



Borough Council

23 October 2025

Borough Council Minutes

24 July 2025

Present: The Mayor (Potts)

Councillors Berkley, Brenen, Brown, Carter, Clare, Coombes, Cunningham, Davies, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foggon, Ford, Foreman, Francis, Gibson, Guy, Gynn, Hamilton, Herbert, Keegan, Kennedy, Kilgour, Lamonte, Leask, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, Meling, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Robertson, Smith, Strike, J. Taylor, R. Taylor, Traynor, Welsh, Wood and Yare

49

Apologies Curtis, Harrison, McKeown, Stonehouse and Thompson

5

The Mayor reminded the public that the meeting was being recorded.

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Berkley, Carter, Hamilton, Gynn and J. Taylor declared a personal interest in Motion 2 – WASPI Women. They remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the motion. They remained in the meeting while the item was being discussed.

Councillor Kilgour declared a personal interest in Motion 2 – WASPI Women as an employee of the Department for Work and Pensions. She remained in the meeting while the item was being discussed.

Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest in Item 16 – Petition to request that South Tyneside Council recognise Temple Memorial Park as a War Memorial as Chair of the Friends of Temple Memorial Park. He remained in the meeting while the item was being discussed.

Councillor Hamilton declared a personal interest in item 12 as a part of Living Better Lives. She remained in the meeting while the item was being discussed.

2. Minutes of the 13 May 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13 May 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Mayor's Communications

The Mayor suggested a change to the order of business under Council Procedure Rule 2.3.1 that Item 14 – To consider a report of the Chief Executive on the Appointment of a Monitoring Officer instead be considered at the end of the meeting in order to minimise disruption to the public gallery and live-streaming, noting that it was an exempt report.

4. Appointment of the Membership of the Committees of the Council

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which included appointments to Committees and Chairs and Vice Chairs, on the basis of the gold and green papers circulated at the meeting.

The report also provided detail of proposed changes to the call-in mechanism following a meeting of the Constitution Committee on 24 June 2025 whereby a number of matters that had been raised with the Chair of Constitution Committee were discussed.

Councillor Davies raised concern that the proposed changes to the call-in mechanism would make it more difficult for Members to successfully call-in a decision, as it would require the signature of both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating and Call-in Committee who were both Members of the ruling group. It was suggested that this was not in line with practice across other Local Authorities.

Councillor Davies moved an amendment to the report that the call-in mechanism keep the original wording, instead only amending the word 'group' to 'affiliation' and that this be reconsidered by Constitution Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Ford. A vote was taken, and the result was 17 for, 27 against and 4 abstentions and therefore the amendment was not agreed.

As per the green sheet indicated Chair and Vice Chair appointments, there were multiple positions whereby two Members had been nominated and therefore votes were taken.

A vote was taken on the Chair of the Our Place Scrutiny Committee. 17 Members voted for Councillor Brenen and 31 Members voted for Councillor Strike; therefore, Councillor Strike continued as Chair of the Our Place Scrutiny Committee.

A named vote was taken on the Chair of Audit Committee. The votes were cast as follows:

DAVIES: 18 (Brenen, Brown, Coombes, Davies, Ford, Francis, Guy,

Gynn, Herbert, Kennedy, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, T. Roberts, Smith, R. Taylor, Wood and Yare)

PORTHOUSE: 26 (Berkley, Carter, Clare, Cunningham, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foreman, Gibson, Keegan, Kilgour, Lamonte, Leask, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, Meling, Porthouse, Proudlock, Strike, J. Taylor, Traynor and Welsh)

ABSTAIN: 4 (Foggon, Hamilton, K. Roberts and Robertson)

Councillor Robertson raised a query about Members chairing more than one committee. It was confirmed that whilst Members could Chair more than one committee, they would only receive remuneration for one. Councillor Guy queried whether the Chair of Audit Committee could also serve as Chair of a scrutiny or regulatory committee. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Chair of Audit Committee should be free from scrutiny or regulatory Chair responsibility, and therefore the result of the previous vote was recognised as void.

The meeting was briefly adjourned.

It was confirmed that there would be no contesting nomination for the Chair of Audit Committee and Councillor Davies was unanimously agreed as Chair of Audit Committee.

A named vote was taken on the Vice Chair of Audit Committee. The votes were cast as follows:

GUY: 21 (Brenen, Brown, Coombes, Davies, Foggon, Ford, Francis, Guy, Gynn, Hamilton, Herbert, Kennedy, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Robertson, Smith, Wood and Yare)

PORTHOUSE: 27 (Berkley, Carter, Clare, Cunningham, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foreman, Gibson, Keegan, Kilgour, Lamonte, Leask, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, Meling, Porthouse, Proudlock, Strike, J. Taylor, R. Taylor, Traynor and Welsh)

Councillor Porthouse was agreed as Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee.

A vote was taken on the Chair of Jarrow and Boldon CAF. 3 Members voted for Councillor Hamilton, 17 voted for Councillor Oliver, and 27 Members abstained. Therefore, Councillor Oliver continued as Chair of Jarrow and Boldon CAF.

Councillor S. Dean was unanimously agreed to serve as Vice Chair of Jarrow and Boldon CAF.

Some Councillors expressed concern regarding the proposed changed to Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15.2, the call-in procedure.

Councillor Owens-Palmer noted that as per the new procedure, all valid call-in submissions needed to be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating and Call-in Committee. She suggested that this undermined the democratic process as both the Chair and Vice Chair were Members of the ruling political group.

A named vote was taken on whether Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15.2 be amended as per paragraphs 32 and 36 of the report. The votes were cast as follows:

- FOR: 26 (Berkley, Carter, Clare, Cunningham, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foreman, Gibson, Keegan, Kilgour, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, Meling, Porthouse, Proudlock, Smith, Strike, J. Taylor, Traynor and Welsh)
- AGAINST: 20 (Brenen, Brown, Coombes, Davies, Foggon, Ford, Francis, Gynn, Hamilton, Herbert, Kennedy, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Robertson, R. Taylor, Wood and Yare)
- ABSTAIN: 1 (Leask)

It was therefore agreed that Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15.2 be amended as per paragraphs 32 and 36 of the report.

Resolved: That (a) the information included in the report with regards to the calculation of political balance of the Council for 2025/26 municipal year be noted; (b) the various political Groups across the Council, together with Group Leaders and Deputy Leaders be noted; (c) the membership of the Committees of the Council for 2025/26 municipal year be agreed as below; (d) the Chair and Vice Chair positions of the Committees of the Council for 2025/26 municipal year be agreed as below; (e) Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15.2 be amended as per paragraphs 32 and 36 of the report.

That the following Members be appointed to serve on the Committees indicated:

General Purposes Committee (16 Members)

Councillors Carter, Curtis, Davies, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Ford, Foreman, Hamilton, Harrison, McCabe, Oliver, T. Roberts, Strike and Yare.

Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating and Call-In Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Brenen, Cunningham, Ford, Francis, Guy, Hamilton, Keegan, K. Maxwell, McCabe, Proudlock, Strike and Yare.

Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Gynn, Hamilton, Keegan, Kennedy, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, McCabe, Myers, Porthouse, Stonehouse, Traynor and Wood.

Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Cunningham, Dawes, Francis, Hamilton, K. Maxwell, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock, T. Roberts, R. Taylor, Welsh and Wood.

Our Place Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Brenen, Cunningham, S. Dean, Hamilton, Herbert, N. Maxwell, Oliver, Porthouse, Smith, Strike, R. Taylor and Welsh.

Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Dawes, S. Dean, Gynn, Hamilton, Kennedy, Leask, K. Maxwell, Myers, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock and R. Taylor.

Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Brown, Cunningham, Dawes, S. Dean, Guy, Harrison, Herbert, Lamonte, Porthouse, Stonehouse, Traynor and Yare.

Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Councillors Brown, S. Dean, Francis, Guy, Keegan, Kennedy, Lamonte, Leask, N. Maxwell, Oliver, Stonehouse and Traynor.

Constitution Committee (9 Members)

Councillors Brenen, Carter, Dixon, Guy, Lamonte, McKeown, Potts, Proudlock and Robertson.

Substitutes Councillors Cunningham and Thompson.

Licensing/Regulatory Committee (15 Members)

Councillors Clare, P. Dean, S. Dean, Foggon, Ford, Guy, Herbert, K. Maxwell, Myers, Porthouse, Proudlock, Smith, Stonehouse, Thompson and Traynor.

Planning Committee (16 Members)

Councillors Brenen, Curtis, Davies, P. Dean, S. Dean, Ford, Hamilton, Keegan, Kennedy, N. Maxwell, McHugh, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock, T. Roberts and Welsh.

Pensions Committee (8 South Tyneside Members)

5 Other Local Authorities' Members

3 Trades Union Advisors

3 Employer Advisers

Councillors Brown, Coombes, Dawes, Foreman, Herbert, Lamonte, Welsh, and one vacancy (REAL Independent).

Employer Representatives: Gareth Hall, Tessa Assadian and one vacancy.

Trade Union Representatives: Janet Green, John Kelly and Janice Liepins-Hall.

Investment Panel: Chair of Pensions Committee Councillor Dawes, Vice-Chair of Pensions Committee Councillor Welsh and Councillor Foreman.

Standards Committee (7 Members)

Professor G. Wright, Ms H. Hall and Mr C. MacCaba.

Councillors Brenen, Cunningham, Herbert, Kilgour, Lamonte, Robertson and J. Taylor*(nominated to answer questions).

Substitutes Porthouse and Guy.

People and Organisational Development Committee (11 Members)

Councillors Cunningham, Ellison, Guy, Gynn, Hamilton, Keegan, McHugh, Porthouse, T. Roberts, Stonehouse and Traynor

Senior Officer Appointment Sub Committee (5 Members)

Councillors Dixon, Carter, Ellison (Chair of People and OD Committee), Cunningham (Vice Chair of People and OD Committee) and 1 opposition Member from the People and OD Committee. If any of the 5 'prescribed Members' are unavailable, then an appropriate replacement from the People and OD Cttee can be approached to attend in their place. If this is not possible then the meeting/interview being conducted by the People and OD Sub Committee can proceed with a quorum of three.

Audit Committee (5 Members)

Councillors Cunningham, Davies, Dawes, Guy and Porthouse

Co-optees Dr S. Green and Mr R. Kotecha

Substitutes S. Dean and Yare.

Health and Wellbeing Board (20 Members)

Councillors Dixon, Berkley and McHugh
Officers – Tom Hall, Vicki Pattinson, Stuart Easingwood, Stuart Wright, Ken Bremner, Scott Watson, Allison Thompson, Victoria Malone, Louise Lydon, Aelfwynn Sampson, Dr Matthew Walmsley, Dr James Gordon, Liz Dawson, James Duncan, Charlotte Harrison, John Lowther and Grahame Cassidy.

Common Land, Town and Village Greens Committee (13 Members)

Councillors Carter, Davies, S. Dean, Dixon, Gibson, Guy, Harrison, McCabe, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Smith, J. Taylor and R. Taylor.

Appeals Panel

The Membership of the Appeals Panel will be taken from the Membership of the Licensing/Regulatory Committee.

The Panel will be Chaired by the Lead Member Governance, Finance and Corporate Services.

That the following Members be appointed to serve on the Committees as Chair and Vice Chair:

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	VICE-CHAIR
Council	Mayor	Deputy Mayor
Cabinet	Leader	Deputy Leader
Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating & Call-in Committee	McCabe	Keegan
Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	McCabe	Lamonte
Our Place Scrutiny Committee	Strike	Brenen
Contracts & Commissioning Scrutiny Committee	Cunningham	Traynor
Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee	Keegan	Lamonte
Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny Committee	K Maxwell	Francis

Education & Skills Scrutiny Committee	Proudlock	Leask
Audit Committee	Davies	Porthouse
General Purposes Committee	Leader	Deputy Leader
Constitution Committee	Leader	Deputy Leader
People and Organisational Development Committee	Ellison	Cunningham
People and Organisational Development Sub Committee	Leader	Deputy Leader
Pensions Committee	Dawes	Welsh
Licensing/Regulatory Committee	Porthouse	Clare
Planning Committee	S. Dean	N. Maxwell
Appeals Committee	Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services	
Common Land, Town & Village Green Committee	Leader	Deputy Leader
Health and Wellbeing Board	Leader	Dr Matthew Walmsley
Standards Committee	Mr G. Wright	J Taylor

5. Application for a request for a dispensation

Submitted: Report of the Director of Governance and Corporate Affairs

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which outlined a request for a dispensation for Councillor Curtis.

The report provided Council with the information needed to consider an application from Councillor Curtis for a dispensation under the six-month rule in section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 so as to excuse her non-attendance at Council meetings.

Resolved: That a dispensation be granted for Councillor Curtis from attending meetings of the Council until 7 May 2026, provided that should within that time Councillor Curtis commence attendance at such meetings, the dispensation would cease to have effect.

Reason for decision: *To avoid Councillor Curtis potentially ceasing to be a Member of the Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.*

6. Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025/2025

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services presented the report that sought Council approval for the publication of a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement covering the 2024-25 financial year.

The draft statement included information on the Council structure and identified areas of business at higher risk of exposure to modern slavery. It also set out key policies and initiatives in place to minimise the risks of slavery as well as information on training, the role of the Modern Slavery Steering Group and key indicators of slavery and trafficking.

The South Tyneside Transparency Statement also went beyond the traditional statutory focus to communicate wider efforts taken by the Council to combat the risks of slavery occurring, ensuring services are positioned to support in the event modern slavery is identified locally.

The Statement had been structured similar to previous years, to align with the Council's Modern Slavery Strategy. It gave an overview of key activities within the last 12 months in relation to five key action areas: identify, disrupt, prevent and engage.

Council was asked to review and endorse the proposed Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the 2024/25 year.

Councillor Gynn noted that we should remain vigilant against modern slavery and protect groups who are particularly vulnerable. She suggested that the Government's decision to restrict asylum seekers from gaining employment could make them more at risk of slavery.

Councillor Yare referred to a recommendation made by the Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee regarding modern slavery and continuous monitoring of the Council's supply chain. He asked if the recommendation had been considered and discussed at Cabinet. Councillor Foreman noted that modern slavery had been discussed at Cabinet level and the actions of partners would be looked into to ensure the statement was abided by. Councillor Guy suggested that modern slavery had been found in the Council's supply chain and the Contract and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee made their recommendation as a result. He asked what had been done specifically in relation to the supply chains and international modern slavery. Councillor Foreman promised to provide an answer to this in writing.

Resolved: It is recommended that Council endorse and approve the publication on the website of the draft Modern Slavery Transparency Statement.

Reason for decision: To ensure the Council effectively discharges its statutory duty under 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

7. Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy Update

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services presented the report to consider and agree the Council's updated Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy.

The Housing Ombudsmen Complaints Handling Code became statutory on the 1st April 2024 and meant that landlords were required by law to follow its requirements. The Code set out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector.

Housing complaints were previously managed by South Tyneside Homes, however following the transfer of housing services back into South Tyneside Council, the Council adopted South Tyneside Homes' Complaints and Compliments Policy. The Council had updated the Policy to be consistent with its other policies and incorporate the PROUD values, without changing the approach to managing housing related complaints. Clarity had also been provided around what could be processed as a housing-related complaint, as well as a process for receiving comments and compliments which could be used to inform service planning and improvement. Members were assured that the Council had both policies and processes for other complaints which were not housing related.

Councillor Davies raised that there had been some changes to the Council's website since the report last came to Council which advised submitting feedback to the complaint's inbox. He suggested that there should be a separate inbox for compliments to better collate positive feedback.

Councillor Robertson also noted that since South Tyneside Housing Services had moved back under the remit of the Council, there had been lots of positive feedback from residents.

Resolved: To agree the draft policy.

Reason for decision: To ensure that the Council's policy is up to date and aligns to the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

8. Spend on Community, Civic and Mayoral Hospitality

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services presented the report that asked Council members to note the amount of spend for the period of 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 on hospitality for events related to community events, Civic events, and Mayoral hospitality.

As required by the Council constitution, information had been collated around Council spending on event hospitality for the 2024-25 financial year. This included spending on food and beverages, as well as associated ancillary and catering staff costs.

The report specifically referred to costs incurred for events promoting civic pride, including recognition and celebration of a wide range of organisations and individuals who had positively contributed to life in South Tyneside. An estimated 1,800 people received hospitality over 261 events hosted by the Council, and included schools, history groups, charity organisations and community groups, to name a few.

The report provided detail around the events which had been held, including Community Event Hospitality, Directly Invited Civic Hospitality, Mayoral Hospitality and Leader & Cabinet Hospitality. The report listed the total catering cost associated with each event and provided a summary under each hospitality area. Specific detail around the spend on alcohol was also included.

Councillor Robertson asked for the figures around the income made from drinks that had been sold. He also requested a breakdown of costs for the Mayoress at Home event, which he thought seemed high in comparison to other civic events. Councillor Foreman agreed to provide this.

Resolved: That the Council notes the information contained within the report, which is made to support openness and transparency.

Reason for decision: *To ensure that the Council aligns with the Protocol on Hospitality, outlined in the Council Constitution, Part E Codes and Protocols, Section 14, Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality for Councillors and Officers.*

9. Communications Strategy

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report that provided Borough Council with a Communications Strategy for South Tyneside Council. The Strategy had been developed as a key supporting tool in the delivery of the 20-Year Vision, the 3-Year Council Strategy, and the ambitious programme of change that the Council had committed to deliver through 'Our Council' Change Programme, supported by the work of the Transformation Board.

Following feedback from the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge in March 2022 to rethink Council strategic communications, significant work had been undertaken to plan and deliver a reset of the Council's communication approach. Strategically planned and effective communications played a critical role in the delivery of Council services, and the Communications Strategy would set out the strategic communications framework and key actions to support engagement with audiences. The Strategy going forward would align with the three-year strategic planning cycle.

The new Strategy had been informed by insight from residents, Elected Members, employees and other stakeholders. Since the Council communicates with multiple audience groups, the Strategy would provide a strategic framework as to how to communicate with these audiences. It would consider brand and governance, audience and channels, creating and owning the narrative and measuring success. The Strategy would also draw on the PROUD values, committing to several principles in delivering communications activity, which were outlined in the report.

The report went on to discuss the importance of a coherent brand, a multi-channel approach, creating a narrative which defined the Council's purpose, as well as managing this on social media. Social media guidance had been developed and included within the Strategy as well as a mechanism to measure success and identify improvement.

The Strategy also took into account the five themes which had been identified from the LGA Communications Peer Review.

Councillor R. Taylor noted the environmental impacts in relation to more digital communications, for example electronic advertisement boards could contribute to light pollution and AI also carried a carbon footprint. She also asked how the strategy would deal with fake news and if the Council could respond to correct any misinformation. She also asked how the strategy could deal with elected Members who publicly opposed the Council's messaging around pride and equality.

Councillor Brown welcomed the strategy and noted the importance of communicating in plain and simple English.

Councillor Yare noted that KPIs for the strategy were yet to be set and would be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis. He asked if they could also be fed into the relevant scrutiny committees.

Councillor Dixon noted, regarding fake news and misinformation, that the Council currently responds to this on social media channels, but this could be difficult at times.

Resolved: To agree the adoption of the Communications Strategy to support officers to deliver communications activity within the strategy framework.

Reason for decision: To provide a clear and coherent framework of delivery outlined in the Communications Strategy to ensure Council audience groups are engaged with the work of the Council.

10. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

Councillor Jane Carter, Lead Member for Housing and Community Safety, presented the report that formed part of the Council's statutory requirements to develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. It presented the

priorities and focus of the Strategy, which had been developed with input from internal and external stakeholders and those with lived experience, in addition to data and evidence that was set out in the 5-year review.

The review was required to cover:

- Levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the Borough over the last 5 years.
- What the Council has done to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- The resources the Council has available to do so.

Duties were also placed on housing authorities to set out the requirement to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those that have priority need.

The Strategy must be formulated by a Local Housing Authority for:

- Preventing homelessness in their district.
- Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless.
- Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district who are or may become homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent from becoming homeless again.

