Hartlepool
Borough Council

Children's Services Committee

Minutes and Decision Record

3 November 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 4:00pm

Location: Council Chamber Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Jim Lindridge (In the Chair)

Councillors Nick Anderson, Brian Cowie, Martin Dunbar, Branda Harrison, Phil Holbrook and Amanda Napper

Co-opted Members: Gillian Hood (C of E Diocese)

Parent Governor Representative: Martin Pout

Also Present: Oliver Dixon, Member of Youth Parliament

Officers: Alison Sutherland, Executive Director for Children's Services

Rebecca Stephenson, Assistant Director (Early Intervention, Performance and Commissioning)

Fiona Stobbs, Assistant Director (Education, Aspiration and Achievement)

Micky Froud, SENDIASS Manager

Phil Gleaves, Youth Offending Service Team Manager

Zoe McKenna, Youth Education and Pathways Strategy Lead

Jo Stubbs, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

20. Apologies for Absence

Joanne Wilson (RC Diocese Representative) and Adam Palmer (Secondary School Representative)

21. Declarations of Interest

None

22. Minutes

Minutes from 29 September 2026 – received.

23. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-2027 *(Executive Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To present the final Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026-2027 and seek approval to refer the plan to full Council for final approval.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Youth Offending Service Team Manager presented the final draft of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27 as appended to the report. The plan outlined the Strategic Objectives and Priorities for the service and identified key risks to future delivery. It would be submitted to Council for final adoption before being sent to the National Youth Justice Board which had already approved the draft plan for funding release purposes.

Members praised the robustness of the plan and the work of the team. They suggested that the Council's Communications Team promote the plan via social media.

Decision

That the local Youth Justice Plan 2026-27 be recommended for final approval by full Council

24. SENDIASS Annual Report *(Executive Director of Children's Services*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To present the Hartlepool Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) Annual Report September 2025 – August 2026.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were provided with the background to the SENDIASS Service. The Committee was referred to the SENDIASS Annual report, attached at Appendix 1, which provided a key overview of the information, advice and support being offered to children, young people (aged 0-25 years) and their parent/carers about matters related to Special Educational Needs .and Disability (SEND). Between September 2025 and August 2026 SENDIASS had supported 270 children, young people and parent/carers through 402 recorded enquiries and casework involvements. While overall demand was down on the previous year there had been a marked increase in the complexity and intensity of support needed. Details were given of the most common issues raised and the wider social contribution made by SENDIASS to SEND improvement activity. While there had not been much parental feedback the reports from schools and family groups were wholly positive.

Members praised the SENDIASS Manager for the work of the service, saying they had only ever heard positive comments for other parents. The Executive Director for Children's Services noted that a recent Local Government Association Special Education Needs Peer Review had been very positive about the support offered to parents. The SENDIASS Manager advised that any referrals were prioritised through a triage system.

Decision

That the SENDIASS Annual Report 2025/26 be noted.

25 Presentation – Local Youth Transformation Programme *(Youth Education and Pathways Strategy Lead)*

The Youth Education and Pathways Strategy Lead gave an update on the work of the Local Youth Transformation Programme. This was a UK Government initiative designed to rebuild the capability and leadership of local authorities. Hartlepool was one of 12 'Pathfinder' local authorities asked to test the integration of the system, for which they had received over £632 thousand in funding. Recommendations to help breach the gap in Hartlepool Youth Services had subsequently been identified and were detailed as part of the presentation.

The Youth Parliament Member commented that the Programme was transformative for young people, particularly the development of information systems which was serve as a legacy.

Members praised the Youth Education and Pathways Strategy Lead for the team's work which would make a big difference to young people, particularly the inclusivity offered to those with SEND.

26. Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent

The Chair advised that Hartlepool's Best Start Family Hubs and Health Visiting Service had recently been awarded a Baby-Friendly Award by UNICEF UK.

The Chair confirmed that he would be attending the forthcoming United for Change for Care Leavers event in Birmingham with officers.

The Chair notified members that the Leader of the Council had recently written to the Secretary of State for Education highlighting concerns around Children's Services budgetary pressures, which he was sure members from all parties would support.

Members noted that the agenda made reference to the date of the next meeting as being after the completion of the Governance changes. The Chair acknowledged this, advising that further information would be provided on the new system in due course.

The meeting concluded at 16:40.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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