene rating of '2' or less offering advice and support. Where appropriate, enforcement action will be taken to secure compliance.
- 5.9 Under the FHRS there is a procedure that affords food business operators the opportunity to request a re-visit inspection once they have taken action to rectify non-compliances identified during the inspection. In certain circumstances a charge can be levied. At the re-visit the establishment may be re-assessed and given a new hygiene rating.
- 5.10 During 2025/26, 9 businesses submitted applications for a re-rating and 8 were re-inspected and all demonstrated an improvement in standards. The ninth was not due until the following business year (12th May 2026).
- 5.11 Service performance during 2025/26 is detailed in the Service Plan. Of note 383 food hygiene, 299 food standards and 3 feed hygiene interventions were completed.
- 5.12 The Council has continued to respond to complaints in the usual manner. The service dealt with 16 complaints relating to the condition of food premises and/or food handling practice.

- 5.13 In addition, 28 complaints were received regarding unfit or out of condition food or extraneous matter. A further 15 complaints concerning the composition or labelling of food items were received. No complaints were received regarding animal feeding stuffs. Investigations into all complaints were undertaken within our target of 2 working days.
- 5.14 No formal enforcement was undertaken in relation to official food controls during the year.
- 5.15 During 2025/26 the service participated in four microbiological surveys and took 168 hygiene samples. The majority of hygiene samples examined were reported as being satisfactory, however where poor results were obtained the premises were revisited and provided with advice and resampled as necessary.

One sample, taken as part of the Reactive Study Fresh and Frozen Raw/Non Ready to eat Chicken, necessitated follow up action. The unsatisfactory result was reported to the FSA and an investigation carried out. This was concluded to the satisfaction of the FSA.

- 5.16 A further 14 food standards samples were taken during 2025/26. All were taken as part of Food Standards Agency (FSA) surveys.
- 5.17 During the FSA Imported Food Survey six food standards samples were taken. These included nuts, beans, lentils, spices and tea. The samples were analysed for heavy metals, pesticides, aflatoxins or lead.

Five of the samples were deemed to be satisfactory. The one unsatisfactory sample was of brown beans that contained residues of pesticides above the maximum permitted residue level. A visit was made to the retailer where the beans were purchased from. There were 5 bags of beans on sale, which were voluntarily surrendered and destroyed. Contact was made with the supplier and local authority where the supplier was located who confirmed that none of the product was left in circulation.

The results and follow up action were reported to the FSA and the Health and Safety Executive who are responsible for pesticide enforcement.

A sample of Ground Hot Pepper was also taken as part of the survey and sent to the Public Analyst for microbiological testing. The result was deemed to be satisfactory.

Eight 'Gluten free' foods were sampled from catering establishments as part of FSA Food Standards Directed Sampling Programme 2025/26. All results were deemed to be satisfactory.

- 5.18 Water obtained from a private supply and used for manufacturing purposes was also sampled and all results were satisfactory.
- 5.19 As part of the service's Port Health functions water was collected from 5 vessels visiting Hartlepool; 8 bacteriological water samples were examined and all were reported as Satisfactory. In addition 7 water samples were examined for the presence of Legionella bacteria. One

sample was reported as Unsatisfactory and another Borderline; these were from separate vessels. No resamples were taken as both vessels had already left the port by the time the results were received. Advice was provided by email to the Agents and confirmation of receipt was received from the Master of both vessels.

9 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates were issued and one Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificate extension.

- 5.20 No promotional/campaign work was carried out during 2025/26, however, whenever possible activities that support the Public Health Agenda will take place in 2026/27.
- 5.21 The inspection programme for 2026-27 is challenging and this will be further exacerbated by the inclusion of childminders. The Public Protection Section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2026/27 we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of food safety risks which will have impact on wider public health outcomes. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to Public Health Outcomes and source funding streams to support our work.
- 5.22 We will keep abreast of and respond to any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. We will continue to review and update our Food and Feed Quality Management System and Standard Operating Procedures to reflect the changes.

6. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	If the Food Law Enforcement Law Service Plan 2026/27 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues.
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues.
Legal Considerations	If the Food Law Enforcement Law Service Plan 2026/27 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.

Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	No relevant issues.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. That the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee approves the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2026/27.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2026/27 needs to be adopted to comply with the requirements of the Food Standards agency Framework Agreement on local Authority Food Law Enforcement.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1. There are no background papers for this report.

10. Contact Officers

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Tel: (01429) 523320

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 29/09/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 29/09/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 25/09/2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council

Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2026-27

FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2026-27**INTRODUCTION**

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INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how Hartlepool Borough Council will deliver the food law service. The food law service covers both food and feed enforcement.

The Plan accords with the requirements of the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, and sets out the Council's aims in respect of its food law service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled. Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2026-27, longer-term objectives are identified where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2025-26 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and the Neighbourhood Services Committee has approved previous plans.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

The service aims to ensure:

- that food and drink intended for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed in the borough is without risk to the health or safety of the consumer;
- food and food packaging meets standards of quality, composition and labelling and reputable food businesses are not prejudiced by unfair competition; and
- the effective delivery of its food law service so as to secure appropriate levels of public safety in relation to food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs enforcement.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions and examples of best practice as disseminated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), including Approved Codes of Practice, the Regulators' Code and other relevant guidance shared by Local Government Regulation and Central Government.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Food Law Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Public Protection service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.1 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

Hartlepool will be:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this Food Law Enforcement Service Plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of food hygiene and safety legislation.

This Food Law Enforcement Service Plan contributes towards elements of the Council Plan vision in the following ways:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

Through the effective delivery of its food law service, we aim to secure appropriate levels of public safety in relation to food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs enforcement.

By ensuring that businesses only provide safe products that comply with relevant food safety standards.

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements regarding food hygiene and safety requirements and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid-19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of

England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and again in 2024.

The tourist industry affects recreational opportunities, shopping and leisure facilities, including the provision of food and drink outlets restaurants, bars and cafes. There are currently 773 food establishments in Hartlepool, all of which must be subject to intervention to ensure food safety and standards are being met.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult Services and Public Health Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee
- Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

The Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee provides political oversight for Food Law enforcement.

The Council is made up of seven main Departments:

- Children's Services
- Adults Services & Public Health
- Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR Services
- Finance, IT and Digital Services
- Housing, Growth and Communities
- Office of Chief Executive

The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan is delivered through the Public Protection section of the Regulatory Services division, which is contained within the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Council's Commercial Services team is a constituent part of the Public Protection division contained within the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services department and is responsible for delivery of the food service. The food service covers both food and feed enforcement.

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- programmed interventions of premises for food hygiene, food standards and feed hygiene;
- registration and approval of premises;
- microbiological sampling and chemical analysis of food and animal feed;
- food & feed inspection;
- checks of imported food/feed at retail and catering premises;
- provision of advice, educational materials and courses to food/feed businesses;
- investigation of food and feed related complaints;
- investigation of cases of food and water borne infectious disease, and outbreak control;
- dealing with food/feed safety incidents; and
- promotional and advisory work

Effective performance of the food law service necessitates a range of joint working arrangements with other local authorities and agencies such as the Food Standards Agency (FSA), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) & the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

The Council aims to ensure that effective joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute to the on-going development of those arrangements.

Whilst undertaking food safety interventions, officers are expected to carry out the following additional functions:

- health and safety enforcement where the local authority is the relevant enforcing authority (this includes carrying out hazard spotting in relation to health and safety issues and carrying out priority based health & safety inspections)
- the provision of guidance, advice and enforcement in respect of smoke free legislation in public places;
- the provision of guidance, advice and taking enforcement action in response to certain public health legislation;
- water sampling; including both private and mains supplies & bathing water;
- port health;
- provision of assistance for animal health and welfare inspections, complaint investigation and animal movement issues; and
- acting as a statutory consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

The Council is responsible for 773 food premises within the borough mostly comprising retailers, manufacturers and caterers. The food businesses are

predominantly micro or small establishments and the majority of these are liable to food hygiene and food standards interventions.

In addition, the Council is the enforcing authority for 88 registered feed businesses.

The delivery point for the food enforcement service is at:

Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY
Tel: (01429) 266522

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies that occur out of hours. Contact can be made on (01429) 266522, Option 1, followed by Option 2.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, there is a Public Protection Enforcement Policy, which deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service.

The Commercial Services team, which is responsible for food law enforcement, will take account of the 2014 Regulator's Code when carrying out its interactions with food business operators.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1.1 Interventions Programme

The Council has a wide range of duties and powers conferred on it in relation to food law enforcement. The Council must appoint and authorise inspectors, having suitable qualifications and competencies for carrying out duties under the Food Safety Act 1990 and Regulations made under it.

Authorised officers can inspect food at any stage of the production, manufacturing, distribution and retail chain. The Council must draw up and implement an annual programme of risk-based interventions to ensure that food and feeding stuffs are inspected in accordance with relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance.

The Code allows local authorities to choose the most appropriate action to be taken to drive up levels of compliance with food law by food establishments. In so doing, it takes account of the recommendations in the 'Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement'.

Interventions are defined as activities that are designed to monitor, support and increase food law compliance within a food establishment. They fall into two categories of either official control or non-official control as follows:

Official Controls include:

- Monitoring
- Surveillance
- Verification;
- Audit;
- Inspection
- Sampling and Analysis;

Interventions which are not Official Controls include:

- Targeted education, advice
- Information and intelligence gathering.

Other activities that monitor, promote and drive-up compliance with food law in food establishments, for instance 'Alternative Enforcement Strategies' for low risk establishments and education and advisory work with businesses away from the premises (e.g. seminars/training events) remain available for local authorities to use.

3.1.2 Broadly Compliant Food Establishments

The Code established the concept of 'Broadly Compliant' food establishments. In respect of food hygiene, "broadly compliant", is defined as an establishment that has an intervention rating score of not more than 10 points under each of the following components:

- Level of (Current) Hygiene Compliance;
- Level of (Current) Structural Compliance; and
- Confidence in Management/Control Systems

"Broadly Compliant", in respect of food standards, is defined as an establishment that has an intervention rating score of 3,4 or 5 for all four Compliance Assessment Risk factors under the new Food Standards Delivery Model scheme. These are:

- Management Systems & Procedures
- Allergen Information
- Current Compliance Level
- Confidence in Management (CIM)

As at the 1st April 2026, 99.9% of businesses in the borough were "Broadly Compliant" with food safety requirements. For food standards 97.5% of businesses achieved broad compliance.

The Food Law Enforcement Plan will help to promote efficient and effective approaches to regulatory inspection and enforcement that will improve regulatory outcomes without imposing unnecessary burdens. The term enforcement does not only refer to formal actions, it can also relate to advisory visits and inspections.

3.2 Service Delivery Mechanisms**3.2.1 Intervention Programme**

Local Authorities must document, maintain and implement an interventions programme, which includes all establishments for which they have food law enforcement responsibility.

Interventions carried out for food hygiene, food standards and for feeding stuffs are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and standard operating procedures on food/feed premises inspections and relevant national guidance.

Information on premises liable to interventions is held on the APP computerised system. An intervention schedule is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

The food hygiene, food standards and feeding stuffs intervention programmes are risk-based systems that accord with current guidance. The current premises profiles (as at 1 April 2026) are shown in the tables below:

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Premises
A	6 months	0
B	12 months	14
C	18 months	74
D	24 months	381
E	36 months or other enforcement	304
Unclassified	Requiring inspection / risk rating	0
No Inspectable Risk (NIR)		0
Total		773

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Interventions
MR1	12 months	12
MR2	24 months	89
MR3	36 months	145
LR1	48 months	92
LR2	60 months	197
LR3	72 months	228
LR4	120 months	10
Unrated		0
Unclassified		0
Total		773

Feed Hygiene:

Registered Activity		No of Premises
R5	Distributor	0
R6	Pet Food Manufacturer	1
R7	Supplier of Surplus Food	8
R8	Transporter	3
R9	Stores	1
R10/11	On Farm Mixer	12
R12	Co Product Producer	2
R13	Livestock Farm	40
R14	Arable Farm	23
Total		90

The intervention programme for 2026-27 comprises the following number of scheduled food hygiene and food standards interventions.

Food Hygiene:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Interventions
A	6 months	0
B	12 months	14
C	18 months	56
D	24 months	203
E	36 months or alternative enforcement strategy	114
Unclassified		0
Unrated		0
Total		387

Food Standards:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	No of Interventions
MR1	12 months	12
MR2	24 months	36
MR3	36 months	22
LR1	48 months	6
LR2	60 months	9
Unrated		0
Unclassified		0
Total		85

In addition to the above scheduled inspections, officers will carry out interventions at newly registered premises and other additional workload is generated from requests for a food hygiene re-rating inspection. Officers will also carry out interventions at some mobile food traders, including those visiting the borough in connection with events.

Childminders

During 2026 the Food Standards Agency wrote to all local authorities to clarify that it had come to the attention of the Agency that the registration and official control approach to childminders has led to some inconsistency. Local authorities were advised that childminders should be included in the programme of official controls, as appropriate.

Childminders are required initially to register with OFSTED and this information is shared with the Local Authority (LA) Early Years Service who in turn are expected to share this information with relevant services e.g. those responsible for carrying out Official Food Controls (i.e. the Commercial Services team within the Public Protection service). This had not happened.

In Hartlepool childminders were not included in the programme of official controls and only received visits following receipt of complaints. Communication arrangements between the Early Years Service and the Commercial Services team have been established and an extra 40-50 inspections are expected to be added to the inspection programme. This is in addition to the 2026-27 inspection programme and any newly registered food businesses.

A proforma to gather information about the food business and food hygiene guidance has been prepared and sent to all childminders. Completed information will be reviewed and relevant childminders inspected.

Food Standards Delivery Model

The FSA developed a new model for the delivery of food standards official controls for LAs. The main proposals involved fundamental changes which are contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (England), which was issued in June 2023, and associated content. The changes included the introduction of a:

- new food standards intervention rating scheme that LA officers use to evaluate the risk posed by a food business
- new decision matrix to determine the frequency at which food standards official controls should be delivered in line with the outcome of the risk assessment

The food standards intervention rating scheme involves the calculation of a risk profile for food establishments that is based on its 'inherent risk profile' – this considers the inherent risks associated with the business, such as the scale of supply and the potential for product harm and a 'compliance assessment', which considers the FBO's performance and track record.

The new model enables LAs to focus their resources on those businesses creating the greatest risk.

Transitional arrangements applied until 31 March 2025 to enable a phased rollout of the programme. During the transitional period the FSA engaged with Management Information Providers to agree the programme's implementation. Following some delays from the Management Information Provider we have now fully implemented the new delivery programme and updated our management information system.

Approved Establishments:

There are 2 approved food establishments in the borough; a fishery products establishment, a manufacturer of food ingredients.

A third premises was formerly approved. It was determined that they have now discontinued activities requiring approval and as such their licence was surrendered.

Details of the Approved Premises are given below:

Establishment Name	Type of Approval	Approval Number
W Hodgson (Hartlepool) Limited, Fish Quay, Hartlepool	Fishery Products	HP0002
Kerry Ingredients and Flavours Ltd c/o Kerry Ingredients (UK) Ltd, Unit 6, Park View Industrial Estate, Brenda Road, Hartlepool, TS25 1PE	Meat Products Fishery products Dairy products Rendered Animal Fats & Greaves	HP003

These premises are inspected in accordance with our risk rating programme. They are subject to more stringent hygiene provisions than those applied to registered food businesses. These premises require considerably more staff resources for inspection, supervision and advice on meeting enhanced standards. Additionally, there is a need for ongoing specialist training for those who inspect approved premises.

Primary Producers:

The service has 73 primary producers. Inspections are combined with visits to farms for animal welfare and/or feed legislation as far as possible.

Feed Hygiene Intervention Programme 2026-27:

The National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) is responsible for the co-ordination of grant funding allocations for the FSA Feed Delivery Programme. A regional lead feed co-ordinator has been appointed. As a member of the NETSA (North East Trading Standards Association) group Hartlepool Council will receive funding to meet the costs of the following feed inspections:

Feed Hygiene:

Activity	No of Interventions
Distributor (R05)	0
Pet Food Manufacturer (R06)	0
Feed/Materials / Ingredients/Surplus Food (R07)	1
Transporter (R08)	0
Stores (R09)	0
On-farm Mixer (R10/ R11)	1
Co-Product Producer (R12)	1
Livestock Farms (R13)	1
Arable Farms (R14)	0
Total	4

Visits outside of standard hours

An estimated 10% of all programmed interventions relate to premises where it is more appropriate to conduct visits outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to visit these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if necessary, paid overtime provisions. In addition, these arrangements will permit the occasional inspection of premises, which open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours. The Food Law Code of Practice requires inspections of these premises at varying times of operation.

Revisits

All businesses less than satisfactory (with a food hygiene rating of 0,1 and 2) are revisited to ensure that the necessary improvements are carried out. Re-visits and appropriate enforcement for all non-compliant food premises (i.e. hygiene rating less than 3) is a requirement under the Food Law Code of Practice.

As a follow-up to primary inspections, the service undertakes revisits in accordance with current policy.

For the year 2026-27, the intervention programme is expected to generate an estimated 50 revisits. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place as described above to facilitate this.

Hygiene standards in premises declined during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery period. The cost of living crisis further exacerbated this situation. Consequently, the service has had to carry out more revisits to premises. It is anticipated that consistent, high quality programmed interventions by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

The performance against intervention targets for all food hygiene and food standards inspections is reported annually to the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee via the Service Plan.

Port Health

Hartlepool is a Port Health Authority, however, no food or feed enters the port.

Work in relation to imported food control can therefore ordinarily be accommodated within the day-to-day workload of the service, however if circumstances were to change whereby food or feed was imported/exported additional resources would be required which would have an effect on the programmed intervention workload and other service demands.

Since 1st April 2022 and on request we have carried out ship sanitation inspections and certification. We will also undertake water sampling as required.

During 2025-26, 9 Ships have been inspected – all vessels were issued with a Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificate and 1 Ship Sanitation Control Certificate was issued.

Water samples were collected from 5 vessels; 8 bacteriological water samples were taken for analysis – all were returned as satisfactory. In addition, 7 water samples were taken for analysis and tested for the presence of legionella - 1 sample was returned as unsatisfactory and 1 was returned as borderline - these were from 2 separate vessels. No resamples were taken in respect of the legionella samples as both vessels had already left port by the time the results were received. Advice was provided by email to Agents and confirmation of receipt of advice was received from the Master of both vessels

Fish Quay

There is a Fish Quay within the Authority's area, which provides a market hall although it is not currently operational and there are associated fish processing units, one of which is an approved establishment.

During 2023-24, 25 fishing vessels registered with Hartlepool Borough Council as food business establishments. All fishing vessels were inspected in accordance with directions issued by the Food Standards Agency.

