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South Tyneside Council

item 2

Cabinet
27 May 2026

Cabinet Minutes
11 March 2026

Present: Councillors: Dixon *(in the Chair),* Carter, Berkley, P. Dean, Foreman, Gibson, McHugh, Meling and J Taylor.

Jonathan Tew (Chief Executive), Stuart Reid (Director of Business and Resources), Stuart Easingwood (Director of Children's Services), Stuart Wright (Director of Strategy and Place), Gary Kirsop (Director of Operations), Vicki Pattinson (Director of Adult Social Services and Commissioning), Tom Hall (Director of Public Health), Lucy Keating (Director of Legal and Governance – Monitoring Officer), John Rumney (Corporate Lead Legal and Governance), Natalie Johnson (Senior Press Officer) and Karen Connolly (Democracy Officer).

There was also 1 member of the press in attendance.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of 28 January and 4 February 2026

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 28 January 2026 and 4 February 2026 be confirmed as a true record.

3. Council Budget Monitoring – April to December 2025

Submitted: Report of the Director Business and Resources

This report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services provided a quarterly update on budget monitoring in relation to financial management.

The Council has implemented a number of actions to ensure prompt action is taken to mitigate against and reduce the spending pressures identified, details of these actions were set out in the report.

Options Considered

Option 1
Approve the capital budget changes highlighted in paragraph 27 of the report.

Option 2
Reject the capital budget changes highlighted in paragraph 27 of the report, which would mean that the budget would not accurately reflect the resources required to deliver the capital programme, which would result in less accurate reporting to Council, increasing the risk of overspend.

Resolved: That (a) the revenue and capital spending forecasts for 2025/26 and the forecast position on capital receipts be noted; (b) the progress against planned efficiency gains in 2025/26 at Appendix 1 of the report be noted; (c) the monitoring of key revenue service drivers and the associated financial risks from increases to activity levels outlined at Appendix 2 of the report be noted; (d) the capital budget changes highlighted in paragraph 27 of the report be approved; (e) the reserve balances for 2025/26 and the highly likely utilisation of specific reserves during the financial year be noted; and (f) the actions being taken to support addressing the revenue financial pressures in-year be noted.

Reason for Decision: *To comply with the Council's statutory duties in relation to financial management.*

4. Treasury Management Quarterly Report – 31 December 2025

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

The report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services provided a quarterly update on Treasury Management activity for the quarter ended 31 December 2025.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reasons for decision: *To comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Public Services.*

5. Community Area Forum 2026-2027

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

This report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services detailed how the Community Area Forum (CAF) funding for 2026/27 should be allocated.

The proposed funding to be administered through CAFs for 2026/27 is detailed below:

Scheme	**Proposed 2026/27 Budget (£)**
Housing Capital Scheme	400,000
Environmental Capital Scheme	500,000
Local Neighbourhoods Scheme	150,000
Total	1,050,000

The report also provided details on the amount of funding allocated for each Scheme for each ward.

It was noted that the Leadership Fund would continue to support small-scale locally important projects which contribute towards the Council's core ambitions, and that £5,000 had allocated to this fund.

Resolved: That the proposed allocation of Community Area Forum Grants for 2026/27, as set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: *To ensure the continued effective operation of the Community Area Forum funding schemes.*

6. Sums Due to the Council Considered Irrecoverable

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

This report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services provided details of debts which were no longer considered recoverable at the present time and sought approval to write-off the amounts as detailed in the report, in line with financial regulations. All of the debts were in respect of Housing Benefit Overpayments. If new information is received or there is a change in the circumstances of the debtor, future action may be taken to recover the debt.

Options Considered

Option 1
To write off the identified debts in line with paragraph 5.1.7 of the Constitution. The benefits of this are that the Council's accounts present the value of collectable debt and it releases resource to focus on other recovery projects. The risk of this is the public perception of non-recovery, however this should be mitigated by the explanation that all reasonable recovery action has been exhausted.