The report went on to discuss the coverage and priorities of the Strategy and explained that the Council looked to make homelessness 'everyone's business' to consider how partnership working could fit into a wider prevention system. Five main areas of focus had been identified to track and assign actions under the homelessness action plan:

- Enhance upstream prevention
- Strengthen crisis response
- Access to suitable and affordable housing
- Data and intelligence
- Advice and support services

The report also looked at the causes of homelessness and the work being done around rough sleeping.

Councillor Davies reflected on the case of one resident, which had recently been closed that month, who had been sofa surfing for over three years. He cited the figure of 1,524 cases, noting this could also include families. He stressed that there were not enough homes and an unregulated private rental sector had aggravated the issue. He suggested that the Council could strengthen its tracking of sofa surfers and hidden homeless.

Councillor Brown noted that it should be intolerable that anyone should go to bed hungry or homeless. He stressed that everyone should be dedicated to eradicating homelessness and highlighted that changes in circumstances could happen to anyone.

Councillor Robertson observed that some people on the social housing register had struggled to secure an allocation due to a history of rent arrears, however some tenants had been allocated housing and caused problems for their neighbours. He suggested the allocations process could warrant further scrutiny.

Councillor Yare drew Members attention to the Severe Weather Protocol which meant that when weather conditions became a threat to life, the Council were able to offer protection to residents without a homelessness duty. He urged Members to note this protocol and keep an eye out for severe weather notifications.

Councillor Roberts suggested that there was a breakdown in communication between housing officers, police and Councillors in relation to problematic residents. He noted that some residents had been persistent with antisocial behaviour and felt that Councillors should be consulted when rehousing these residents.

Councillor Lamonte responded to Councillor Roberts' comments, noting that the Council was often bound by statute in these circumstances and could not refuse an application. She suggested the Housing Manager share the Council's policy, highlighting this information.

Councillor Carter thanked Members for their comments and noted that South Tyneside were the only authority where the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol kicked in after the first day. She commended the Council for providing that service.

Councillor Leask suggested that there should be a tenancy review to look at how tenancy is explained to residents. She noted that in a lot of cases people did not understand the responsibilities of having a house and neighbours.

Councillor Carter confirmed that there was cross-party work on going on this and the Allocations Policy would be coming to Council in the near future.

Resolved: To agree to regular updates and feedback from progress made against the Strategy.

Reason for decision: *So the Council can fulfil its statutory duty to publish a strategy which sets out its priorities as a local authority, and how it will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping based on the published Homelessness Review.*

11. Stop Smoking Service Expansion and Vapes – One Year On

Councillor Berkley, Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence, delivered a report that aimed to provide an update on the progress of the Stop Smoking Service, including the integration of vapes as a stop smoking tool. The

report also presented future plans for enhancing the general stop smoking support offer in South Tyneside.

The report outlined the national context around the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which would stop the legal sale of cigarettes to future generations and reduce youth vaping. This would also stop vapes and other nicotine products from being branded and advertised to appeal to children.

Locally, there was currently 15,000 smokers in the Borough and supporting smokers to make multiple quit attempts was one of the most cost-effective strategies for enhancing health and wellbeing in the area. The cost of smoking to the system in South Tyneside was substantial and included £5.93 million on healthcare and £4.79 million on social care costs.

The report looked at which groups were more likely to face health inequalities and noted that smoking was more prevalent in deprived communities, individuals living in social housing, those employed in routine and manual jobs and people with poor mental health.

The report went on to outline what the Stop Smoking Service offer looked like including referral routes and quit aids. Pharmacies and GP services would receive key milestones throughout the individual's journey. From April 2024 to March 2025 1,009 quit dates had been set, 466 4-week quits and 122, 12-week quits.

The Service was also looking at targeted support which included an outreach project working with employers to promote the service through the workplace. Voluntary sector organisations could also apply for small grants.

The report covered information about vaping and its purpose as an aid to quit smoking cigarettes. It was emphasised that 'if you smoke vaping is much safer, if you don't smoke, don't vape.' However, the report did indicate that significant numbers of children had tried vaping or vaped 'more than once or twice.'

Detail was also given around the 'Swap to Stop' scheme and the Regional Patient Group Directive for Stop Smoking Drugs.

Councillor Lamonte noted that the statistics around children, of primary school age in particular, who used vapes were worrying. She also highlighted that 33% of secondary school children between Year 8 and Year 10 had used a vape. She noted that many children were influenced by their parents as 33% the children included in those figures had a parent who vaped.

Councillor Davies agreed with Councillor Lamonte's comments and noted that vaping had been normalised, and the Government's new regulations had not gone far enough. He also noted that incorrectly disposed vapes were also causing fires in bins. He added that while we should be trying to decrease smoking, efforts should also be made to prevent children's exposure to vaping.

Resolved: To a) note and endorse the Stop Smoking Service and vape implementation approach and b) to continue to engaging Scrutiny

with progress, especially in relation to vaping and the rollout of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Reason for decision: *By combining evidence-based methods, local insight, and accessible quit tools like vaping, the approach ensures that interventions are both effective and equitable to help people quit smoking.*

12. South Tyneside Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2025-27

Councillor Berkley, Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence delivered a report that outlined the purpose & vision, principles, approaches, and ten key priority areas for action for Adult Social Care Commissioning. This had informed a procurement forward plan (meeting the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023) and would form the content of a refreshed Market Position Statement to be produced in the summer of 2025 to indicate future requirements in the Borough.

The report provided background around Living Better Lives which was a five-year strategy for Adult Social Care and Commissioning in South Tyneside. It was based on extensive consultation and co-production with local partners, people working in adult social care and service users. Information was also provided around the commissioning function.

The Council had recognised that in order to deliver objectives within the Living Better Lives Strategy and the wider ambitions of the South Tyneside Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the commissioning function played a key role in delivering solutions. Therefore, a dedicated Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy was needed to run alongside these key strategies to identify priorities and provide a vision and purpose for adult social care related commissioning activity.

The Council had also identified practical reasons for producing a refreshed Market Position Statement for 2025 to embed the recently developed Quality Assurance Framework.

Council was asked to endorse the Strategy and approve the production of a Market Position Statement for 2025-27.

Councillor Brown noted that he had reservations about the CQC and suggested that it was not a credible organisation.

Councillor Hamilton noted that she was a part of the Living Better Lives co-production and cited the lack of interest in the project since its initial inception, as well as Adult Social Care.

A named vote was taken on the recommendation to endorse the content of the South Tyneside Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2025-27 and enables publication of the documents on the Council's website. The votes were cast as follows:

FOR: 41 (Berkley, Brenen, Brown, Carter, Clare, Coombes, Cunningham, Davies, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foggon, Foreman, Francis, Gibson, Guy, Gynn, Herbert, Keegan, Kennedy, Kilgour, Lamonte, Leask, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McHugh, Meling, Myers, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock, Smith, Strike, J. Taylor, Traynor, Welsh, Wood and Yare)

AGAINST: 3 (Hamilton, K. Roberts and Robertson)

ABSTAIN: 3 (Oliver, T. Roberts and R. Taylor)

Resolved: To a) endorse the content of the South Tyneside Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2025-27 and enables publication of the documents on the Councils website and b) approve the production of a Market Position Statement to cover the period of 2025-27 to reflect the content of the Commissioning Strategy to encourage providers to respond to commissioning intentions through the procurement process. This document would be published on the Councils website and replace the existing Interim Strategy.

Reason for decision: *The endorsement and approval of the South Tyneside Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2025-27 will enable the Council to progress activity articulated within the strategic priorities of the document. This will facilitate delivery of the ambitions of the Living Better Lives Strategy for Adult Social Care and to contribute towards meeting the core objectives, relating to Adult Social Care of the South Tyneside Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.*

At this point in the meeting, in order to accommodate members of the public who had attended, the Mayor agreed to consider Motion 2 - WASPI Women. Please see details of this motion below at Item 17.

13. Age Friendly Communities Annual Progress Report 2024/2025

Councillor Berkley, Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence delivered a report that detailed the Annual Progress Report on Age Friendly Communities (2024/25) to Council for consideration and discussion.

The report provided background on Age Friendly Communities, including how they are defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the results of a South Tyneside survey held in 2023.

During the first year of the age friendly plan, progress had been made against individual actions and partnerships had come together. A key priority was to raise awareness of the age friendly approach to seek opportunities to do more.

The Age Friendly Steering Group aimed to report to the Health and Wellbeing Board annually, with input from each lead, plus an update at the annual professional event during the celebration of International Day of Older People. Heads of Service were also asked to consider what else they could do internally with their own staff, and externally with their respective services, to support this piece of work.

Councillor Davies noted that the work on this programme should be celebrated as it was consistently and quietly changing lives. He noted the difficulties cited in the report in relation to highways, paving and kerbs and called for Highways to step up their work on that. He also noted that life was hard for many older residents in South Tyneside, with issues like poverty, isolation, poor housing and long waits for care. He suggested that a further best principle be included, utilising the Marmot approach to address health inequalities. Councillor Berkley agreed to look at the suggested best practice and noted that ageing should not be seen as a burden but something to be embraced. She also commented that the Council should be reflective of the needs of the Borough's ageing community to allow for a more equitable distribution of assistance.

Councillor Brown noted that seamless protocols should be in place and welcomed the recommendations but noted they would not be in isolation. He hoped that there was no international conflict to come and commented on the closure of NHS services.

Resolved: To a) acknowledge the progress that has been made and continue to endorse the work programme and b) support South Tyneside Council signing up to the global network.

Reason for decision: *South Tyneside has an ageing population. By embracing the WHO Age Friendly Communities approach, we can as a whole system, work towards making the Borough a better place to age.*

Minute no.	Item	Exempt category nos.	"public interest" test Reason for exempting
14	14	1	The report contains information relating to an individual.

14. EXEMPT Appointment of Monitoring Officer

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented a report that sought approval from Members to appoint Lucy Keating to the role of Monitoring Officer in accordance with the requirements of Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. A detailed discussion ensued on this report.

A vote was taken on the report, with 29 votes to agree the report and its recommendations, 8 votes against and 2 abstentions.

Resolved: To a) agree to the appointment of Lucy Keating as Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer of South Tyneside Council on a temporary basis until the return of the substantive postholder from secondment and b) delegate responsibility to the Chief Executive, in consultation with POD Sub-Committee members, to finalise the details of respective secondment arrangements to ensure continuity of coverage in post.

Reason for decision: *To ensure that the Council is able to fulfil the Council's obligations under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 through the appointment of a Monitoring Officer to the temporary vacancy.*

15. To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

No questions had been received under Council Procedure Rule 8.

16. To consider any petitions received under Procedure Rule 9

One petition had been received under Council Procedure Rule 9.

The petition requested that South Tyneside Council recognise Temple Memorial Park as a War Memorial.

The petition had 172 signatories in total, 77 of which lived in the Borough.

The petition stood referred to the Director of Place Strategy as the appropriate body for further consideration.

There were no petitions presented to the meeting of Borough Council on the 20 March 2025.

At this point in the meeting, the Mayor informed Council that unless it was agreed otherwise where three hours have elapsed from the commencement of the meeting the meeting will end in accordance with Rule 28.4. The Mayor asked if Council agreed to suspend Rule 7.1 and for to extend the meeting past three hours to finish the remaining business on the agenda.

It was unanimously agreed that the meeting be extended past three hours to allow for the remaining business to be considered.

17. To consider any Motions received under Procedure Rule 10

Four motions had been received under Council Procedure Rule 10.

Councillor Clare proposed the following motion:

Motion 1 – Workers Rights

This council recognises that employment law in the UK has not been fit for purpose for some time, and the last Conservative Government failed to properly engage with employers and the Trade Union movement to fix that.

South Tyneside Council as the largest employer in the borough, has been at the forefront of change, and recognise that its most valuable asset is its workforce.

As an employer of choice, the council make sure that all employment policies and practices are always up-to date and offer a significant remuneration package of benefits to our employees for example:

Entitlement to guaranteed annual leave, as well as maternity, adoption, paternity and parental leave, special leave, compassionate leave, and professional support where appropriate.

Flexi time, flexible working, job sharing and emergency time off work. subject to agreement with your line manager. There is no expectation to work longer or later hours, supporting a better work life balance.

Hybrid working, attractive Pension scheme, positive policy to education and training, Tax-free childcare benefit, Reserve Forces Policy, Cycle to Work Scheme, Car Lease Scheme, Metro Business Passes, Corporate Leisure Membership and many more.

South Tyneside Council welcomes the new Labour Government's approach to legislation that would end exploitative zero hours contracts, fire and rehire practices, and establishing from day one that rights for paternity, parental, bereavement leave for millions of workers, including the strengthening of statutory sick pay.

This council resolves to write to the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner MP on behalf of the council, outlining just how this new policy will benefit working people in our communities and to request that these measures are implemented quickly and fully.

Signed :

Councillors: Councillor Clare (proposer)
Councillor Smith (seconder)
Councillor Carter
Councillor Berkley
Councillor Gibson
Councillor Traynor
Councillor Kilgour
Councillor Dawes
Councillor N Maxwell
Councillor McCabe
Councillor Porthouse

The motion was seconded by Councillor K. Maxwell.

The motion was unanimously carried.

Councillor Kennedy moved the following motion:

Motion 2 – WASPI Women

Motion: To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Borough's Members of Parliament, and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, outlining the effects of the injustice to 1950s WASPI women, including those within our communities in South Tyneside, and to seek their support for a just compensation package.

The Council notes that:

- A Motion in support of WASPI women has already been agreed by Borough Council in January 2023 and that the Council is included on the WASPI website as a local authority that has passed a motion supporting WASPI women in South Tyneside.
- The 1995 Pensions Act increased the State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with the 2011 Pensions Act increasing it again to 66.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) found the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was guilty of maladministration, through its failure to properly inform women of the changes, which left them little time to make alternative retirement plans.
- Approximately 3.5 million women born in the 1950s were affected, including 11,000 in our local authority area, and a total of 65,000 in the Northeast. Source: Women's State Pension Age Communication: PHSO Report Hansard - UK Parliament
- The worst affected individuals received only one year's notice of a six-year increase to their State Pension age, throwing the retirement plans of many into chaos and leaving them with little time to make alternative arrangements.
- In March 2024, the PHSO instructed the UK Government to apologise to those affected and to pay compensation on Level 4 of their financial remedy scale (£1,000 - £2,950). Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation – Hansard - UK Parliament
- The PHSO noted the DWP did not accept the findings of its report, and so laid its report before Parliament, instructing MPs to intervene and ensure a financial remedy is delivered.
- In May 2024, the cross-party Work and Pensions Select Committee wrote to the then Work and Pensions Secretary, urging them to ensure a compensation scheme was urgently set up, a request which has been echoed by hundreds of MPs across all parties.
- In December 2024, the UK Government apologised on behalf of previous administrations for the mistakes that were made but took the almost unprecedented step of ignoring the PHSO through its refusal to pay financial redress to those affected.
- As of January 2025, more than 300,000 women born in the 1950s have died waiting for justice, while the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) Campaign enters its tenth year. Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation - Hansard - UK Parliament

- In January 2025, the House of Commons voted to compensate those affected, with a majority of 105 MPs, while a poll conducted by Yonder (7-9 January 2025) of 2,078 UK adults found that 74 per cent of the public support a compensation scheme for affected women. Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation – Hansard - UK Parliament

The Council believes that:

- The UK Government's decision to equalise the State Pension age for men and women was the right one, but the way it was carried out was wrong.
- Many women have been left in financial hardship as a result of failings by the DWP, which the current Government has not yet recognised.
- The DWP's decision to ignore the PHSO's instruction to compensate affected women creates a concern for the checks and balances on the executive and the public's faith in independent watchdogs to hold ministers to account.
- Like elsewhere in the country, our local area is likely to have been negatively affected by the DWP's failure to inform women of changes to their State Pension age, and should be considered, because:
 1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care.
 2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren are having to continue working, increasing the pressures on childcare locally.
 3. Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing provision.
 4. Local voluntary services are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned.
 5. Of the reduced spending power and disposable income amongst those impacted by the changes, and the knock-on effect to the local economy.
- The Government was right to apologise to those affected by this injustice, but the DWP must urgently follow the PHSO's orders and set up a compensation scheme for those affected.
- In relation to the Government response of 17 December 2024, specifically that:
 1. The vast majority of women were not aware of the changes, despite the Government's reference to a 2006 survey of around 200 women, which asked about general awareness of State Pension changes in the future – not about the impact on them as individuals. This cannot be reflective of 3.5 million peoples' experiences.
- Women did not know This is the very reason why PHSO found the DWP was guilty of maladministration and identified wrongdoing:
 - a. As concluded by the PHSO, financial restraints are not an excuse for the non-payment of a financial remedy.
 - b. Resourcing and staffing issues within the DWP should not be a barrier to compensation – we elect governments to take difficult decisions and deliver challenging projects.
 - c. Writing to women earlier would have made a difference to awareness

levels, evidenced by the Government writing letters to those having their WFA removed.

Council resolves:

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament (South Shields and Jarrow), and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions MP Liz Kendall; to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women in the communities of South Tyneside and to seek:
 1. Proposals for a compensation scheme, in line with the PHSO's report, to be urgently brought forward by the DWP.
 2. Requesting an urgent debate and vote, in Government time in the House of Commons, on delivering compensation to affected women.
- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to Sir Keir Starmer outlining the Council's position and calling for swift necessary action to resolve this situation and deliver all that the Prime Minister and many other Labour politicians promised to WASPI campaigners.

Signed:

Councillors: Councillor Kennedy (proposer)
Councillor Owens- Palmer (seconder)
Councillor Thompson
Councillor Myers
Councillor Brenen
Councillor T Roberts
Councillor Coombes
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Guy
Councillor Yare
Councillor Oliver

The motion was seconded by Councillor Owens-Palmer.

Councillor Robertson was asked to leave the meeting, and did not return, at the request of the Mayor.

Councillor Carter proposed an amendment to the motion.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Berkley.

Motion: To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Borough's Members of Parliament, and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, outlining the effects of the injustice to 1950s WASPI women, including those within our communities in South Tyneside, and to seek their support for a just compensation package.

The Council notes that:

- A Motion in support of WASPI women has already been agreed by Borough Council in January 2023 and that the Council is included on the WASPI website as a local authority that has passed a motion supporting WASPI women in South Tyneside.
- The 1995 Pensions Act increased the State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with the 2011 Pensions Act increasing it again to 66.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) found the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was guilty of maladministration, through its failure to properly inform women of the changes, which left them little time to make alternative retirement plans.
- Approximately 3.5 million women born in the 1950s were affected, including 11,000 in our local authority area, and a total of 65,000 in the Northeast. Source: Women's State Pension Age Communication: PHSO Report Hansard - UK Parliament
- The worst affected individuals received only one year's notice of a six-year increase to their State Pension age, throwing the retirement plans of many into chaos and leaving them with little time to make alternative arrangements.
- In March 2024, the PHSO instructed the UK Government to apologise to those affected and to pay compensation on Level 4 of their financial remedy scale (£1,000 - £2,950). Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation – Hansard - UK Parliament
- The PHSO noted the DWP did not accept the findings of its report, and so laid its report before Parliament, instructing MPs to intervene and ensure a financial remedy is delivered.
- In May 2024, the cross-party Work and Pensions Select Committee wrote to the then Work and Pensions Secretary, urging them to ensure a compensation scheme was urgently set up, a request which has been echoed by hundreds of MPs across all parties.
- In December 2024, the UK Government apologised on behalf of previous administrations for the mistakes that were made but took the almost unprecedented step of ignoring the PHSO through its refusal to pay financial redress to those affected.
- As of January 2025, more than 300,000 women born in the 1950s have died waiting for justice, while the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) Campaign enters its tenth year. Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation - Hansard - UK Parliament
- In January 2025, the House of Commons voted to compensate those affected, with a majority of 105 MPs, while a poll conducted by Yonder (7-9 January 2025) of 2,078 UK adults found that 74 per cent of the public support a compensation scheme for affected women. Source: Women's Changed State Pension Age: Compensation – Hansard - UK Parliament
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman set out the difficulties of establishing a tailored scheme for those who were not aware of the changes.
- The Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kedall has apologised for maladministration and committed to ensuring that her department learns the lessons from this serious and complex case.