3.2.2 Registration and Approval of Premises

Food and feed business operators must register their establishments with the relevant local authority. This provision allows the service to maintain an up-to-date premises database and facilitates the timely inspection of new premises and, when considered necessary, premises that have changed food/feed business operator or type of use.

The receipt of a food/feed premises registration form initiates an inspection of all new premises. In the case of existing premises, where a change of

food/feed business operator is notified, other than at the time of a programmed intervention, an assessment is made of the need for inspection based on the date of the next programmed intervention, premises history, and whether any significant change in the type of business are being notified. During 2025-26, 150 new registrations were received and all businesses received face-to-face visits and/or were provided with advice. During 2023-24, work was successfully undertaken to ensure that all food business registration forms are up to date.

The number of small food businesses changing hands and requiring re-registration and inspection each year remains at a steady high level of 100-150, made up of new start up businesses and those changing hands with new incoming proprietors. It is not known what number of businesses will change hands or even cease to trade because of the current economic environment. It is nevertheless anticipated that at least 100 additional food premises inspections will be generated for new food businesses during 2026-27.

Advising and assisting new proprietors places an extra pressure on the inspection programme in terms of additional inspections required for new starts and businesses changing hands which may not have otherwise been due for inspection and often will require extra support for proprietors.

A competent authority must with some exceptions, approve food business establishments that handle food of animal origin. If an establishment needs approval, it does not need to be registered as well.

Food premises which require approval include those that are producing any, or any combination of the following: minced meat, meat preparations, mechanically separated meat, meat products, live bivalve molluscs, fishery products, raw milk (other than raw cows' milk), dairy products, eggs (not primary production) and egg products, frogs legs and snails, rendered animal fats and greaves, treated stomachs, bladders and intestines, gelatine and collagen and certain cold stores and wholesale markets.

The approval regime necessitates full compliance with the relevant requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and Regulation (EC) 853/2004. There are 2 premises in the Borough which are subject to approval; a fishery products establishment and a manufacturer of food ingredients.

Since 1 January 2006, feed businesses have been required to be approved or registered with their local authority under the terms of the EC Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005). This legislation relates to nearly all feed businesses. This means, for example, that importers and sellers of feed, hauliers and storage businesses now require approval or registration. Livestock and arable farms growing and selling crops for feed are also within the scope of the provisions of the regulation.

3.2.3 Microbiological and Chemical Analysis of Food/Feed

An annual food/feed sampling programme is undertaken with samples being procured for the purposes of microbiological or chemical analyses. This

programme is undertaken in accordance with the service's Food/Feed Sampling Policy.

All officers taking formal samples must follow the guidance contained in and be qualified in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and centrally issued guidance, including that contained in the Food Law Code of Practice/Feed Law Code of Practice and associated Practice Guidance. Follow-up action is carried out in accordance with the service's sampling policy.

Microbiological analysis of food and water samples is undertaken by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Food, Water & Environmental Laboratory based at York. An appointed Public / Agricultural Analyst undertakes chemical analysis.

Sampling allocations from UKHSA are based on a credits system dependant on the type of sample being submitted and examination required. The baseline allocation has been recently reviewed and details are included in a Service Level Agreement.

18,124 credits have been allocated to Hartlepool for the year 2026-27.

The allocation is subject to annual review. It is possible that the allocation will be reduced if an authority uses substantially less than its allocation.

A sampling programme is produced each year for the start of April to assess the microbiological quality of food, water and environmental surfaces and composition and labelling of food.

The results of the sampling programme carried out during 2025-26 are provided in **6.2.3**.

In addition to local intelligence, the sampling programme for 2026-27 will take account of national and regional surveys and local interventions and the availability of local resources.

Sampling programmes have been agreed with the Food Examiners and Public/Agricultural Analysts. These have regard to the nature of food/feed businesses in Hartlepool and will focus on locally manufactured/processed foods/feed and food/feed targeted because of previous sampling and complaints.

The service aims to meet a national target set in 2007 by the Food Standards Agency, the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) and the Association of Port Health Authorities that imported food should make up 10% of the food samples taken by local and port health authorities.

The sampling plans for 2026-27 are detailed overleaf.

Microbiological Food Sampling Plan 2026-27

April Local Survey – swabs in catering premises	May Local Survey – swabs in catering premises Raw Milk (Re-sampling)	June Local Survey & FSA Funded – Imported Herbs and Spices
July Study 86 – Rice, Noodles and Pasta	August Study 86 – Rice, Noodles and Pasta	September Study 86 – Rice, Noodles and Pasta
October Study XR47 – Spa Pools & Hot Tubs	November Local Survey – swabs in catering premises	December Local Survey – Imported Nuts/Seeds/Fruit
January Study 87 – RTE Raw Fish & Shellfish	February Local Survey – swabs in catering premises	March Raw Milk Sampling

Food Standards Sampling Plan 2026-27

Survey	Number of Samples
Allergens (Peanuts) in Takeaway/Restaurant Meals (including resampling of Indian Cuisine)	6
* Directed Sampling - Milk in loose/PPDS food at caring establishments and schools	3
Imported Food FSA LA/PHA funded	4
Ad hoc samples arising from emerging priorities identified during the year	Unknown

(*Hartlepool is part of a Northeast Authority bid to sample certain food commodities as part of the FSA's directed sampling programme.)

Feeding Stuffs Sampling Plan 2026-27

At present feeding stuffs sampling is being given a low priority due to the lack of local manufacturers and packers. No sampling is planned for 2026-27. We will however respond to emerging national or local issues.

Last year we participated in the FSA Feed Delivery National Sampling Project 2025-26. The aim of this sampling project was to understand if there were compliance issues with dog chews, which are commonly fed to many pet dogs and found in a large proportion of homes.

Dog chews have been the subject of several RASFF alerts, with Salmonella contamination being the most common issue. During 2025-26 our sampling plan involved taking 4 samples. Salmonella was not detected in any of the 4 samples tested.

Regional funding provided by the National Trading Standards Board and Food Standards Agency will supplement our sampling budget.

Private Water Supplies

A local brewery uses a private water supply in its food production. Regular sampling is carried out of this supply in accordance with relevant legislative regulations.

3.2.4 Food Inspection

The purpose of food inspection is to check that food complies with food safety requirements and is fit for human consumption and is properly described and labelled. As such, the activity of inspecting food commodities, including imported food where relevant, forms an integral part of the food premises intervention programme. Food inspection activities are undertaken in accordance with national guidelines.

3.2.5 Provision of Advice and Information to Food/Feed Businesses

It is recognised that for most local food businesses contact with an officer of the service provides the best opportunity to obtain information and tailored advice on legislative requirements and good practice. Officers are mindful of this and aim to ensure that when undertaking premises interventions sufficient opportunity exists for food business operators to seek advice.

When providing advice to food businesses, advisory leaflets including those produced by the Food Standards Agency, are made available.

Significant resources have been directed towards assisting businesses to fully implement a documented food safety management system, including Safer Food Better Business (SFBB). The FSA introduced this system to assist smaller catering businesses introduce a documented food safety management system.

Guidance is also prepared and distributed to food businesses relating to changes in legislative requirements. The service also encourages new food/feed business operators and existing businesses to seek guidance and advice on their business. It is estimated that 50 such advisory visits will be carried out during the year.

The Council operates the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme whereby each business is awarded a rating, which reflects the hygiene conditions found at the time of the primary inspection. The business' rating is made available to the public via the Food Standards Agency's website and the business is provided with a sticker to display on their premises. The service has made a commitment to work with businesses to improve their rating; in particular, those awarded a rating of less than '3' (generally satisfactory).

A limited level of promotional work is also undertaken by the service on food safety, with minimal impact on programmed enforcement work. Feeding stuffs advice is available via the Council's web site.

3.2.6 Public Health Initiatives

Wherever possible the service will contribute to the Public Health Framework Outcomes.

Allergy Awareness

We will continue to use a range of interventions including sampling, provision of information and advice and working in partnership with colleagues in the other North-East local authorities as part of a regional group to raise awareness regarding allergens.

We will continue to raise awareness of changes in food labelling legislation relating to foods that are pre-packed for direct sale.

As part of the regional work programme, we have together with the other North-East local authorities produced a range of video clips to raise awareness of allergies and duties placed on food business operators. These videos were promoted during contact with food businesses and by using social media.

We have introduced a single point of contact for people seeking to report allergen related incidents, which are then referred to the relevant local authority for investigation. We have also participated in a regional sampling programme specifically looking for allergens.

3.2.7 Investigation of Food / Feed Complaints

The service receives on average 40 complaints each year concerning food/feed, all of which are subject to investigation. During 2025-26, 28 (+16 hygiene of premises) complaints were received concerning food. An initial response is made to these complaints within two working days. Whilst many complaints are investigated with minimal resource requirements, some more

complex cases may be resource-intensive and potentially affect programmed intervention workloads.

No complaints were received concerning feed.

All investigations are conducted having regard to the guidance on the 'Home Authority Principle'.

The procedures for receipt and investigation of food/feed complaints are set out in detailed guidance and internal policy documents.

3.2.8 Investigation of Cases of Food Poisoning and Outbreak Control

Incidents of food related infectious disease are investigated in liaison with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) North-East Public Health Team and in the case of outbreaks in accordance with the Outbreak Control Policy.

Where it appears that an outbreak exists the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) or deputy (an EHO) will liaise with UKHSA North-East Health Protection Team to determine the need to convene an Outbreak Control Team. Further liaison may be necessary with agencies such as the Food Standards Agency, UKHSA Food, Water and Environmental Laboratory, Public Analyst(s), Anglian Water and Northumbrian Water.

It is estimated that approximately 150 food poisoning notifications are received each year, a large proportion of which are confirmed cases of Campylobacter.

Investigations of foodborne illness and any suspected food poisoning/food borne outbreaks (with the exception of Campylobacter notifications) are undertaken in order to attempt to identify the source of the illness, prevent further spread, raise awareness of hygiene issues and carry out any necessary food hygiene visits or enforcement action.

As relatively little benefit has been demonstrated from the investigation of individual sporadic cases of Campylobacter only those who are in high-risk groups (e.g. food handlers or those who live/work in a residential care home) are routinely investigated. Cases of Campylobacter are followed up with a standard letter and receive an information leaflet.

Any cluster or outbreak identified by UKHSA North-East Public Health Team or the Commercial Services team will be investigated following the agreed outbreak investigation arrangements. In the event of any major food poisoning outbreak, a significant burden is likely to be placed on the service and this would inevitably affect the performance of the intervention programme.

3.2.9 Dealing with Food / Feed Safety Incidents

A national alert system exists for the rapid dissemination of information about food and feed hazards and product recalls, this is known as the food/feed alert warning system.

All food and feed alerts received by the service are dealt with in accordance with national guidance and internal quality procedures. Food and feed alert warnings are received by the service from The Food Standards Agency via an electronic mail system. Several officers have also subscribed to receive alerts via their personal mobile phones.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) ensures that a timely and appropriate response is made to each alert.

The out of hours contact telephone number for the service is (01429) 266522, then Option 1, then Option 2.

In the event of a serious local incident, or a wider food safety problem emanating from production in Hartlepool, the Food Standards Agency will be alerted in accordance with guidance.

We continue to receive food alerts for action or information, food allergy alerts and food recall notices throughout the year. Whilst it is difficult to predict with any certainty the number of food safety incidents that will arise based on previous years it is anticipated that approximately 75 food alerts (not including allergy alerts) will be notified in 2026-27, with an estimated 4 or 5 requiring action.

This level of work can ordinarily be accommodated within the day-to-day workload of the service, but incidents that are more serious may require additional resources, which may have an effect on the programmed intervention workload and other service demands.

3.2.10 Complaints relating to Food / Feed Premises

The service investigates all complaints that it receives about food/feed safety and food standards conditions and practices in food/feed businesses.

An initial response to any complaint is made within two working days. In such cases, the confidentiality of the complainant is paramount. All anonymous complaints are also currently investigated.

During 2025-26, 44 (28 food and 16 hygiene of premises) complaints about hygiene standards in food premises were received. All were investigated within our 2-day response time.

The purpose of investigation is to determine the validity of the complaint and, where appropriate, to seek to ensure that any deficiency is properly addressed. The general approach is to assist the food/feed business operator in ensuring good standards of compliance, although enforcement action may

be necessary where there is failure in the management of food/feed safety, or regulatory non-compliance.

Based on the average number of complaints received during previous years it is estimated that approximately 60 such complaints will be received in 2026-27.

3.3 Complaints against Our Staff/Service

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are contained in the inspection report left at the time of an inspection.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

3.4 Liaison Arrangements

To ensure consistency in enforcement and approach in all food safety matters the service has a number of formal and informal liaison arrangements with other local authorities, Government bodies and local liaison groups.

The service actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Heads of Public Protection Group
- Tees Valley Food Liaison Group (for a 12-month trial period the group has been merged with the North East Food Liaison Group. Attendance at the North East Microbiological Sampling Group and North East Compositional Sampling Group also occurs).
- UKHSA/Local Authority Sampling Group
- Tees Valley Public Health Group
- North East Public Protection Partnership (NEPPP) (representing the 12 North East local authorities)
- North East Trading Standards Liaison Group, which incorporates the North East Trading Standards Animal Feed Group (NETSA) (representing the 12 North East local authorities)

There is also liaison with other organisations including the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Trading Standards Institute, Consultant in Communicable Disease, UKHSA, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Defra / Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA), Cleveland Police, OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Officers also work in liaison with other Council departments including the planning services and licensing teams.

3.5 Home Authority Principle / Primary Authority Scheme

The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 introduced Primary Authority agreements. It placed a statutory obligation on the Council to provide a significantly expanded range of Home Authority services to local businesses when requested by that business. There are opportunities for local authorities to recover costs from businesses to provide this premium service.

The Council continues to fully support the National Primary Authority Scheme for businesses. When inspecting businesses which have a primary authority agreement in place with another local authority, officers will have regard to any relevant inspection plans or primary authority advice published on the register.

The Council will contact the Primary Authority and liaise over:

- any proposed formal enforcement action
- service of Notices
- shortcomings in the companies' policies that have wider implications

There are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place with a Hartlepool based trader however the service works closely with some local businesses on an informal basis.

The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

4 RESOURCES**4.1 Financial Resources**

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2026-27 is:

	£ 000
Employees	689
Other Expenditure	64
Public Health Grant	(312)
Other Grant Funding	(36)
Income	<u>(11)</u>
Net Budget	394

This budget is for all services provided by this section including Health & Safety, Animal Health, Trading Standards and resources are allocated in accordance with service demands.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the Council's Public Protection service, including delivery of the food/feed law service, in accordance with the service plan.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for the strategic management of the Food Service.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the food service in 2025-26 are as follows:

Food Hygiene

1 x 0.5 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) (with responsibility also for Port Health, Health and Animal Health and Welfare)

4 x 0.5 FTE EHO* (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility also for Health & Safety)

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

1 x 0.3 FTE Part-time EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

1 x 1 FTE Technical Officer Food (with requisite qualifications and experience)

Food Standards

1 x 0.2 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) (with responsibility also for Port Health, Health and Animal Health and Welfare)

4 x 0.3 FTE EHO* (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

1 x 0.16 FTE Part-time EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience and with responsibility for Health & Safety)

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for the strategic management of the Food Law Service. These duties are in addition to their general management responsibilities of the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) has responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the Food/Feed Law Service, Port Health, Health & Safety at Work, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health & Welfare.

The EHOs have responsibility for the performance of the food premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the food law service, particularly more complex investigations. In addition, these officers undertake Health & Safety at Work enforcement.

The Technical Officer (Food) is also responsible for interventions, including inspections as well as revisits, investigation of less complex complaints and investigation of incidents of food-borne disease.

Feed Hygiene

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) and the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager are designated as lead officers for imported food / feed control and animal feed enforcement.

The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) allocated resource for carrying out official controls for feed hygiene is 0.25 FTE.

Authorised Trading Standards Officers have responsibility for the performance of the feed premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the feed law service.

Support Services based within the department provide administrative support.

All staff engaged in food/feed safety law enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

Staff undertaking educational and other support duties are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out this work.

4.3 Staff Development

The Council recognises that there is a need to invest in the continuing development of staff. Within the Commercial Services team such development is needed in order to meet the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and more specifically requirements contained in the Food Standard Agency's Food Law Code of Practice.

The qualifications and training of staff engaged in food/feed law enforcement are prescribed and this will be reflected in the Council's policy in respect of appointment and authorisation of officers.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the food/feed law service to maintain their professional competency by undertaking a minimum of 20 hours continuous professional development (CPD) training each year, which may involve inhouse training, attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences. This is also consistent with the requirements of the relevant professional bodies.

The priorities for the service are concerned with ensuring up to date knowledge and awareness of legislation, building capacity within the team including training and development of new staff. Detailed records are maintained by the service relating to all training received by officers.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the food/feed law service. The service has a documented standard operating procedure that ensures the proper maintenance and calibration of equipment and its removal from use if found to be defective.

The service has a computerised performance management system, the Authority Public Protection computer system (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the food/feed law service. A documented database management standard operating procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all food/feed interventions, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the food law service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the food service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking interventions, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

It is possible that the Food Standards Agency will at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

6 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1 Overview

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan, a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2025-26.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of the year 2026-27 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Council approval will be sought.

6.2 Performance Review 2025-26

This section describes performance of the service in key areas during 2025-26.

6.2.1 Intervention Programme

During 2025-26, we successfully completed 383 food hygiene, 299 food standards and 3 feed hygiene interventions.

We met our 2-working day response time for all complaints.

6.2.2 Registration and Approval of Premises

During 2025-26, 150 new food businesses were registered. This was a big increase on the previous year when 104 were registered.

Two premises subject to approval were inspected and given relevant guidance. A third premises was formerly trading but has now surrendered their approval as the activities requiring approval had discontinued (premises closed down actually).

6.2.3 Food Sampling Programme

Programmed food sampling in 2026-27 focussed on issues of public safety and took account of local and national priorities.

In total 168 hygiene samples and 14 food standards samples were taken. The results are discussed below:

Hygiene Samples

During 2025-26, the service participated in four microbiological surveys and took 168 hygiene samples.

- During a local survey 108 hygiene swabs were taken from catering premises, such as schools, cafes and care homes. Swabs were taken of hand contact surfaces such as wash hand basin taps, equipment handles and of storage containers and other equipment. Three of the swabs were deemed to be unsatisfactory due to high levels of bacteria (*Enterobacteriaceae*). This is an indication of poor hygiene practices. Advice was given and re-samples with satisfactory results were obtained.

- Three national microbiological surveys were undertaken. These looked at:

(i) Microbiological quality of root vegetables

During the survey 25 samples of loose root vegetables were sampled and checked for a number of microbiological parameters. All 25 samples were deemed to be satisfactory by the Food Examiner.