Option 2
Postpone decision. In relation to the cases in this report, this option is not viable, there are no methods of recovery available.

Resolved: That (a) the write-off of the specified irrecoverable Housing Benefit Overpayments as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved on the basis that no further recovery action is available at this time; (b) where new information becomes available or circumstances changes, it was agreed that officers may re-instigate recovery actions in line with policy and legislation.

Reason for Decision: *To ensure the Council's accounts reflect a fair value of amounts owed, consistent with financial regulations and prudent practice.*

To focus recovery resources on collectable debts, maximising in year and overall collection performance.

To recognise the exceptional circumstances leading to the debt becoming iirrecoverable (e.g. deceased estates with no funds and personal insolvency).

To maintain transparency and proper governance by setting out clear, proportionate decisions where further effective recovery action cannot currently be taken.

7. School Calendar 2027/28 Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Submitted: Report of the Director of Children's Services

The report, which was presented by Councillor McHugh, Lead Member Children and Families Social Care & Education and Skills sought approval of the School Calendar for 2027/28 for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in South Tyneside.

As part of an ongoing effort to harmonise the school calendar across the northern area, officers have been in discussion with neighbouring and regional local authorities, and the Bishop Chadwick Trust, about the formulation of a single calendar for the academic year 2027/28.

There had been agreement on all term dates, other than a slight variation at the beginning of the Autumn Term and at the end of the academic year. North Tyneside and Darlington (already approved) were proposing to start the Autumn term on Wednesday 1st September 2027 and end the Summer Term on 20 July 2028.

Options considered

Option 1

Start the Autumn term on Monday 6 September 2027 and end the Summer Term on Friday 21 July 2028.

Option 2

Start the Autumn term on Monday 6 September 2027 end the Summer Term on Tuesday 25 July 2028

Resolved: That (a) the calendar for the academic year 2027/28 be Adopted in accordance with Option 1, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report for all community and voluntary controlled schools and the Director of Children's Services be authorised to publish the document accordingly and (b) all other academies and schools within South Tyneside be requested to follow, as far as is possible, the Council's calendar when determining their individual school calendars for 2027/28.

Reason for decision: The Council must determine the calendars annually for all community and voluntary controlled schools and endeavours to collaborate with neighbouring Local Authorities and the Dioceses in order to achieve the maximum level of consistency. For the sake of uniformity across the Council, other schools will be asked to follow as closely as possible the calendar published for community and voluntary controlled schools.

8. Proposal to seek approval of publication of Section 19 policy

Submitted: Report of the Director of Children's Services

The report, which was presented by Councillor McHugh, Lead Member Children and Families Social Care & Education and Skills sought approval of the policy for 'Supporting children who are unable to attend their education setting under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996', as detailed in Appendix 1.

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on Local Authorities (LA) to 'Make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive a suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.' This applies to all such children who are resident in the area, whether they are on the roll of a school, and whatever type of school they attend.

Resolved: That approval be given to Section 19 Policy which sets out how the council will meet its statutory duties under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

Reasons for Decisions: *All Local authorities are required to have a written, publicly accessible policy statement on their arrangements for complying with the Section 19 duty.*

9. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and Civil Penalties Policy 2026

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

The report, which was presented by Councillor Carter, Lead Member for Housing and Community Safety sought approval to update the Council's Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy for the regulation of housing and management standards in the private rented sector, and Civil Penalties Policy, to take account of changes in legislation and guidance as detailed in the report.

<u>Options Considered</u>

<u>Option 1</u>

Approve and adopt the draft policies, with transitional arrangements allowing the existing policies to operate in tandem for a limited period to conclude legacy cases. Approving the policies will ensure that the Council can meet its statutory duties under the Renters' Rights Act 2025 section 107, by providing a clear and consistent framework for enforcement decision making that supports alignment. This option minimises risk of legal challenge, ensures that the Council is implementing the Renters' Rights Act effectively and that the intended tenant protections are driven forward.