The Council believes that:

- The decision regarding payments to 1950s born women is not about the changes to state pension age from 1995 onwards, but rather how decisions made by DWP led to a 28-month delay in starting to send letters to 1950s born women about the changes to State Pension age.
- The acceleration in the increase in state pension age in the 2011 Pensions Act, without much notice, under Conservative Chancellor George Osborne, was unfair, and successive Comnservative Governments have delayed action on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) report.
- ~~The UK Government's decision to equalise the State Pension age for men and women was the right one, but the way it was carried out was wrong.~~
- ~~Many women have been left in financial hardship as a result of failings by the DWP, which the current Government has not yet recognised.~~
- The DWP's decision to ignore the PHSO's instruction to compensate affected women creates a concern for the checks and balances on the executive and the public's faith in independent watchdogs to hold ministers to account.
- Like elsewhere in the country, our local area is likely to have been negatively affected by the DWP's failure to inform women of changes to their State Pension age, and should be considered, because:
 1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care.
 2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren are having to continue working, increasing the pressures on childcare locally.
 3. Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing provision.
 4. Local voluntary services are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned.
 5. Of the reduced spending power and disposable income amongst those impacted by the changes, and the knock-on effect to the local economy.
- The Government was right to apologise to those affected by this injustice, but the DWP must urgently follow the PHSO's orders and set up a compensation scheme for those affected.
- In relation to the Government response of 17 December 2024, specifically that the majority of women born in the 1950s were aware of the increase to the State Pension as outlined in the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.
- The current Government inherited a dire economic picture from its Conservative Predecessors.
- Regardless, it remains important that women affected by maladministration must be offered appropriate and just support.
- Resourcing and staffing issues within the DWP should not be a barrier to compensation.
- Improved communication would have made a difference to awareness levels.
- 1. The vast majority of women were not aware of the changes, despite the Government's reference to a 2006 survey of around 200 women, which asked about general awareness of State Pension changes in the future – not about the impact on them as individuals. This cannot be reflective of 3.5 million peoples' experiences.

- Women did not know This is the very reason why PHSO found the DWP was guilty of maladministration and identified wrongdoing:
 - a. As concluded by the PHSO, financial restraints are not an excuse for the non-payment of a financial remedy.
 - b. Resourcing and staffing issues within the DWP should not be a barrier to compensation – we elect governments to take difficult decisions and deliver challenging projects.
 - c. Writing to women earlier would have made a difference to awareness levels, evidenced by the Government writing letters to those having their WFA removed.

Council resolves:

- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament (South Shields and Jarrow), and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions MP Liz Kendall; to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women in the communities of South Tyneside and to seek:
 - 3. Proposals for a compensation scheme, in line with the PHSO's report, to be urgently brought forward by the DWP.
 - 4. Requesting an urgent debate and vote, in Government time in the House of Commons, on delivering compensation to affected women.
- To ask the Leader of the Council to write to Sir Keir Starmer outlining the Council's position and calling for swift necessary action to resolve this situation ~~and deliver all that the Prime Minister and many other Labour politicians promised to WASPI campaigners.~~

Proposed: Councillor Carter
Seconded: Councillor Berkley
Councillor J Taylor
Councillor A Lamonte
Councillor R Porthouse

A named vote was taken on the amendment. The votes were cast as follows:

FOR: 24 (Berkley, Carter, Clare, Cunningham, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foreman, Gibson, Keegan, Kilgour, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McHugh, Meling, Porthouse, Proudlock, Strike, J. Taylor, Traynor and Welsh)

AGAINST: 21 (Brenen, Brown, Coombes, Davies, Foggon, Ford, Francis, Guy, Gynn, Hamilton, Herbert, Kennedy, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Smith, R. Taylor, Wood and Yare)

Therefore, the amendment was agreed.

The amended motion was carried unanimously.

Councillor Carter proposed the following motion:

Motion 3 – Social Housing

Under the previous Conservative government, social housing provision has fallen to crisis levels due to the chronic underfunding of the social housing sector. The need for social housing has grown, with 1.33 million households on a waiting list for social housing nationally as of March 2024.¹ The housing charity Shelter has stated that 90,000 homes a year, for a decade, are required to address the backlog. There are currently approximately 4000 households on a waiting list for social housing in South Tyneside.

This Council notes that, in the June Spending Review, the Government has committed £39 billion to social and affordable housing over the next 10 years, as part of their manifesto commitment to building 1.5 million homes. This is welcomed by the Council alongside the important work already done locally by our housing company.

This Council also notes that a £4.5 million investment has been approved, by Mayor Kim McGuinness, to support housing development in Durham within the North East Combined Authority (NECA), including social housing.

This Council welcomes the Government's efforts to meet housing demand and tackle homelessness. As local council budgets, including South Tyneside's, are under a great deal of pressure, this Council believes Government provision of specific, targeted funding support for social housing is crucial.

This Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Minister for Housing and Planning, to outline how funding for social housing will benefit communities like South Tyneside and emphasise support for social housing provision.

Signed:

Councillors: Councillor Carter (proposer)
Councillor Porthouse (seconder)
Councillor McHugh
Councillor Berkley
Councillor Keegan

The motion was seconded by Councillor Porthouse.

The motion was unanimously carried.

Councillor Gynn proposed the following motion:

Motion 4 – Bringing Council in Line with COP15 (Convention on Biological Diversity)

Motion To South Tyneside Council

1. In becoming a signatory to COP15 the government agreed targets and goals to be achieved by 2030. These included the target:
-

2. *“Effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world’s lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services”.*

It is moved that this council integrates the above target into all aspects of Council service provision and function. In particular, the Council shall:

- 1) Work with Gateshead and Sunderland Councils, with the aim of ensuring that the target informs the setting of goals for the South of Tyne & Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- 2) To consider a commitment to aim towards protecting and managing 30% of council landholdings for nature recovery.
- 3) Recognise the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan in achieving this target, and request that those responsible for the preparation of the Neighbourhood plan, ensure that it protects and restores Nature
- 4) Work with residents, businesses, statutory and non-statutory bodies, educational establishments and other partners, with a view to collectively promoting and achieving the target in respect of land within the Borough of South Tyneside.
- 5) Seeks to achieve the target in respect of land within South Tyneside, through any leverage or influence it can exercise via its procurement and investment activities.

Signed:

Councillors: Councillor Gynn (proposer)
Councillor R Taylor (seconder)
Councillor Francis
Councillor Stonehouse
Councillor Mckeown
Councillor Ford
Councillor Herbert
Councillor Curtis
Councillor Davies

The motion was seconded by Councillor R. Taylor.

The motion was unanimously carried.

ANNEX 1 Does not form part of the Minutes of the Meeting.

QUESTIONS ARISING WITHIN THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 24 JULY 2025

Item 6 - Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025/2025

Councillors Yare and Guy asked if the recommendation of the Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee in relation to international modern slavery and the Council's supply chain, had been considered and action taken.

Response:

Following on from Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Strategic Procurement Manager raised the recommendation at the Modern Slavery Group as part of his update.

The action to be taken is to further enhance the pre-qualification questionnaire to include not only the Council's Tier 1 suppliers but also within the products, or sub-contract arrangements, of contracted suppliers.

Therefore, the Council are putting emphasis on its contractors to fully support and eradicate Modern Day Slavery.

Item 8 - Spend on Community, Civic and Mayoral Hospitality

Councillor Robertson asked for the figures around the income made from drinks that had been sold, as well as a breakdown of costs for the Mayoress at Home event in 2024.

Response:

Income from Drinks Sold:

The income from the sale of drinks during the period of the report was £1,297.63.

A new system has now been implemented to record income on a per-event basis to improve transparency and reporting for the period of 2025/26.

Mayoress at Home Event Costs:

The costs for this event were higher than other civic events. This is due to the scale of the historic public event, which was attended by over 200 people.

The event included full catering—i.e. food, tea/coffee, including staffing support. This food and staffing were provided by the School Meals Department.



South Tyneside Council

14 October 2025

Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

**Re: Support for Workers' Rights and Urgent Implementation of
Employment Reforms**

I am writing on behalf of South Tyneside Council following the unanimous approval of a motion at Full Council on 24 July 2025, in support of the Labour Government's proposed reforms to employment law.

This council recognises that employment legislation in the UK has long been unfit for purpose. As the largest employer in the borough, South Tyneside Council has led by example — placing our workforce at the heart of our organisation and ensuring that our employment policies are progressive, inclusive, and supportive.

We are proud to offer a comprehensive package of benefits to our employees, including guaranteed annual leave, maternity, adoption, paternity and parental leave, carers, special and compassionate leave, flexible working arrangements, hybrid working, and a strong commitment to work-life balance. Our policies also include professional development support, tax-free childcare, cycle to work schemes, car lease options, and corporate leisure memberships, among other employee benefits.

We therefore welcome the Labour Government's commitment to ending exploitative zero-hours contracts, banning fire-and-rehire practices, and establishing day-one rights for parental, paternity, and bereavement leave. These measures will significantly improve the lives of working people in our communities — many of whom have faced insecurity, low pay, and limited protections for far too long.

We urge the Government to implement these reforms quickly and fully. The people of South Tyneside deserve a fairer, more secure working future, and we stand ready to support the rollout of these policies locally.

Thank you for your leadership on this vital agenda. We look forward to working with you to ensure that these changes deliver real and lasting benefits for working people across our borough and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Foreman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Councillor Jim Foreman – Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services

On behalf of South Tyneside Council



Emma Lewell MP
Member of Parliament for South Shields
One Trinity Green
Eldon Street
South Shields
Tyne & Wear
NE33 1SA

Date: 28 August 2025
Our Ref: TD/JS

Email: emma.lewell.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Emma

Re: Compensation for WASPI women

On behalf of South Tyneside Council, I am writing to you to voice our concerns regarding the Government's position regarding women affected by State Pension changes, often referred to as WASPI women.

Our position as a Council is that the Government must revisit their difficult decision not to compensate women, and we greatly appreciate the support you have continued to show the WASPI women.

As you may know, South Tyneside Council passed a motion in support of WASPI women in January 2023, and an updated version in July 2025. We are highly concerned about the Department for Work and Pensions' position on this matter, following the findings of the Parliamentary Ombudsman under the previous administration. As you will be aware, the Secretary of State has apologised for the maladministration but has not implemented a programme of compensation.

While we appreciate the apology and promise to learn from previous mistakes, we are concerned that this does not adequately address the adverse impacts for WASPI women. The DWP's failure under previous Governments to properly inform women of changes to the State Pension Age have had serious financial consequences for many women, and therefore the decision not to compensate them should be revisited.

Contd.../2



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

☎ [0191 427 1717](tel:01914271717)

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Town Hall and Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields,
Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

Spread the word!

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SOUTH
TYNESIDE**

In terms of the impact on South Tyneside, there are numerous knock-on effects that the historic failures of the DWP have had – not only on WASPI women, but also the community more broadly. This includes:

1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners were unable to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care;
2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren or other young relatives were unable to do so, increasing pressures on local childcare;
3. Women whose personal finances were severely impacted will have struggled to meet their housing costs, impacting local housing provision;
4. Reduced spending power/disposable income will have had a negative impact on the local economy.

We therefore ask that you continue to voice your support for WASPI women and push for just compensation for them within Parliament, in order to bring about a swift and fair resolution to this issue.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

Spread the word!

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Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

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Kate Osborne MP
Member of Parliament for Jarrow and Gateshead East
The Clervaux Exchange
Clervaux Terrace
Jarrow
NE32 5UP

Date: 28 August 2025

Our Ref: TD/JS

Email: kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Kate

Re: Compensation for WASPI women

On behalf of South Tyneside Council, I am writing to you to voice our concerns regarding the Government's position regarding women affected by State Pension changes, often referred to as WASPI women.

Our position as a Council is that the Government must revisit their difficult decision not to compensate women, and we greatly appreciate the support you have continued to show the WASPI women.

As you may know, South Tyneside Council passed a motion in support of WASPI women in January 2023, and an updated version in July 2025. We are highly concerned about the Department for Work and Pensions' position on this matter, following the findings of the Parliamentary Ombudsman under the previous administration. As you will be aware, the Secretary of State has apologised for the maladministration but has not implemented a programme of compensation.

While we appreciate the apology and promise to learn from previous mistakes, we are concerned that this does not adequately address the adverse impacts for WASPI women. The DWP's failure under previous Governments to properly inform women of changes to the State Pension Age have had serious financial consequences for many women, and therefore the decision not to compensate them should be revisited.

Contd.../2



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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Town Hall and Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields,
Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

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In terms of the impact on South Tyneside, there are numerous knock-on effects that the historic failures of the DWP have had – not only on WASPI women, but also the community more broadly. This includes:

1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners were unable to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care;
2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren or other young relatives were unable to do so, increasing pressures on local childcare;
3. Women whose personal finances were severely impacted will have struggled to meet their housing costs, impacting local housing provision;
4. Reduced spending power/disposable income will have had a negative impact on the local economy.

We therefore ask that you continue to voice your support for WASPI women and push for just compensation for them within Parliament, in order to bring about a swift and fair resolution to this issue.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



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The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Date: 28 August 2025
Our Ref: TD/JS

Email: keir.starmer.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Prime Minister

Re: Compensation for WASPI women

I am writing to you on behalf of South Tyneside Council, to outline our concerns regarding the Government's position regarding women affected by changes to the State Pension Age, often referred to as WASPI women.

Our concerns center around the findings, by the Parliamentary Ombudsman under the previous Government, of maladministration by the DWP; despite this, our Labour administration has taken the difficult decision to not compensate the women affected by said maladministration.

While we appreciate that the Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall MP, has apologised for the maladministration and committed to ensuring that her department learns lessons from this case, this simple apology does not address the serious material consequences of the injustice at hand.

In January 2023, South Tyneside Council passed a motion in support of WASPI women. At the time, our support for WASPI women appeared to be in lockstep with the position of the Labour Party.

Contd.../2



Councillor Tracey Dixon
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Whilst we appreciate that we have inherited a dire economic situation from the previous Government, and that there is a serious need for fiscal responsibility, we are not confident that this is a strong enough reason to refuse compensation for this injustice.

At a local level, there are a number of ways that WASPI women and the wider community have suffered. This includes:

1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners were unable to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care;
2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren or other young relatives were unable to do so, increasing pressures on local childcare;
3. Women whose personal finances were severely impacted will have struggled to meet their housing costs, impacting local housing provision;
4. Reduced spending power/disposable income will have had a negative impact on the local economy.

In light of the above, we urge you to revisit this decision and take whatever swift and necessary action is required to resolve this situation.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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The Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP
Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Date: 28 August 2025
Our Ref: TD/JS

Email: liz.kendall.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Compensation for WASPI women

I am writing to you to outline my concerns regarding the Government's position regarding women affected by State Pension changes, who are often referred to as WASPI women.

Although you have recognised and apologised for the historic maladministration of the Department of Work and Pensions found by the Parliamentary Ombudsman under the previous Government, we continue to have concerns regarding the lack of compensation for WASPI women. While an apology for maladministration, and a recognition of the fact that many women were not properly informed of State Pension Age, is appreciated, it does not fully address the material and economic consequences of this issue.

South Tyneside Council have always supported WASPI women. We passed a motion in January 2023 outlining our support, and again in July 2025. This is partly because of the injustices faced by WASPI women in our communities, as well as the knock-on effect to the wider community, including (but not limited to):

1. Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners were unable to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care;
2. Women who would have cared for grandchildren or other young relatives were unable to do so, increasing pressures on local childcare;

Contd.../2



Councillor Tracey Dixon
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3. Women whose personal finances were severely impacted will have struggled to meet their housing costs, impacting local housing provision;
4. Reduced spending power/disposable income will have had a negative impact on the local economy.

We appreciate that managing public finances is very difficult given the dire economic situation inherited from the previous Government, and we understand the need for fiscal responsibility. However, given the serious impacts of this injustice, we would urge you to reconsider this decision and revisit the possibility of compensation for the women affected.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



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Appendix 7

Emma Lewell MP

Member of Parliament for South Shields
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Cllr. Tracey Dixon,
Town Hall and Civic Offices,
Westoe Road,
South Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE33 2RL

Email: cllr.tracey.dixon@southtyneside.gov.uk

Your Reference: TJ/DS

10th September 2025

Dear Cllr. Dixon,

Thank you very much for your letter.

I remain disappointed with the Government's decision not to compensate the women affected by changes to the state pension, following the PHSO's report. I remain firmly of the belief that WASPI women deserve fast and fair compensation. That is why I was one of ten Labour MPs who broke ranks with the Government to vote for WASPI compensation in January this year. I believe that an apology is simply not enough.

WASPI women entered into a contract with the state, which the state reneged on. Their pensions have been stolen from them. The fight of WASPI women for fast and fair compensation always has and always will have my steadfast support. My support has not, nor will it ever, waiver.

I brought one of the first petitions to the House from WASPI women in 2016, calling for compensation. I wrote personally to every WASPI woman in South Shields a few years ago. I remain a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group: State Pension Inequality for Women.

I have met with the WASPI women from South Shields on numerous occasions, holding public and private meetings. I feel it is important you are aware that the WASPI women in South Shields have voiced their disappointment to me regarding the recent debate that followed a motion to July's Full Borough Council meeting. In response, as I am not a member of Council, I have reiterated to them that I will always stand by my promises to them.

Kind regards,

Emma Lewell MP



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

ministers@dwp.gov.uk



HM Treasury

HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council
Town Hall
Westoe Road
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE33 2RL

Your ref: TD/JS

Our ref: MC2025/84432

16 September 2025

Dear Councillor Dixon,

Thank you for your letter of 28 August to the Prime Minister regarding the Government's response to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into the communication of women's State Pension age changes. I am replying as the Minister for Pensions.

As you know the Ombudsman did not investigate the Conservative Government's decision to increase the State Pension age for women in 1995, or that of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government to accelerate that increase in 2011, but rather how the changes were communicated.

The Ombudsman found that the Department provided adequate and accurate information on changes to the State Pension age between 1995 and 2004, including through leaflets, pensions education campaigns and on its website. However, they said that decisions about communications made between 2005 and 2007 led to a 28-month delay in sending out letters to women born in the 1950s. It was the Ombudsman's view that these delays did not result in the women suffering direct financial loss, but they were maladministration.

We considered the Ombudsman's findings very carefully to make sure our decision was based on the evidence. As you say, we have accepted the finding that there was a 28-month delay in sending out letters and for this we have apologised. However, we do not agree with the Ombudsman's approach

to injustice or remedy. Two of our important considerations, when making the decision, were that sending people unsolicited letters is unlikely to affect what they know and that most 1950s-born women were aware that the State Pension age was changing.

Alongside this are the financial and administrative reasons that it would be difficult to deliver a compensation scheme that is fair, value for money and feasible. Blanket compensation payments when the majority of women were aware that State Pension age was changing would be wrong. It would be impossible to establish a bespoke scheme that is fair or value for money, as it would take thousands of staff years to consider the detailed personal circumstances of up to 3.5 million women. It would also be impossible to verify claims if we simply asked women to self-certify experiencing injustice. The Government's assessment of the various compensation schemes can be found in paragraphs 93 to 107 of our detailed response published on 17 December 2024.

I fully recognise the strength of feeling on this issue. Many 1950s-born women have experienced significant disadvantage, not least in the labour market. This Government will continue working towards equality for women in the workplace now and in future, and ensure those with lower pension outcomes due to the inequalities they have faced in the past receive the right support.

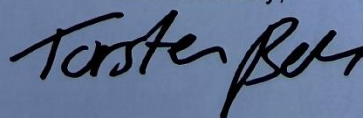
We are determined that failures of communication, as were seen with 1950s-born women, will not be repeated and have committed to work with the Ombudsman to learn the lessons this investigation can teach us, developing an action plan that we will publish in due course.