(ii) Microbiological quality of imported nuts, seeds, dried fruit and snacks

During the survey 27 samples of prepacked nuts, seeds, dried fruit and snacks were sampled and checked for a number of microbiological parameters. All 27 samples were deemed to be satisfactory by the Food Examiner.

(iii) Reactive Study Fresh and Frozen Raw/Non-ready to eat Chicken

During this survey five samples of loose raw chicken were taken from local butchers.

The study aimed to determine the microbiological safety and quality of fresh or frozen chicken meat and chicken meat products from retail, catering and distributor/supplier premises including UK Ports. It aimed to determine the prevalence of Salmonella and Campylobacter in meat supplied for consumption in the UK. Associations between the presence of pathogens, packaging, country of origin and other relevant information was gathered.

Four samples were reported as Unsatisfactory as they contained Campylobacter and one sample contained both Campylobacter and Salmonella sp. All samples were of imported chicken.

As the samples examined were of raw chicken, which would undergo further processing limited follow up was required. The detection of Salmonella did, however, require further investigation. This involved notification of the incident to the Food Standards Agency.

A resample of the chicken was reported as Satisfactory as neither Campylobacter nor Salmonella species were detected.

The original sample was further serotyped for Salmonella Typhimurium and Salmonella Enteritidis in order to verify legal compliance, however, neither were detected. The investigation was subsequently concluded to the satisfaction of the Food Standards Agency.

- A sample of locally produced raw drinking milk was also taken, and the result of the sample was deemed unsatisfactory. The sample was found to contain Coliforms. The matter was referred to the Milk Inspectorate. A satisfactory sample was subsequently obtained.

Food Standards Sampling

A total of fourteen food standards samples were taken during 2025-26. All samples were taken as part of Food Standards Agency (FSA) surveys. Details are discussed below:

- During the Food Standards Agency Imported Foods Survey six food standards samples were taken. These included nuts, beans, lentils, spices and tea. The samples were analysed for heavy metals, pesticides, aflatoxins or lead.

Five of the samples were deemed to be satisfactory. The one unsatisfactory sample was of brown beans that contained residues of pesticides above the maximum residue level. A visit was made to the retailer where the beans were purchased from. There were 5 bags of beans still on sale – these were voluntarily surrendered and destroyed. Contact was made with the Supplier and Local Authority where the supplier was located who confirmed that none of the product was left in circulation.

The results and follow up action were reported to the Food Standards Agency Imported Food team and the Health and Safety Executive who are responsible for pesticide enforcement.

A sample of Ground Hot Pepper was also taken as part of the survey, which was sent to the Public Analyst for microbiological testing. The result was deemed to be satisfactory

- The FSA Directed Sampling focused on allergens in prepared meals. During the survey 8 gluten free meals were sampled. The meals included fish and chips, pizza, sandwiches and desserts. These were taken from a mix of takeaways, cafés and restaurants. All eight samples were deemed to be satisfactory by the Public Analyst, in that they did not contain gluten.

Sampling continued in relation to private drinking water used by a local brewery. The results of the samples taken were all satisfactory.

A programme of sampling continued to be carried out to assess the microbiological quality of drinking water at premises within the borough and at the port.

Water sampling was also provided upon request to vessels visiting Hartlepool to assess the microbiological quality of drinking water.

6.2.4 Food Inspection

The service undertook no formal seizure of unfit food in the year.

Brown beans taken as part of the FSA Imported Foods Survey were voluntarily surrendered as stated above.

6.2.5 Promotional Work

Food safety promotion whether by advice, education, training or other means is a key part of the food team's strategy in changing behaviour and increasing compliance in businesses.

In February 2006, the Food Standards Agency introduced Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) aimed at assisting smaller catering businesses to introduce a documented food safety management system. Since this time, our resources have been directed towards continuing to assist businesses to fully implement a documented food safety management system.

The team has continued to offer tailored advice and information on request with advisory visits to businesses being carried out during the year.

Circular letters are issued as required to inform food business operators of important food safety matters relevant to their operations e.g. changes in legislation, food alerts etc.

6.2.6 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Hartlepool Council introduced the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' (FHRS) a Food Standards Agency / local authority partnership initiative to help consumers choose where to eat out, or shop for food.

The 'Food Law Code of Practice', requires that a risk rating is undertaken which is used to determine the frequency of intervention for the business. The hygiene rating is derived from the risk rating that is given to a business following every 'primary' inspection.

Of the seven main categories used to determine the overall rating score the following three factors are used to create a hygiene rating:

1. Food Hygiene and Safety
2. Structure and Cleaning
3. Management and Control

These ratings are the only ones that are directly controllable by the business and are the reason they have been used to obtain the food business' hygiene rating.

The total score from the 3 categories is then used to derive the hygiene rating ranging from '0' ('Urgent improvement necessary') through to '5' ('Very Good').

The profile of Hartlepool premises FHRS ratings is shown overleaf.

Table 1: Profile of Premises FHRs Ratings.

Hygiene Rating	No @ 1.4.14	No @ 1.4.15	No @ 1.4.16	No @ 1.4.17	No @ 1.4.18	No @ 1.4.19	No @ 1.4.20	No @ 1.4.21	No @ 1.4.22	No @ 1.4.23	No @ 1.4.24	No @ 1.4.25	No @ 1.4.26
5 Very Good	456 (66.7%)	471 (68.3%)	502 (72.2%)	539 (76.9%)	561 (80.6%)	580 (82.9%)	596 (83.9%)	587 (73.2%)	688 (87.3%)	654 (85.9%)	647 (87.4%)	658 (88.9%)	664 (90.5%)
4 Good	149 (21.8%)	136 (19.7%)	125 (18.0%)	107 (15.3%)	101 (14.5%)	76 (10.9%)	77 (10.8%)	72 (9%)	64 (8.1%)	66 (8.7%)	57 (7.7%)	55 (7.4%)	47 (6.4%)
3 Generally Satisfactory	63 (9.2%)	56 (8.1%)	55 (7.9%)	43 (6.1%)	28 (4.0%)	38 (5.4%)	36 (5.1%)	32 (4%)	35 (4.4%)	32 (4.2%)	33 (4.5%)	25 (3.4%)	22 (3%)
2 Improvement Necessary	9 (1.3%)	18 (2.6%)	8 (1.2%)	10 (1.4%)	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%)	4 (0.5%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)	1 (0.1%)
1 Major Improvement Necessary	7 (1.0%)	9 (1.3%)	3 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	3 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
0 Urgent Improvement Necessary	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Awaiting Inspection	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.01%)	111 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sub Total	684	690	695	701	696	700	710	802	788	761	740	740	734
Exempt	45	44	45	42	42	37	39	39	39	28	27	27	26
Excluded	10	10	1	1	10	12	2	2	8	6	4	3	4
Sensitive	32	1	8	9	1	1	10	10	2	3	5	7	9
Total	771	745	749	753	749	750	761	853	837	798	776	777	773
% of premises rated as 3 or above	97.7%	96.1%	98.1%	98.3%	99.1%	99.2%	99.8%	86.2%	99.8%	98.8%	99.6%	99.7%	99.9%

Since the introduction of the FHRs national scheme in 2013, the number of premises rated as 3 (Generally Satisfactory) or better has remained consistently high. In 2025/26 the figure was 99.9%.

In their Post Pandemic Recovery Plan, the FSA acknowledged that hygiene standards had anecdotally fallen. This fall in standards has in part been a consequence of the Covid-19 Pandemic, however it is also reflective of the cost of living crisis and the difficulties businesses are facing e.g. fewer people working in businesses, problems with recruitment and a lack of investment as businesses struggle financially due to the rising costs of utilities and food.

Officers are finding that inspections are taking longer to do with more advice/support being given to operators, and more frequent revisits. There is a requirement under the Food Law Code of Practice that all non-compliant premises (i.e. hygiene rating less than 3) receive a revisit.

The service is committed to focussing its resources on carrying out interventions at those businesses which are deemed not to be 'broadly compliant' and has liaised with businesses that have been awarded a hygiene

rating of '2' or less offering advice and support. Where appropriate, enforcement action will be taken to secure compliance.

Under the FHRS, there is a procedure that affords food business operators the opportunity to request a re-visit inspection once they have taken action to rectify non-compliances identified during an inspection. At the re-visit, the establishment may be re-assessed and given a new hygiene rating.

During 2025-26, 9 businesses submitted applications for a re-rating. Further information is provided in **6.2.7**.

The food hygiene ratings are published online at www.food.gov.uk/ratings

6.2.7 FHRS Re-rating & Promotional visits

During 2025-26, officers worked closely with food business operators to improve food hygiene standards in our lowest rated premises. During the year, 9 businesses submitted applications for a FHRS re-rating.

Eight of these businesses were re-inspected in accordance with the FHRS and all demonstrated an improvement in standards. Four improved from a 4 to a 5, one from a 3 to 5, one from a 1 to a 5, one from a 1 to a 3 and one from a zero to a 4. The ninth was not eligible until 12th May 2026.

On 1st April 2018, we introduced a dual system for dealing with re-rating requests. The five constituent members of the Tees Valley Food Liaison Group agreed this system.

The scheme enables food businesses to apply for one free re-rating revisit (as per the original scheme). To qualify they must have carried out the necessary improvements to their business and be willing to wait a minimum of three months from their last inspection (this period is known as a 'stand still' period). Businesses can elect to pay £160 if they wish to be inspected within three months of their inspection. They are also eligible to submit more than one application to be re-rated if they pay the £160 fee. During 2025-26, 2 businesses elected to pay for a re-rating inspection.

6.2.8 Food / Feed Complaints

During the year, the service dealt with 16 complaints relating to the condition of food premises and/or food handling practices. In addition, 28 complaints were received regarding unfit or out of condition food or extraneous matter. A further 15 complaints concerning the composition or labelling of food items were received.

No complaints were received regarding animal feeding stuffs.

Investigations into the above were undertaken within our target of 2 working days.

6.2.9 Food Poisoning

In conjunction with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Hartlepool Council investigates cases of actual or suspected food poisoning and foodborne disease.

The majority of notifiable disease notifications received by the food service were cases of *Campylobacter*, all of which appeared to be sporadic (isolated) cases.

Campylobacter is the most common bacterial cause of food poisoning in England and Wales. National data shows that while the incidence of *Salmonella* infections has steadily declined since the late 1990s those caused by *Campylobacter* had significantly increased. As a result in recent years the FSA and UKHSA has been spearheading campaigns to address this.

6.2.10 Food Safety Incidents

The Service received Food Alerts and a number of Product Recall/Withdrawal notifications and Allergy Alerts from the Food Standards Agency during the year. All Food Alerts requiring action were dealt with expeditiously.

The Service also receives reports from the FSA regarding incidents involving food fraud, which may present a risk to health and require immediate investigation. Most relate to illicit alcohol due to the chemicals used as a substitution for genuine alcohol. In addition, intelligence is received from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) regarding counterfeit alcohol.

6.2.11 Enforcement

No formal enforcement was undertaken in relation to official food controls during the year.

An agreement to voluntarily close the food premises was accepted in respect of two premises. The brown beans referred to in 6.2.3 above, were voluntarily surrendered and destroyed.

6.2.12 Complaints against Our Staff/Service

No complaints were made against our staff during 2025-26.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2026-27

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the intervention programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable. Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement and/or challenges for 2026-27.

1. The inspection programme for 2026-27 is challenging and this will be further exasperated by the inclusion of childminders. The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2026-27 we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of food safety risks that will have an impact on wider public health outcomes. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes Framework.
2. We will need to keep abreast of and respond to any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. This may involve reviewing and updating our Quality Management System/Standard Operating Procedures for Food and Feed as appropriate.



Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Service Committee

4 November 2026

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Subject: HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2026-27

Decision Type: Non-Key

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To approve the Health & Safety Service Plan for 2026-27, which is a requirement under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has a key role in overseeing local authority enforcement activities. They have duties to set and monitor standards of local authorities to ensure that authorities are providing an effective service to protect public health and safety.

- 3.2 The Health & Safety Executive has issued guidance to local authorities, which provides information on how local authority enforcement service plans should be structured and what they should contain.
- 3.3 The service planning guidance ensures that key areas of enforcement are covered in local service plans, whilst allowing for the inclusion of locally defined objectives.
- 3.4 The Health and Safety Enforcement Service Plan for 2026-2027 is available in **Appendix 1** and takes into account the guidance requirements. The Plan details the Service's priorities for 2026-27 and beyond where appropriate. It also highlights how these priorities will be addressed.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. The Service Plan for 2026/27 has been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in Service demand.
- 4.2. The Plan covers the following:
 - (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The scope and demands on the Health & Safety Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development;
 - (v) A review of performance for 2025/26

5. Summary of main issues raised in the Plan.

- 5.1 The Council is the enforcing authority for 1,356 premises within Hartlepool. In planning our intervention programme for 2026-27, we have had regard to the 'National Local Authority Enforcement Code Health and Safety at Work England, Scotland & Wales'.
- 5.2 The majority of businesses we have enforcement responsibility are micro, small or medium employers with many employing less than 5 staff. The table below provides a profile of the premises within the borough.

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/26
Retail Shops	384
Wholesale	23

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/26
Offices	128
Catering Services	248
Hotel/residential	14
Residential Care Homes	39
Leisure and Cultural	255
Consumer Services	258
Other (Miscellaneous)	7
Total	1356

- 5.3 HSE provides local authorities with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). The Code is given legal effect as HSE guidance to local authorities under section 18(4) (b) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It is designed to ensure that local authority health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to enforcement.
- 5.4 The Council has a vital role to play in ensuring that the regulatory system is focused on better health and safety outcomes and not purely technical breaches of the law. During 2026-27 we will carry out a range of interventions based on risk, local intelligence, performance history, RIDDOR reports, complaints and local occupational health data.
- 5.5 The Code states that proactive inspection must only be used to target the high-risk activities in those sectors specified by HSE or where intelligence suggests risks are not being effectively managed. HSE have published a Local Authority (LA) Circular LAC 67/2 (For work years 2026/2027 – 2028/29), which sets out guidance to assist LAs in setting priorities and targeting interventions. This contains details of the national priorities. (Not all national priorities have a proactive inspection component).
- 5.6 In delivering their priorities, LAs should ensure their planned regulatory activity is focused on improved outcomes, for example better risk management, improved health as well as reduced injuries to employees or members of the public.
- 5.7 The Code provides flexibility for local authorities to address local priorities alongside the national priorities set by HSE. During interventions, officers will focus on specific risks that are the key causes of serious workplace accidents, injuries and ill health.
- 5.8 Priorities can be addressed during our contact with businesses, including through other areas of work e.g. food inspections, licensing visits and following notifications of local events to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
- 5.9 We have identified the following local priorities:

- Asbestos Management
 - Electrical & Gas Safety in Commercial Premises
 - Cellar Safety
 - Managing Risks from Legionella
 - Hygiene in Tattoo Studios and Salons offering Beauty Treatments e.g. micro-blading, application of semi-permanent make up etc.
- 5.10 During 2025 /26, health and safety interventions were carried out at 86 premises. These were risk based and multiple priority topics were covered during some of these visits. All visits were undertaken in conjunction with food interventions.
- 5.11 In addition to the planned interventions officers carried out 1 revisit to monitor compliance with contraventions identified during these planned interventions. During the year, we worked with new businesses and continued to offer tailored advice and information on request.
- 5.12 During the year the Authority undertook 317 enforcement visits to assess compliance with smoke free legislation that came into force on 1st July 2007, a proportion of which were carried out in conjunction with health and safety interventions.
- 5.13 No planned promotional / campaign work was undertaken during 2025/26 however this work will be undertaken as required during 2026/27.
- 5.14 During 2025-26, water sampling was undertaken from bathing water (swimming pools, spa and hydrotherapy pools) to assess water quality.
- 5.15 As part of the service's Port Health functions water was collected and examined, including from five vessels visiting Hartlepool. Bacteriological samples were examined and samples were tested for Legionella bacteria.
- 5.16 Nine Ships have been inspected; all vessels were issued with a Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificate. One Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificate Extension was issued, however, no Ship Sanitation Control Certificates were issued.
- 5.17 In 2025/26 advice was provided to 25 businesses on event management through the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
- 5.18 During 2025-26, the Council continued to respond to any health and safety complaints in the usual manner. The service carried out 24 visits in response to 40 complaints / service requests relating to health and safety conditions and working practice. The initial response to these requests was undertaken within our target of 2 working days.
- 5.19 The service received 17 accident notifications during the year. After applying selection criteria based on national guidance, 1 of these notifications were selected for further investigation.

- 5.20 With regards enforcement action under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and associated legislation, no legal proceedings was undertaken during 2025-26.
- 5.21 Local authorities are required to assess whether there is sufficient capacity within the authority to undertake their statutory duties and to deliver an effective service. The Service Plan sets out the resources determined necessary to deliver the health and safety service in 2026-27.
- 5.22 The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2026-27, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses, with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of health and safety risks. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes Framework.
- 5.23 We will need to keep abreast of, and respond to, any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework.

6. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	If the Health and Safety Service Plan 2026-27 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues.
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues.
Legal Considerations	If the Health and Safety Service Plan 2026-27 is not adopted we will not meet the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.

Consultation	No relevant issues.
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7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee approves the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2026-27.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1. The Health and Safety Service Plan 2026-27 needs to be adopted to comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1. There are no background papers for this report.

10. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 01/10/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 29/09/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 29/09/2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council

Health & Safety Service Plan 2026-27

APPENDIX 1**HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2026-27**

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INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how the health and safety service will be delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Plan accords with the requirements of the mandatory guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA).

In May 2013, HSE published the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). The Code is designed to ensure that LA health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to their regulatory interventions. It sets out the Government expectations of a risk-based approach to targeting. Whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to the wider public health agenda.

This Plan sets out the Council's aims in respect of its health and safety enforcement service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled.

Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2026-27 longer-term objectives are identified, where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2025-26 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions from the Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA), Approved Codes of Practice, the Regulators' Code, and any other relevant guidance.

1.2.1 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Public Protection service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.2 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

Hartlepool will be

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of health and safety legislation.

This Health & Safety Service Plan contributes towards elements of the Council Plan vision in the following ways:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

By ensuring that businesses meet their obligations as regards health and safety the wellbeing of both employees and the public will be protected;

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements with regard to health, safety and welfare requirements, and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Health & Safety Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid-19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Over the past 20-25 years, Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and 2023.

The tourist industry impacts upon recreational opportunities, shopping facilities and leisure facilities including the provision of food and drink outlets. There are currently 1356¹ businesses in Hartlepool for which the Council is the enforcing authority.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult Services and Public Health Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee
- Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

The Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee provides political oversight for Health and Safety at Work enforcement.

