Hartlepool
Borough Council

Neighbourhood and Regulatory Service
Committee Minutes and Decision Recor

4 November 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 2:00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Amanda Napper (In the Chair)

Councillors Ronnie Buglass, Richie Hughes, Michael Jorgeson, Sue Little and Karen Oliver

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Martin Dunbar was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Martin Scarborough

Parish Council Co-opted Member: Stephen Smith (Greatham Parish Council)

Also Present: Councillor Ed Doyle

Officers: Kieran Bostock, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services

Scott Parkes, Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)

Zoe Craig, Head of Public Protection

Jane Kett, Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)

Rachael Readman, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager

Phil Hepburn, Head of Community Safety

Helen Smith, Planning Policy Team Leader

Jo Stubbs, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

17. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Martin Scarborough

18. Declarations of Interest

None

19. Minutes

Minutes from 15 September 2026 – received with the following amendment:

Councillor Karen Oliver noted that her dissatisfaction regards the Chair not allowing one member of the public to speak and then allowing another to speak had not been included. She also requested that any comments made in this meeting be specifically attributed to her personally rather than generically.

20. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction *(Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Key

Purpose of report

To seek the Committee's recommendation to full Council that the non-immediate Article 4(1) Direction made by the Council on 24 September 2025 be confirmed so that it comes into force on 1st December 2026. This also addresses part of the motion referred from Council on 25 June 2026 – 'Standing Up for Residents: Action on HMOs, Housing Standards and Neighbourhood Protection'

Issue(s) for consideration

In June 2025 Committee members approved a consultation for potentially introducing a HMO Article 4 Direction within the Local Planning Authority area of Hartlepool Borough Council. Following this the Council made a non-immediate Article 4 Direction in September 2025 specifying 1st December 2026 as the date this would come into force subject to full Council confirmation. Notice of the Direction was given in the statutory manner although serving individual notice to land and property owners had been considered impractical. Details had also been sent to the Secretary of State and officers therefore felt all procedural requirements had been complied with. Members were therefore asked to approve the Direction be recommended to Council for confirmation.

The Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) detailed the justification for an Article 4 Direction and what it would do in practical terms. Appendices outlined the data pertaining to HMOs in Hartlepool and officer engagement relating to complaints associated with HMOs.

Also appended was the motion referred from Council on 25 June 2026 – 'Standing Up for Residents: Action on HMOs, Housing Standards and Neighbourhood Protection' – part of which would be addressed by approval of the Article 4 Direction by Council.

A member queried whether HMOs were subject to business rates. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services confirmed that they were not and only Council Tax was applicable. Similarly waste management provision is based on residential properties rather than business.

Councillor Oliver thanked officers for their work on this but expressed concerns at the need to look at Selective Landlord Licensing and Additional Licensing in order to deal with issues around poorly managed privately rented property. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services confirmed this would be addressed at a future meeting. He advised that as this was the final meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee that a reporting route needed to be confirmed. Councillor Oliver asked that a progress report be provided to members on this and requested commitment that these concerns would be carried forward and action taken. The Chair assured that any update would go to the appropriate forum once the new governance arrangements were finalised.

Decision

I. That full Council be recommended to confirm the non-immediate Article 4 (1) Direction to come into force on 1st December 2026
II. That authority be delegated to the Director for Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services to complete the statutory notification and publication requirements in consultation with the Director for Legal, Governance and Human Resources should the direction be confirmed by full Council.

21 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2026-27 *(Assistant Director (Regulatory Services))*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

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

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services gave details on the Food Law Enforcement Plan for 206/27 in compliance with statutory guidance requirements. The Plan, which was appended to the report, detailed the service priorities for 2026/27 and how these would be addressed. A profile of the Food Hygiene Ratings for all Hartlepool premises was included. Details were given within the report of the work carried out by the team including re-inspections, investigation of complaints, microbiological surveys and the taking of samples. It was also noted that the addition of Childminders to the official control programme would add an additional 40-50 inspections for 2026/27.