Parliament has considered and debated the report and the Government's response on a number of occasions.

You can read the Secretary of State's Statement and our detailed response on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-parliamentary-and-health-service-ombudsmans-investigation-into-womens-state-pension-age-communications-and-associated-issues.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,



Torsten Bell MP

Minister for Pensions

Motion 4 – Bringing Council in Line with COP15

South Tyneside Council welcomes the ambition of this motion and supports the principle of embedding biodiversity targets into service delivery. The COP15 commitment to protect and manage 30% of land and waters by 2030 is a significant goal, and one that aligns with our broader climate and nature objectives.

However, it's important to be clear that meaningful progress toward this target is dependent on further feasibility assessments, robust land-use data, and the availability of resources. At present, we do not have a comprehensive baseline of council landholdings or their current contribution to nature recovery, and many sites are already under pressure to deliver essential and statutory functions.

Subject to these constraints, the Council will:

- Collaborate with Gateshead and Sunderland Councils to ensure the COP15 target informs the development of the South of Tyne & Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Explore the potential to manage 30% of council landholdings for nature recovery, pending the outcome of land-use audits and coordinated input from relevant services.
- Engage with Planning Leads to support the integration of nature recovery into local planning, where feasible and appropriate.
- Work with residents, businesses, and partners to promote biodiversity outcomes across the Borough, recognising that delivery will require shared effort, investment, and long-term commitment.
- Review procurement and investment policies to identify opportunities for nature-positive action, where this aligns with strategic priorities and available resources.

The Council remains committed to supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health, but acknowledges that achieving the 30% target will require a phased, evidence-led approach, informed by ongoing assessment, cross-sector collaboration, and realistic resource planning.



Borough Council
15 January 2026

Borough Council Minutes

23 October 2025

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Smith)

Councillors Berkley, Brenen, Brown, Carter, Clare, Coombes, Cunningham, Curtis, Davies, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Ellison, Foggon, Ford, Foreman, Francis, Gibson, Gynn, Hamilton, Harrison, Herbert, Keegan, Kennedy, Kilgour, Lamonte, Leask, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McHugh, Meling, Myers, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, Proudlock, K. Roberts, Robertson, Stonehouse, Strike, J. Taylor, R. Taylor, Traynor, Welsh, Wood and Yare

Apologies 47
Guy, McCabe, McKeown, Oliver, Potts, T Roberts and Thompson

7

The Deputy Mayor reminded the public that the meeting was being recorded. He informed Council that due to unforeseen circumstances he was deputising for Councillor Potts at this meeting.

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brenen, Cunningham, Herbert, Kilgour, Lamonte, Robertson declared non-pecuniary interests in Items 5 and 6, Standards Committee items as a member of the Standards Committee. They remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the items.

Councillor J Taylor declared a non-pecuniary interest in Items 5 and 6, Standards Committee items as the Vice Chair the Standards Committee. She remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the items.

Councillor Dawes declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Appointment to the membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to

Groundworks as Chair of Pensions Committee. He remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Welsh declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Appointment to the membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to Groundworks as Vice Chair of Pensions Committee. She remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Coombes, Foreman, Herbert and Lamonte declared non-pecuniary interests in Item 8 – Appointment to the membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to Groundworks as members of the Pensions Committee. They remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Francis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Appointment to the membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to Groundworks as he was a proposed appointment to the Pensions Committee as well as a member of the LGPS. He remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor S. Dean declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Appointment to the membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to Groundworks as he was a trustee of Groundworks. He remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

2. Minutes of the 24 July 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Mayor's Communications

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Lucy Keating the newly appointed Director of Legal and Governance - Monitoring Officer and wished her well in her role. The Deputy Mayor also wished Councillors Thompson and Potts well and wished Councillor Thompson a swift recovery.

4. Treasury Management Annual Report 2024-25

Submitted: Report of the Director of Governance and Corporate Affairs

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires a report to be submitted annually to Council on Treasury Management activities.

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services, introduced this report, which outlined the Treasury Management activities for the financial year 2024/25. The report detailed the following:

- Economic Background
-

- Interest Rates on Investments
- Interest Rates on Borrowing
- Capital Financing Requirement and Consolidated Loans
- Management of Cash Balances
- Credit Rating Methodology and Lending Lists
- Other Credit Liabilities
- Compliance with Treasury Management Prudential Limits

Councillor Davies highlighted that inflation was a double-edged sword since it had diminished the value of the Council's long-term debt as inflation had outstripped interest rates. However, inflation was also having a detrimental impact on day to day budgets, particularly in adult and children's social care. It was noted that the Council made the minimum revenue provision each year, which reduced the underlying debt over time which was methodical management of the balance sheet. Population growth had stagnated due to a failure to build enough homes within the Borough, which had resulted in an aging population. He also stated that the Borough would be punished by the Fair Funding Review as the demographics of deprivation had been diluted while the need has grown. In the coming years the Council would face higher costs, higher demand and lower funding and he stressed that it would be vital to maintain fiscal prudence, continue to invest in prevention such as extra care schemes and renewable energy to permanently lower costs. He commented that the report set out a disciplined and realistic path, protecting services in the present while keeping finances sustainable.

Councillor Yare referred to point 46 in the report and the Council's PFI liabilities which sat at £91.2 million and were supported by funding from the Government. He observed that savings of up to £24 million over the course of the next three years could be required by the upcoming Fair Funding Review and queried how these liabilities could be maintained.

Councillor Myers suggested that the Council had reached a crossroads in regards borrowing and suggested that this was unsustainable. She highlighted that the Council was over £800 million in debt and serving interest which made up nearly 20% of the total Budget. She also stated that reserves were at an all-time low and expressed concern that the Fair Funding Review could lead to services being slashed and reserves depleting further.

Councillor Robertson commented that the CIPFA Action Plan had still not been completed after over three years and asked how it had not been finished within the deadline.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2024/25 be noted.

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

5. Report of the Independent Chair of Standards Committee

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor J Taylor, Lead Member Culture, Leisure and the Visitor Economy and the nominated Member of Standards Committee authorised to speak at Borough Council, moved the report. Professor Wright, Independent Chair of Standards Committee, spoke on the report.

This was the fifth and final report from the Standards Committee's Independent Chair and covered the period from August 2024 to August 2025. It was noted that Professor Wright's period of office would end at the close of the Municipal year in May 2026. The report highlighted the work of the Committee, identified progress made in raising standards, and addressed issues requiring attention at future meetings. In addition to this the Chair provided his observations on some significant changes and issues that had occurred over his eight year tenure.

It was noted that the approved minutes and relevant agenda papers of Standards Committee meetings can be found on the Council's website for information.

The report set out the meetings, training sessions and hearing dates which the Chair had covered since his appointment as well as the recent Committee membership and an overview of the roles and responsibilities. In broad terms its focus was on three main activities:

- Monitoring and enhancing the Council's corporate complaints procedures, including consideration of any Local Government Ombudsman's Reports,
- Monitoring the Council's application of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and
- Monitoring and promoting enhanced standards of Members' ethical behaviour and dealing with complaints of alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Tables showing the numbers and sources of corporate complaints, complaints under the Code of Conduct, and outcomes of hearings were detailed for Members' information. The number of corporate complaints received since January 2020 stood at 328 in total.

Professor Wright highlighted that Elected Members could help reduce such issues by considering their personal behaviour, collectively as a Council by reviewing the Constitution and in interactions with each other, and by party or group through collective decisions on how to handle disagreements.

Councillor Gibson agreed that 328 complaints filed in South Tyneside over a five year period did seem high and the Council must be doing something wrong. He suggested that Code of Conduct training should be offered to everyone within the Council, including officers. He acknowledged that everyone came from different walks of life with factors such as profession and age influencing

terminology and culture, and how this can be perceived. He stressed that Councillors were the frontline of democracy who were under a lot of pressure and scrutiny, but suggested the complaints process had been weaponised and legitimate concerns were dismissed. He acknowledged the emotional and financial toll of a formal complaints hearing, noting that only four Members were responsible for 139 complaints and suggested that resources could be better directed in this time of austerity. He added that a process should be in place to support Councillors who had a complaint made against them as Elected Members did not have access to support from human resources or legal advice since they were not Council employees. He stressed that the standards procedure should be used to uphold values and bind democracy together.

Councillor Hamilton welcomed the report but disagreed that the complaints process had been weaponised, suggesting that complaints were made out of necessity not as a 'badge of honour'. She felt that Independent Councillors had been unfairly targeted as they looked to challenge what was considered the norm. She noted that 328 complaints equated to approximately five every month but 304 of these complaints had been closed and only 24 were outstanding. She suggested that they had been treated unfairly at Council meetings in the past and that Members had been left in limbo, for years in some cases, while awaiting a decision on a complaint.

Councillor Robertson stated that he had been in front of the Standards Committee twice and he felt that the report presented to Council was not aligned with the Council's PROUD values, professional and respectful. He refuted comments within the report that some Independent Councillors valued the publicity brought by being subject to a complaint. He also referenced page 80 of the report which he suggested targeted him personally as he was the only Member of the Committee who had received formal sanctions.

Councillor Francis thanked the Independent Chair and Committee for the thankless task that they took in dealing with complaints. He drew attention to the corporate complaints within the report which demonstrated a positive trend, suggesting the data showed the Council were getting something right. He cited Part E of the report, which mentioned verbal attacks on Council officers as they often did not have any right of reply. He stressed that all employees of the Council should feel safe and supported at work, free from personal attack, either in person or on social media. He supported the proposal that a lay independent Member should be appointed as Vice Chair and the Council should be striving to make the complaints process as open and accountable as possible. He refuted claims that the Committee was biased in its approach as the number of complaints upheld were split fairly between the main and opposition groups. He went on to reference the bleak financial situation that the Council was in and asked Members to accept responsibility and avoid wasting money and staff time on unnecessary complaints.

Councillor Brennen stated that the report painted a grim picture of the standards in South Tyneside but he felt that the report did not show the whole picture, despite being honourable and brave. He suggested that the number of complaints had increased over the years as more opposition Councillors had been elected and presented more challenge to the ruling group.

Councillor Yare noted the Chair's comments and thanked him for the thorough report. He expressed concern about the integrity of the process if Members were to follow party lines in relation to Standards matters.

Councillor Brown expressed concern around the the complaints process as he had been cited in a document without his permission, which was submitted as evidence to a complaint.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Standards Committee Update – 4 August 2025

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services presented the report which provided an update to Council on the outcome of the investigation into and hearing of Complaint C154, which took place on 4 August 2025.

An investigation was undertaken into Complaint C154 and the final report concluded that there had been a failure by the Subject Member to comply with the Code of Conduct for Elected Members. The Monitoring Officer referred the Final Report to Standards Committee for a formal Hearing. The Standards Committee Hearing in respect of Complaint C154 took place on 4 August 2025.

The decision and response of the Standards Committee was presented to Council and detailed in the report.

The Standards Committee recommended that:

- (a) a formal censure in writing be issued to Councillor Gibson for his failures to follow the Members Code of Conduct.
- (b) The decision of the Standards Committee be referred to Council for information and
- (c) Councillor Gibson complete mandatory training in the areas of conduct and behaviour.

The Standards Committee by a majority of 5 to 2, did not consider it appropriate to recommend to Full Council that the Council itself issues a formal censure to Councillor Gibson for his failures to follow the Members Code of Conduct.

Resolved: That the decision of the Standards Committee in respect of complaint C154 be noted.

Reason for decision: The matters set out in this report were the product of lengthy deliberations by the Standards Committee, and reporting the same to Council was considered to represent part of a proportionate and reasonable response to the findings.

7. Interim Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations 2025

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services presented the report which set out the changes required to ward boundaries and ward names following the Local Government Boundary Commission's electoral review of South Tyneside. Approval was also sought for the necessary changes to polling districts required to implement the electoral review, as well as any other changes to polling places that had arisen since the elections held in 2024.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England carried out an electoral review of the ward boundaries in the Borough between April 2023 and December 2024. The final recommendations were published on 3 December 2024, and the changes order was made on 7 July 2025. As a result of the electoral review the number of councillors and wards remained the same, however the boundaries of twelve wards were to change and three wards would be renamed.

The changes were to take effect at the all-out local government elections on 7 May 2026.

Following this, an interim review of polling districts, places and stations was required. This interim review would focus on the wards that have boundary changes as well as any changes to the current polling places required as a result of the electoral review, and any other required changes that had been identified since the elections held in 2024. Details of the changes and maps of the affected wards were listed at appendix 3 and 4 and the current polling places and electorates were listed in appendix 5 of the report. The Constitution Committee had considered the options at its meeting held on 16 September 2025 and the final recommendations were presented to Council for approval.

The report included a table which outlined the three ward names which would be changed and any changes to their associated polling district codes.

Councillor Herbert expressed concern that the initial ward boundary proposal would have split the cohesive community of Cleadon Village in two. He suggested that the fact that this had been proposed in the first place cast doubt on the initial consultation process, more thought was required. He proposed that in future, a cross-party working group should be established to consider ward boundary changes to allow for more transparency. He also stated that better communication with residents was needed.

Resolved: That (a) the changes to the ward boundaries and names arising out of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of South Tyneside be noted; (b) the changes to polling district boundaries, as a necessary consequence of the above changes be agreed – to take effect at the next local government elections in May 2026; (c) the Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Register of

Electors and (d) the Corporate Lead Legal and Governance be authorised to publish the decision of the Register of Electors the Council, with reasons, including all prescribed information, in line with the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Reason for decision: A wide-ranging consultation exercise was undertaken; all of the representations received as a result of the consultation were considered.

By implementing the recommendations, the Council will maintain reasonable facilities for voting by including those voters with disabilities.

The Council will have discharged its statutory function in relation to the review requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

8. Report to appointment to the Membership of the Pensions Committee and the Council's Lead Officer to Groundwork

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which sought appointments to vacancies on the Pensions Committee. The Council must allocate seats on committees in line with political balance rules prescribed in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Committee and Political Group Regulations 1990.

The Pensions Committee is made up of eight members of South Tyneside Council, together with a number of elected members from neighbouring authorities, and advisory members from trade unions and employers who form part of the Tyne & Wear Pension Fund. As the administering authority of the Fund, South Tyneside Councillors represented a significant proportion of the Committee membership.

Previously at the meeting of Council in July the Real Independent Group was invited to submit a nominee to be considered for membership of Pensions Committee, but no nomination was received due to work commitments of the members of that group.

Since the last meeting of Council held in July Councillor Brown resigned from the Pensions Committee. The other independent member who is unaffiliated to any political group indicated that they were unable to undertake the role due to other commitments. Given this change and the vacancy outstanding from July Council it was necessary to revisit the membership of Pensions Committee.

The make-up of the South Tyneside cohort of members on the Committee was politically balanced, but in view of the above and in order to ensure that 8 members of the Council are allocated places, it was necessary to undertake the

political balancing exercise based on three political groups, Labour, Green and South Tyneside Alliance Group.

The calculations produced the proposal that the Labour Group be allocated 4 places (which was currently the case), with the South Tyneside Alliance Group being allocated 2 places and the Green Group be allocated the remaining 2 places. This represented an increase in the allocation to both the South Tyneside Alliance Group and the Green Group, for the reasons set out above.

In addition, it was considered necessary and appropriate for the Council to change its nominated Lead Officer for South & North Tyneside Groundwork Trust ("Groundwork").

The Director of Business & Resources was appointed to be the Council's Lead Officer for Groundwork at the Annual Meeting in May, but it was considered more appropriate for the current Head of Operations, Community & Place to undertake this role. The current post-holder had been a Trustee of Groundwork for a number of years, and given his knowledge of both organisations, it was felt that he would be best placed to be the Lead Officer.

Resolved: That (a) the information included in the report be noted, including the reasons for the reallocation of places on the Pensions Committee; (b) Councillors Francis (Green) and Councillor Owens-Palmer (STAG) be appointed to the Pensions Committee and (c) the Head of Operations Community and Place (Andrew Whittaker) be appointed as the Council's Lead Officer on the Groundwork's Board replacing the Director of Business and Resources (Stuart Reid).

Reason for decision: To ensure Council appoint the membership of the committees of the Council correctly, and that it is appropriately represented at Groundwork.

9. Application for a request for a dispensation

Submitted: Report of the Director of Governance and Corporate Affairs

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which outlined a request for a dispensation for Councillor Thompson.

The report provided Council with the information needed to consider an application from Councillor Thompson for a dispensation under the six-month rule in section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 so as to excuse his non-attendance at Council meetings.

Councillor Robertson noted that a copy of the dispensation application form had not been attached to the report. The Mayor confirmed that this should have been attached and could be distributed to everyone after the meeting. Councillor Robertson also queried whether there was anything in the Council's Constitution

about payable allowances and dispensations. The Mayor advised that this could be looked at under the Constitution Review and Councillor Dixon affirmed this, stating that this would be incorporated into the Constitution Committee's work programme ahead of the Annual Council meeting 2026. Councillor Robertson asked if the Monitoring Officer could clarify what the Council's position was on dispensations in regards to the payment of allowances and SRAs. He also stated that an equality impact assessment should have been included with the report, he wanted to know why it was not included. The legal adviser clarified that currently when a dispensation is put in place the allowances continue to be paid but noted that this could be discussed at the Constitution Committee.

Councillor Roberts suggested that the dispensation had been brought to Council too early as Councillor Thompson still had another two months left on the six-month deadline. The Mayor clarified that the timing was appropriate as this was the last Borough Council meeting before the deadline.

Councillor Owens-Palmer observed, as a ward colleague, how hard Councillor Thompson worked in the Westoe ward and suggested it was distasteful to discuss the payment of allowances when a councillor was out of action through ill health.

Members acknowledged the hard work undertaken by Councillor Thompson and wished him well in his recovery.

Resolved: That a dispensation be granted for Councillor Thompson from attending meetings of the Council until 7 May 2026, provided that should within that time Councillor Thompson commence attendance at such meetings, the dispensation would cease to have effect.

Reason for decision: *To avoid Councillor Thompson potentially ceasing to be a Member of the Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.*

10. Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy Annual Report 2025

Councillor Ernest Gibson, Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, presented the report which provided an annual update of the actions delivered against the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy, highlighting progress in reducing carbon emissions and advancing the Council's wider sustainability goals.

In July 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to take all necessary steps to become carbon neutral by 2030. Following the climate emergency declaration, the Council developed the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy and produced a 5-year action plan, which set out the shared vision for a cleaner, greener, and more resilient future.

The Council has signed up to the UK100 pledge, committing to using its influence to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work with residents and businesses to support a borough-wide transition to Net Zero.

The Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy provides a coordinated approach to climate mitigation and adaptation across the Council services, promoting a low carbon, sustainable future. It was structured around eleven key themes, the progress of each was outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Council established 2018/19 as the baseline year from which all future carbon emission reporting would be measured against. In 2019 it was calculated that the Council's baseline carbon dioxide (CO₂) emission figure was 17,140 tonnes.

To support the delivery of the emission reduction targets the Council set interim reduction figures of:

- 25% reduction within 3 years (March 2023)
- 50% reduction within 5 year (March 2025)

The first interim target was achieved in April 2023 with a reduction from the baseline of 5,170 tonnes, a 30% reduction. However, in 2024/25, emissions rose from 12,211 tonnes to 12,940 tonnes which was an increase of 729 tonnes. This meant the Council had achieved a 25% reduction overall, falling short of the 50% target set for 2025.

Several factors contributed to this increase. For example, changes in energy procurement and reporting practices had a direct impact on the carbon footprint. This reporting year had included streetlight emissions in the Council's carbon counting which had previously been recorded as zero due to the use of certified renewable energy. However, after moving to a more cost-effective energy contract these figures were to be included in the emission figures. To mitigate these emissions, the Council was implementing a borough-wide upgrade to LED streetlighting.

It was also noted that emissions from electricity use were influenced by the carbon intensity of the national grid and how clean the power supply was. Encouragingly, the most recent government figures had shown a renewed decline in carbon intensity, suggesting that electricity-related emissions should decrease in 2025/26.