The Council is made up of seven main Departments:

- Children's Services
- Adults Services & Public Health
- Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR Services
- Finance, IT and Digital Services
- Housing, Growth and Communities
- Office of Chief Executive

The health and safety service is delivered through the Public Protection section of the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Department.

1 Total number of premises as at 01/4/2026

2.3 Scope of the Health and Safety Service

The Council's Commercial Services team is a constituent part of the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Department and is responsible for delivery of the health and safety service. Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Carrying out interventions including inspections;
- Investigating concerns/complaints regarding health and safety and associated issues;
- Investigating workplace accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences;
- Providing advice and information;
- Taking action (formal and informal) to ensure compliance with legislation;
- Responding to asbestos notifications;
- Registering premises and persons offering personal treatments e.g. body piercing, tattooing, acupuncture etc.;
- Acting as a Statutory Consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003; and
- Enforcing smoke-free legislation in public places.

To achieve strategic aims and objectives it is necessary to work in partnership with other local authorities, the Health and Safety Executive and businesses. The Council aims to ensure that these joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute and are committed to the ongoing development of these arrangements.

2.4 Demands on the Health and Safety Service

The Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities are the principal enforcing authorities for Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSAWA) in Great Britain.

The primary purpose of the HSAWA is to control risks from work activities. The role of the HSE and LAs is to ensure that duty holders manage and control these risks and thus prevent harm to employees and to the public.

The type of premises/nature of work activity falling to local authorities for enforcement is dictated by Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1989 with further guidance provided by Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA), which is the formal enforcement liaison committee between the HSE and LAs.

There are currently 1,356 premises in Hartlepool for which the Council is the Enforcing Authority for Health and Safety. Such premises include retailers, wholesalers, offices, catering premises (including hotels and guesthouses), leisure and consumer services and residential care homes. The businesses are predominantly micro/small (employing less than 10 employees).

Other premises within the borough, including premises within local authority control, are within the enforcing remit of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

The table below provides a profile of the premises within the borough.

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/26
Retail Shops	384
Wholesale	23
Offices	128
Catering Services	248
Hotel/residential	14
Residential Care Homes	39
Leisure and Cultural	255
Consumer Services	258
Other (Miscellaneous)	7
Total	1356

The delivery point for the health and safety enforcement service is at:
Civic Centre
Victoria Road
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY
Telephone: (01429) 266522

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies, which occur out of hours. Contact can be made on (01429) 266522, then Option 1, then Option 2.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, a Public Protection Enforcement Policy deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service. This policy applies to health and safety enforcement.

The Health and Safety Executive Enforcement Management Model (EMM) will be used to inform the service's decision-making process. Officers also have reference to the HSE's Enforcement Guide and the Work Related Deaths Protocol.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

The Council is committed to meeting its obligations under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

3.1 Regulatory Reform

There have been significant changes in regulatory approach in recent years. The key objective is to free up business growth by transforming regulatory enforcement.

In drawing up this service plan, we are setting out the approach we intend to take to comply with the National Local Authority Enforcement Code Health and Safety at Work England, Scotland & Wales' (the Code). This is to ensure that we use a risk-based, targeted and proportionate approach to our interventions and enforcement in accordance with the principles of good regulation, which requires enforcement to be demonstrably targeted, proportionate, consistent, transparent and accountable.

The Code acknowledges that whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to a wider public health agenda.

The Code provides direction to local authorities on meeting these requirements and reporting on compliance. To assist local authorities understand and implement the code, supplementary guidance is published annually.

The Service Plan sets out the risks, which we consider we need to address and the range of interventions that we will use to influence behavioural change in the way business manages or undertakes its work.

Officers carrying out regulatory interventions will ensure that every effort is made to reduce administrative burdens on business. At the same time, they will take efficient, effective and proportionate enforcement, concentrating on poor performers who present the highest risk to the health and safety of workers and the public.

Hartlepool Council is an active member of the Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group. Through this group, the five local authorities collectively target work areas based on:

- national priorities
- local priorities based on intelligence and evidence

As appropriate, a joint work plan is prepared and we aim to deliver this along with other interventions that are required at a local level.

This service plan sets out the activities that the service intends to carry out in 2026-27 to meet this requirement within the resources available. The programme will be delivered using the following interventions:

3.2 Interventions

As part of the Code HSE will monitor report and direct the approach of local authority regulatory intervention. This guidance supports HSE in this process by requiring local authorities to carefully consider how they target their inspections and investigations in a manner that is:

- Reactive – typically investigative actions, undertaken in response to a specific incident or complaint or visits in response to requests for assistance,

or

- Proactive – inspections that are not triggered in response to a single specific incident or concern but result from a wider consideration of local intelligence or national trends that identify poor performers.

There is a range of intervention types available for the regulation of Health and Safety at Work. LAs should use the full range of interventions to influence behaviours and the proportionate management of risk. These include:

a. Proactive interventions:

- This involves influencing and engaging with stakeholders and with the workforce and working with those at risk.
- Working with other regulators including HSE, other LA regulators, the Police and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) etc.
- Creating knowledge and awareness of health and safety risks and encouraging behaviour change through:
 - education and awareness
 - best practice
 - recognising good performance
 - proactive inspection (restricted to activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed)

b. Reactive interventions:

- incident and ill-health investigation
- dealing with issues of concern that are raised and complaints

Health and safety interventions are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and standard operating procedures and relevant national guidance i.e. the Code.

Information on premises liable to health and safety interventions is held on the APP computerised system. An intervention programme is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

During 2026-27, we will carry out a range of interventions based on risk, local intelligence, performance history, RIDDOR reports, complaints and national occupational health data.

3.2.1 Proactive interventions including inspections

HSE provides LAs with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code).

Local Authority (LA) Circular (LAC 67/2 (For work years 2026/2027 – 2028/29) is guidance under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSAWA).

The Code states that proactive inspection must only be used to target the high-risk activities in those sectors specified by HSE or where intelligence suggests risks are not being effectively managed.

Proactive inspections should only be used for:

- a) Specific projects/programmes of inspections identified by HSE for LA attention;
- b) High risk premises / activities within the specific LA enforced sectors published by HSE (Annex B of LAC 67/2 provides a list of higher risk activities/sectors suitable for targeting for proactive inspection (the List”),
- c) Locally identified potential poor performers. This is where specific local intelligence indicates that a business is failing to effectively manage risk.

In all circumstances, local authorities have the discretion as to whether or not proactive inspection is the most appropriate intervention using their local knowledge/intelligence of the dutyholder.

3.2.2 Delivery of priorities

In delivering their priorities, local authorities should ensure their planned regulatory activity is focussed on outcomes. The Code provides flexibility for local authorities to address local priorities alongside the national priorities set by HSE. Having identified their evidence-based priorities local authorities are directed to address them using the whole range of regulatory interventions but preserve proactive inspection only for activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed.

Priorities are presented in the Code in 2 distinct sections, one focussing on health and the other safety. These national priorities have been collated from intelligence.

a) National priorities

LAC 67/2 (For work years 2026/27 – 2028/29) identifies the following national priorities:

Section 1 – Health Topics

- Occupational Lung Disease
- Legionella
- Work Related Stress (WRS)
- Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)
- Noise in the Workplace

Section 2 – Safety Topics

- Planned Preventive Maintenance
- Safety in Motorsport
- Inflatable amusement devices
- Trampoline parks
- Adventure Activities Licensing Authority
- Preventing injuries involving large waste bins

Not all national priorities have a proactive inspection component. Many of the above will be discussed during routine contact with duty holders e.g. during routine food interventions, following complaints or accident investigations or when providing advice in respect of events notified to Hartlepool's Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

b) Regional Priorities

We will work in partnership with the other Tees Valley and Northeast Authorities and HSE where appropriate to deliver local awareness based initiatives and enforcement. We will share best practice, carry out consistency exercises and identify training activities as necessary during the year.

The group has agreed the following priorities for 2026-27:

- 1) Golf Clubs
- 2) Cellar Safety

c) Local Priorities

We recognise that we have a vital role to play in ensuring that the regulatory system is focused on better health and safety outcomes and not purely technical breaches of the law. During interventions, officers will focus on specific risks, which are the key causes of serious workplace accidents, injuries and ill health in our community.

Using local based intelligence we have identified the following priorities, which can be addressed during our contact with businesses, including through other areas of, work e.g. food inspections and licensing visits.

Priority Topics

- Asbestos Management

- Electrical & Gas Safety in Commercial Premises
- Cellar Safety
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Hygiene in Tattoo Studios and Salons offering Beauty Treatments e.g. Micro blading, application of semi-permanent make-up etc.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality interventions by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

An estimated 10% of interventions are within premises where it is more appropriate to conduct interventions outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to inspect these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if necessary, paid overtime. In addition, these arrangements will permit the occasional intervention at premises that open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours.

Revisits will be carried out to check compliance with all statutory notices also where contraventions have been identified that may lead to risks to health and safety. Revisits other than for statutory notices will be made at officer's discretion.

The intervention programme for 2026/27 is expected to generate 5 revisits. As safety standards may have fallen during the COVID-19 Pandemic and/or cost of living crisis, this figure could however be significantly higher. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place to facilitate this.

The performance against targets for all health and safety interventions is reported annually to the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Committee in the Health and Safety Service Plan.

3.2.3 Unrated Premises

We endeavour to maintain an accurate database of health and safety premises in the Borough (so far as is possible given that there is no longer a requirement for premises to notify their presence to LAs) and record information to enable the completion of statutory returns to the HSE's Local Authority Unit. Currently there is no national guidance on how to address unrated premises, with the exception that premises must not receive an inspection without a reason.

We aim to identify businesses that fit in with national, regional and local priorities (e.g. by business directories, information from business rates and other intelligence) so that we can focus our interventions on those that present the greatest risk.

3.2.4 Combined Food & Health and Safety Interventions

We currently provide a combined food safety and health and safety service and have done so for many years to maximize resource use. Our planned approach does not result in an increase of proactive health and safety inspections, which is in accordance with government mandate.

3.3 Reactive Interventions**3.3.1 Health and Safety Complaints and Service Requests**

In order to target those businesses that are poor performers and not meeting the requirements under health and safety legislation we will place significant emphasis on reactive work such as dealing with complaints, accidents and incidents.

It is intended that every complaint / request for service be responded to within 2 working days. The initial response is determined after assessment of the information received and is based on the risk arising from the conditions that are the subject of the complaint.

Complaints are investigated in accordance with established procedures. The potential actions that are available vary from the provision of advice, often after liaison with the business, to full prosecution procedures in line with the Council's Public Protection Enforcement Policy. Officers also have regard to the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) when making enforcement decisions.

This reactive work is variable and unpredictable in nature and volume and includes complaints about poor working conditions, safety concerns and smoke free complaints. Based on the previous two years data it is estimated that 35 complaints / service requests will result in a visit being carried out.

3.3.2 Dealing with Matters of Evident Concern

The Code acknowledges that there will be other reasons that local authorities undertake site visits to businesses, for example food hygiene or licensing, and there will be circumstances when officers may become aware of a significant health and safety issue. Local authorities are directed to deal with such matters at the time of the initial visit wherever possible and factor it into their assessment of how the company is managing its risks, rating the premises accordingly.

Information relating to action taken in dealing with matters of evident concern has not previously been recorded as it forms part of the officer's role, but it is estimated as likely to require reactive health and safety interventions during approximately 30% of food safety inspections.

3.3.3 Accident/Disease/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

Some accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences must be reported under the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). To co-ordinate the reporting of these incidents nationally there is an online RIDDOR reporting system. Fatal and specified injuries can also be reported by telephone.

Once a notification is received, it is accessed from a secure website. This work involves administrative resource to filter, download, direct and redirect incidents. Once accepted a decision by a senior officer is made as to whether the matter requires further investigation using selection criteria. The investigation selection criteria are based on national guidance.

In some cases, incidents can have a considerable impact on planned work as there is a need to react immediately. For example, accidents involving a fatality, major and/or multiple injury and those likely to affect the public will require immediate response, including out of hours if necessary.

The following data from the last ten years gives some indication of the likely workload:

Year	15 / 16	16 / 17	17 / 18	19 / 20	20 / 21	21 / 22	22 / 23	23 / 24	24 / 25	25 / 26
No. of reported accidents	50	58	46	29	14	27	32	31	26	17
No. requiring investigation	6	2	1	4	0	4	0	5	2	1

NB. Investigations may take several months to complete and can span financial years.

3.3.4 Supporting Businesses & Others

In support of local economic development and growth, the Council considers that providing advice and support to business, especially new business start-ups, to help them to comply with the requirements of legislation, is one of our core activities.

For health and safety issues the Council has a policy of offering comprehensive and usefully tailored advice to any business for which we are, or are likely to become, the enforcing authority. Feedback from businesses indicates that they value this type of contact.

Advice will be available during the course of routine visits and interventions, through information publications such as leaflets and booklets and in response to queries.

Advisory visits, which are undertaken, are distinct from regulatory visits and are, made at the convenience of the business without recourse to the section 20 regulatory powers of entry provided by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Our focus may be broader than specific health and safety outcomes as advice and support given can influence wider public health outcomes/health inequalities. In 2025/26, we worked with 3 new businesses.

3.3.5 Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

We provide advice on event management through the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). This is a multi-agency non-statutory body, coordinated by the local authority, that provides advice and guidance to event organisers on public safety at events, particularly those that are large, complex or carry a significant risk. The SAG ensures that events are planned and managed safely and legally. Event plans and risk assessments are reviewed and advice is provided to the event organiser(s) where concerns exist, including signposting to the Council and/or HSE website accordingly.

In 2025/26, 25 applications for events were considered.

3.3.6 Public Health Promotional/Campaign Work

During 2025-26, we did not carry out any public health promotional campaign work. We did however continue to do joint visits with the Council's licensing team/advisory visits to persons registering to undertake Acupuncture, Ear Piercing, Electrolysis & Tattooing.

3.3.7 Sampling

Water Sampling

During 2025/26 water sampling was undertaken from swimming pools and spa pools to monitor water quality. Sampling was also undertaken at the port and marina, including from 5 vessels visiting Hartlepool. These samples were taken upon request and were in relation to microbiological examination for the presence of *Legionella* and to assess water quality.

7 *Legionella* water samples were taken for analysis - 1 *Legionella* sample was returned as unsatisfactory and 1 was returned as borderline - these were from 2 separate vessels. No resamples were taken as both vessels had already left port by the time the results were received. Advice was provided by email to Agents and confirmation of receipt of advice was received from the Master of both vessels'

8 bacteriological water samples were taken for analysis – all were returned as satisfactory

In addition, 9 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates and 1 Extension to a Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificate was issued; the latter was issued as it is deemed too unsafe to board the vessel due to adverse weather conditions (high winds). No Ship Sanitation Control Certificates were issued

In 2026-27, samples may again be taken from premises or vessels in response to health and safety concerns or as part of the Port Health function.

During 2026/27 we will participate in relevant sampling surveys.

3.4 Complaints against our Staff

The Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel was set up to enable a business to challenge specific health and safety regulatory advice provided by HSE or Local Authority Inspectors, that they believe to be unreasonable or disproportionate. Before raising an issue with the panel, businesses are expected to have first tried to resolve the matter with the relevant inspector and their manager.

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are contained in the inspection report left at the time of an inspection.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

3.5 Liaison Arrangements

The Council actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group (for a trial period of 12 months this group has combined with the Northeast Health and Safety Group);
- Tees Valley Public Protection Heads of Service Group;
- Northeast Public Protection Partnership.

The Authority receives and takes cognisance of guidance from a number of bodies but principally the Health and Safety Executive, Local Authority Unit the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

The service acts as a Statutory Consultee for applications relating to Premises Licences made under the Licensing Act 2003 and are consultees for commercial planning applications.

3.6 Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) / Primary Authority Scheme

It is the Council's policy to comply with HSE's mandatory guidance in respect of the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) and Primary Authority

Scheme. In particular, the Council will contact the Lead/Primary Authority and liaise over:

- local intelligence (adverse defect or insurance reports etc.);
- issues arising in connection with inspection plans;
- any proposed formal enforcement action;
- service of Prohibition Notices;
- shortcomings in the company's policies that have wide implications; and
- death, major injury, work related ill health or dangerous occurrences reportable under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

This will help determine a proportionate and consistent response and ensure that any national implications can be considered.

In Hartlepool, there are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place; however, we continue to work closely with local businesses on an informal basis. The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2026-27 is:

	£ 000
Employees	689
Other Expenditure	64
Public Health Grant	(312)
Other Grant Funding	(36)
Income	<u>(11)</u>
Net Budget	394

This budget is for other services provided by this section including Food, Animal Health, Trading Standards and Licensing resources are allocated in accordance with service demands. The figures do not include the budget for administrative / support services which are now incorporated into the overall budget nor is a Chief Officer Post budgeted on this Cost Centre.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the Authority is required to set out their commitment, priorities and planned interventions; and put in place the capacity, management infrastructure, performance and information systems to deliver an effective service and comply with their statutory duties; operate systems to train, appoint, authorise, monitor and maintain a competent inspectorate.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the health and safety service.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for ensuring the strategic delivery of the Council's Public Protection service, including delivery of the health and safety service, in accordance with the service plan.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the service in 2026/27 are as follows:

1 x 0.20 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) (with responsibility also for Food, Port Health, Feed Hygiene and Animal Health)

4 x 0.20 FTE EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience)*

1 x 0.10 FTE Part-time EHO

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

These are considered to be the minimum resources required to deliver the commitments set out in this Plan and to comply with the S18 Standard.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for strategic service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, in addition to other services and general management responsibilities as a member of the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Management Team.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) has responsibility for the operational service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, Food, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health and Welfare.

The EHOs are responsible for carrying out the health and safety premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the health and safety service and will undertake complex investigations. In addition, these officers undertake food and other enforcement work.

The Public Protection Support Services team provides administrative support.

All staff engaged in health and safety law enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

4.3 Staff Development

The Council is committed to the training and personal development of its employees. During the annual appraisal process the formal identification of the training needs of staff members is linked with the development needs of the service. Competence standards in respect of regulatory skills, knowledge and development needs are assessed.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the health and safety service to maintain their professional competency. This is achieved in a variety of ways including through attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences, by vocational visits, directed reading and E learning.

Detailed records are maintained relating to all training received by officers.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the health and safety service.

The service has a computerised performance management system, Authority Public Protection (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the health and safety service.

A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all health and safety activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the health and safety service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the health and safety service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking inspections, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

It is possible that the Health and Safety Executive will at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

6 REVIEW OF 2025-26 HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan, a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2025-26.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of 2026-27 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Corporate Plan will be incorporated into the service plan.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Member approval will be sought.

6.2 Performance Review 2025-2026

This section describes performance of the service in key areas.

