Hartlepool
Borough Council

Adult Services and Public Health Commi

Minutes and Decision Record

5 November 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 4.30 pm

Location: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Wiley (in the Chair)

Councillors: Dunbar, Gaines, Hall, Little and Stevenson

Officers: Jill Harrison, Exec Director of Adult Services & Public Health
John Lovatt, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care
Trevor Smith, Head of Strategic Commissioning
Angela Lucas, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

Prior to the commencement of the meeting a member of the public objected to a request that she be seated in the public gallery rather than with Committee Members. The Chair acknowledged the objection and advised that her comments would be noted.

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10. Apologies for Absence

Chris Robson (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

11. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Little declared a personal interest in Item 15.

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2026 were received, subject to an amendment to minute number 9 – Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent. It was noted that Councillor Little had requested details of the additional costs of holding evening meetings rather than daytime meetings. Councillor Little requested an update on this matter and was informed that the requested information would be forwarded to her.

13. Housing Assistance Policy 2026 – *Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health*

The Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health presented a report on proposed amendments to the Housing Assistance Policy arising from recommendations made by the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care. The proposed changes included a fast-track approach to assessments, care and housing adaptations for people living with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and other rapidly progressing conditions.

Members discussed the adequacy of the £30,000 discretionary grant limit, with officers advising that the amount is set nationally, although discretionary support may be provided in exceptional circumstances. Clarification was provided on the reuse of adaptation equipment and the arrangements for major adaptations to properties.

Members sought clarification on the potential impact of the proposed fast-track arrangements on waiting times and were advised that only a small number of cases were anticipated and no significant impact was expected, although the position would be monitored.

Discussion also took place regarding the potential benefits of adaptations in supporting independence, reducing admissions to residential care and facilitating hospital discharge. Members requested information on the current waiting list for major adaptations and were informed that there were currently 28 people who had been assessed and were waiting for work to be completed. The average waiting time for completion from the point of an Occupational Therapy assessment is 123 days, a reduction of 13% compared to the previous year.

Officers further highlighted the Council's strong performance in relation to hospital discharges, whilst noting that delays can sometimes arise from the practical challenges associated with delivering specialist adaptations.

Following a query regarding hospital discharge arrangements and care home capacity Officers advised that there were no delays for hospital assessments and highlighted the Council's strong performance in supporting timely discharges. Members were informed that there were around 590 care home beds for older people in the borough with around 55 of these being vacant. That’s an occupancy rate of approximately 94%.

Members welcomed the work undertaken by the service and recognised the positive impact of adaptations and support services in helping residents maintain their independence. A Member suggested that consideration be given

to featuring an article on this topic in Hartbeat magazine to help raise public awareness.

Decision - that the updated Housing Assistance Policy be approved and the Council's continued commitment to the MND Charter be noted.

14. Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy – *Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health*

The Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health presented a report detailing the Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026-2030 and accompanying Implementation Plan 2026-2028.

Members were advised that the strategy was designed to ensure the Council had a skilled, stable and capable workforce to meet current and future adult social care needs, with a focus on the key priorities of recruiting and retaining staff and developing and training the workforce.

Members commended the dedication and professionalism of Adult Social Care staff, whilst acknowledging the significant pressures being faced. Discussion took place on workforce development arrangements, including the use of apprenticeships as a means of attracting new entrants into the profession, developing skills and supporting long-term recruitment. Members also explored succession planning and the age profile of the workforce, recognising the importance of preparing for future staffing needs and ensuring that knowledge and experience are retained within the service.

Further discussion focused on initiatives designed to attract younger people into careers in adult social care, including promotional activity, training opportunities and career progression pathways. Members highlighted the importance of raising awareness of the sector as a rewarding and worthwhile career choice.

Questions were raised regarding levels of sickness absence across the workforce. Officers outlined the range of support available to employees, including occupational health provision, wellbeing initiatives and management support arrangements. Members were advised of the processes in place to assist staff in returning to work following periods of absence and the ongoing efforts to promote staff wellbeing, resilience and retention across the service.

Decision - the updated Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026-2030 and the Implementation Plan 2026-2028 be approved.

15. Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy – *Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health*

The Executive Director of Adult Services and Public Health provided details of the refreshed Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2026-2030 and accompanying Implementation Plan 2026-2028.

Members were advised that commissioned services play a key role in meeting the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014 and in supporting residents through a range of services, including early intervention, home care, assistive technology, residential care and support for unpaid carers. The Strategy sets out the commissioning principles and priorities for Adult Social Care and seeks to further embed the strengths-based Community Led Support approach across services.

Members discussed a range of issues relating to the future delivery of adult social care services. Consideration was given to the impact of severe weather events and the robustness of business continuity arrangements, with officers outlining the measures in place to support vulnerable residents and maintain service provision during emergencies. The Committee also discussed support for young people transitioning from children to adult services, with officers highlighting the importance of early intervention, advocacy, supported employment opportunities and partnership working with families to achieve positive long-term outcomes and independence.

Members further considered the provision of care home services, support for people living with dementia and end-of-life care, workforce training within the care sector, and the importance of effective partnership working between Adult Social Care, health services and care providers. Discussion also took place regarding increasing demand for services, the growing complexity of need, demographic pressures associated with an ageing population, and the financial challenges facing the sector.

Officers highlighted the Council's ongoing focus on prevention and early intervention, including initiatives designed to help people remain safe and independent within their own homes for longer, reduce avoidable admissions to residential care and hospital settings, and improve outcomes through closer integration with NHS partners. Members also discussed the importance of ensuring that services remain sustainable and responsive to future demand, including opportunities to further develop work around healthy ageing and support for older people across the borough.

The Committee heard that demand for adult social care services continued to increase, with growing complexity of need and associated financial pressures. Officers highlighted the Council's focus on prevention, supporting people to

remain independent in their own homes for longer, and strengthening collaborative working with NHS and care sector partners to meet future demand. Members also discussed support for older people and the potential benefits of developing an Ageing Well approach within the borough.

Decision - the updated Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2026-2030 and the Implementation Plan 2026-2028 be approved.

16. Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent

None

The meeting concluded at:

Time: 5.47 pm

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

PUBLICATION DATE: 11th November 2026