The report went on to discuss early progress and innovation, current challenges and future plans. In May 2025 a five-day Climate Change Summit had been held which brought over 200 participants together from across the Borough. The Summit aimed to gather insights and spark collaboration to shape the future of sustainability in South Tyneside. A series of events had been held as part of a borough-wide conversation and each day of the summit was dedicated to a specific theme which was tailored to different stakeholder groups.

The key outcomes and insights of the Summit were outlined, as well as the next phase for Sustainable South Tyneside. The Council would aim to introduce a

Statement of Intent (2025-27) and begin preparations for the Sustainable South Tyneside: Environmental Growth Strategy (2027-30).

Councillor R. Taylor acknowledged the hard work of officers and the Lead Member in steering the South Tyneside sustainability agenda, hosting the Climate Summit and delivering projects such as the Hebburn energy schemes and Viking energy network, which demonstrated real commitment. She noted that it was encouraging to see early carbon reductions and community engagement. She went on to say that she had championed trees, open spaces and grass roots action but felt the current strategy did not clearly protect the green belt, open spaces or mature trees from future development pressures. She asked the Council to make preservation of the Borough's natural assets a key part of the next Environmental Growth Strategy alongside carbon reduction. She suggested that sustained support was needed for local grassroots initiatives, from funding to advice and training so people on the ground could make a real difference with projects in their neighbourhoods. She noted that the Council had fell short of the 50% carbon reduction target for 2025 and she advised that moving forward the Council needed clear, accountable targets, robust monitoring, and transparent reporting so residents can see both the progress and challenges faced. Initiatives should continue to focus not just on carbon reduction but on health, equity and local economic resilience.

Councillor Berkley discussed the significance of sustainable food practices in combatting climate change. The production, transportation and consumption of food are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions placing strain on the environment. She noted the importance of reducing food waste, supporting local producers and introducing planet friendly diets. She noted that the Council's commitment to sustainable food practices had been highlighted through the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy and South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing strategies, and noted the importance of this given nearly three quarters of adults in South Tyneside were overweight or obese. She stated that in South Tyneside only one in five households meet the recommended five a day fruit and vegetable intake and one in four households in the North East faced food insecurity. South Tyneside had joined the National Sustainable Food Places Network and through partnerships, stakeholders had been united to develop an action plan in line with the Sustainable Food Partnership Framework. This effort had driven progress towards advancing sustainable food across the Borough and the partnership was working towards bronze status in the Sustainable Food Places award which would open up further opportunities for South Tyneside. The Borough had also seen success in the Good Food Local Project under leadership in the 'Food for the Planet' theme.

Councillor Brown commended the commitment to the Climate Emergency and praised officers on their hard work and the usefulness of the carbon literacy training. He went on to discuss the destruction of habitats and competing priorities relating to building houses which could be detrimental to health and aggravate community tensions.

Councillor Gynn noted that the production of a sustainable environment for communities must include all the required infrastructure or an efficient public transport system to allow access. She acknowledged the importance of green

spaces, community spaces, sports facilities, and youth centres for children and young people. She suggested that a sustainable South Tyneside would be not the reality if the sole focus was on building houses and did not include plans for all community needs. She asked if the new Environmental Green Strategy would reflect the support received for the COP15 motion and include ways to engage and empower residents to make the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle. She also asked whether the Council's CO₂ emissions figures included those caused by the incineration of South Tyneside waste.

Councillor Yare noted, regarding the delivery of sustainable homes, that a significant portion of the Council's housing stock came with an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating of D or below. He expressed concern that some residents might be left behind due to national funding challenges. He asked how the National Government expected to deliver on its manifesto promise to save money for families, slash fuel poverty and get Britain back on track to meet climate change targets while stripping local authority budgets.

Councillor Kilgour referenced a new MIQ (matters, issues and questions) which would be raised during the planning examination of the housing land supply and delivery in Fellgate. She advised that time would be allocated on 20th November's agenda to discuss air quality and public health, which had been raised by a resident. She encouraged residents and Members with an interest to respond to the consultation by the 20 November.

Councillor Davies drew attention to the report's mention of the Council's fleet emissions. He stated that there was a missed opportunity, through the recent procurement process, to electrify the Council's fleet and suggested that this had been one of the reasons why carbon reduction targets had not been met. He also felt an opportunity had been missed around promoting active travel for work, since leisure travel had been prioritised. He felt key decisions like this had led to backsliding on carbon reduction targets.

Councillor Herbert expressed concern that emissions had increased and noted one of the reasons was the use of a less green energy provider. He suggested that the Council itself should look to generate more renewable power, utilising solar panels on council roofs and car parks. As a member of the cross-party Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group, he expressed frustration that many ideas are stymied by lack of money. He referenced a document from the Local Government Association (LGA), a 'Guide to Financing Green Ambition' which recommended alternative funding resources such as community municipal bonds allowed local people to invest in local renewable energy, which had been popular in other Boroughs. He also suggested that alternatively, a company could install and maintain solar panels on Council buildings at no cost and could sell the generated energy back to the Council at a discounted rate. He also asked that a cost-benefit analysis to be carried out on the alternative funding sources recommended by the LGA.

Councillor Gibson, responded to some of the queries raised in relation to biodiversity and green spaces and stated that they were all covered within the report and Strategy. A Local Nature Strategy was also being worked on with other local authorities in the Region and Councillors would be invited to respond

to the consultation. In relation to queries around financing green energy, he noted that the North East Combined Authority would be key in funding local projects. He also advised that a written response would be provided to all other questions.

There was a dissenting voice against the report's recommendation to endorse the strategic direction set out in this report, recognising the importance of the Statement of Intent (2025–2027) in maintaining momentum and preparing the borough for the next phase of strategy development. A show of hands vote was taken:

FOR: 25

AGAINST: 17

ABSTENTIONS: 2

Therefore, the recommendation was agreed.

Resolved: That (a) the progress made in delivering the aims of the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy (2020–2025) be noted; (b) the strategic direction as set out in this report be endorsed, recognising the importance of the Statement of Intent (2025–2027) in maintaining momentum and preparing the borough for the next phase of strategy development; (c) approval be given to the use of the Statement of Intent (2025–2027) as outlined in Appendix 3, as the guiding framework for the interim phase of work and (d); it be noted that this interim phase will lead into the development of the longer-term Environmental Growth Strategy (2027–2030), which will include wider engagement and consultation, and will be brought back to Cabinet and Council for formal approval.

Reason for decision: As the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy (2020–2025) concludes, the Council is entering a pivotal transition phase. The Statement of Intent (2025–2027) provides a practical and inclusive framework to guide this interim period, helping to sustain momentum, consolidate learning, and prepare the borough for the next phase of strategic development.

It is important that Members and the public are kept informed of the progress in reducing emissions against the Council's baseline, the Key projects and delivery activities and any changes that may affect how progress is measured or reported.

Maintaining transparency and regular communication supports accountability and helps build public confidence in the Council's climate commitments.

Adopting a phased approach - beginning with the Statement of Intent - enables the Council to continue delivering meaningful climate action while allowing time to develop a robust, financially sustainable longer-term Environmental Growth Strategy (2027–2030) aligned with South Tyneside's climate ambitions.

11. To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

One question had been received under Council Procedure Rule 8.

The question had been received from Ms Gemma Long. The Deputy Mayor presented the question to Council as follows:

Who made the decision to suggest the reduction in the number of full Council meetings for this year (2025-2026) that was voted upon at full Council on 13 May 2025? Do you feel that only having roughly half the number of meetings will have any effect on encouraging democracy in South Tyneside?

It was confirmed that Gemma Long would receive a written response within 7 days of the meeting. The question and answer provided would be added to the Question Book, open for public inspection.

12. To consider any petitions received under Procedure Rule 9

One petition had been received under Council Procedure Rule 9.

The petition, regarding a proposed HMO at 212 Westoe Road, South Shields, had 18 signatories in total, all of which lived in the Borough.

Councillor Owens-Palmer presented the petition on behalf of the residents. The petition was submitted in advance of the meeting of Borough Council, and subsequently the total number of signatories stood at 185.

The petition stood referred to the Director of Place Strategy as the appropriate body for further consideration.

There were no petitions presented to the meeting of Borough Council on the 13 May 2025.

13. To consider any Motions received under Procedure Rule 10

Three motions had been received under Council Procedure Rule 10.

Councillor S. Dean proposed the following motion:

Motion 1 – Driving Test Centre

Calls to re-open South Shields Driving Test Centre.

This Council notes that:

- South Shields Driving Test Centre (DTC) was closed in April 2022 and merged with Sunderland DTC.
- DVSA stated in 2022 that this would not impact upon test availability or waiting times.
- DVSA remain the owners of the facility, remaining unsold since its closure.
- Sunderland DTC is subject to a booking trial where tests can be booked 27 weeks in advance instead of the standard 24, evidencing local demand.
- Reports that there are over 30 thousand candidates accessing or attempting to access the booking system when appointments are released every Monday.
- Driving instructors have been unable to secure a test appointment for their pupils via the professional portal.
- The next available dates for driving tests from Sunderland DTC, at the time of writing, is March 2026 - 8 months wait.
- Availability and wait times have worsened significantly since the closure.

This Council acknowledges:

- Sunderland has lost several Examiners since 2022, through retirement, long term sickness and resignations.
- DVSA announced plans to recruit a significant number of Examiners to tackle this backlog.
- It will take time to recruit staff to capacity in the existing DTCs where the most significant delays are occurring, like Sunderland DTC.

This Council recognises:

- That the role of an examiner can be a challenging one, given the significant increases since 2022 in private bookings without dual controls.
 - There has been an increased number of no shows for tests as candidates shop around for the quickest available slot.
 - A reported increase in misuse of the system.
 - This is a function not owned or managed by South Tyneside Council.
 - Kate Osborne MP's letter to Ministers and the DVSA requesting the
-

halting of the sale of South Shields Test Centre and consideration of reopening the site.

- Both local MPs Kate Osborne and Emma Lewell support the re-opening of South Shields DTC, which is in the Jarrow and Gateshead East Constituency.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive of South Tyneside Council to write to Chief Executive of the DVSA, supporting the call to re-open South Shields DTC.
2. Instruct the Chief Executive of South Tyneside Council to write to Minister for Future of Roads, supporting the call to re-open South Shields DTC.
3. Instruct the Chief Executive of South Tyneside Council to write to Secretary of State for Transport, supporting the call to re-open South Shields DTC.
4. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to Kim McGuinness, the North East Mayor, to support the efforts of campaigners seeking to the re-opening of South Shields DTC, and to ask that Mayor McGuinness writes to Secretary of State for Transport, Minister for Future of Roads and to the Chief Executive of DVSA, seeking the re-opening of South Shields DTC.

Selected evidence and rationale:

Data collated by Vikki Holt DVSA ADI (car) one year after the closure of South Shields DTC.

APR 2022 Predicted vs JAN 2023 Actual Impact Costs based on 4581 tests (3 SSDTC examiners working 231 days completing 7 tests per day)

	Predicted 360 Miles per candidate	Actual 654 miles per candidate
Extra Hours per pupil	10hrs @ £25 per hr £1,145,250	17.5hrs @ £29 per hr £2,324,858
Price Rise per hour	£2 rise over 45 hrs £412,290	£4 rise over 62.5hrs £1,145,250
Vehicle depreciation	360 miles @0.08p per mile £131,933	654 miles @ 0.85p per mile £254,658
Extra Fuel	0.133p per mile, 360 miles £219,338	@0.085p per mile £254,658
TOTAL COST	£1,908,811	£4,211,611
Environmental costs 411 grams CO2 per mile	677,804,760	1,231,345,312

Signed:

Councillors: Councillor S Dean (proposer)
Councillor G Kilgour
Councillor S Traynor
Councillor N Maxwell
Councillor L Proudlock
Councillor P Dean

Councillor M Clare
Councillor K Maxwell

The motion was seconded by Councillor G. Kilgour.

The motion was unanimously carried.

Councillor R. Taylor proposed the following motion:

Motion 2 – Paper Smart South Tyneside” Ending Virgin Paper Use Across the Council

South Tyneside Full Borough Council
Switch from virgin paper to recycled paper and digital-first across all Council operations

This Council notes

1. South Tyneside Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency on 18 July 2019 and has set the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
2. The pulp and paper sector contributes materially to industrial emissions; cutting demand for virgin fibre reduces pressure on forests and lowers lifecycle emissions.
3. Recycled office paper has a lower average carbon footprint than virgin paper when like for like compared: UK Defra factors indicate 730 kg CO₂e per tonne for recycled versus 910 kg CO₂e per tonne for virgin paper.
4. Production of recycled paper also reduces energy and water demand compared with virgin paper production and helps avoid pollution associated with bleaching; historical elemental chlorine bleaching generated toxic dioxins/furans, now largely replaced by TCF, but bleaching remains a huge environmental concern.
5. Digital working should be the default for efficiency, cost savings and carbon reduction, but when printing is genuinely necessary, high-recycled content paper is a proven, readily available alternative in UK public procurement (e.g., Ireland’s OGP framework moved to 100% recycled office paper for the public sector in 2024).

This Council believes

Continuing to purchase virgin office paper conflicts with our Climate Emergency declaration and misses easy, visible emissions savings.

A “digital-first, recycled when needed” policy is deliverable within existing budgets by using frameworks and competitive tendering.

Setting clear standards (recycled content, chlorine-free processes, eco-labels) will send a strong market signal and support a circular economy.

This Council therefore resolves to

1. Adopt “digital by default” for committee papers, officer and councillor reports, briefings and internal communications, with hard copies provided only on documented accessibility or operational grounds.
2. Prohibit new purchases and internal use of virgin-fibre copier/print paper unless absolutely necessary across the Council and all Council-managed sites (including libraries, leisure centres and other organisations over which the Council exercises control as regards printing) within 6 months of this motion passing. *Existing virgin paper bought on, thereabouts or before the date of this motion will continue to be used up until supplies exhausted as not to waste Council resources.
3. When printing is necessary, require paper that is:
 - 100% recycled (with preference for post-consumer content),
 - EU Ecolabel and/or FSC Recycled certified,
 - PCF/TCF/ECF (processed or totally chlorine-free)
 - 80–90 gsm for standard use (lighter grammages encouraged where fit for purpose).
4. Cease printing of agenda packs and committee papers by default from the start of the next municipal year, supported by training and device support for Members who need it.
5. Refer to the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee. Report back within 12 months with: baseline and progress data (reams purchased, cost, estimated CO₂e and water savings), issues encountered, was any virgin paper used under the ‘absolutely necessary’ terms, has all virgin paper now been used that was bought before or within several days of the motion being passed and recommendations for further reduction (e.g., duplex defaults, lighter grammage, managed print rules).
6. Publicly communicate this change as part of the Council’s Climate Emergency delivery, encouraging partners and suppliers to match our standard.

Indicative costs (for Members’ information)

Market prices vary by brand, whiteness and volume, but recycled paper is competitive with mid-range virgin brands, and bulk procurement narrows any gap further.

Recycled (A4, 80 gsm):

- Xerox Recycled A4, £7.99 per ream (retail, single ream).
 - Evercopy Prestige 100% recycled, £26.50 per box of 5 reams (£5.30/ream).
 - Steinbeis 100% recycled, pallet pricing £680 / 200 reams (£3.40/ream).
-

Virgin (A4, 80 gsm):

- “Economy” virgin copier paper, typical £16–£25 per box of 5 reams (£3.20–£5/ream) depending on brand and supplier. Examples: Navigator Universal £23–£25/box; multiple suppliers list economy/white-box at £19–£20/box.

On a like-for-like, public sector volume basis, 100% recycled office paper can be obtained at £3.40 - £5.30 per ream, which is comparable to mainstream virgin paper (usually £3.20 - £5 per ream). Any minor unit cost difference is typically offset by reduced volumes through digital-first and print-management settings (duplex, draft mode), while delivering real emissions and water savings.

Environmental rationale: -

Lower lifecycle emissions: Recycled office paper 730 kg CO₂e/t vs virgin 910 kg CO₂e/t (Defra factors).

Less energy & water: Studies drawing on EU sources indicate 68% energy and 78% water savings for recycled paper manufacturing on average.

Reduced bleaching risk: Chlorine based bleaching generated dioxins/furans historically; modern ECF/TCF processes reduce these impacts hence specifying PCF/TCF/ECF and eco-labels.

Policy precedent: Public buyers can and do mandate 100% recycled paper (e.g the Irish OGP 2024 framework).

Implementation guidance (Officer actions)

Update procurement specs immediately; require FSC Recycled / EU Ecolabel paperwork from suppliers.

Roll out print-management defaults (duplex, mono, draft); restrict local printers; monitor usage monthly.

Provide Member/officer training on digital agenda tools; ensure accessibility provision (large print recycled paper on request).

Publish a quarterly dashboard (reams avoided, CO₂e and water saved, spend vs baseline). Use Defra factors for CO₂e calculations and supplier LCAs where available.

*Terminology:

*ECF – ‘Elemental Chlorine Free’ The pulp is bleached without using elemental chlorine gas. Instead, chlorine dioxide is used which produces far fewer harmful dioxins.

*TCF – ‘Totally Chlorine Free’ No chlorine compounds are used at all. Bleaching relies on oxygen or hydrogen peroxide. This is considered the most environmentally friendly option.

*PCF- ‘Processed Chlorine Free’ This is recycled paper that has been re-bleached or whitened without any chlorine compounds. This ensures recycled

papers are environmentally friendly, reduces the release of chlorinated organic compounds into waterways which are linked to toxic effects on wildlife and human health.

Signed :

Councillors: Councillor R Taylor (proposer)
Councillor C Davies (seconder)
Councillor D Francis
Councillor R Curtis
Councillor N Gynn
Councillor S McKeown
Councillor D Herbert
Councillor S Stonehouse
Councillor S Ford

The motion was seconded by Councillor Davies.

Councillor Berkley proposed an amendment to the motion.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Gibson

That the motion as set out above be amended to remove and not include paragraph 4 as part of the motion.

~~4. Cease printing of agenda packs and committee papers by default from the start of the next municipal year, supported by training and device support for Members who need it.~~

Proposed: Councillor Berkley
Seconded: Councillor Gibson
Councillor P Dean
Councillor McHugh
Councillor Traynor

A show of hands vote was taken on the amendment as proposed by Councillor Berkley. The votes were cast as follows:

FOR: 28
AGAINST: 16
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Therefore, the amendment was agreed.

An additional verbal amendment was proposed by Councillor Curtis but it was moved that this not be accepted by the Deputy Mayor as it was considered difficult for the Chamber to follow the proposed amendment as a verbal submission.

Councillor Berkely proposed the following motion:

Motion 3 – Higher Education Crisis

Council will be pleased to congratulate our school communities in the academic achievements of our young people. Education and skills are at the heart of our crisis in the Borough, including economic regeneration and high-paid quality jobs that will reduce poverty in our communities.