6.2.1 Health & Safety Interventions

In total interventions were carried out at 86 premises. These were risk based and multiple priority topics were covered during some visits.

Below is a summary of the type of topics covered during the intervention visits:

- Asbestos Management
- Gas Safety in Commercial Kitchens
- Deliveries / Workplace Transport
- Cellar Safety
- Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Falls from Heights
- Violence at Work

In addition, officers made 1 revisit to monitor compliance with contraventions identified during planned interventions.

It appears that the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis is having an impact on standards. Periods of closure and financial pressures has resulted in some businesses failing to carry out essential maintenance / repairs, consequently there has been an increase in the number of contraventions found. We anticipate that this trend of reduction in standards is likely to continue until the economic climate improves.

During 2025/26, the Authority undertook 317 enforcement visits to assess compliance with smoke free legislation that came into force on 1st July 2007, a

proportion of which were carried out in conjunction with health and safety inspections.

6.2.2 Promotional/Campaign Work

Routine promotional/campaign work did not take place in 2025-26.

6.2.3 Health and Safety Complaints & Requests for Service

During the year, the service carried out 24 visits in response to 40 complaints / service requests relating to health and safety conditions and working practice. The initial response to these requests have been undertaken all within our target of 2 working days.

Officers responded to all statutory consultations relating to applications made under the Licensing Act 2003.

Comments were also made to the SAG in relation to event management. Where necessary advice was provided to event organisers.

6.2.4 Complaints against our Staff

No complaints were made against our staff during 2025-26.

6.2.6 Accidents/Diseases/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

The service received 17 accident notifications during the year. After applying selection criteria based on national guidance, 1 of these notifications was selected for further investigation.

6.2.7 Formal Enforcement Action

With regards enforcement action under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation no legal proceedings were undertaken during 2025/26.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2026-27

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the intervention programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable.

Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement that are to be progressed during 2026-27.

1. The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2026-27, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of health and safety

risks. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes.

2. We will keep abreast of, and respond to, any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework.



Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Committee

4 November 2026

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Subject: TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2026-27
Decision Type: Non-Key Decision

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

2.1. To approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2026/27.

3. Background

3.1. Trading Standards operates within the Public Protection section and has a wide range of enforcement responsibilities including product safety, underage sales, weights and measures, and counterfeiting. It also plays a significant role in, amongst other things, the detection and prevention of doorstep crime, illicit tobacco, cowboy roofers and builders, and other scams.

- 3.2 Trading Standards publish an annual Service Plan detailing the previous performance of the Service, the main challenges facing it and a plan of work to be undertaken in the forthcoming year.
- 3.3 The Service Plan details the Trading Standards priorities for 2026/27 and highlights how these priorities will be addressed.
- 3.4 The Service Plan for 2026/27 is attached as **Appendix 1**.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The Service Plan for 2026/27 has been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in Service demand.
- 4.2 The Plan covers the following:
- (i) Service Aims and Objectives;
 - (ii) The scope and demands on the Trading Standards Service;
 - (iii) Service delivery, including intervention programmes, service requests, complaints, advice, liaison and promotion;
 - (iv) Resources, including financial allocation, staff allocation and staff development; and
 - (v) A review of performance for 2025/26.

5. Summary of main issues raised in the plan

- 5.1. The Trading Standards Service is the principal enforcing authority for approximately 500 statutory instruments relating to consumer protection.
- 5.2. With limited resources it is necessary to prioritise proactive work. Prioritisation takes account of a range of factors including public concerns, business concerns, degree of risk to the public, complaint trends, government concerns at a national level (as expressed through the National Trading Standards Board) and local councillors concerns – each of which helps establish which enforcement areas should take priority over others.
- 5.3. The current priority areas for the Trading Standards Service are: -

5.4. Protecting Vulnerable Consumers

Protecting vulnerable residents remains the highest priority. The Service will continue to:

- Target rogue traders and doorstep criminals.
- Support victims of scams and fraud.

- Work alongside Adult Safeguarding, Cleveland Police, financial institutions and community groups.
- Expand preventative initiatives including No Cold Call Zones and scam-awareness campaigns.
- Make best use of Financial Fraud Advocates to assist victims in recovering losses.

5.5. Digital Consumer Protection and Online Marketplaces

The growth of online trading continues to present significant challenges. Hartlepool Trading Standards will continue to develop its capability in investigating traders operating through social media platforms, online marketplaces and emerging digital channels. Particular focus will be given to:

- Online scams and impersonation fraud.
- Misleading online advertising.
- Counterfeit and unsafe products sold through digital platforms.
- Rogue traders using social media and trader-review websites.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled scams and deceptive marketing practices.

5.6. Illicit Tobacco, Vapes and Emerging Nicotine Products

Whilst enforcement activity has reduced the availability of illicit products, intelligence indicates continued consumer demand and criminal involvement.

The Service will focus on:

- Illicit tobacco and counterfeit cigarettes.
- Illegal vaping products.
- Compliance with legislation relating to nicotine pouches and emerging nicotine delivery products.
- Underage sales of age-restricted products.
- Closure Orders and prosecutions where appropriate.

5.7. Product Safety and Market Surveillance

National concerns regarding imported consumer products continue to place pressure on Trading Standards services.

Priority areas include:

- Unsafe electrical goods.
- Imported products sold through online marketplaces.
- Consumer products subject to Product Safety Alerts and recalls.

- Children's products and toys.
- Risk-based sampling programmes.

5.8. Supporting Legitimate Businesses and Economic Growth

The Service recognises the vital contribution local businesses make to the local economy and will continue to:

- Provide practical, proportionate advice.
- Support new businesses entering the market.
- Work constructively with businesses to achieve compliance.
- Promote fair competition.

5.9. Intelligence-Led Enforcement

Given continuing resource pressures, enforcement activity will remain intelligence-led and focused on areas of greatest consumer detriment.

This will include:

- Enhanced use of regional intelligence.
- Participation in National Trading Standards initiatives.
- Intelligence sharing through IDB and regional partnerships.
- Joint operations with Police, HMRC, Immigration and other enforcement agencies.

5.10. Weights and Measures

Consumers are entitled to receive the quantity of goods for which they have paid and to have confidence that weighing and measuring equipment is accurate and reliable. In some sectors, particularly fuel sales, even a small inaccuracy can result in significant financial detriment to consumers and businesses.

Trading Standards officers are appointed as Weights and Measures Inspectors and are responsible for enforcing legislation relating to the accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment. The Service will respond to complaints, investigate suspected non-compliance and undertake targeted inspections where appropriate.

6. Trading Standards Highlights of 2025/26

6.1. Protecting Public Health

- Seized 40,585 illicit cigarettes and 30.45kg of illegal hand-rolling tobacco, significantly disrupting the illicit tobacco market in Hartlepool.
- Seized 182 illegal vapes.
- Tested 58 pieces of community medical weighing equipment on behalf of Public Health, identifying a 14% non-compliance rate.

6.2. Underage Sales Enforcement

- Conducted an intelligence-led underage alcohol sales operation.
- Recorded four failed test purchases, resulting in final written warnings and a licence review.

6.3. Supporting Victims of Fraud and Scams

- Through the Financial Fraud Advocate scheme, supported 15 victims of fraud.
- Assisted with cases involving losses totalling £467,675.
- Successfully secured £167,475 in refunds for victims, with a further £77,775 under consideration by banks and the Financial Ombudsman Service.

6.4. Tackling Premises who persistently sell Illicit Tobacco

- Continued use of Closure Orders under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Closure Orders were obtained against:
 - o 12 Murray Street (and extension)
 - o 16 Murray Street
 - o 129 Raby Road (and extension)

6.5. Product Safety and Fair Trading

- Participated in a regional Retail Monitoring of Packaged Goods project, checking supermarkets for short-weight products and raising non-compliances with businesses, head offices and Primary Authorities.

6.6. Community Protection and Awareness

- Delivered two community presentations promoting consumer protection and scam awareness.
- Continued support for vulnerable residents through:

- o 56 established No Cold Call Zones.
- o Over 13,000 No Cold Calling stickers distributed since the initiative began.

6.7. Enforcement Successes

- Secured a conviction for an underage tobacco sale, resulting in a fine, costs and surcharge against the seller.

6.8. Service Delivery

- Responded to 111 complaints during 2025/26 while continuing to prioritise complex criminal investigations and intelligence-led enforcement activity.
- Recorded zero complaints against Trading Standards staff.

7. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	No relevant issues
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues
Legal Considerations	No relevant issues
Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues
Consultation	No associated consultation

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That Neighbourhood Services Committee approves the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2026/27.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1. The Trading Standards Service Plan sets out the priorities for, and methods of, service delivery in 2026/27.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are no background papers for this report.

11. Contact Officers

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Rachael Readman
Trading Standards & Licensing Manager
Email: Rachael.readman@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 01/10/2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council

Trading Standards Service Plan

2026/27

TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2026/27

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INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how the Trading Standards Service will be delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council.

Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2026/27, longer-term objectives are identified where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2025/26 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and previous plans have been approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

1 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Overall Vision

The Council's overall vision is that Hartlepool will be a place...

- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives;
- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm;
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all;
- With a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community;
- That has an inclusive and growing economy; and
- That is sustainable, clean, safe and green.

1.2 Service Aims and Objectives

Hartlepool Borough Council aims:

- To carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- To supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- To encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- To actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and

- To ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.
- To develop the Service's capability to identify and respond to emerging digital consumer risks, including online fraud, AI-enabled scams and unlawful online trading activity, whilst continuing to protect vulnerable consumers and support legitimate businesses.

In delivering the service, the Council will have regard to relevant statutory guidance, the Regulators' Code, guidance from central government, National Trading Standards and the Chartered Trading Standards Institute

1.3 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Trading Standards Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Trading Standards Service's contribution to corporate objectives.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The estimated resident population was 99,656 in 2025. Ethnic minority groups comprised 3.5% of the population according to the 2021 Census.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid 19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and

the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Over the past 20 years Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and repeated the well-received successful event in 2023.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult Services and Public Health Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee
- Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

The Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee provides political oversight for Trading Standards enforcement.

The Council is made up of seven main Departments:

- Children's Services
- Adults Services & Public Health
- Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR Services
- Finance, IT and Digital Services
- Housing, Growth and Communities
- Office of Chief Executive

The Trading Standards Service Plan is delivered through the Public Protection Section contained within the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services division, which is contained within the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

2.3 Scope of the Trading Standards Service

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Investigating complaints relating to consumer protection issues;
- Carrying out programmed test purchase exercises to monitor trader compliance with relevant legislation – including underage sales;
- Taking samples of consumer products for testing and analysis
- Carrying out programmed interventions;

- Providing advice and information to both consumers and traders;
- Taking action (formal and informal) to ensure compliance with legislation;
- Acting as a statutory consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003;
- Ensuring appropriate standards of animal welfare at farms and other relevant premises; and
- Enforcing smoke free legislation in public places;

To achieve its strategic aims and objectives it is necessary to work in partnership with other organisations and agencies such as local authorities, Cleveland Police, His Majesties Revenues & Customs (HMRC) and local businesses. The Council aims to ensure that these joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the Service contribute, and are committed to, the ongoing development of these arrangements.

2.4 Demands on the Trading Standards Service

The Trading Standards Service is the principal enforcing authority for approximately 500 statutory instruments relating to consumer protection.

With limited resources it is necessary to prioritise proactive work. Prioritisation takes account of a range of factors including public concerns, business concerns, degree of risk to the public, complaint trends, government concerns at a national level (as expressed through the National Trading Standards) and local councillors concerns – each of which helps establish which enforcement areas should take priority over others.

The current priority areas for the Trading Standards Service are: -

Protecting Vulnerable Consumers

Protecting vulnerable residents remains the highest priority. The Service will continue to:

- Target rogue traders and doorstep criminals.
- Support victims of scams and fraud.
- Work alongside Adult Safeguarding, Cleveland Police, financial institutions and community groups.
- Expand preventative initiatives including No Cold Call Zones and scam-awareness campaigns.
- Make best use of Financial Fraud Advocates to assist victims in recovering losses.

Digital Consumer Protection and Online Marketplaces

The growth of online trading continues to present significant challenges. Hartlepool Trading Standards will continue to develop its capability in investigating traders operating through social media platforms, online marketplaces and emerging digital channels.

Particular focus will be given to:

- Online scams and impersonation fraud.
- Misleading online advertising.
- Counterfeit and unsafe products sold through digital platforms.
- Rogue traders using social media and trader-review websites.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled scams and deceptive marketing practices.

Illicit Tobacco, Vapes and Emerging Nicotine Products

Whilst enforcement activity has reduced the availability of illicit products, intelligence indicates continued consumer demand and criminal involvement.

The Service will focus on:

- Illicit tobacco and counterfeit cigarettes.
- Illegal vaping products.
- Compliance with legislation relating to nicotine pouches and emerging nicotine delivery products.
- Underage sales of age-restricted products.
- Closure Orders and prosecutions where appropriate.

Product Safety and Market Surveillance

National concerns regarding imported consumer products continue to place pressure on Trading Standards services.

Priority areas include:

- Unsafe electrical goods.
- Imported products sold through online marketplaces.
- Consumer products subject to Product Safety Alerts and recalls.
- Children's products and toys.
- Risk-based sampling programmes.

Supporting Legitimate Businesses and Economic Growth

The Service recognises the vital contribution local businesses make to the local economy and will continue to:

- Provide practical, proportionate advice.
- Support new businesses entering the market.
- Work constructively with businesses to achieve compliance.
- Promote fair competition.

Intelligence-Led Enforcement

Given continuing resource pressures, enforcement activity will remain intelligence-led and focused on areas of greatest consumer detriment.

This will include:

- Enhanced use of regional intelligence.
- Participation in National Trading Standards initiatives.
- Intelligence sharing through IDB and regional partnerships.
- Joint operations with Police, HMRC, Immigration and other enforcement agencies.

Weights and Measures

Consumers are entitled to receive the quantity of goods for which they have paid and to have confidence that weighing and measuring equipment is accurate and reliable. In some sectors, particularly fuel sales, even a small inaccuracy can result in significant financial detriment to consumers and businesses.

Trading Standards officers are appointed as Weights and Measures Inspectors and are responsible for enforcing legislation relating to the accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment. The Service will respond to complaints, investigate suspected non-compliance and undertake targeted inspections where appropriate.

Due to the specialist nature of legal metrology enforcement, Hartlepool Borough Council maintains a service level arrangement with Durham County Council to undertake inspections requiring specialist testing equipment and expertise. This ensures that statutory metrology functions continue to be delivered effectively and efficiently

2.5 Intelligence Operating Model

In addition to the identification of local priorities, the Trading Standards Service also contributes towards the development of regional and national priorities through Regional and National Tasking Groups.

The purpose of these groups is to identify those specific areas of concern that have a cross border impact and which, if tackled on a regional or national level, can benefit consumers everywhere.

The Intelligence Operating Model introduces a national intelligence framework to support regional and national enforcement through the collection and utilisation of information and data to inform work planning processes. Hartlepool Trading Standards will continue to both contribute and benefit from this Model.

2.6 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, there is a Public Protection Enforcement Policy that deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service.

The Trading Standards Service will take account of the 2014 Regulator's Code when carrying out its interactions with the business community.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Proactive Work

3.2 Trading Standards Interventions

As pressure on the Service has continued to grow in areas such as doorstep crime, the ability to maintain a high level of routine inspections has been seriously challenged. As such, proactive inspections will be targeted where consumer risk is considered to be high because of intelligence received; a high numbers of complaints etc; or where new businesses have been established that may well not be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities.

On-line retailing continues to flourish and therefore it is necessary to monitor internet retailers to ensure consumers are receiving a fair deal and that products are safe.

Opening a line of communication with new businesses early will ensure that they can set up their operations as efficiently and effectively as possible without having to 'catch up' with their legal compliance at a later date.

Information on premises liable to Trading Standards interventions is held on the APP computer system. An intervention programme is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality programmed interventions by the Service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

Revisits will be carried out to check compliance where contraventions have been identified.

3.3 Advice and Guidance

The Trading Standards Service works closely with the national Consumer Advice helpline which is now being operated by the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to provide a comprehensive advice and guidance service. Consumers in need of advice regarding the civil law will be serviced by Citizen's Advice but where issues are raised that may have a broader local impact, or there may be a criminal element to the complaint, the local Trading Standards Service will be alerted and, if appropriate, an investigation commenced.

In most cases the Trading Standards Service will look to work in partnership with local businesses to ensure they are fully aware of their legal obligations

and how best to achieve legal compliance. Such advice is offered free of charge and can be made available at a time to suit the trader.

Trading Standards staff also regularly provide advice sessions to local community groups on issues such as doorstep crime, rogue traders and 'the work of Trading Standards'.

Recent surveys carried out by the Government have indicated that businesses and retailers value visits by Trading Standards staff as being an important source of up to date advice and information.

The Council considers that assistance to business, in order to help them to comply with the requirements of legislation, is one of our core activities. For Trading Standards issues the Council has a policy of offering comprehensive advice to any business for which it is, or is likely to become, the enforcing authority.

Advice will be available during the course of routine visits and interventions, through information leaflets and booklets, in response to queries and through the Council's website.

3.4 Acting as Statutory Consultee

Trading Standards is a statutory 'Responsible Authority' under the Licensing Act 2003. This means that every application for a licence to supply alcohol or offer other regulated entertainment must be submitted to the Trading Standards Service who will consider the application in terms of its likely impact on the Act's 'licensing objectives'. For Trading Standards this primarily means the protection of children from harm and officers use their expertise in detecting and preventing underage sales to work with prospective licensees and ensure operating procedures are put in place to prevent the sale of alcohol to children.

3.5 Local programmes/initiatives

Trading Standards will be conducting a range of projects and surveys during 2026/27 in order to improve consumer protection and to raise consumer confidence. These will include: -

Protecting the Most Vulnerable – Complaints continue about rogue roofers, cowboy builders and telephone/postal scams that have targeted the elderly and vulnerable and scammed them out of money for poor quality or, sometimes, non-existent work and non-existent prize money.

Trading Standards officers will continue to work to raise awareness amongst targeted groups and identify and prosecute the traders involved.

The Team continues to work with the Police and local banks to promote the national 'Banking Protocol'. The protocol involves training bank staff to recognise when their customers may be the victim of an ongoing scam and where appropriate they can dial 999 and the local Police force has committed to treat the incident as an emergency – sending officers/Trading Standards Officers direct to the bank to assist.

The Trading Standards Team will also continue to promote No Cold Call Zones and set them up where there is an identified demand. At the end of 2025/26 Hartlepool had 56 NCCZ's (an increase from just 7 in 2016) and there is a target that five more will be created during 2026/27.

Officers will continue to offer awareness raising presentations to neighbourhood and community groups and will promote the 'No Cold Calling' stickers that are available free of charge.