<u>Option 2</u>

Retain existing policies with minor amendments only. Retaining the existing policies with only. minor amendments to reference the Renters' Rights Act, without introducing a revised enforcement framework, would fail to reflect the Council's full statutory duties under section 107, create inconsistencies in enforcement practice, and reduce clarity for officers, landlords and tenants. It would also increase the risk of legal challenge, weaken the Council's ability to demonstrate effective implementation of the Act and present reputational risks associated with inadequate tenant protection.

<u>Option 3</u>

Reject the proposed draft policies

Resolved: That (a) approval be given to the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and the Civil Penalties Policy appended to this report and (b) approval be given to delegate authority to the Director of Place Strategy, in consultation with the Lead Member Housing and Community Safety, to make minor amendments to the Policies, as well as any further more significant revisions required from time to time to reflect and incorporate changes in legislation, case law or national guidance. Any such amendments would include those considered necessary to incorporate national policies, frameworks and guidance issued by central government or relevant support organisations, relating to the expanded use of civil penalties and civil breaches, as alternatives to prosecution.

Reasons for Decisions: *Moving to the new policy framework is necessary to ensure the Council is compliant with the new statutory enforcement duties under section 107 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025, and to provide a clear, consistent framework for robust decision-making, ensuring that all aspects of enforcement activity are aligned with the powers, responsibilities and expectations set out in the legislation.*

The updated policies will reduce the risk of legal challenge, strengthen effective implementation of the Act and help secure the intended tenant protections. Overall, this approach supports full legislative compliance, provides clear officer guidance and minimises legal and reputational risks.

The updated policy framework strengthens effective implementation of the Act, supports full legislative compliance and provides clear guidance for officers, thereby reducing the risk of legal challenge. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to effective regulation, tenant protection and high-quality enforcement practice, while adopting a modern, robust and defensible approach, that minimises legal and reputational risks and can withstand public, political and judicial scrutiny.

10. Tree and Woodland Policy

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

The report, which was presented by Councillor Gibson, Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change sought approval of the updated Tree and Woodland Policy (TWP), which sets out a clear framework for the management, protection and enhancement of the borough's trees.

Tree risk will be managed through a new set of Operating Procedures, detailed at Appendix B of the report, which require individual trees or groups of trees to be inspected and subject to a formal risk assessment. This assessment quantifies risk, determines appropriate re-inspection intervals and identifies when remedial works are required.

Options Considered

Option 1

Approve and adopt the Tree and Woodland Policy, together with the Tree Risk Management framework embedded within the Operating Procedures. This will enable the Council to implement a consistent, transparent and proactive approach to tree risk management that aligns with environmental priorities and community expectations.

Option 2

Do not approve and adopt the Tree and Woodland Policy. This would result in continued reliance on a less structured and more reactive approach to tree management, with reduced ability to manage risk effectively within existing budgetary constraints. This could negatively impact operational efficiency and hinder progress towards key environmental objectives, including climate resilience and biodiversity enhancement.

It was suggested that the diagram at paragraph 7 of the Tree and Woodland Policy, in relation to the process on how decisions to define exceptional circumstances will be taken be updated to include the Lead Member and the paragraph beneath to be updated to read:

- The decision-making for exceptional circumstances, taken in collaboration with Head of Service, Service Lead, Lead Member, Senior Tree Officer and may include other relevant stakeholders such as finance, legal, members etc. with the Head of Service making the final decision.

Resolved: That approval be given to adopt the Tree and Woodland Policy, together with the Tree Risk Management framework embedded within the Operating Procedures subject to the amendment of the Policy document to add in the Lead Member as detailed above.

Reasons for Decisions: This will ensure the safe and sustainable management of the borough's trees by providing a clear and structured framework for assessing and managing tree-related risks, while supporting their ongoing care and long-term preservation.