This Council notes that:

- 35.2% of South Tyneside's population have qualifications at Level 4 or higher, below the national average of 47.1%;¹
- The Higher Education sector is currently in crisis, with many universities facing serious financial challenges due to spiralling costs and insufficient student recruitment;²
- According to Universities UK, the current funding system for universities is unsustainable, and a sustainable and stable approach to research and innovation, as well as more secure financial foundations for teaching, are vital to maintain the international competitiveness of the UK Higher Education sector;³
- The £9,000 tuition fee for UK undergraduate students temporarily gave universities financial stability at the expense of a generation of students, many of whom now have thousands of pounds' worth of debt hanging over their future prospects in life;
- The introduction of tuition fees at rates of £9,000 per year, and then £9,250 and £9,535 in following years, has led to the marketisation of Higher Education institutions, and large amounts of spending on buildings and marketing to encourage student enrolment. However, the introduction of high fees has not solved Higher Education funding issues, as fee-based funding has not risen in line with inflation;
- The Government has raised tuition fees to £9,535 per year from the academic year 2025/26, but this is predicted to do little to mitigate the current Higher Education financial crisis;⁴
- The resultant financial situation has had adverse effects on students' learning environment and staff wellbeing, due to the culture of overwork of university staff in precarious employment circumstances;⁵
- According to the Office for Students, three-quarters of the Higher Education sector in England could be in deficit in 2025/26 without mitigating action;⁶
- Universities surrounding South Tyneside, which are important institutions for the education and upskilling of residents of South Tyneside, have been severely impacted by redundancy measures and other financial measures, including:
 - Durham, which has repeatedly opened voluntary severance schemes with the intention of removing 200 non-academic

¹ [South Tyneside Data Observatory \(September 2025\) - Children and Young People](#)

² [The Week UK \(2025\) Why the UK's universities are in financial crisis](#)

³ [Universities UK \(2024\) Opportunity, growth and partnership: a blueprint for change from the UK's universities](#)

⁴ [Universities UK \(2025\) The financial impact of government policy decisions on universities](#)

⁵ [Times Higher Education \(2023\) The four-day week in Higher Education: can we make it work?](#)

⁶ [Times Higher Education \(2025\) Three-quarters of universities heading for deficit despite fee rise](#)

- positions⁷ and refused to rule out compulsory redundancies, leading to the Durham UCU branch voting to strike;⁸
- Northumbria, who aim to cut their staffing budget by £12.5 million⁹ and have announced the cancellation of business-and-language courses;¹⁰
 - Newcastle, who announced a £35 million shortfall against projected income in the academic year 2024/25, have repeatedly opened voluntary severance schemes, and were seeking to make 300 FTE redundancies until the Newcastle UCU branch secured a commitment of no compulsory redundancies;¹¹
 - Sunderland, who in September 2024 announced they were looking to make 1 in 10 staff redundant;¹²
 - Teesside, who have seen course closures and a voluntary severance scheme, followed by a 'targeted voluntary redundancy' and the threat of compulsory redundancies.¹³
- In the academic year 2023/24, universities in the North East employed over 20,000 staff and had approximately 125,000 students, representing a significant source of employment and education in the region;¹⁴
 - North East universities represent an important educational opportunity for residents of South Tyneside – for example, 85% of Sunderland's home students are from the North East,¹⁵ of which a significant proportion will be from South Tyneside;
 - The North East universities are an important research collaboration partner for South Tyneside Council to improve the lives of residents, for example through partnerships with Northumbria and Newcastle Universities on health and wellbeing;¹⁶
 - Universities play an important role in attracting Foreign Direct Investment into the UK and local communities, meaning their longevity and success directly impacts communities such as South Tyneside;¹⁷
 - Overall, South Tyneside is impacted by the reduction in teaching and research capacity, as this limits the ability for residents to study in Higher Education institutions, as well as limiting the ability for South Tyneside Council to collaborate with university researchers on innovative research that benefits our communities.

This Council believes that:

- Higher Education is a public service, that should be accessible to all, and should employ staff in safe, secure and fair conditions;

⁷ [Chronicle Live \(2025\) Durham University plans to cut hundreds of jobs in bid to reduce costs by £20m](#)

⁸ [Durham UCU \(2025\) Durham University staff vote for further strike action in row over job cuts](#)

⁹ [Chronicle Live \(2024\) Northumbria University job losses looming as staff warned of £12.5 million budget cuts](#)

¹⁰ [BBC \(2024\) Staff 'demoralised' over Northumbria University course cuts - BBC News](#)

¹¹ [UCU Queen Mary - UK HE shrinking](#)

¹² [BBC \(2024\) Sunderland University job cuts 'demoralising', academic says](#)

¹³ [UCU Queen Mary - UK HE shrinking](#)

¹⁴ [HESA \(2025\) - Where do HE students study?](#)

¹⁵ [Knowledge Exchange Framework - University of Sunderland](#)

¹⁶ [South Tyneside Council \(2024\) Health and Wellbeing Annual Research Report](#)

¹⁷ [Higher Education Policy Institute \(2023\) The role of universities in driving overseas investment into UK Research and Development](#)

- Without urgent intervention, the UK HE sector will continue to degrade in quality and capabilities to the detriment of staff, students, and local communities;
- The UK government must review the funding model of UK universities to ensure the Higher Education sector continues to be viable and internationally competitive, both in terms of research and teaching;
- That the longevity and prosperity of universities within the North East directly impacts the opportunities for education, skills, training, and employment for residents of South Tyneside.

This Council resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to:

- The Secretary of State for Education, to outline the impacts of the Higher Education Crisis on communities like South Tyneside, and highlight the Council's concerns regarding the funding crisis and the need for government intervention;
- The Vice-Chancellors of Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria, Sunderland, and Teesside Universities, to outline the concerns of South Tyneside Council around the impact of redundancies and reduced teaching and research capacity on staff and students, and how this impacts South Tyneside residents and young people.

Signed:

Councillors: Councillor R Berkley (proposer)
Councillor L McHugh (seconder)
Councillor J Carter
Councillor L Proudlock
Councillor R Porthouse

The motion was seconded by Councillor McHugh.

At this point in the meeting, the Deputy Mayor informed Council that unless it was agreed otherwise where three hours have elapsed from the commencement of the meeting the meeting will end in accordance with Rule 28.4. The Mayor asked if Council agreed to suspend Rule 7.1 and for to extend the meeting past three hours to finish the remaining business on the agenda.

It was unanimously agreed that the meeting be extended past three hours to allow for the remaining business to be considered.

Councillor Berkley proposed an alteration to the original motion, seconded by Councillor McHugh and asked that this be agreed for consideration as follows:

This Council notes that:

Bullet points 4 and 5 be amended.

Bullet 5 to longer include the text as amended below.

- The introduction of tuition fees at rates of £9,000 per year, and then £9,250 and £9,535 in following years, has led to the marketisation of Higher Education institutions, and large amounts of spending on buildings and marketing to encourage student enrolment. ~~However, the introduction of high fees has not~~
-

~~solved Higher Education funding issues, as fee-based funding has not risen in line with inflation;~~

Bullet 6 to include the additional text in italics as well as the removal of wording as set out below.

- The Government has raised tuition fees to £9,535 per year from the academic year 2025/26, *and announced that fees will begin to rise in line with inflation, dependent on meeting high-quality teaching standards. However* but this is predicted to ~~do little to mitigate~~ *be insufficient in mitigating* the current Higher Education financial crisis;¹⁸

It was unanimously agreed that the alteration as proposed by Councillor Berkley as set out above be agreed for consideration.

Councillor Davies proposed an amendment to the motion.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Francis.

That the following paragraph be inserted as an additional bullet after bullet 2.

This Council notes:

- It is widely acknowledged within the Higher Education sector that two of the biggest factors in the current financial crisis are Brexit¹⁹ and the tightening of immigration laws;²⁰ because these changes have significantly reduced the number of international students and funding opportunities.

That bullet 5 of the motion proposed by Councillor Berkley be amended to read:

- ~~The introduction of tuition fees at rates of £9,000 per year, and then £9,250 and £9,535 in following years,~~ has led to the marketisation of Higher Education institutions, and large amounts of spending on buildings and marketing to encourage student enrolment. However, the introduction of high fees has not solved Higher Education funding issues, as fee-based funding has not risen in line with inflation;

That bullet 6 be amended to include additional wording set out in italics below:

- The Government has raised tuition fees to £9,535 per year from the academic year 2025/26, but this is predicted to do little to mitigate the current Higher Education financial crisis;²¹ *The announcement on October 20th that fees to rise*

¹⁸ [Universities UK \(2025\) The financial impact of government policy decisions on universities; BBC News \(2025\) 'University tuition fees in England to rise with inflation from next year'](#)

¹⁹ PWC, "UK Higher Education Financial Sustainability Report," 2024, <https://www.pwc.co.uk/government-public-sector/education/documents/higher-education-financial-sustainability-report.pdf>.

²⁰ Iain White, "STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES for HIGHER EDUCATION in the UK," 2024, <https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/cliffordchance/briefings/2024/12/structural-challenges-for-higher-education-in-the-uk.pdf>.

²¹ Universities UK (2025) The financial impact of government policy decisions on universities

*in line with inflation from 2026 and have multi-year funding settlements is welcomed after nearly a decade of a fee freeze under the last government;*²²

That the below paragraph be inserted before the last bullet under this Council notes:

- *The Vice Chancellor of Newcastle University, Prof. Chris Day, directly referenced the collapse in international students as the main cause for the financial shortfall of £35M that resulted in redundancies, restructures, and cuts.*²³

Proposed: Councillor Davies
Seconded: Councillor Francis

A show of hands vote was taken on the amendment as proposed by Councillor Davies. The votes were cast as follows:

FOR: 13
AGAINST: 31
ABSTENTIONS: 0

The amendment was not agreed, the altered motion as put forward by Councillor Berkley was agreed.

²² Branwen Jeffreys, "University Tuition Fees in England to Rise with Inflation Every Year from 2026," *BBC News*, October 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgkzj87n8rdo>.

²³ Austen Shakespeare, "Newcastle University Faces £35m Blackhole as International Student Numbers Fall," *Chronicle Live*, September 2024, <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/newcastle-university-35m-international-students-30023341>.

ANNEX 1 Does not form part of the Minutes of the Meeting.

QUESTIONS ARISING WITHIN THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 23 OCTOBER 2025

Item 4. Treasury Management Annual Report 2024-25

Councillor Yare referred to point 46 in the report and the Council's PFI liabilities which sat at 91.2 million and were supported by funding from the Government. He observed that savings of up to £24 million over the course of the next three years could be required by the upcoming Fair Funding Review, and asked how these liabilities could be maintained.

Response:

The Council continues to receive specific grants to support the funding of PFI costs. It has also set aside some reserves to fund ongoing costs. The costs of servicing the PFI liabilities are factored into the Council's financial modelling which projects the need for efficiencies on an annual basis.

Councillor Robertson asked why the CIPFA Action Plan had not been finished within the deadline.

Response:

The CIPFA Action Plan has now been fully implemented. The full benefits of developments such as a new financial system which is being implemented will not be realised for at least another year.

Item 9. Application for a request for a dispensation

Councillor Robertson asked if the Monitoring Officer could clarify what the Council's position was in relation to dispensations and allowances, whether this included SRA as well.

Response:

The granting of a dispensation which has as its purpose to avoid an elected member from being disqualified by virtue of their inability (through no fault of their own) to attend meetings within a 6 month period, does not automatically affect that member's entitlement to allowances which would otherwise be paid to them. The dispensation granted at the last Council meeting was unconditional meaning that the payment of basic and any special responsibility allowances would be unaffected.

Item 10. Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy Annual Report 2025

Councillor Gynn asked will the new Environmental Green Strategy reflect the support received for the COP15 motion and include ways to engage and empower residents?

Response:

The new Environmental Strategy will address the principles of COP15 through our work on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), which are fully embedded within national frameworks and statutory requirements and directly support COP15 commitments on biodiversity and nature recovery. These frameworks guide our approach to enhancing biodiversity and restoring nature. The strategy will also include measures to engage and empower residents, such as community consultation, education initiatives, and practical projects that promote sustainable choices in energy, transport, waste, and nature-based solutions.

Councillor Gynn asked whether the Council's CO₂ emissions figures include those caused by the incineration of South Tyneside waste?

Response:

No. Current carbon reporting focuses on operational emissions from Council activities, such as buildings, fleet, and streetlighting, against a 2018/19 baseline. The Council is currently reporting on:

- **Scope 1 emissions:** Direct emissions from sources the Council owns or controls, such as fuel used in fleet vehicles and gas heating in buildings.
- **Scope 2 emissions:** Indirect emissions from purchased energy, such as electricity used in offices and streetlighting.

Emissions from waste incineration are not included because they fall outside the Council's direct operational boundary and are considered Scope 3 emissions. These are indirect emissions that occur as a result of Council activities but are not under its direct control. The Council is at the very early stages of exploring how Scope 3 emissions, including those from waste disposal, can be better understood and influenced. The strategy will promote sustainable waste management practices, working with regional partners to reduce environmental impacts, improve resource efficiency, and identify opportunities to address these indirect emissions over time.

Cllr Yare asked how the National Government expected to deliver on its manifesto promise to save money for families, slash fuel poverty and get Britain back on track to meet climate change targets while stripping local authority budgets.

Response:

We recognise the challenge posed by reduced local authority budgets, but we remain committed to making a real difference for our communities. By working smartly with the resources available to us, focusing on innovation and efficiency, and collaborating closely with partners across the public, private, and voluntary sectors, we can continue to deliver meaningful outcomes. Our approach is about leveraging collective strengths to tackle fuel poverty, support families, and progress towards climate targets. While national funding decisions create pressures, we are determined to maximise impact through partnership working and strategic prioritisation.

Item 11 - To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

The question had been received from Ms Gemma Long. The Deputy Mayor presented the question to Council as follows:

Who made the decision to suggest the reduction in the number of full Council meetings for this year (2025-2026) that was voted upon at full Council on 13 May 2025? Do you feel that only having roughly half the number of meetings will have any effect on encouraging democracy in South Tyneside?

Response:

In relation to the first part of your question, the proposal to reduce the number of Full Council meetings for the 2025/2026 municipal year was considered as part of the wider review of Council Meeting Dates. This review took into account the overall volume of meetings in the Council diary and the capacity of staff who support these meetings, including their role in assisting Members attending North East Combined Authority meetings.

The suggestion formed part of broader discussions around staff wellbeing, the practicality of scheduling additional meetings, and whether a reduced frequency could be effectively managed. Following these discussions, the Council's Leadership confirmed that a reduction in the number of Full Council meetings would be acceptable.

To date, three Full Council meetings have taken place, with two further meetings scheduled - resulting in a total that is more than half the number held in the previous year.

Regarding the second part of your question, while individual Members may hold differing views, it is not felt that the change in meeting frequency has had a negative impact on encouraging democratic engagement in South Tyneside.



South Tyneside Council

Minister for Future of Roads
Department for Transport
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

14 November 2025

Dear Rt Hon Kier Mather,

RE: Request for reopening of South Shields Driving Test Centre

I am writing to you as Chief Executive of South Tyneside Council following a Motion being presented at South Tyneside Council on 23 October which was agreed and passed by members (attached). The motion highlighted concerns of all our members and the strength of feeling of the community which I have highlighted as well as the rationale for my mandate in making this approach within the letter.

Frustratingly, the South Shields Driving Test Centre (DTC) was closed in April 2022 and merged with Sunderland Driving Test Centre. The Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) stated in 2022 that this would not impact upon test availability or wait times. It is important to note that the DVSA remain the owners of the former South Shields Driving Test Centre facility, remaining unsold since its closure.

The Sunderland Driving Test Centre is subject to a booking trial where tests can be booked 27 weeks in advance instead of the standard 24 weeks, showing evidence of the increased local demand.

Further to this, there are over 30,000 candidates accessing or attempting to access the Sunderland booking system, when appointments are released every Monday. This has resulted in driving instructors not being able to secure test appointments for their pupils via the professional portal.

As a result of this, the next available dates for driving tests from Sunderland DTC are (at the time of writing) is March 2026 – 7 months wait. It is considered that the availability and wait times have worsened significantly since the closure, which has adversely affected the local residents of South Tyneside and other local areas.

Added to the above, it is recognised that the local area has lost several Examiners since 2022, through retirement, long term sickness and resignations. Whilst the DVSA have announced plans to recruit a significant number of examiners to tackle this backlog, it will take significant time to recruit staff to the expected capacity in the existing Driving Test Centres.

In terms of supporting evidence, the Council has been made aware of data collected by Vikki Holt - DVSA ADI (car) one year after the closure of South Shields DTC.

This data shows the predicted April 2022 costs against the actual costs – January 2023 - Actual Impact Costs based on 4581 tests (3 SSDTC examiners working 231 days completing 7 tests per day)

Mileage Undertaken	Predicted 360 Miles per candidate	Actual 654 miles per candidate
Extra Hours per pupil	10hrs @ £25 per hr £1,145,250	17.5hrs @ £29 per hr £2,324,858
Price Rise per hour	£2 rise over 45 hrs £412,290	£4 rise over 62.5hrs £1,145,250
Vehicle depreciation	360 miles @0.08p per mile £131,933	654 miles @ 0.85p per mile £254,658
Extra Fuel	0.133p per mile, 360 miles £219,338	@0.085p per mile £254,658
TOTAL COST	£1,908,811	£4,211,611
Environmental costs 411 grams CO2 per mile	677,804,760	1,231,345,312

The rationale for this request is that the former test centre is still within the ownership of the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency, so the process for reopening should be straightforward, and the supporting evidence presented demonstrates that there is a considerable need for increased test facilities in the South Shields area.

As a result of this, the Council requests that Central Government commits to the reopening of the South Shields Driving Test Centre, at the early opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Tew

**Chief Executive South Tyneside Council
Enc.**



The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Date: 10 November 2025
Ref: TD/JS

Dear Secretary of State

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding the Higher Education Crisis and Its Impact on South Tyneside

On behalf of South Tyneside Council, I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the ongoing crisis in the Higher Education sector and its significant implications for our residents, communities, and local economy.

South Tyneside is proud of the academic achievements of our young people and the dedication of our school communities. However, we face a persistent challenge: only 35.2% of our population hold qualifications at Level 4 or higher, well below the national average of 47.1%. This educational gap directly affects our ability to regenerate economically, attract high-quality employment, and reduce poverty.

The financial instability currently facing universities across the UK threatens to exacerbate this issue. As highlighted by Universities UK, the existing funding model is unsustainable. Rising costs and declining student recruitment have placed many institutions under severe financial strain. The recent increase in tuition fees to £9,535 per year, while indexed to inflation and tied to teaching quality, is unlikely to resolve the underlying structural issues.

Universities in the Northeast—Durham, Northumbria, Newcastle, Sunderland, and Teesside—are experiencing significant disruption due to budget shortfalls, course closures, and staff redundancies. These institutions are not only vital for the education and upskilling of South Tyneside residents but also serve as key partners in research and innovation that benefit our communities, particularly in areas such as health and wellbeing.

Contd.../2



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

☎ [0191 427 1717](tel:01914271717)

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Town Hall and Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields,
Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

Spread the word!

**THIS IS
SOUTH
TYNESIDE**

The reduction in teaching and research capacity, coupled with the precarious employment conditions faced by university staff, is having a detrimental effect on both the quality of education and the wellbeing of those who deliver it. According to the Office for Students, three-quarters of HE institutions in England could be in deficit by 2025/26 without urgent action.

We are particularly concerned about the impact on local students, many of whom rely on nearby universities for accessible education. For example, 85% of Sunderland University's home students are from the Northeast, with a significant proportion from South Tyneside. The erosion of HE opportunities in our region risks deepening existing inequalities and limiting the life chances of our young people.

South Tyneside Council firmly believes that Higher Education is a public service that should be accessible to all and delivered under fair and secure employment conditions. We urge the Government to:

- Conduct an urgent review of the HE funding model to ensure long-term sustainability and competitiveness.
- Recognise the strategic importance of Northeast universities in delivering education, skills, and economic growth.
- Provide targeted support to institutions facing financial hardship to prevent further erosion of teaching and research capacity.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and explore how the Department for Education can work with local authorities to safeguard the future of Higher Education in regions like ours.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

☎ [0191 427 1717](tel:01914271717)

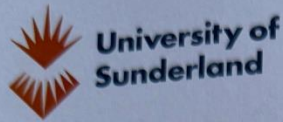
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Town Hall and Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields,
Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

Spread the word!

**THIS IS
SOUTH
TYNESIDE**



SIR DAVID BELL KCB DL
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
Fourth Floor, Edinburgh Building
Chester Road
Sunderland, SR1 3SD
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vice.chancellor@sunderland.ac.uk
www.sunderland.ac.uk

12 November 2025

Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader
South Tyneside Council
Via email: cllr.tracey.dixon@southtyneside.gov.uk

Dear Tracey

UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

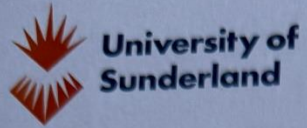
Many thanks for your letter of 10 November 2025 regarding the University of Sunderland and its work.