The Trading Standards Team works closely with the National Scams Team which provides details of Hartlepool consumers who have been found on scammer's databases. Trading Standards Officers will continue to contact and offer support to victims identified this way.

3.6 E-Crime – Using the internet to buy goods and services is now commonplace and rogue traders have used this as an opportunity to sell counterfeit and dangerous goods to the unsuspecting public.

Trading Standards secured national funding to purchase specialist equipment that allows local officers to identify and target rogue e-traders operating in Hartlepool.

Officers will be conducting regular monitoring of internet sites that have a Hartlepool connection and, working with other agencies, specifically the Regional Investigations Team, test purchases will be made to generate evidence for formal legal action where such steps are considered appropriate.

Social media sites have become a popular forum for the sale of counterfeit goods and, in response, the Trading Standards Service has created a Facebook 'profile'. Suspected sellers of counterfeit goods receive a 'post' from Trading Standards advising that their activities are being monitored.

This acts as a deterrent for those sellers who had not considered the potential consequences of their activities. For those who ignore the warnings, Trading Standards is able to have sites 'taken down' by Facebook. For those who continue to trade using alternative pages, investigation and prosecution will follow.

Rogue Traders, who traditionally cold called unsuspecting home owners, are now using Social Media and approved trader platforms to reach a wider audience who are already considering building work on their property. Using these sites and professional appearing accounts creates an air of legitimacy for their business making it appear they are able to do any work and get more customers approaching them. Only after traders take large deposits and start the work do the problems arise. Work is ongoing to develop consumer advice to warn of the dangers and checks that should be undertaken by would be customers.

3.7 Sampling

In order to protect the public it is essential that potential problems, particularly safety related, can be identified before they cause damage or harm.

One way of achieving this is through the sampling of consumer products to ensure they comply with relevant safety standards or with the descriptions being applied to them.

Product Safety – Trading Standards may purchase a wide range of consumer products to test for compliance with appropriate safety standards. Products to be tested are usually identified as a consequence of national issues, products that have a history of problems or from safety complaints. Testing during 2026/27 will concentrate on product safety.

3.8 Test Purchasing

Trading Standards (or underage volunteers under the supervision of Trading Standards officers) will carry out test purchases at premises where there is reason to suspect that illegal activity may be taking place.

Test purchasing is used to test a trader's procedures and establishes whether a trader is engaging in a certain activity, the way in which they do it and provides the best possible evidence for potential formal action.

3.9 Reactive Work

3.10 Trading Standards Complaints and Service Requests

It is intended that every complaint/request for service is responded to within two working days.

The majority of consumer complaints are forwarded to the Trading Standards Service via the 'Citizen's Advice Consumer Service' (CACS) – a national consumer hotline funded by central government. CACS provide scripted advice that can resolve many of the simplest complaints but the more complex matters, or those requiring a potential criminal investigation, are referred on to the local Trading Standards department.

The initial response is determined after assessment of the information received, and is based on the risk arising from the conditions that are the subject of the complaint.

The potential actions that are available vary from the provision of advice, often after liaison with the business, to full prosecution procedures in line with the Public Protection Enforcement Policy.

3.11 Liaison Arrangements

The Council actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Public Protection Heads of Service Group
- North East Public Protection Partnership (NEPPP)
- North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA)
- Various multi-agency intelligence networks
- Multi Agency Approach to Fraud group

3.12 Regional Enforcement

Hartlepool's Trading Standards manager sits as an executive member of the North Eastern Trading Standards Association (NETSA) and contributes to the regional enforcement activity planned by it.

In addition there is a National Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) which is now directly funded by a levy on the Banking industry and a Regional Investigations Team, funded via the National Trading Standards, that targets criminal activity at a regional and national level.

To assist with the work of these two teams NETSA also manages the work of a Regional Intelligence Analyst whose role is to gather and disseminate intelligence to NETSA members, the IMLT and the regional Investigations Team.

3.13 Primary Authority Scheme

- The Council will comply with the requirements of the Primary Authority scheme, administered by the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

In particular the Council will contact the Primary Authority and liaise over:

- any proposed formal enforcement action
- service of Notices
- shortcomings in the company's policies that have wider implications

In Hartlepool, there are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place with a Hartlepool based trader however the service works closely with some local businesses on an informal basis.

The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

3.14 Financial Fraud Advocate

Trading Standards Teams within the Cleveland Police Force area have agreed to fund a project in collaboration with the Cleveland PCC to fund Financial Fraud Advocates to assist victims of financial frauds in our Boroughs.

The Advocates act on behalf of the victim and approach banks to recuperate money under the Contingent Reimbursement Model which was implemented to reduce the financial impact of scams from authorised push payment frauds.

The Advocates have been funded using money recovered from criminals prosecuted by the team using the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

The below data incorporates the entirety of the project from its inception in January 2025 through to the end of June 2026.

Hartlepool

Number of cases supported	15
Combined value of losses	£467,675.00
Combined value of refunds to victims	£167,475.00
Outstanding amount subject to banks/FOS complaints	£77,775

Demographics

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Female	0	0	1	4	0	3	2
Male	0	0	1	0	3	1	0

Referral source

Action Fraud	4
Police	2
Local Authority	6
Storm report	3
Other	0

Fraud type

Impersonation & Social Engineering	2
Investment Fraud	4
Employment Fraud	0
Courier Fraud	0
Rogue Trader	5
Other Push Payment Fraud	4

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2026/7 is:

	£ 000
Employees	689
Other Expenditure	64
Public Health Grant	(312)
Other Grant Funding	(36)
Income	(11)
Net Budget	394

This budget is for all services provided by this section including Food, Health & Safety, Animal Health and Trading Standards with resources being allocated in accordance with service demands.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Trading Standards Service in accordance with the Service Plan.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for planning service delivery and management of the Trading Standards Service, Food, Licensing, Public Health, Private Sector Housing, Water Quality, Health & Safety, Animal Health and Welfare, Environmental Protection, Emergency Planning and Community Safety as well as general management responsibilities as a member of the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services department.

The Trading Standards & Licensing Manager has responsibility for the day to day supervision of the Trading Standards and Licensing Service and, having the requisite qualifications and experience, is designated as the authority's Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures.

Senior Trading Standards officers are responsible for carrying out the Trading Standards premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the Trading Standards service and will undertake complex investigations.

The Technical Officer (Trading Standards) officer is gaining experience by assisting qualified officers with team tasks and will eventually undertake their own investigations.

Administrative support is provided by a dedicated Support Services team.

All staff engaged in Trading Standards law enforcement activity will be suitably trained and qualified and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the Trading Standards Service in 2026/27 are as follows:

1 x 0.2 FTE Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

1 x 0.5 FTE Trading Standards & Licensing Manager (with responsibility also for Licensing)

3 x Senior Trading Standards Officers

1 x Technical Officer (Trading Standards)

4.3 Staff Development

The Council is committed to the training and personal development of its employees and has in place Personal Development Plans for all members of staff.

The Staff Training Plan allows for the formal identification of the training needs of staff members in terms of personal development linked with the development needs of the service on an annual basis.

The Training Plan clearly prioritises training requirements of individual staff members will be developed and reviewed bi-annually.

Detailed records are maintained by the service relating to all training received by officers.

The Technical Officer (Trading Standards) has completed the Regulatory Compliance Officer Level 4 qualification and will be undertaking training and gaining experience with the qualified officers on the breadth of Trading Standards' remit.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the Trading Standards Service.

The service has a computerised performance management system, Authority Public Protection (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the Trading Standards Service. A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all Trading Standards activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

The team have regard to the National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model using IDB to input and share intelligence with colleagues around the country and with other agencies.

4.5 Working with Others

Durham County Council undertakes the majority of Hartlepool's weights and measures inspections and maintains the specialist equipment necessary to meet statutory metrology requirements.

The Team continued to participate in Operation Zernius which is a national Trading Standards project aimed at identifying and addressing non-compliance in the Estate and Letting Agents Sector. The project included both an inspection of the physical premises and any social media / website publications to ensure compliance with legislation including the Consumer Rights Act and Tenants fees legislation to ensure consumers are fully informed of charges or fees and helping to provide a level playing field for agents. This Operation was

established in 2023/24 with the inspections and partnership working continuing into 2025/26.

The team regularly work with a variety of operational partners such as the Police, HMRC and Immigration as and when the need arises.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the Trading Standards Service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the Trading Standards Service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

Specifically the Trading Standards & Licensing Manager will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking interventions, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the intervention as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

6 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1 Overview - It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan a review has been conducted of performance against those targets.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of the year 2026/27 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Corporate Plan will be incorporated into the service plan.

6.2 Public Health

The Trading Standards Team undertakes a range of activities designed to protect public health.

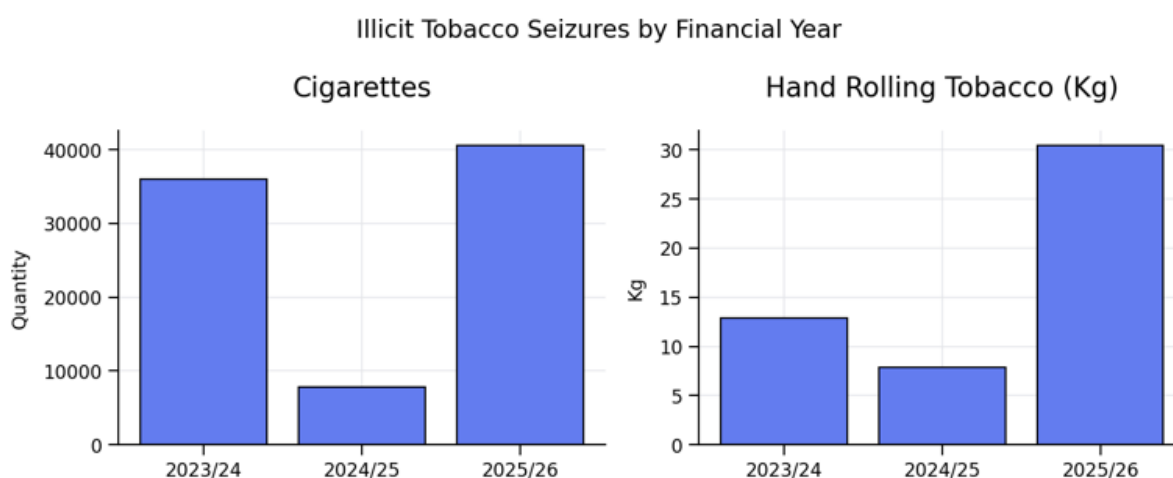
The sale and supply of counterfeit or smuggled tobacco continues to be a significant issue in Hartlepool and the North East as a whole.

During 2025/26 Officers have continued to enforce a wide range of legislation around the sale of counterfeit or otherwise illicit tobacco. Officers seized 40,585 illegal cigarettes and 30.45kg of illegal tobacco from the market.

The Trading Standards team will continue to focus on premises suspected of selling counterfeit and illicit tobacco premises and take formal action where needed.

During the last three years, the team has seized significant quantities of illicit tobacco products through intelligence-led enforcement activity. These interventions have disrupted criminal supply chains, protected consumers, supported legitimate retailers and contributed to local public health objectives. Monitoring seizure data enables the service to assess trends, target resources effectively and demonstrate the impact of enforcement activity.

Financial Year	Cigarettes	Hand Rolling Tobacco (Kg)
2023/2024	36,060	12.9
2024/2025	7860	7.9
2025/2026	40,585	30.45

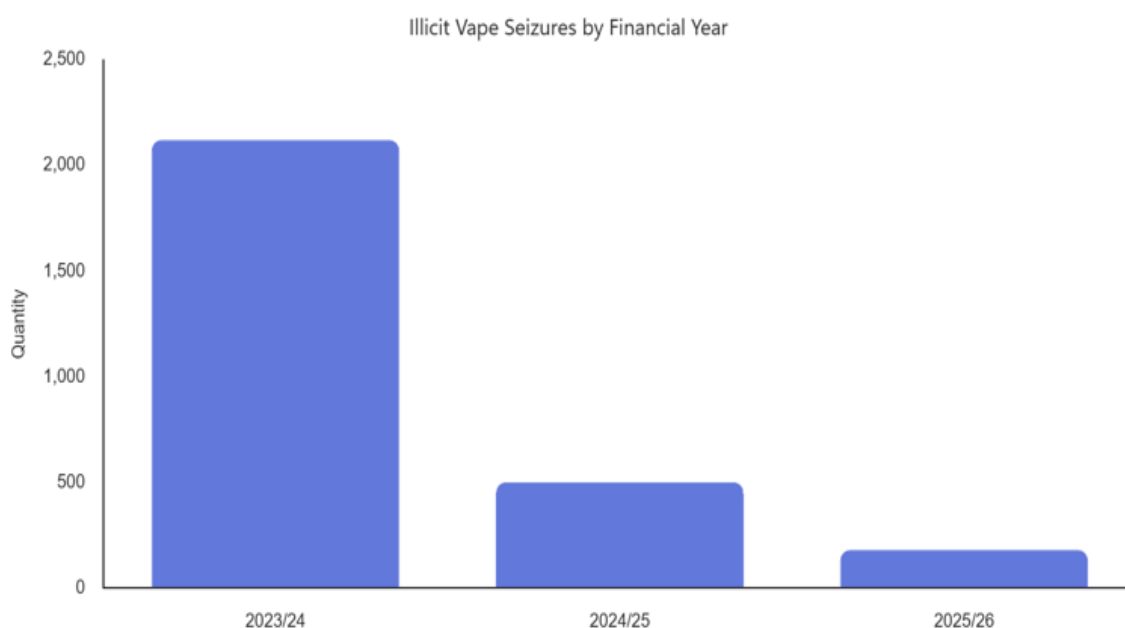


The Trading Standards Team will continue to utilise the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to obtain prompt closure orders for problem premises

During 2025/26 officers seized 182 illegal vapes. The reduction in the number of vapes seized by Trading Standards is a positive outcome and reflects the impact of recent legislative changes and proactive engagement with local businesses. The introduction of new legislation and strengthened regulatory requirements has increased awareness amongst retailers of their responsibilities when selling vaping products. The Trading Standards team has also continued to work closely with business premises through education,

advice, and compliance visits, helping traders understand and meet legal requirements.

Finical Year	Illicit Vapes Seized
2023/2024	2122
2024/2025	502
2025/2026	182



The Team also carries out checks on the safety of products made available for sale to the general public. These may be visual checks of the product and its labelling or the purchase of the product for testing at an accredited laboratory.

Trading Standards have been commissioned by Public Health to inspect medical weighing equipment used within the community, during 2025/26 the team tested 58 pieces of equipment. Of the 58, 47 were baby weighers and 11 were 'stand on' child weighers. There was a 14% non-compliance rate during this round of testing.

Targeted complaint led product sampling and testing will continue to take place throughout 2026/27.

6.3 Underage Sales

During 2025/26 an intelligence led underage sales operation took place. The focus of this operation was retail premises selling alcohol. Four sales were made which were followed up with final written warnings and a licence review.

Underage sales test purchasing will continue in 2026/27.

6.4 E-Crime

Officers continued to monitor websites and online marketplaces throughout 2025/26. Social media remains a significant source of counterfeit goods and is increasingly being used to facilitate the sale of a wide range of illegal products and services.

Counterfeit sellers may operate through their own websites or advertise products via third-party online marketplaces and social media selling platforms. The ease of creating online profiles and accessing large audiences continues to present enforcement challenges.

The Trading Standards Service maintains a presence on Facebook, which enables officers to engage with users and identify sellers promoting counterfeit goods or engaging in other unlawful trading activities. However, the social media landscape continues to evolve rapidly. While Facebook remains relevant, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and WhatsApp are now widely used by traders and consumers alike. The increasing use of these platforms presents new challenges for enforcement activity, particularly where content is transient, private, or encrypted.

As discussed in section 3.6, many rogue traders now use approved trader schemes, online review platforms and social media channels to promote their businesses. Professional-looking profiles, positive reviews and targeted advertising can create a misleading impression of legitimacy, allowing rogue traders to access wider audiences with minimal effort. Membership of platforms such as Checkatrade can increase consumer confidence and may make it more difficult for consumers to identify warning signs.

The use of digital marketing and social media has also expanded the range of potential victims. Younger homeowners seeking home improvement services are increasingly engaging traders online, often without face-to-face contact before work begins. Complaints continue to be received regarding traders who accept substantial deposits and either fail to commence work, repeatedly request additional payments, or abandon projects before completion, leaving consumers with significant financial losses and unfinished work.

In addition to social media, the internet remains a major marketplace for the sale of goods and services. While online shopping offers convenience and choice, consumers can encounter difficulties when goods fail to arrive, do not match their description, or prove to be faulty. Obtaining redress can be particularly challenging where traders are based outside the UK or where limited contact information is available. In such cases, consumers are generally referred to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service for advice and guidance.

Where criminal offences are suspected, investigations involving online traders are often significantly more complex than those relating to traditional, fixed-premises businesses. Internet sellers can operate from anywhere in the world and may conceal their identity through multiple accounts, intermediary platforms or false contact details, making it difficult to establish the true identity and location of those responsible.

To address these challenges, Trading Standards continues to work closely with national and regional partners, online marketplaces, internet service providers and social media platforms. These relationships are essential in supporting the investigation of criminal activity, facilitating the removal of unlawful content and resolution of criminal and civil matters.

6.5 Sampling

No complaint led sampling was carried out by the team in 2025/26.

In 2025/2026 the Trading Standards Team took part in a regional project - Retail Monitoring of Packaged Goods. Due to the cost-of-living crisis' continuing impact upon the country couple with food prices still being high following relatively sharp rises over the latest two years it is vital that consumers receive the quantity of product they have paid for.

As consumers will be unaware of short weight food purchases Trading Standards Teams adopt a proactive approach to short measure products. Visits to Hartlepool Supermarkets were conducted with batches of food products subjected to reference tests to determine if average and minimum quantity laws as set out in the Packaged Goods Regulations 2006 were being complied with.

Twenty-four batches of various food products, including coffee, chicken breasts, chocolate and fruit, were subjected to weight checks. Four products were found to be non-compliant; however, the deficiencies were marginal. Overall, the findings demonstrated an improvement compared to the 2024/25 results.

Any non-compliances identified were raised directly with the premises concerned, as well as with the companies' head offices and the relevant Primary Authority Trading Standards departments.

6.6 Promotional/Campaign Work and Publicity

Two presentations were given to community groups in 2025/26. Presentations are free of charge and are an integral part of promoting the work we do in trying to give members of the public information to help protect themselves. We welcome further promotional opportunities throughout 2026/27.

Press releases are generally published following legal action including but not limited to Prosecutions and Closure Orders.