11. South of Tyne & Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

The report, which was presented by Councillor Gibson, Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change sought endorsement, as a Supporting Authority, for publication of the final South of Tyne & Wear LNRS by Gateshead Council. The report also sought the appropriate delegated authority to finalise any non-material refinements ahead of publication.

Options considered

Option 1
Endorse the LNRS and Support Publication
Matters to consider in relation to this include:

- The draft Strategy is considered robust, with no significant issues identified through consultation.
- Endorsement enables timely progress toward statutory publication deadlines.
- Delegated authority provides flexibility to agree any final technical adjustments without delaying publication.
- The statutory Publication Advisory Notice (PAN) mechanism remains available should any substantive issues arise.
- Supporting publication reflects the constructive partnership working across the South of Tyne and Wear area.

Option 2
Withhold endorsement of the LNRS and Delay Publication
If Cabinet are not content with the proposed schedule of changes to inform the final LNRS they can withhold endorsement at this stage. Any issues raised can be taken back to the LNRS technical working group to resolve.

No such concerns have been identified by officers, given the collaborative development process to date. Withholding endorsement at this stage would delay publication and risk misalignment with wider North East Combined Authority (NECA) LNRS timetables.

Option 3
Neither support nor object

Cabinet may also take a neutral position. If no Publication Advisory Notice is issued within 28 days, Gateshead Council can proceed with publication. Given South Tyneside's active involvement throughout the process, adopting a neutral position at this stage could weaken the Council's influence in establishing future delivery arrangements and ongoing partnership work.

The Lead Member thanked officers for their support with regards to climate change matters and congratulated officers for all of the hard work put into making this happen.

Resolved: That (a) approval be given support the publication of the LNRS, subject to completion of the statutory Supporting Authority review; (b) approval be given to delegated authority being granted to the Director of Place Strategy, in consultation with the Lead Member Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, to consider the final pre-publication Local Nature Recovery Strategy and, if necessary, issue a publication advisory notice to the responsible authority within the statutory timescales and (c) approval be given to delegated authority being granted to the Director of Place Strategy, in consultation with the Lead Member Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to approve any minor or technical amendments required, in addition to the attached draft schedule of changes, during the statutory publication process where these do not materially alter the content of the Strategy.

Reasons for Decisions: *This approach reflects confidence in the robustness of the Strategy, helps maintain progress toward meeting national publication requirements, and provides the necessary flexibility to address any final technical changes without delay. It also retains key safeguards through the ability to issue a Publication Advisory Notice should any significant issues arise, while demonstrating continued commitment to collaborative working across the South of Tyne and Wear area.*

12. Chair's Urgent Items

The Leader noted that five Cabinet Members were leaving in May and she thanked everyone for their hard work, support, commitment and loyalty over the last five years. The Leader also received thanks from Cabinet in recognition of the work she had undertaken, noting the complexities of this role.

13. Resolution to Exclude the Public

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the agenda items as they involve exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

Minute no.	Item	Exempt category nos.	"public interest" test Reason for exempting
14-17	13-16	3	The report contains information which if published could affect the business affairs of persons named in the report.

14. One Housing Contract Renewal

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

The report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services, sought approval of the renewal of the One Housing Management Software system which is the Councils Housing Management IT solution.

<u>Options Considered</u>

Option 1

Agree to upgrade the One Housing Software system to be supported for a further 3 years.

Option 2

Procure a different system. This would require a 2+ years programme and major staff investment including implementation and training which would impact upon continuity of service. This option is not recommended.

Resolved: That approval be given to the contract renewal of the Housing Management Software with MRI Software Ltd for a period of three years from 1 April 2026.

Reasons for Decisions: The Proposed renewal of contract will present best value for money providing a saving of £13,941 over 3 years.

The agreement will ensure the Council can provide the tools and services to help Housing services to continue to carry out their duties and provide opportunities to improve service delivery through further use of services over the 3-year term.

15. Framework for the Supply of Services Including Equipment and Event Stewarding 2026 to 2030

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

The report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services sought approval of the framework agreement for the supply of event services including equipment and stewarding.

