



South Tyneside Council

item 2

Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee 2 June 2026

Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee Minutes 17 February 2026

Present: Councillors: Cunningham (Chair), Brown, S Dean, Guy, Harrison, Herbert (part), Lamonte, Porthouse, Stonehouse, Traynor, Yare.

Also in attendance: Councillor Berkley (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence)

Vicki Pattinson (Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning), Emma Kennington (Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Market Oversight), Jamie Brown (Older People Strategic Commissioning Manager), Jayne Ingram (Neighbourhood Service Lead), Louise Landreth (Place and Performance Manager), Peter Lawton (Strategic Procurement Manager), Jonathan Lunness (Scrutiny and Democracy Support Officer) and Kelly Ellwood (Democracy Support Officer).

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2026 be approved as a true record.

3. Chair's Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

Exempt Information

Agreed: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the agenda items as they involve exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

Minute no.	Item	Exempt category nos.	"Public interest" test - reason for exempting
4-6	4-6	3	The reports contain information which if published could prejudice the commercial interests of persons named in the report.

4. South Tyneside Adult Care Services

This presentation provided an overview of commissioning, quality assurance, and contract updates for Help to Live at Home (HTLAH) and Older Persons' Residential Care services in South Tyneside.

It was noted that the Council continued to strengthen commissioning and quality assurance across these services, with a focus on improving service quality and ensuring services aligned with strategic priorities.

Charts were included to illustrate the CQC ratings showing performance of HTLAH providers across the borough.

It was explained that a Provider Concerns process had been triggered, and due to insufficient improvement and increasing operational pressures, the contract with Dalecare had been terminated. Remaining providers would absorb provision.

In terms of current arrangements, HTLAH was delivered through a four-zone model using lead providers and subcontractors. Members noted that the current contract would run until March 2027.

A Member asked whether complaint handling was improving, and whether the figures presented in the report were typical. Officers explained that the figures were in line with expectations but could also reflect how well people understood the complaints process. Work was ongoing with providers to ensure people knew how to raise issues, and a dashboard was in place to track complaints and safeguarding concerns.

Members queried whether the remaining providers had enough capacity to take on Dalecare's work. It was advised that they did, and that affected staff would be able to transfer under TUPE arrangements. Recruitment would be supported through the Care Academy, performance would be closely monitored, and leadership and governance strengthened. It was also noted that as care moved towards a neighbourhood model, work was ongoing to assess whether three or four providers would be needed in future.

It was asked whether staff had received appropriate training. It was noted that they had, this was ascertained via Quality Assurance, training was mandatory and competency checks were carried out.

Colleagues from the ICB were supporting this and were confident that all providers were compliant and meeting expected standards.

The presentation then went on to give an overview of Older Persons' Residential Care.

It was advised that there were 22 care homes across the borough, offering a mix of dual residential/nursing and residential-only care. The majority of services were rated Good, with one rated Requires Improvement. Charts were included for information.

Focus areas identified through engagement for future planning included alternative accommodation options, person-centred support, dementia-specific services and better access to outdoor space. Strategic priorities were highlighted as moving care closer to home, remodelling of local provision, a potential standalone nursing home and better use of specialist accommodation.

A Member commended the service and their good work carried out under intense scrutiny.

In response to questions about homes rated Requires Improvement, it was explained that these services were monitored weekly, with monthly visits taking place. A CQC re-inspection was expected in the near future.

Members were also informed of ongoing work involving digital tools and the use of AI to support data analysis and intelligence gathering.

Agreed: That the contents of the presentation be noted.

5. Grounds Maintenance Update

This presentation provided an update on the joint scrutiny and review process for the Grounds Maintenance Contracts.

Members were given a recap of the work to date, outlining the rationale for taking a joint commissioning approach between committees. The aim was to strengthen oversight, improve contract outcomes, and ensure value for money.

By way of background, a historical overview of the contract was included, alongside budget figures from 2015–2024 showing annual contract values.

The cross-party, joint review approach was formally agreed in July 2024, with a meeting held in December 2024 to confirm the process and proposed terms of reference. Joint sessions commenced in September 2025. Ongoing discussions were centred around balancing service standards with affordability.

It was noted that a dedicated stakeholder group had been established, with the first session held in November. It was further noted that additional subgroups were planned to focus on specific contract areas such as housing, biodiversity and trees. Mapping data had been provided to the contractor for review.

On next steps, upcoming priorities included delivering joint workshops on specific contract elements, reviewing areas currently included or excluded from the contract scope, and a first draft of the revised contract for legal and procurement review prior to corporate agreement of the final version.

Grass cutting was expected to begin in March, and communications had been prepared to keep residents informed. Members were advised that if weather conditions prevented grass cutting, the contractor would focus on other tasks such as litter picking.

Members commented positively on visible improvements across the borough and thanked the team for their responsiveness.

Questions were raised about responsibility for cutting asset areas, particularly football pitches and newer estates with service charges. Officers explained that some areas remained the responsibility of private developers or managing agents, and that historical decisions had been made about which areas the Council would maintain, with clear justification.

Displays in parks and cemeteries were also discussed. While their importance was recognised, it was noted that these displays came at a significant cost, and the service would look at alternative approaches where needed.

Agreed: That the contents of the presentation be noted.

6. Work Programme 2025-26

This report outlined the draft Work Programme for the 2025-26 municipal year and provided Members with an opportunity to amend or insert new topics for consideration at future meetings based on a list of contracts due to begin the procurement process.

Agreed: That the Work Programme be noted.

Date of Next Meeting

Dates of future meetings of the Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee would be determined at the annual meeting of Borough Council in May 2026.

SIGNED _____

Chair xxx 2026