6.7 Doorstep Crime/Scams

The Team continues to focus resources on preventing the vulnerable from becoming victims of unscrupulous traders and identifying and prosecuting those found to be responsible.

'No Cold Calling' stickers continue to be made available that can be placed in a front door or window advising prospective callers that they are not welcome. The sticker also provides the homeowner with a valuable 'aide-memoire' on what to do if a cold caller ignores the sticker. Over 13,000 have been issued to Hartlepool residents since the initiative began in 2015.

As detailed in paragraph 3.5 above, 56 No Cold Call Zones (NCCZ's) have been created. The team continue to promote them with a view to establishing a further five in 2026/27.

The Trading Standards Service also works closely with the National Scams Team which routinely sends details of Hartlepool consumers who have been found to be on scammer's databases.

Officers contact, and subsequently visit, these victims to provide help and support. Where appropriate, other agencies, such as Adult Safeguarding Teams, are brought in to provide ongoing professional support.

6.8 Serious Violence and Knife Crime

Knife crime continues to be an issue of serious concern and whilst Hartlepool has not been as seriously affected as some other areas of the country, the sale of illegal knives and the sale of knives to children are issues that must not be ignored or overlooked.

The Trading Standards team will be monitoring the retail market for illegal knives (such as 'zombie knives') and will take action if anything is discovered.

The Trading Standards team will continue to support National Campaigns such as Operation Sceptre. Operation Sceptre, is a national campaign which takes place twice a year, supporting the work Cleveland Police carry out all year round to ensure residents are safe from knife crime in the community.

6.9 Formal Enforcement Action

In line with our enforcement policy on some occasions it is necessary to prosecute for serious or repeat offences.

In August 2025, Yogeswaran Karthigesu, pleaded guilty to selling tobacco to a person under the age of 18, contrary to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, following a Trading Standards test purchase operation carried out in December 2024. Karthigesu, whilst working at local convenience store, initially asked the underage volunteer for identification but proceeded with the sale of 20 cigarettes and cigarette papers when none was produced. He was fined £200 following credit for his guilty plea and was ordered to pay £400 towards legal costs and an £80 surcharge.

Hartlepool has been subject to a range of premises that are intent on supplying illicit tobacco products. In 2025/2026 continued emphasis was placed on Closure Orders made possible by virtue of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These orders can be applied for at the Magistrates Court and if granted force that problem premises to close for a period of time (typically 3 months) the following premises have been subject to Closure Orders:

- 12 Murray Street
- 12 Murray Street (Extension Order)
- 16 Murray Street
- 129 Raby Road
- 129 Raby Road (Extension Order)

6.10 Responding to Complaints

111 complaints were received in 2025/26 which is a decrease of four on the previous year. Trading Standards enforcement landscape has dramatically changed in recent years; the team focus their resources on lengthy complex criminal investigations. Previously all consumer enquiries including civil matters would have been recorded on our complaints database, due to service pressures these complaints are now retained on the Citizens Advice Portal and thus the figures are not produced within our service plan.

The Trading Standards team receive a wide range of complaints from consumers, businesses and partner agencies. Common complaints include rogue traders and doorstep crime, scams and fraud, counterfeit goods, the sale of illicit tobacco and vapes, underage sales of age-restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco, unsafe consumer products, misleading pricing or advertising, short-weight or short-measure goods, unfair trading practices, and issues relating to online traders and social media sales. Complaints are assessed according to risk and consumer harm, with Trading Standards focusing resources on matters involving criminal breaches of legislation, vulnerable consumers, public safety concerns and significant consumer detriment.

6.11 Complaints against Our Staff

No complaints were made against our staff during 2025/26.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2026/27

The Trading Standards landscape continues to evolve rapidly. Key emerging challenges include:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Fraud

Criminals are increasingly using AI-generated content, cloned voices, fake websites and sophisticated social engineering techniques to deceive consumers. The Service will work with regional and national partners to identify emerging threats and protect consumers.

Growth in Online Commerce

Consumers are increasingly purchasing goods and services through social media and online marketplaces. Enforcement is often complex due to traders operating outside local authority areas or overseas jurisdictions.

Economic Pressures

Household budgets remain under strain. Consumers may be more susceptible to scams, counterfeit goods, unsafe imports and misleading practices when seeking lower-cost alternatives.

Resource Pressures and Increasing Complexity

Trading Standards investigations are becoming increasingly complex, requiring significant officer time, specialist skills and partnership working. The Service will continue to prioritise interventions based upon risk, intelligence and consumer harm.



Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Committee

4 November 2026

Report of: Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Subject: CIVIL ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN

Decision Type: For information

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 is submitted for information and provides an update on the work and activities undertaken by Civil Enforcement Officers within the Community Safety Team during the reporting period.

3. Background

3.1. Civil Enforcement Officers investigate and enforce a wide range of duties including:

- Littering and littering from vehicles
- Fly-tipping and duty of care responsibilities
- Domestic and commercial waste offences
- Graffiti
- Flyposting

Abandoned, nuisance and untaxed vehicles
Illegally tethered horses
Traveller encampments
Traffic contraventions on the Public Highway
Car parking enforcement – failure to pay/ limited parking stays / controlled bays etc.

3.2. It should be noted that this report excludes the performance outcomes of any traffic and parking contraventions issued under The Traffic Management Act, as statutory legislation requires that such information is published separately within an Annual Parking Report.

3.3. **Appendix A** details the team's enforcement activities during the reporting period April 2024 to March 2026. It provides annual statistics and enforcement actions, explains the service's work priorities, and gives an overview of activity that is not necessarily captured in the statistical returns. This includes education, targeted campaigns, public engagement and increased visible patrols, which can provide reassurance as well as act as a deterrent.

3.4. This report also sets out how the team intends to improve and become more efficient by undertaking new areas of enforcement and using improved technology to support evidence gathering and case file management. It also identifies perceived demand and priority service areas for the forthcoming 12-month period.

3.5. Members may wish to note that the number of reported concerns remains high in relation to fly-tipping. However, following investigation, cases are often reclassified as side waste. For clarification, fly-tipping is deemed to be waste comprising five or more black bags. Anything less is recorded as side waste.

3.6. Waste management investigations and enforcement also remain high, as a result of such reclassifications.

3.7. The increased number of nuisance vehicle reports and removal actions are reflective of a number of programmed weeks of action in specific areas.

3.8. Section 46 (residential) and Section 47 (commercial) Notices, relate to how waste is required to be presented for collection. The team have been concentrating resources in known problematic areas to address domestic waste issues and have an ongoing campaign in place to ensure all

businesses comply with statutory requirements to have a Waste Collection Agreement in place.

- 3.9. Parking and environmental performance has been complemented in part by a number of agency staff, who have supported HBC officers by conducting patrols in anti-social behaviour hotspot areas and enforcing some offences covered by Public Space Protection Orders. The additional staff were available throughout this reporting period, funded by Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland. The funding has now ended and as a consequence, Civil Enforcement Officers will have fewer resources available to them.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. That Members note the work and performance of the Enforcement Team during the 2024/25 and 2025/26 reporting periods.
- 4.2. A similar report covering parking and traffic management contraventions issued under the Traffic Management Act will be produced as part of the local authority's obligation to publish an Annual Parking Report covering the other elements of this services work.

5. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	No relevant issues
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues.
Legal Considerations	No relevant issues.
Single Impact Assessment	N/A – this is a report for information.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability	No relevant issues.

and Climate Change Considerations	
Consultation	N/A – this is a report for information

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Members note the content of the report.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

7.1. The report provides Members with an update on the work and activities of the Enforcement Team and sets out the areas of priority and improved performance for the next 12-month period.

8. Background Papers

8.1. Neighbourhood Services Committee – 24th March 2025.

9. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 02/10/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 2/10/26



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council

Civil Enforcement Environmental Service Plan 2026/27

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN 2026/27

INTRODUCTION

1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Service Aims and Objectives
- 1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans
 - 1.2.1 Overall Aim/Vision

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Profile of the Local Authority
- 2.2 Organisational Structure
- 2.3 Scope of the environmental enforcement team
- 2.4 Demands on the Service
- 2.5 Enforcement Policy

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

- 3.1 Waste issues
 - 3.1.1 Domestic waste
 - 3.1.2 Commercial waste
- 3.2 Untaxed and Abandoned Vehicles
 - 3.2.1 Untaxed
 - 3.2.2 Abandoned
- 3.3 Caravans/trailers/boats
- 3.4 PSPOs
- 3.5 CPW/CPNs
- 3.6 Horses
- 3.7 Travellers/Unauthorised Encampments
- 3.8 Smoking in a prohibited place
- 3.9 Littering
- 3.10 Fly posting
- 3.11 Graffiti
- 3.12 Vehicles for sale
- 3.13 Vehicles repairs
- 3.14 Stop Search and Seize
- 3.15 Court action/ debt recovery
- 3.16 Parking
- 3.17 Front line Duties (breached props, ASB, damage, etc)

4. RESOURCES

- 4.1 Staffing Allocation
- 4.2 Staff Development
- 4.3 Equipment and Facilities
- 4.4 Complaints against Staff

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

6. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- 6.1 2024/25 & 2025/2026 review
- 6.2 Yearly results
- 6.3 2024/25 & 2025/26 Evaluation

7. 2026/2027 ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 Agency staff
- 7.2 Reintroduction of escaped waste FPN
- 7.3 Review of PSPO warning procedure

- 7.4 Murray Street car park
- 7.5 Back-alley waste operations
- 7.6 Vehicle uplift operations
- 7.7 PSPO Renewals
- 7.8 Introduction of new PSPO
- 7.9 Change to working rota
- 7.10 Fly tipping cameras
- 7.11 Event assistance
- 7.12 Legal Proceedings
- 7.13 Fly Posting
- 7.14 Waste Checks
- 7.15 Technology and Equipment

INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how Hartlepool Borough Council delivers its civil enforcement service.

The Plan accords with the statutory requirements of the framework agreement on local authority environmental enforcement and sets out the Council's aims in respect of this service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled. As this is the first formal action plan of its type it primarily focuses on the year 2026/27 and any longer-term objectives, where relevant but also gives a brief insight into the teams background, set-up and service deliveries.

The Plan is to be reviewed annually, at service level as well as at committee level. As this is the departments first formal action plan, we have no former plans to refer to, currently.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources.
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice.
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies.
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

The service aims to ensure:

- We undertake investigations into environmental crimes and take appropriate enforcement action.
- We investigate complaints and provide direct intervention where necessary regarding environmental crime.
- We engage with businesses and members of the public to ensure legal compliance with all aspects of environmental procedures.
- We are fair and unbiased in all our actions and decision making.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board

- The Civil enforcement service plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Community Safety service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.1 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

The Council's vision is that:

Hartlepool will be a place...

- ***where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.***
- ***where people will be safe and protected from harm.***
- ***of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.***
- ***that is connected, sustainable, clean and green.***
- ***that has an inclusive and growing economy.***
- ***with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.***

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this civil enforcement service plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of environmental & parking enforcement actions.

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

By undertaking investigations into environmental crimes and take appropriate enforcement action.

By investigating complaints and providing direct intervention where necessary regarding environmental crime and compliance with any statutory requirements.

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements with all aspects of environmental procedures.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Civil Enforcement Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid-19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks

area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and again in 2024.

The tourist industry affects recreational opportunities, shopping and leisure facilities, including the provision of food and drink outlets restaurants, bars and cafes. There are currently 773 food establishments in Hartlepool, all of which must be subject to intervention to ensure food safety and standards are being met.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult Services and Public Health Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee
- Housing, Growth and Communities Committee

The Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee provide political oversight for Civil enforcement.

The Council is made up of seven main Departments:

- Children's Services
- Adults Services & Public Health
- Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance and HR Services
- Finance, IT and Digital Services
- Housing, Growth and Communities
- Office of Chief Executive

The environmental enforcement service plan is delivered through the Community Safety Team within the Regulatory Services division, which is contained within the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department

2.3 Scope of the service

The Council's Civil Enforcement Team is part of the Community Safety Team within the Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department and is responsible for delivery of environmental and parking enforcement.

Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs):
Dog fouling – borough wide
Means to pick up – borough wide

Maximum number of dogs – borough wide
Dog on lead when directed – borough wide
Dog off lead in an on-lead area – specific locations
Dog Exclusion area – specific locations
Dog lead length – specific locations
Back Alley waste issues
Back Alley vehicle issues
Property issues from rear alley
Town centre ASB

- Environmental Protection Act 1990
Littering offences.
Commercial waste issues
Domestic waste issues
Duty of care – both commercial and domestic.
Fly tipping
- Highways Act 1980
Graffiti
Fly posting
Abandoned vehicles/caravans/trailers/boats
- Health Act 2006
Smoking in a non-smoking place
- Animal Act 1971/Control of Horses Act 2015
Tethered horses on council land
- Control of Pollution Act 1989
Stop, Search and Seize – dealing with waste carriers/unnetted vehicles
- Common Law powers
Used to deal with travellers setting up illegal sites on public land
- Community Protection Warnings and Notices. Issued to any persistent or continued activities that have detrimental effects on the community.
- Clean and Neighbourhood Act
Vehicles for sale
Vehicles under repair
- Traffic Management Act – all parking related offences.

The Council aims to ensure that effective joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute to the on-going development of those arrangements.

The service also deals with the following:

- Parking and Traffic Management Enforcement
- School parking education.

- ASB reporting and detection.
- Opening/closing and cleanliness of certain parking sites.
- Winter gritting at certain parking sites.
- Fly posted sign removal.
- Event Control Assistance – such as the town fireworks display.
- Maintenance of parking machines, signage and upkeep of car parks.
- Camera deployment for the use in fly tipping detection/prevention
- Reviewing camera footage from operations
- Letter/leaflet distribution, to provide information to residents and the public
- Minor repairs to equipment and facilities
- Setting up and conducting interviews under PACE conditions.
- Parking control measures for events/suspension of Traffic Regulation Orders
- Property visits for evidence gathering/issuing
- Plus, any other environmental or parking related matters

2.4 Demands on the Service

The Civil Enforcement Officers work 7 days a week and carry out a dual role of both environmental and parking enforcement. As per the requirements of the Traffic Management Act, performance specifically relating to parking is reported and published annually in a separate Annual Parking report. This plan therefore concentrates on environmental aspects of the service.

The service receives a number of complaints / referrals / requests to investigate issues of concern.

The Civil Enforcement Officers work closing with the Neighbourhood Policing Team and are co-located at:

Hartlepool Police Station, Avenue Road, Hartlepool.

The team operates a shift pattern which allows coverage 7 days per week (7am – 8pm) but are only directly contactable Monday – Friday during normal office hours. An out of hours telephone emergency line is manned 24hrs a day via the CCTV control room.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021.

Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to civil enforcement and education but also has a duty to ensure compliance of any statutory legislation. The service will always try to use education methods, where possible, to prevent environmental and parking issues from occurring but where enforcement is justified, further action will be taken which may result in formal warnings or Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued or where required prosecutions at court.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY (with brief descriptions)

3.1 Waste issues

3.1.1 – Domestic Waste

Section 46 Notices – Domestic waste is required to be presented in the appropriate collection bin on the designated collection day. Enforcement action may be taken for non-compliance under the Environmental Protection Act.

Fly tipping - If waste is present, officers will investigate for evidence to progress as fly-tipping. Fly-tipping offences can be dealt with by an FPN of £400 or taken to court under the Environmental Protection Act.

Duty of care – If evidence is found in the waste which identifies an individual who has requested their waste be removed by an unlicensed waste removal person/company (either paid or unpaid), they may still be liable for the waste if it has been deposited illegally, they can also be issued with an FPN under the Environmental Protection Act. (EPA)

3.1.2 – Commercial Waste

Section 47 Notices – Businesses are required to have an appropriate waste collection agreement in place which reflects the level of waste they produce. This may include overflowing bins, insecure waste bins or presenting side-waste for collection. Enforcement action may be taken for non-compliance under the EPA.

Fly tipping – If waste is present, officers will investigate for evidence to progress as fly-tipping. Fly-tipping offences can be dealt with by an FPN of £400.

Waste Agreements – The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires that all businesses must hold a valid Commercial Waste Contract and Waste Transfer Note demonstrating the safe storage, collection and disposal of waste produced through daily business activities, via a licensed waste contractor. Officers visit businesses across Hartlepool to ensure businesses have appropriate arrangements in place and are compliant with the legislation.

3.2 Untaxed and Abandoned vehicles

3.2.1 Untaxed – Hartlepool Borough Council have devolved powers as part of an agreement with the DVLA to remove untaxed/SORN vehicles that are on the public highway or public land. We can also remove vehicles from private land with the owner's consent (although this is chargeable to the landowner).

3.2.2 Abandoned – Under the Road Traffic and Highways Acts, HBC has the authority to deal with abandoned vehicles. In Hartlepool, cases are considered on an individual basis and are assessed against a predetermined criteria before being removed.

3.3 Caravans/Trailers/Boats - The Council periodically receives complaints in regard to caravans, trailers and sometimes boats parked or abandoned on the highway. These items can be an obstruction and cause road safety concerns.

If the unit is in poor condition, is a potential danger to the public and meets the pre-determined removal criteria, the owner may be served with a Removal Notice. If the unit has to be removed by HBC, the owner will still be liable for any costs the authority incur.

3.4 PSPOs – Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO). The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 allows local authorities to create Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) In Hartlepool the legislation covers:

Dog fouling – borough wide
Means to pick up – borough wide
Maximum number of dogs – borough wide
Dog on lead when directed – borough wide
Dog off lead in an on-lead area – specific locations
Dog Exclusion area – specific locations
Dog lead length – specific locations
Back Alley waste issues
Back Alley vehicle issues
Property issues from rear alley
Town centre ASB

Further details and location plans are available on the HBC website.

3.5 CPW/CPNs – Community Protection Warnings / Notices can be issued when dealing with a person aged 16 years or over, business or organisation committing anti-social behaviour which spoils the community's quality of life. A person's behaviour has to have a detrimental effect on the quality of life to those on the locality, be a persistent or continuing nature and/or be unreasonable.

CPW/CPN's can be used to control or manage a person's unreasonable behaviour. Non-compliance of a CPN can result in an FPN being issued and potential escalation into criminal proceedings.

3.6 Horses – Any horses or any other animals loose on the highway are the responsibility of the Police. HBC enforcement officers do however take action against any tethered horses on council land under the Control of Horses Act 2015.

3.7 Travellers/Unauthorised encampments – Enforcement officers respond to reports of unauthorised encampments. Sites on HBC land or public open space are managed as trespass under common law.

If the encampment is on private land HBC enforcement officers will still conduct a welfare assessment but it would be the responsibility of the landowner to take enforcement action. If the landowner refuses to deal with the issue HBC enforcement officers could issue the landowner a CPW to comply. (see CPW procedure 3.5)

3.8 Smoking in a prohibited place – Enforced under the Health Act. HBC enforcement officers can issue FPN's to anyone seen smoking in a prohibited place.