The framework was split into twelve lots, two of which had not received any compliant tenders. The Framework lots not awarded as part of the tender process will be considered outside of the Framework. Contractors will be requested to provide quotes in line with the Council's constitution.

Options Considered

Option 1
Agree to the framework agreement as set out in the report.

Option 2
An alternative would be to direct award for services of an identical or very similar nature to that already priced.

Resolved: That approval be given to the framework agreement for the supply of event services including equipment and stewarding for a period of 3 years commencing 1 April 2026 with an option to extend for a further 12 months.

Reasons for Decision: *The proposed award of contract will ensure the continuity with the supply of goods and services to South Tyneside Council*.

16. Award of contract for Right to Buy Leaseholder Building Insurance

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

The report, which was presented by Councillor Foreman, Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services sought approval to award contracts for Right to Buy (RTB) Leaseholder Building Insurance and Terrorism Insurance for properties covered by the buildings insurance.

Options considered

Option 1

Approve the award of tender to Aspen Insurance UK Ltd

Option2

Do not award the tender to Aspen. Doing this would require a retender exercise be carried out. This would likely yield a similar result albeit with the additional cost and time of performing the retender exercise.

Resolved: That approval be given to the award of contract to Aspen Insurance UK Ltd to provide Leasehold RTB Buildings Insurance commencing 1 April 2026 for a period of 3-years with an option to extend for a further 2 years.

Reasons for Decision: *The contract meets the needs of the Council and its leaseholders, provides value for money for leaseholders and ensures the Council complies with its statutory obligation to provide building insurances for its leaseholders.*

17. South Tyneside Local Regeneration Fund Programme

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

The report, which was presented by Councillor Meling, Lead Member Economic Growth and Transport provided an update on the status of the capital funded elements of the Local Regeneration Fund Programme (formally Community Regeneration Partnership funding) as well as seeking approval for the delivery strategy and associated procurement plan.

South Tyneside had been named as one of 20 Levelling Up Partnership areas across the UK in March 2023 with the potential for £20m of capital funding. Following the change in Government, the Chancellor announced that the scheme would continue but be renamed the Community Regeneration Partnership and focus on meeting the Government's missions particularly around economic growth, safer streets, breaking down barriers to opportunity and making Britain a green energy superpower. The funding had since been rebranded to the Local Regeneration Fund Programme

MHCLG had issued a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to the Council as the Accountable Body for the funding on the 11 September 2025. The MOU applies until March 2027. The agreed programme of capital projects and funding allocations were set out in the MoU and included improvements in Hebburn and South Shields Town Centres, full details of the four projects and costs were detailed in the report.

<u>Options considered</u>

<u>Option1</u>
Approve the four Local Regeneration Fund projects as detailed in the report.

<u>Option 2</u>
Reject some or all of the proposals as set out in the report.

The Members praised the partnership work undertaken and thanked all officers involved for their hard.

Resolved: That (a) the update on the status on the capital funded elements of the Local Regeneration Fund Programme (formally Community Regeneration Partnership funding) be noted; (b) the delivery strategy and associated procurement routes as detailed in the report be approved; (c) approval of delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place Strategy, Director of Business and Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Growth and Transport and the Lead Member for Business, Resources & Governance to:

- Finalise and execute the necessary delivery structures and legal agreements to deliver the elements of the Local Regeneration Fund programme and
- Progress a procurement plan required to deliver the Local Regeneration Fund Programme in accordance with the delivery strategy and Government requirements.

and (d) approval of delegated authority be granted to the Director of Business & Resources and the Director of Place Strategy in conjunction with the Lead Member for Governance, Finance & Corporate Affairs and the Lead Member for Economic Growth & Transport to carry out any other functions required to deliver the projects funded by the Local regeneration Fund Programme.

Reasons for Decision: *To ensure the timely and effective delivery of the elements of the project in line with the timescales set out in the MoU with Government.*