Members thanked the team for their work in managing these visits so successfully. They raised concerns at staffing levels in the department which the Assistant Director acknowledged due to a national shortage. Councillor Oliver queried whether an apprenticeship might be feasible but the Assistant Director advised that a post would need to be created in order for them to be paid which would bring additional financial pressures. Graduates could be taken on in order to start their route to professional qualifications. Councillor Oliver asked that this approach to apprenticeships be reconsidered given the work pressures on the team. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services advised that Economic Development may be a more appropriate route for business advice.

Decision

That the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2026/27 be approved.

22 Health and Safety Service Plan 2026-27 *(Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

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

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services gave details on the Health and Safety Service Plan for 206/27. The Plan, which was appended to the report,

detailed the service priorities for 2026/27 and how these would be addressed. Details were given within the report of the work carried out by the team including health and safety interventions, enforcement visits, the taking of samples and the investigation of complaints and accident notifications. Financial pressures and the need to prioritise were also highlighted, the Assistant Director noting that this team were also responsible for Food Law Enforcement as detailed earlier in the meeting.

Members thanked the team for their work. They asked for reassurance that the Council was fully compliant in matters of health and safety. The Assistant Director advised that investigation of this was the remit of the Health and Safety Executive as the team could not investigate themselves. Councillor Oliver referred to concern around a lack of understanding by those with English as an additional language saying they might not be aware that translated documentation was available to request. The Assistant Director advised that officers could only take action on high risk premises and did not have the resources to visit all premises. Councillor Oliver also queried why there had been no promotional work, The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) indicated that there were not the resources to do this unless it was considered a priority.

Decision

That the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2026/27 be approved.

23 Trading Standards Service Plan 2026-27 *(Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2026-27.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services gave details on the Trading Standards Service Plan for 206/27. The Plan, which was appended to the report, detailed the Trading Standards priorities for 2026/27 and how these would be addressed. A profile of the Food Hygiene Ratings for all Hartlepool premises was included. Details were given within the report of the work carried out by the team including the seizure of illicit products, the testing of equipment, the securing of refunds for victims of fraud and the use of closure orders in a number of areas.

Members thanked the team for their work. Concerns were raised around the elderly becoming victims of fraud, particularly given an increase in bank closures. The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager referred to the national banking protocol whereby staff were trained to question any unusual money transfers or removals. She also highlighted that Government funding had been secured to employ an apprentice who had recently been appointed.

Decision

That the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2026/27 be approved.

24 Civil Enforcement Service Plan *(Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the work and activities undertaken by Civil Enforcement Officers within the Community Safety Team during the reporting period

Issue(s) for consideration

Councillor Oliver queried why this was a report for information given its importance. The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) advised that statutory responsibility did not apply however Councillor Oliver felt this should have required approval by members whilst noting it was not a statutory requirement

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) gave an update on the work of Civil Enforcement Officers during 2024/25 and 2025/26. This included annual statistics, enforcement actions, work priorities, targeted campaigns and increased visible patrols. Future priority service areas were also identified. The large number of reported concerns relating to fly-tipping and side waste was noted and the concentration of resources in known problematic areas in order to address domestic waste issues. In terms of parking enforcement it was noted that the funding of additional agency staff through the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland had recently ended meaning there would be fewer resources available.

A member of the public gave details of the number of fly tipping incidents per head in Hartlepool and the resultant cost of this. He noted that Durham had lower levels of fly tipping due to an emphasis on detection and legal powers and queried whether officers intended to review their existing strategy. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services acknowledged that he

would prefer to invest in this area, citing the cost of litter and fly tipping collection. However he needed to be realistic about current budget pressures and efforts were being made to be more proactive in terms of CCTV provision. He acknowledged the Council's massive reliance on volunteers in litter collection and said there needed to be a generational change whereby everyone takes responsibility and does not see this as only a Council issue.

Councillor Oliver highlighted the lack of detail in the report including information on any hot spots and around the issues of Selective Landlord Licensing. The work had clearly been done but officers needed to be more transparent around their successes. She would have liked to see an update report but appreciated this would not be possible. The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) referred to a new online dashboard which was used to target enforcement. The Chair suggested this might be used to name and shame repeat offenders.

Councillor Oliver queried how members would receive updates following the governance changes. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services advised that information on this would be available in due course once the constitution implementation had been resolved.

Decision

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 15:30

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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