3.9 Littering – Enforced under the Environment Protection Act. If a Enforcement Officer witnesses a person deposit and leave any kind of litter on public or private land that is accessible by the public, can be issued with an FPN for the offence.

FPN's can also be sent out retrospectively for offences of litter being thrown/dropped from a vehicle. The registered keeper of the vehicle is liable for the offence regardless of who discarded it.

3.10 Fly Posting – Enforced under the Highways Act and/or the Town and Country Planning Act. Any person seen putting item(s) on council land/furniture without prior permission will be issued an FPN. Any item(s) seen already in place on council land/furniture, without permission will be removed.

If the item has been put up on private land the landowner will be notified and any removal will be at their discretion unless the item is inappropriate or offensive, to which HBC enforcement officers will remove it.

3.11 Graffiti – Any person graffitiing within the Borough of Hartlepool can be issued with a FPN for the offence under the Highways and Criminal Damage Acts/Highways Act.

3.12 Vehicles for sale – Any person or company that has two or more vehicles for sale on the highway within a 500m distance to each other can be issued with a FPN for the offence under the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act.

3.13 Vehicles under repair – Enforced under the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act. Any vehicle being repaired or worked on, on the public highway, for profit or gain, or as part of a commercial business may be issued with an FPN.

3.14 Stop Search and Seize – Dealt with under the Control of Pollution, Environmental Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Acts. As well as the Controlled Waste Regulations.

Any person or company that carry waste need to be licenced with the Environment Agency to be able to do so. Failure to have a valid waste licence may result in a FPN being issued. In some cases, the vehicle may also be seized, where it is believed to have been involved in fly tipping or is untaxed.

3.15 Court action / debt recovery – Cases of none compliance or failure to pay an FPN are referred to court for a formal prosecution or recovered as part of the debt recovery process.

3.16 Parking – Although this plan specifically covers environmental enforcement, all officers work in a dual role covering environmental and parking enforcement. Parking was included in this Service Plan to emphasise how resources are used and can impact environmental enforcement. Civil Enforcement Officers not only do all the environmental actions mentioned in the plan but also are responsible for all the parking enforcement related issues across the whole borough.

Civil Enforcement Officers are also responsible for opening and closing some of the town centre car parks, restocking and maintaining the 56 pay and display machines

across the town centre and Seaton Carew areas and driving the camera enforcement vehicle.

- 3.17 Front line Duties** – As Officers enforce both environmental and parking enforcement, they patrol either by vehicle or on foot. This role has a mandatory uniform requirement, so all officers wear a uniform to conduct their duties regardless of which role they are performing.

Enforcement officers also often assist or are involved with town events such as the Seaton firework display, private events (particularly if they involve traffic management or a suspension of existing Traffic Regulation Orders).

Enforcement officers by virtue of the areas they patrol also get involved with assisting other HBC departments. Reporting breached residential properties, incidents of anti-social behaviour such as begging or drinking in a public place, vandalism to property / street furniture.

4 RESOURCES

4.1 Staffing Allocation

The Director of Neighborhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the Council's civil enforcement service, including delivery of the service, in accordance with the service plan.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for the strategic management of the Service.

The Head of Community Safety has the responsibility for the management and day to day running of the whole Community Safety Team, which includes the Civil Enforcement .

The resources determined necessary to deliver the service in 2026/27 are as follows:

1 x Enforcement Coordinator

2 x Senior Enforcement Officers

8 x Civil Enforcement Officers

**Two of these posts are currently vacant*

1 x Civil Enforcement Officers (fixed term contract)

Admin support for the enforcement service is provided by a team of Admin Support Officers based in both The Civic Centre and Police Station.

All staff employed in enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal procedures. DBS and Police checks are carried out on every officer to allow them to undertake their role and work from the Police station, where the team is based.

4.2 Staff Development

The qualifications and training of staff engaged in civil enforcement are prescribed and this will be reflected in the Council's procedure in respect of appointment and authorisation of officers.

Both external and internal training is undertaken, new officers are inducted and then have a period of shadowing experienced team members before they perform all duties unassisted.

The Council is committed to the continuing professional development of staff. The priorities for the service are concerned with ensuring up to date knowledge and awareness of legislation, building capacity within the team including training and development of new staff. Training needs are reviewed annually as part of the Council's personal development programme.

4.3 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the service. The service has a documented standard operating procedure that ensures the proper maintenance and calibration of equipment and its removal from use if found to be defective.

The service has a computerised performance management system, the Authority Public Protection computer system (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the service. A documented database management standard operating procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all environmental interventions, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

Officers are supplied with a standard uniform and PPE to enable them to perform all their duties under the current risk assessments. The service also has access to 2 enforcement vans to allow patrols of all areas within the borough to allow officers to respond and investigate reported issues of concern.

Officers are also issued with equipment to comply with Health and Safety and risk assessment requirements. This includes the use of body worn cameras and radios, providing officers with the relevant and appropriate equipment to fulfil the role. Radio's also have an emergency feature which allows officers to call for assistance and for their location to shown so that more resources can immediately be sent to help.

Civil Enforcement Officers are based within the Hartlepool Police Station, but their duties and investigation work often require that they work away from the station including remote areas across the Borough.

4.4 Complaints against Staff/Service

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are available on the council website or alternatively they can be done by contacting the service directly by email or telephone.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

- Two complaints were made against staff members in 2025/26 reporting year. One case was dealt with internally before any formal escalation took place. The second was dealt with as a stage 1 complaint in accordance with the Council's complaints procedures. –

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the environmental enforcement service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The team meet regularly with both supervisors and Enforcement Coordinator to discuss and review issues or concerns and consider potential areas of improvement. The Head of Service also holds regular meetings to update on changes of direction and future developments affecting the service.

6 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1 2024/25 & 2025/2026 Performance review

Previous Service reports have concentrated mainly on performance and comparisons of the year-on-year FPN's issued to indicate how best the service has performed. Although such measures are important, this does not always capture the extent of the work the team has been involved with. By only comparing the number of FPN's issued, this fails to reflect much of the unseen work the team have been involved with. This latest review includes details of the work and actions of the previous reporting period and identifies priorities and aims in the form of an action plan for the next twelve months.

The following table shows the year-on-year environmental enforcement work.

6.2 Yearly results

Details	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
CPW/CPN			2	2	0
Fly tipping reports	2208	1115	3690	3248	3103
Fly tipping investigated by enforcement	-	-	-	-	839
Fly tipping evidence found	-	-	-	-	214
Fly tipping FPN	40	13	17	56	78
Fly tipping casefiles submitted				23	22
Abandoned vehicle reports	103	150	102	205	261
Abandoned vehicle notices issued					16
Abandoned vehicle removals	5	3	3	3	11
Abandoned vehicle FPNs	-	-	-	-	2
Nuisance vehicle reports	67	53	88	77	84
Caravan / trailer/ Boats removals	2	3	2	11	2
Untaxed vehicle reports	154	162	136	201	286
Untaxed vehicle uplifts	45	22	12*	29	34
PSPO warnings			26	59	25
Dog fouling reports	201	78	149	14	89
Dog fouling FPN's	4	2	4	8	7
Dog exclusion FPN's	0	0	0	0	0
Dog off lead FPN's	3	0	0	3	11
Section 46 domestic advice notice	1134	769	1222	1059	829
Section 46 refuse warning notice	262	143	398	299	293
Section 46 refuse intents	104	43	176	124	113
Section 46 (FPN)	73	38	77	102	99
Section 47 commercial waste warnings issued	5	10	12	18	26
Section 47 commercial waste FPN issued	1	1	6	25	7
Traveller reports	1	1	11	8	12
Traveller eviction notices served		0	6	5	3
Tethered horses' reports (fly grazing)	3	0	0	0	1
Horses removed		0	0	0	0
Fly posting reports	2	4	2	0	0
Littering FPN's	80	18	16	66	85
Littering prosecutions					
Other reports various	350	229	445	397	299
CLE2 forms issued (DVLA reports)	25	7	22	28	4
Parking PCN	1953	3505	3704	4119	4483
Smoking FPN	3	4	13	5	15
Duty of care Domestic			4	4	19
Waste Agreements	-	-	-	-	21
Graffiti FPN	-	-	-	-	1
Means to pick up FPN	-	-	-	-	2

In addition, and in response to reports and complaints received, officers have removed in the region of 700 signs that have been placed on the public highway.

They have also carried out specific targeted Section 46 operations at 10 of our most challenging locations and where waste presentation, fly tipping and reports of littering have been reported. Such cases can result from house clearances,

landlords do not provide the appropriate waste bins or deliberate fly -tipping by illegal waste carriers. The operations involved installing overt cameras to capture and obtain evidence and taking appropriate enforcement action against offenders. This targeted approach has been successful, and the subsequent publicity of successful court successes has acted as a meaningful deterrent to potential offenders. This work will continue into the 26/27 Action Plan.

6.3 2024/2025 2025/2026 EVALUATION

This service has seen some major changes during the last few years, including a number of new appointments into both The Enforcement Co-ordinator and Supervisors roles.

Recruitment remains a significant issue, partly due the skill sets required to for this dual enforcement role and the strict vetting process officers need to work within the Police Station.

Performance was however improved during this period mainly by the fact that in 2023 we were able to secure funding to employ a number of Enforcement Officers over a two-year period. The officers were employed to provide highly visual patrol presence at known ASB hotspot areas and to help patrol some of the public open spaces covered by Public Space Protection Orders. The officers were provided by Kingdom, who specialise in this type of support work for local authorities.

The help of the supporting officers allowed our own staff to concentrate on the more complex cases they investigate, and this has led to a number of amendments to how tasks are investigated changes to working practices to help support and improve performance. They have included:

- Use of littering FPNs in Pace interviews
- Use of camera footage to issue for PSPO issues (when obtained from overt operations)
- Changes to staff rota and job roles to improve efficiency and output
- Introduction of PSPO warning books
- Means to pick up FPNs
- Abandoned vehicle FPNs
- Waste agreement FPNs
- Review of all current parking machines and tariffs

The number of issued FPNs and PCNs has increased in 2024 over 2023 with FPNs increased by 227% and PCNs increased by 22%. FPN's increased by a further 14% in 2025 and PCN's by 13%. This was predominantly a result of several procedural changes which made the process more efficient but the additional agency staff did also provide HBC officers with more time to concentrate on the more complex cases and environmental referrals.

Additional training has also resulted in more engagement and improved enforcement action against offenders, a fact demonstrated by the higher number of FPN's issued. The service is hoping to continue this trend into

2026/27 as we look to make more efficiencies into our operational procedures and potentially introduce / reintroduce further enforceable powers.

Throughout 2024 and up until March 2025, Enforcement Officers were extensively involved in supporting The Safer Streets Projects. A number of operations were conducted to deal with fly tipping, abandoned bins, untaxed vehicles and commercial and domestic side waste issues. Community and residential meetings were also held which allowed local residents to directly raise concerns and suggest improvements / issues that mattered to them.

The engagement and suggestions allowed officers to prioritise enforcement action in areas driven by the residents' concerns. The team worked to make the patrols more efficient and as a consequence become a more robust deterrent. Links with the community were also improved as there is often a reluctance for residents to report issues in their area for fear of reprisals. As more and more issues were resolved, residents became more confident to report issues of concern. To help support this ethos, Enforcement Officers took part in litter picks, community walkabouts and handed out burglary packs to residents.

Officers also ran a project with the local primary school by asking them to design anti-litter and dog fouling signs. The winners received a prize, and their designs were used to create actual signs which were then erected throughout the Borough to highlight this issue.

The service also benefited from GRIP funding provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner which allowed additional reassurance patrols in ASB hotspot areas with the aim of reducing and reporting ASB incidents and UKSPF funding from Tees Valley Combined Authority which helped fund additional temporary CEO's within this team. Whilst additional Pride in Place money provided 3 additional mobile CCTV cameras to help support fly-tipping enforcement.

During 2025 environmental enforcement officers participated in the pride in Hartlepool Action weeks. The week of action allowed officers to be assigned to the area and provide extra enforcement patrols, respond and investigate complaints particularly in relation to fly-tipping, waste and littering and to remove any untaxed vehicles from the Public Highway. Due to the success of these action weeks, it was extended into 2025/2026. The scheme covered every ward in Hartlepool. Enforcement officers with the support of Kingdom Agency staff, continued to take part in these action weeks throughout this period.

The service has now introduced a FPN (£200) for vehicles that have been abandoned in the Borough. Removing untaxed/abandoned vehicles has an associated expense. Introducing this allows the service to recoup some of that cost with the registered keeper of the vehicle being responsible for the FPN.

7. 2026/2027 ACTION PLANS

7.1 Agency staff support

Since Sept 2024, HBC have used officers supplied by Kingdom, to help assist and support HBC Enforcement Officers in some areas of our work. The agency staff were

funded with money provided by Tees Valley Combined Authority and The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland. They assist the environmental enforcement and ASB teams by providing uniformed officers to patrol specific areas, acting as a visual deterrent and a reassuring presence, reporting issues of concern for potential follow up action. They were also authorised to issue FPN's for some offences, predominantly covered by PSPO's. This funding has however now ended and the temporary arrangements in place have now ceased. This arrangement did however provide an additional resources which allowed our own HBC officers to investigate the more complex enforcement cases.

7.2 Reintroduction of commercial waste escape FPN

The Service is actively considering the introduction of a new area of enforcement which would allow officers to take action in cases where waste is escaping from commercial bins or vehicles. The offence would carry a £300 FPN and it is hoped that the necessary legal clearance will allow enforcement in this area to take place as part of the 26/27 action plan.

This power will be an addition to the current commercial powers we use as described in section 3.1.2.

7.3 Review of PSPO warning procedure

The Enforcement Service are currently working with colleagues from Legal Services to review the process required for contraventions of the PSPO covering dog control orders. The changes will allow for a more efficient case management process and reduce some of the officer time spent preparing enforcement action.

7.4 Murray Street car park

During 2025 there have been a number of issues with the Murray Street car park being vandalised or the signage stolen or waste being fly tipped. Numerous attempts have been made to rectify this issue. This year will see a new CCTV camera installed to monitor the area both to serve as a deterrent and to provide improved evidential images to allow prosecution.

7.5 Back-alley waste operations

During 2026/27 the service is looking at running at least 6 camera waste operations in back alleys across the town. This involves selecting particular back alleys where issues of fly tipping, side waste and waste bins not returned to the property have been a concern. Supported by educational campaigns and residential visits, the work will also involve gathering evidence from temporary CCTV cameras.

7.6 Vehicle uplift operations

During 2026/27 the service is looking to have at least 6 vehicle uplift operations. These operations are to remove untaxed vehicles from the highway. The team have devolved powers from DVLA and can action the removal of untaxed / SORN vehicles that are parked on the public highway. Abandoned vehicles often become a target for ASB, vandalism and if they meet a predetermined criteria they can also be removed before they become a hazard or road safety concern.

7.7 PSPO Renewals

The current PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Orders) covering the former dog control orders and gated orders will expire in October 2026. PSPO's are required to be renewed every three years and Members recently approved for both orders to be extended until October 2029.

7.8 Introduction of new requirements under PSPO

As part of the PSPO renewal (see 7.7) there will be a requirement for householders to comply with a number of a new restrictions covering how the bin are presented. The PSPO will allow the Enforcement Officer the option of taking action should the bins or waste be presented incorrectly or a vehicle is obstructing access in the back alley. The inclusion of such offences into the PSPO will allow officers to issue FPN's in cases of noncompliance.

The enforcement officers will also be required to assist with a new town centre PSPO that predominantly covers matters of anti-social behaviour. Enforcement Officers will support colleagues from The Anti-social Behaviour Team and Cleveland Police and assist when dealing with reports of begging, loitering, drinking alcohol, urinating in public and spitting. This new PSPO will become active in mid-October 2026.

7.9 Change to working rota

The current working role of the team is one of a dual role between environmental enforcement and parking enforcement. The Environmental cases are often more complicated and case preparation and investigation can take longer. Officers need to ensure they have the correct skills and ability to do both of these very specialised enforcement areas.

The Enforcement Coordinator will monitor that the team has the right balance and experience in both areas of specialist work whilst ensuring there is rotation and variety to best reflect the needs of the Enforcement Service.

7.10 Fly tipping cameras

The service currently uses cameras to tackle fly tipping and although this works well in most central areas, there are more limitations in rural areas. Issues with activation, battery life, memory capacity and locations can all be problematic. The officers are also required to instal them, maintain them and check the footage, to see what evidence has been captured, all of which can be time consuming. As a result, officers will be evaluating and seeking to purchase improved cameras to tackle rural fly tipping issues.

7.11 Event assistance

Enforcement Officers assist with many events that take place in the town, particularly if they involve traffic management controls or a suspension of an existing Traffic Regulation Orders. The team may also be required to resolve parking issues caused by displaced traffic as a consequent of an event.

This support is envisaged to continue for similar events in 2026/27.

7.12 Legal Powers and changes to legislation

The Enforcement Team are constantly reviewing the enforcement options available to help support our work and ensure the use of the most efficient and effective legal powers available to support the service. In this respect we regularly consider and evaluate any emerging powers that may assist our work and regularly network with colleagues in neighbouring authorities and partner agencies to maximise the impact the service can deliver. This will continue

7.13 Fly Posting

The Highways Team do have a formal policy which sets out what can and cannot be advertised on the Public Highway and determines where prior agreement or approval is required. We intend to initiate a running monthly programme to inspect areas for fly posted materials. This will allow us to remove all unauthorised posters/notices from the Public Highway or HBC owned land. Where appropriate, FPN's will be issued to anyone caught fly posting. Enforcement Officers will contact companies advertising using this advertising method and persistent offenders may be issued with a CPW/CPN should this activity reoccur.

7.14 Waste agreement checks

The Enforcement Team recently reintroduced checks to ensure if businesses had an appropriate Waste Agreement in place with a licenced waste carrier. Officers can request evidence to demonstrate such measures have been in place for the preceding 6 month from the date of the visit and that bins are appropriate for the waste generated and are regularly collected to avoid overflow and discourage any side waste.

This work began earlier this year, and it is our intention to visit every business in Hartlepool with a programme of visits / revisits to business premises during 2026/27.

7.15 Technology & equipment

The service is currently reviewing how we can improve and utilise technology into more aspects of our work. We are currently developing ways that will reduce the paper-based dependency we currently rely on when issuing FPN's for many environmental offences. The changes in new technology would allow the service to replicate the case management system we currently operate for PCN's (parking) allowing officers to issue generated printed PCN's and allow the information to be captured as an active enforcement case file.

It is hoped that such changes and improvements to service efficiency will be progressed during this period.