I am pleased to reassure you that the University is in a good position in many ways, including educational outcomes, financial strength, and connecting with its communities

In 2024/2025, like most other universities in the UK, we were required to reduce our expenditure to meet a range of budget pressures. In our case, this was around £20 million or about 10% of our overall income. However, we were able to do this in a way that mitigated some of the worst impacts. As a result, our student outcomes and satisfaction measures, as well as our staff survey results, continued to be strong.

The only course closure we have announced is in relation to glass and ceramics. We have not reduced teaching or research capacity in other areas and nor have we reduced our access and participation work which is designed to engage as many prospective students as possible including, of course, your residents in South Tyneside.

Indeed, our story is very much one of growth and development. We are considering opening new programmes in health, developing our work in research and knowledge exchange, not least with local business, and undertaking an exciting consultation exercise with our staff (and, in time, the wider public) on the future of the University estate in Sunderland.



I would be very happy to meet with you or your senior colleagues to discuss further ways in which we can ensure that the University remains well connected to South Tyneside and, indeed, the wider region.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

SIR DAVID BELL KCB DL
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
vice.chancellor@sunderland.ac.uk



Borough Council
26 February 2026

Borough Council Minutes

15 January 2026

Present: The Mayor (Potts)

Councillors Berkley, Brenen, Brown, Carter, Coombes, Cunningham, Davies, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Foggon, Ford, Foreman, Francis, Guy, Gynn, Hamilton, Harrison, Herbert, Keegan, Kennedy, Kilgour, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, McKeown, Meling, Myers, Oliver, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, K. Roberts, T. Roberts, Robertson, Smith, Stonehouse, Strike, J. Taylor, R. Taylor, Traynor and Yare

45

Apologies Clare, Curtis, Ellison, Gibson, Leask, Proudlock, Thompson, Welsh and Wood

9

The Mayor reminded the public that the meeting was being recorded.

The Mayor informed Borough Council of the death of former Councillor Olive Punchion, who had served as an Elected Member for Biddick and All Saints from 2006 to 2022. Olive served as Mayor of South Tyneside over the municipal year 2017/18. Borough Council observed a minute silence.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held 23 October 2025 and the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held 23 October 2025

It was confirmed that at the previous meeting, on Motion 2 the amended motion was agreed.

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council and the Ordinary Meeting of Council were both agreed as a true record.

3. Mayor's Communications

The Mayor wished everyone a Happy New Year. The Mayor thanked everyone for their well wishes following a suspected Transient Ischemic Attack, and noted thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Smith, who had Chaired the previous meeting of Borough Council at short notice.

4. Armed Forces Annual Report

Submitted: Report of the Corporate Lead Officer for Engagement, Communications and Support Services

Councillor P. Dean, Lead Member for the Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Equalities and Armed Forces Member Champion, presented the report which detailed the Council's ongoing work to support the Armed Forces Community, in line with the commitments made in the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

The Armed Forces Covenant aimed to ensure that those who serve or had served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and with respect. The Council appointed an Armed Forces Member Champion to advocate for and oversee delivery of the Covenant commitments. In 2018, South Tyneside Council was awarded gold status in the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme, recognising exemplary support for the Armed Forces Community. This status was successfully revalidated in October 2023 and would remain in place until 2028.

The report detailed the Council's progress and achievements in meeting its Covenant Duty between October 2024 and 2025. Notably, South Tyneside had become the first known local authority to formally include the Merchant Navy in its Armed Forces Covenant. Additional work had been done around employment and transition support, as well as community engagement and commemoration.

Achievements of the Council's partner organisations were also outlined from Veterans for Veterans in Care, NAAFI Break, Reservists and Veterans Response.

Some areas for development had been identified as a focus for 2025/26 to 2026/27, including data impact reporting, training and awareness, policy review and employment pathways.

Councillor Meling acknowledged that as a seafaring Borough, it was right and proper that South Tyneside acknowledge the Merchant Navy in its Armed Forces Covenant. She noted that while Merchant Navy vessels were unarmed those onboard suffered in the same way as members of the Royal Navy as they suffered separation from families, as well as being wounded and killed in action. During the Second World War, 47,000 casualties and 30,000 deaths were

reported, this being the highest proportion of any other service. The Armed Forces Covenant was far reaching and we're committed to positive action to help overcome some of the disadvantages which came with serving in the armed forces. She acknowledged this initiative could sit proudly alongside the Borough's seafaring heritage and internationally renowned Marine School.

Councillor Cunningham cited the Borough's proud seafaring history from the Romans to the Second World War and the Marine School. She commended the inclusion of the Merchant Navy in the Armed Forces Covenant and hoped that other Local Authorities would follow.

Councillor Brown endorsed the addition to the Covenant, acknowledging the deep-rooted connections the Borough had to the sea. He saw the change as magnifying the existing service and setting the best example to others.

Councillor Breneen acknowledged the importance of Local Authority support, as a fellow veteran himself. He commended the work around the Covenant and welcomed the Merchant Navy as an addition. He noted that youth unemployment was a growing issue and the Council could work to encourage armed forces recruitment, to help meet recruitment targets and bolster the country's forces which were currently overstretched.

Resolved: That (a) the content of the report be noted and resource maintained to continue to drive the agenda forward with continuous service and partnership improvements; and (b) that the progress since the last update to Borough Council in January 2023 be noted.

Reason for Decision: To note the continued high standard of work to support Armed Forces, as accredited by the Ministry of Defence in the conferral of Gold Award and to ensure capacity to respond to the extension of the Legal Duty to the 13 identified policy areas.

The Mayor read a letter received from Stuart Rivers, Chief Executive of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board, which celebrated South Tyneside Council incorporating the Merchant Navy into the South Tyneside Armed Forces Covenant. It was noted that this demonstrated impressive support for the Merchant Navy in recognition of their service, and it was hoped that other Councils may do the same.

A signing ceremony took place to mark the incorporation of the Merchant Navy into South Tyneside's Armed Forces Covenant. The Mayor signed on behalf of South Tyneside Council, Commodore Tom Knowles, Royal Navy Regional Commander for Northern England and the Isle of Man, signed on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, and Edwin Dick, Harbour Master of the Port of Blyth and Chair of the Tyne Port Welfare Committee, signed on behalf of the Merchant Navy.

5. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – 30 September 2025

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services, presented the report which provided an update on Treasury Management activity. There was a requirement to report quarterly to the Executive on treasury management activity and the exercise of delegated powers.

The report covered the following areas of treasury management for the six month period to 30 September 2025:

- An economic update and comments on interest rates;
- Credit rating and investment activity;
- Capital financing activity;
- Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits;
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

Councillor Davies noted that the report clearly demonstrated how the Council's debt was being controlled and managed at a fixed rate, as current market value and inflation were above the interest rates of borrowing. He acknowledged the increase in service demand which would be exacerbated by the Fair Funding review which South Tyneside had not come out of favourably. South Tyneside had also failed to build enough homes and population growth had stalled, weakening the Council's tax base. He also cited demand from an ageing population for rising alongside escalating care costs.

Councillor Robertson asked what the mentality was behind the Council borrowing £50 million but only investing £5 million. Councillor Foreman offered to have a meeting with Councillor Robertson and the Director of Business and Resources to discuss this and answer his queries.

Councillor Hamilton cited comments made earlier, that referred to the demand on adult social services being down to an ageing population. She stressed that if this was a persistent problem in South Tyneside then more rigorous action should be taken.

Councillor Guy noted from the report that interest rates had not gone as expected, however some financial commitments had been made based on these predictions. He asked how these interest rates were being predicted. He also asked a supplementary question, following on from comments made by Councillor Robertson, if further rationale could be provided around the link between borrowing and investing.

Resolved: That (a) the report be noted; and (b) that following a review of the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision a change to the methodology of calculation has been made.

Reason for Decision: To comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Public Services.

6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27

Submitted: Report of the Director of Business and Resources

Councillor Foreman, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services, presented the report which outlined the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme to apply from 1 April 2026.

The Council Tax Support Scheme was a locally funded and determined discount which reduced council tax payable by households on lower incomes. It is a statutory requirement to review the scheme on an annual basis.

The local scheme since adoption had been largely based on the previous national council tax benefit scheme. The local scheme was considered annually by Council and minor revisions had been linked to uprates in national welfare benefits. The local scheme applied to 11,300 working age customers and did not apply to claimants of pensionable age who remained eligible for up to 100% of support towards their council tax liability. The allowances, premia and deductions applied to assess entitlement continued to be set by Government for claimants within the latter group.

The Council had agreed to introduce an income banded scheme from 1 April 2024 which would offer greater support to customers and targeted support to make things fairer, in line with the Council's core ambitions. The report provided details of the income banded scheme.

No changes were being proposed to the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2026/27 and the proposed 2026/27 scheme was appended to the report for consideration.

Councillor Davies felt that Council Tax was regressive, derived from property values frozen in 1991, and the Government were failing to reform this system. In South Tyneside, the majority of properties were classed as Band A so Councils were forced to raise from money from people with the least capacity to pay. He was regretful that the maximum threshold for working age people had been cut in the previous year but was grateful it had not been amended again this year. He stressed that the Fair Funding formula should be revised as the Council could not sustain the required level of service if funding continued to be cut.

Resolved: That (a) Council approve the banded Council Tax Reduction Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and (b) any subsequent minor changes to the scheme be delegated to the Director of Business and Resources in conjunction with the Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate Services to ensure alignment with the final uprating of allowances applied by DWP in the assessment of national benefits which remain to be announced and other national requirements.

Reason for decision: To ensure the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme which aligns with its core ambitions and objectives.

7. Annual Report 2025 and Delivery Plan 2026

Submitted: Report of the Corporate Lead for Policy and Insight

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report covering the Annual Report 2025 which provided a summary of efforts progressed over the past year in line with the South Tyneside Vision and Strategy, and the Delivery Plan 2026, which provided an overview of the Council's planned activities for the coming year.

The Annual Report had been structured against the Council's five strategic ambitions which underpinned an overarching vision for South Tyneside. The Ambitions were for people to be Financially Secure; Healthy and Well; Connected to Jobs; Part of Strong Communities and an underpinning commitment to Target Support to Make Things Fairer. The report set out the key projects, initiatives and achievements for each Ambition over the last year.

In pursuit of the ambition for all residents to be financially secure the Council's Welfare Support Team had helped residents secure an additional £11.1million in financial support. The region's first Child Poverty Strategy had been launched and over 8,000 children and young people had been supported to access free activities and meals over the holidays. South Tyneside had also achieved 'Bronze'-level Sustainable Food Places accreditation in recognition of partnership work to tackle food poverty and sustainability, and 27 energy roadshows had been hosted across the borough to help people reduce their fuel bills.

To support residents with Health and Wellbeing, continued progress had been made on the Children's Services improvement journey, including the addition of three new residential children's homes. Leisure services had hosted 1.6 million visits and specialist supported living housing schemes had been established for residents with learning disabilities. Work was also ongoing on the 'Guiding You Home' programme which was helping to ensure more people being discharged from hospital were supported to avoid residential care and return to their own homes. A Local Area Coordination approach had also helped people to build community connections that help reduce reliance on social care; and work had

begun to create hundreds of new Extra Care homes at Griffin Court to make sure more people could live independently at home for longer.

In helping connect local people to jobs, the Council had pressed forward with regeneration across South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn, including securing £20m in Community Regeneration Partnership Funding. This would support projects like the Hebburn Town FC refurbishments, supporting the independent Jarrow Forward Town Board to develop a regeneration plan to steer £20 million towards local priorities over the next decade, and continuing with the South Shields Masterplan and the relocation of Tyne Coast College. Over 5,000 young people had been supported to navigate careers options, plus 1,300 residents had been assisted with employment and skills support. The Council had also worked with over 400 businesses through the South Tyneside Pledge to increase local spend and local recruitment.

To help ensure people were 'Part of Strong Communities,' South Tyneside had hosted a Climate Summit, seen the official opening of the innovative Viking Energy Network Jarrow, and been shortlisted for 'Green Council of the Year' at the Political Purpose Awards. New ultra-energy efficient council housing had been brought forward and reductions had been made in anti-social behaviour. Another year of events and cultural activities had been delivered, supporting home-grown cultural talent through the 'NEXT! Big Thing' programme and drawing millions of visitors to the Borough.

In pursuit of the commitment around 'Targeting Support to Make Things Fairer,' the first year of the South Tyneside Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy had been delivered. Eight EDIB employee networks had been grown, and diverse communities had been celebrated with events including 'Pride in South Tyneside.' The Hate Crime Strategy had also been launched and the Council had hosted the 'From Adversity to Diversity' Conference. Work had also been done with local businesses to promote inclusive employment and support had been strengthened for the Armed Forces community, including with the launch of our new Veteran's Walkway memorial. Walkability Audits of South Shields Town Centre and South Shields Town Hall had also been completed to identify and remove barriers to access faced by people with disabilities or who are navigating older age.

Councillor Francis commended the work of the Council and its partners which was outlined in the report.

Councillor Foreman praised the work of the Welfare Support Team who had secured £11.1 million in financial support for residents. He also highlighted the work of the Borough's foodbanks which demonstrated how the Council, partners and residents could join together to help the unfortunate.

Councillor Hamilton noted that the report from the Care Quality Commission's inspection had not been completed. She stressed that a reorganisation of Adult Social Care was required it currently demanded 75% of the Council's budget.

Councillor Hamilton also observed that one of the Council's new children's homes was still not in use, despite its completion and the demand on service.

Councillor Davies clarified that the children's home would be populated once it had been signed off by Ofsted. Councillor Hamilton noted that according to the report, the Council were waiting for employees to take their posts. Councillor McHugh offered clarification on this, she confirmed that there were three new children's homes being established in the Borough, including one in South Shields which would have a young person moving in by the end of the week and another by the end of the month. In terms of the homes in Jarrow and Hebburn, both were awaiting registration from Ofsted and would be used to house children who had previously been housed outside of the Borough. She stressed that this process could take time as assessments needed to be made as to whether this kind of accommodation would be suitable for the children moving there. In terms of recruitment, two more employees had been hired following publication of the report and due to the vulnerability of the children who would be living at the care homes, thorough recruitment processes were required which could take time.

Councillor Robertson thanked the Council's officers and noted that reduced funding was down to Central Government.

Councillor Porthouse acknowledged that there was a lot to celebrate within the report with exciting and impactful projects yet to come. He commended the work being done around the 'targeting support to make things fairer' ambition, which underpinned all of the Council's ambitions and encompassed all services from social care to unemployment support. He was glad to see that targeted programmes of work were helping communities in Jarrow and Biddick Hall, and that vital progress had been made around EDIB.

Councillor Lamonte cited employment and skills programmes which worked to connect residents to jobs and opportunities, creating the right conditions for economic growth. She also acknowledged the positive difference that the South Tyneside College relocation would make for South Shields Town Centre, as well as the Jarrow Forward plan and transformational investment for Hebburn Town Centre. Investment had also been made into the International Advanced Manufacturing (IAM) park to attract investment while creating more jobs. The South Tyneside Pledge had also strengthened networking between local businesses and work had also been undertaken to help encourage pupils to explore different career pathways and academic subjects. Skills hubs had also supported residents with maths, English and employability skills. Targeted work, including a summit, would look at economic inactivity and how the Council can support people to get back into work.

Councillor Berkley acknowledged the delay with the CQC report but put this down to internal issues within the CQC itself. She highlighted the Council's delivery of new extra care facilities which were phenomenal and revitalised the areas where they had been built, also receiving support from the community. She stressed that Adult Social Care were committed to co-production, particularly in listening to carers. In terms of Public Health, additional support had been provided for survivors of domestic abuse and those suffering from social isolation. The 'Swap to Stop' service had also helped a growing number of residents to quit smoking.

Councillor Davies praised the work of the Untidy Sites Committee. He also welcomed the Pride of Place funding for Biddick Hall and the opportunity this would bring for delivering what ward residents want for their community.

Councillor Dixon stressed that the Adult Social Care Team were excellent and highlighted some of the other programmes within this service. She outlined the Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy, new supported accommodation for adults with additional needs, the Guiding You Home programme and Borrowdale House extra care facility which had supported 158 people coming out of hospital to live independently, the Lets Talk Team and the local hub offer, the newly launched advocacy service, and the new Safeguarding Handbook, to name a few.

Resolved: That (a) Council note the report and the progress made throughout 2025 and high-level plans for 2026 and approve them for publication on the Council website.

Reason for decision: The Annual Report 2025 helps to monitor progress against the Ambitions and Priorities set out in the South Tyneside Council Vision and Strategy. The Delivery Plan 2026 helps to provide clarity on plans for 2026, in line with the Ambitions and Priorities, and publication of these documents on the Council website promotes openness and transparency.

8. Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25

Submitted: Report of the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit Committee

Councillor Davies, Chair of Audit Committee, presented the report which provided detail of the Audit Committee's work over the municipal year 2024/25, satisfying the requirements of the Constitution. The report covered activity considered by Committee at its meetings between October 2024 and November 2025.

Membership of the committee had been refreshed in May 2025 as a new Chair and Vice Chair were appointed. In July the Membership was refreshed again and Councillor Davies was appointed Chair, with Councillor Porthouse as Vice Chair. Both Members could see opportunities for the Audit Committee to develop further and provide robust and constructive challenge to the Cabinet and Council, supporting the organisation to improve its risk management, control and governance processes. They were also keen to deliver improvements in openness, transparency and reporting of the Committee's work.

Two co-opted members were also reappointed in May 2025 and played a crucial role in reinforcing political neutrality and independence while also maintaining continuity in the committee membership.

Following the refresh in May 2025, all newly appointed Members were offered training which covered key topics and functions within the Committee's remit. Further training was also arranged for all committee members which covered the role of Internal Audit within Local Government; and the Chair and Vice Chair were also invited to attend the North-East Audit Committee Chair Forum.

The report went on to outline the Committee's key activities in:

- Risk management;
- Internal Audit;
- Financial statements and external audit; and
- Budget monitoring.

Councillor Robertson observed that the report did not mention the Internal Audit Charter which recommended that the Internal Audit service be assessed by an external organisation every five years. He noted that the last assessment had been made in 2019 and asked why another had not been arranged. He also asked Councillor Davies, as the Chair of the Audit Committee, if Internal Audit was fit for purpose. He asked if the Chair would request that CIPFA return for another assessment following completion of the action plan. Finally, he asked if Councillor Davies had completed the LGA training for Audit Committee Chairs. Councillor Davies responded that he had been unable to attend the LGA training but had completed the mandatory internal training. He had also addressed the CIPFA action plan and a report on this could be brought to the next committee meeting. He also assured that as Chair of the Audit Committee, he provided strong challenge to Internal Audit and he hoped over time a stronger relationship could be formed. The Committee had also looked at a review of the Internal Audit Charter as the standards had been changed.

Councillor Foreman commended the report and thanked the Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee as they had provided good challenge, which had been presented comprehensively in the report, during an integral financial period.

Councillor Yare thanked the Chair for his professionalism and stressed that the internal audit resources should be protected and maintained for financial stability in the future.

Councillor Roberts asked whether a report on Members Travel and Usage of the Civic Car would be brought back to the Committee. The Chair confirmed this would be brought to the meeting in March.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason for decision: To comply with the Constitution.

9. Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Policy 2026 - 2031

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

Councillor Carter, Lead Member for Housing and Community Safety, presented the report which sought agreement of the revised Licensing Act 2003 Policy for South Tyneside which had been approved by Cabinet. The report ensured the Local Authority could continue to meet statutory obligations under the Licensing Act 2003. The proposed Licensing Act policy was appended to the report.

The Licensing Act policy consultation did not attract any significant or relevant representations, so the policy had been updated and refreshed to include any new legislation and statutory guidance.

There were some amendments to the policy which included a stronger public health message and confirmation of the removal of the Special Policy Area around South Shields Town Centre, following a Cumulative Impact Assessment in 2023.

A re-affirmed message was also included which stressed that South Tyneside Council's Licensing Service did not use blanket conditioning when considering applications and that all conditions must be proportionate and necessary. A final message also stressed that all main licensing policies were fully digital and available online.

Resolved: That the revised Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Policy 2026 – 2031 be approved.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to review the policy at least once every five years and to continue to effectively administer and enforce the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Home Office.

10. Ecological Emergency Annual Update 2024/25

Submitted: Report of the Director of Place Strategy

Councillor Meling, Lead Member for Economic Growth and Transport, presented the report which provided an annual update on the Council's Ecological Emergency Declaration; summarising progress made between April 2024 to March 2025 against the commitments set out in the Ecological Emergency Action Plan. It explained the actions taken, highlighted key achievements, and next steps to continue delivering on statutory duties and wider ecological objectives.

South Tyneside Council declared an Ecological Emergency in March 2023 to address the urgent decline in biodiversity and nature. This report provided the second annual update (April 2024 to March 2025) on progress against the Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

During the reporting period, progress had been focused on statutory functions, but with additional positive outcomes that went beyond compliance. The report outlined progress against:

- Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Responsible Body Status;
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
- Strengthened Biodiversity Duty;
- COAST South Tyneside;
- Lane Management for Biodiversity.

Councillor R. Taylor thanked officers for their professionalism and genuine enthusiasm for protecting nature in South Tyneside. She added that in reality Central Government policy had forced development through the Local Plan process. She encouraged residents and Members to respond to the consultation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as public voices were important. She also advised the national picture as the Government had missed several environmental targets and highlighted the limitations on local power.

Councillor Smith noted that it was positive to read that there were two new sites for future deliveries. He asked whether there was a timeline in mind for the development of these sites, thanking the Council for the planting of new trees in Carr Ellison Park.

Councillor Owens-Palmer stressed that the ecological emergency was a crisis that needed to be addressed. She asked if green spaces in areas of development would be replaced like for like to support the natural environment. She also suggested that rather than placing conditions on planning applications around planting trees, hedgerows would be a more effective habitat for a variety of animals. Councillor Brenen also echoed concerns that playing fields were being lost to development without being replaced, as advised by Sports England. Councillor Meling noted that the Local Plan did hold a provision to replace playing fields but took Members' suggestions on board.

Councillor Ford welcomed the report and praised the staff for doing their best despite lacking resources.

Councillor Herbert noticed the importance of sea grass in sustaining coastal environments. However, it was very susceptible to pollution so the Council should challenge and hold Northumbrian Water to account.

Councillor Gynn suggested that nature would not recover as long as pesticides were continually used. She asked if there were any plans to reduce the use of these chemicals. Councillor Meling noted that this was a national issue and the Council would do what was possible within its own powers. She also acknowledged comments about Northumbrian Water but stressed there was very little the Council could do to hold them to account.

Councillor Kilgour welcomed the report setting out the Council's vision and goals and stressed the importance of delivering them. She noted that playing pitches in Hebburn were being renovated so it was not just about retaining pitches but

bring existing pitches back into use. She also noted the hedgerow suggestion which had been raised at a Planning Committee meeting, she advised that the developer was not able to do this it did not meeting requirements. She also suggested that developers should have a social conscious so that whatever is lost is gained tenfold.

Resolved: That the report and information in relation to the Ecological Emergency Action Plan and associated delivery activities supporting the Council's commitment under the Ecological Emergency Declaration be noted.

Reason for decision: To ensure that Council is informed of progress made in delivering the Ecological Emergency Action Plan and the associated activities supporting the Council's commitment to addressing the Ecological Emergency.

11. Domestic Abuse Annual Report

Submitted: Report of the Director of Public Health

Councillor Berkley, Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence, presented the report which provided an update on the progress and achievements of the Council and its partners tackling domestic abuse across November 2024 to November 2025. The report included an overview of the work carried out, case studies as well as a summary of activities for White Ribbon Day on 25th November 2025 and the following 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

It was a statutory requirement that as a local authority the Council must produce a domestic abuse strategy, and the annual report provided the Council and partners assurance of the work being achieved. As well as providing updates, Strategy also highlighted challenges and barriers.

Council services were continually seeing repeated cases with the same perpetrator, an increase in coercive control and stalking cases and domestic abuse related deaths. The strategy had taken this into account and considered how learning would be implemented to improve outcomes for all victims, including children and tackling the perpetrators to reduce further harm.

The Strategy also looked at the availability of appropriate safe accommodation, particularly for more complex cases. Public Health were working closely with other Council services and housing colleagues, to ensure victims were safe and provided with wrap-around support. There had been some successes in this area with the introduction of the domestic abuse housing policy for South Tyneside Housing and strategic housing colleagues, and the static refuge. However, demand for accommodation was increasing for single women with complex needs.

South Tyneside has also seen several domestic abuse related deaths and suspected suicides where a victim had taken their own life. Work was ongoing with the police and probation services to address perpetrator behaviour. However, there was more work needed to strengthen multi agency ways of working to achieve better outcomes.

Councillor Gynn commended the establishment of a static refuge and the vital role being played by the Housing team in identifying signs of domestic abuse. She stressed the importance of calling out misogynistic language and behaviour.

Resolved: That the work outlined in the annual report be acknowledged and noted.

Reason for decision: Domestic Abuse work requires support from across the whole system, and Council and Elected Members are a key partner to ensure the issues within local communities are addressed and support is provided to those affected by domestic abuse.

12. Annual Scrutiny Report 2025/26

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor McCabe, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report which provided an update on the work of the Council's scrutiny committees during the municipal year 2025/26.

It was highlighted that the scrutiny function was an essential component of local democracy, enhancing the accountability and transparency of decision making, enabling Councillors to make decisions that represent the views of residents.

Each scrutiny committee was responsible for setting its own work programme, within the scope of its terms of reference, and could consider topics through a variety of methods including reports, presentations, deep dives and commissions. Scrutiny committees also have the ability to make evidence-based recommendations with the view to improving services for residents.

An overview of the work undertaken by the seven scrutiny committees was presented within the report. The committees were:

- Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating and Call-in Scrutiny Committee;
 - Our Place Scrutiny Committee;
 - Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee;
 - Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
 - Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee;
 - Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee;
 - Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
-

Councillor Davies stressed that it was everyone's responsibility to scrutinise and would welcome more public attendance. He stressed the importance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its work scrutinising the Council's Annual Report and Budget.

Councillor Yare thanked Councillor McCabe for his chairmanship as well as all the Members involved in the Call-in that had happened in the last year as this was a good demonstration of effective scrutiny.

Councillor McCabe thanked all scrutiny Members for their work over the last year, as well as any public that had attended. He also thanked the Democratic Services officers for their hard work.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason for decision: To raise awareness of the work and activities of scrutiny committees and to ensure compliance with the Terms of Reference of each scrutiny committee as per the Constitution.

13. Report to Appoint the Membership of Committees of the Council

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which provided information regarding a requirement to recalculate proportionality following changes to the political groupings of the Council.

Since the last meeting of Council held in October 2025 Councillor Harrison had resigned from the South Tyneside Alliance Group (STAG). The report provided information to assist Council regarding a requirement to recalculate proportionality to ensure that committees that are subject to political proportionality were correctly constituted following this change.

The changes were outlined as follows:

- As a consequence of the new political balance calculations there will be no change to seat allocations for the Labour Group, Green Group & REAL Independents.
- The STAG Group has one less allocation on Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee, General Purposes Committee and Common Land, Town and Village Green Committee.
- Councillor Harrison is proposed to be appointed to Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee, General Purposes Committee and Common Land, Town and Village Green Committee.

Resolved: That (a) the information included in the report with regard to the calculation of political balance for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year be noted; and (b) that the STAG Group have one

less allocation on the Contracts and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee, General Purposes Committee and Common Land, Town and Village Green Committee and that Councillor Harrison be appointed to these Committees as an unaligned Independent Member.

Reason for decision: *To ensure that the Council's political balance and proportionality is correctly applied and Council Committees are properly constituted.*

14. Report on Special Urgency Decisions 2024/25

Submitted: Report of the Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which provided details of Special Urgency Decisions taken over the course of the period January 2025 to January 2026.

The report provided background on what was meant by a Key Decision. These included:

- Any decisions involving expenditure in excess of £350,000 (excluding any decisions relating to investment of Council monies, or borrowing, undertaken as part of Treasury Management procedures or the purchase or sale of an investment or other transaction on behalf of the Tyne and Wear Pension Fund);
- A decision which was likely to be significant in the way in which they affect those people living and/or working in an area that in size is equivalent to two or more electoral wards in South Tyneside (as per the Constitution Part B – Articles of the Constitution, Article 16 Decision Making, para 16.3).

The law required the Council to give 28 days' notice of those decisions which would be published on a Forward Plan of Key Decisions which could be viewed on the Council website. However, in cases where an intended key decision could not wait for such notice then the Special Urgency Rule could be enacted.

The report provided a table which summarised the Special Urgency Decisions taken between January 2025 and January 2026.

Councillor Davies acknowledged that decisions needed to be made quickly but asked for clarification on the timeline of the Cabinet decision around the Upgrade of the National Cycle Route (NCN1) which was taken in November 2032.

Councillor Robertson asked why the two decisions outlined in the report were classed as special urgency. He also asked that Council be provided with the value of the transactions in future special urgency reports. Councillor Dixon explained that the Tyne Coast College decision needed to be made urgently so that funding could be released from the Department for Education and keep the work programme on track. Councillor Robertson asked for further explanation

around the other decision outlined in the report. Councillor Dixon explained that this was down to external funding, but a written response could provide further detail.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason for decision: As a tenet of good governance and in order to comply with constitutional requirements, it is important that Council have awareness of the number and nature of decisions taken under Rule 19 (Special Urgency).

15. To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

Three questions had been received under Council Procedure Rule 8.

Councillor Davies presented the following question which he had submitted:

Given that:

South Tyneside is home to diverse and well-established communities and has a strong record of promoting community cohesion through its policies, partnerships and engagement with residents; and

The Council's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy and wider community programmes seek to ensure that all residents are treated with dignity and respect and feel safe and welcome in the borough; and

From time to time, incidents involving damage to public property or the unauthorised display of symbols on council-owned infrastructure can give rise to concern among residents and community groups about the impact on community cohesion;

- 1. How does the Council, at a strategic and policy level, respond to such incidents and work with partners—including community organisations, schools, faith groups and other stakeholders—to promote positive community relations and inclusive civic participation; and*
- 2. Can the Council provide that supporting community cohesion and ensuring residents feel safe and welcome remains an ongoing priority within its corporate and partnership arrangements?*

It was confirmed that Councillor Davies would receive a written response within 7 days of the meeting. The question and answer provided would be added to the Question Book, open for public inspection.

Lewis Spence (member of the public) had submitted a question which was read out by the Mayor:

Will the Council review its arrangements for civic events to allow attendees, where they wish, to voluntarily reimburse the cost of their catering or attendance? If you deem such a mechanism not currently possible, can the Council explain why this is the case?

It was confirmed that Lewis Spence would receive a written response within 7 days of the meeting. The question and answer provided would be added to the Question Book, open for public inspection.

Sophia Malik (member of the public) had submitted a question which was read out by the Mayor:

Does the council allow for cycling to be claimed through expenses? If not, in line with the councils net zero commitments for 2030, would the council consider reviewing and updating its policy to include cycling as expensed travel?

It was confirmed that Sophia Malik would receive a written response within 7 days of the meeting. The question and answer provided would be added to the Question Book, open for public inspection.

16. To consider any petitions received under Procedure Rule 9

One petition had been received under Council Procedure Rule 9.

The petition, calling on the Council to protect and preserve the green fields around Marsden Primary School had 1269 signatories in total, 522 of which lived in the Borough.

Councillor R. Taylor presented the petition on behalf of the residents.

The petition stood referred to the Director of Place Strategy as the appropriate body for further consideration.

There was one petition presented to the meeting of Borough Council on the 24 July 2025 and an update report was provided for note.

17. To consider any Motions received under Procedure Rule 10

Two motions had been received under Council Procedure Rule 10.

Councillor Berkley proposed the following motion:

Motion 1: Tackling Youth Unemployment in South Tyneside

This Council notes:

- Youth unemployment is alarmingly high. In South Tyneside, 4.9% of people aged 16-24 claiming out of work benefits, compared to the North East average of 3.8% and national 4.1%.¹
- 9.8% of young people aged 18-21 are claiming benefits in South Tyneside, higher than both the North East (5.9%) and nationally (6.2%).²
- 31% of South Tyneside's working age population was economically inactive in the 12 months to March 2025, while North East and England-wide figures were 26% and 21.5% respectively.³
- These statistics reflect deep structural barriers, such as limited high-quality local opportunities, under-resourced vocational training, and insufficient targeted support.
- Programmes such as South Tyneside's Social Navigators helps support young people in the Borough, and the South Tyneside Partnership is planning a summit on economic activity in March.
- In May 2025, the Government launched a Youth Guarantee scheme to target support for young people to get into work, ensuring that all 18 to 21 year olds in England can access help to find work, including through work and training opportunities, free travel passes, mental health support, and money advice.⁴ This includes offering a guaranteed paid work placement to young people who have been out of a job or education for 18 months.
- In the Autumn Budget⁵, the Chancellor announced that:
 - £1.5 billion would be made available for the Youth Guarantee scheme and the Growth and Skills Levy, to tackle the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
 - The Government is launching an independent investigation to tackle rising young inactivity, focusing on preventing young people from becoming trapped out of work, education, or training.
- Kim McGuinness, Regional Mayor for the North East Combined Authority, has committed to supporting young people into employment, through the New Deal for North East Workers.⁶

This Council believes:

- That every young person in South Tyneside deserves access to secure employment, meaningful apprenticeships, and high-quality training opportunities.

¹ [South Tyneside Council Performance Update | Quarter 1 / End June 2025](#)

² [South Tyneside Council Performance Update | Quarter 1 / End June 2025](#)
[Out of work benefits - Office for National Statistics, 11 November 2025](#)

³ [South Tyneside Council Performance Update | Quarter 1 / End June 2025](#)

⁴ [GOV.UK \(2025\) Thousands of young people set to benefit from new support into work and training](#)

⁵ [Budget 2025 - Strong Foundations, Secure Future / November 2025](#)

⁶ [North East Combined Authority \(2025\) New Deal for North East Workers](#)

- That the Government support in tackling youth unemployment will be vital to get our young people into work, so that they can live happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives.
- That more can be done from a regional perspective to target support in the North East and South Tyneside, given the higher rates of young people not in employment, education or training.
- Addressing youth unemployment is vital for reducing poverty, securing health outcomes, and ensuring South Tyneside's prosperity.

This Council resolves:

1. To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, expressing our support for the Government's plans to reduce youth unemployment and emphasising the need for targeted regional strategies and investments to tackle this issue.
2. That the Council organises a Summit bringing together partners across the borough to develop a strategy that looks to better understand the barriers faced by young people in accessing education, training and skills, that prepares them for the world of work and encourages raising aspiration for their future success.

Signed:

Councillors: R Berkley (proposer)
L McHugh (seconder)
J Carter
R Porthouse
P Dean

The motion was seconded by Councillor L. McHugh.

Councillor Robertson moved an amendment to include a third resolution that 'the Council will publish copies of letters sent and received from the Secretary of State in future Borough Council agenda packs'.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Hamilton.

The amendment was unanimously agreed.

The amended motion was unanimously agreed.

Councillor Stonehouse proposed the following motion:

Motion 2: Improving Men's Health Outcomes in South Tyneside

This Council notes that:

Men's health outcomes are shaped not only by medical factors, but by wider social, economic and community conditions. Many men experience poorer health outcomes because they are less likely to access preventative services, disclose mental distress, or engage early with support.

In England, men die on average almost four years earlier than women and experience higher rates of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease, cancer and suicide. Suicide remains the leading cause of death for men under 50, with a concerning increase among men aged 35–64.

Evidence highlighted by the Local Government Association shows that effective approaches to men's health are rooted in prevention, place-based working and community connection, recognising that many men engage more readily in informal, trusted and non-clinical settings.

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for public health and a unique ability to convene partners, shape place-based responses and support preventative approaches that reduce health inequalities and pressure on acute services.

This Council recognises and welcomes the positive work already taking place locally to support men's mental health and wellbeing, including the presence of Andy's Man Club as a peer-led support network, and the Red Bench Project, which provides visible and accessible prompts for conversation, reflection and signposting to support.

Members note international experience, including Australia's National Men's Health Strategy, which places a strong emphasis on early intervention across the life course, addressing disadvantage from an early age, and recognising the role of families, communities and public services in preventing poor outcomes later in life.

Improving men's health outcomes contributes directly to wider council priorities, including reducing health inequalities, supporting economic participation, strengthening communities and improving quality of life across the borough.

This Council resolves to:

- Welcome the Government's intention to develop a National Men's Health Strategy and ensure that South Tyneside Council engages constructively with any call for evidence, reflecting local need, lived experience and existing good practice.
 - Request that Public Health, working with the Health and Wellbeing Board, considers how men's health inequalities are addressed within existing strategies, including suicide prevention, cancer screening uptake and cardiovascular health.
 - Ask relevant scrutiny committees to review how council-commissioned and partner-delivered services engage men, particularly those least
-

likely to access traditional health services, and to identify opportunities to improve reach and effectiveness within existing resources.

- Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, calling for the development of a comprehensive national approach to men's health screening and early intervention, recognising the role that earlier diagnosis and preventative action would play in reducing avoidable illness and premature death among men.
- Encourage the continued use and promotion of proven, low-barrier and community-based approaches in Council Communications, including informal settings and peer support, to improve men's mental wellbeing, physical health and social connection.
- Ensure that relevant council strategies and services are gender-informed, recognising that equality requires addressing different barriers to access and outcomes, and that improving men's health is a necessary component of reducing overall health inequality in South Tyneside.

Signed:

Councillors: S Stonehouse (proposer)
D Francis (seconder)
R Taylor
C Davies
D Herbert

The motion was seconded by Councillor Francis.

Councillor Robertson moved an amendment to include an additional resolution that 'the Council will publish copies of letters sent and received from the Secretary of State in future Borough Council agenda packs'.

Councillor Davies seconded the amendment.

Councillor Kilgour suggested that instead the process of correspondence being published could be a topic considered by Constitution Working Group. It was noted that all correspondence sent by the Leader of the Council in relation to motions is included in the folder in the Fitzpatrick Room, which is also accessible to members of the public upon request.

The amendment was unanimously agreed.

A named vote was taken on the amended motion. The votes were cast as follows:

FOR: 35 (Berkley, Brenen, Brown, Carter, Coombes, Cunningham, Davies, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Foggon, Ford, Francis, Guy, Harrison, Herbert, Keegan, Kennedy, Kilgour, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McHugh, Meling, Owens-Palmer, Porthouse, K. Roberts, Smith, Stonehouse, Strike, J. Taylor, R. Taylor, Traynor and Yare.

AGAINST: 1 (Hamilton)

The amended motion was carried.

ANNEX 1 Does not form part of the Minutes of the Meeting.

QUESTIONS ARISING WITHIN THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 15 JANUARY 2026

Item 5 – Treasury Management Mid Year Review – 30 September 2025

Councillor Robertson asked what the mentality was behind the Council borrowing £50 million but only investing £5 million.

Answer:

It is common practice for organisations including councils to have outstanding debt (loans) as well as investments at any one time. The Council's cashflow is highly volatile and it must ensure it retains sufficient cash at any one time to pay suppliers, staff costs and payments to other bodies including Government. These include investments to which the Council has ready access whilst at the same time generating some interest income.

Councillor Guy noted from the report that interest rates had not gone as expected, however some financial commitments had been made based on these predictions. He asked how these interest rates were being predicted.

Answer:

Interest rate projections are based upon forecasts from independent external bodies such as MUFG (who also act as the Council advisers) as well as Capital Economics who employ a range of expert economists.

Item 8 – Annual Report of the Chair of Audit Committee

Councillor Robertson observed that the report did not mention the Internal Audit Charter which recommended that the Internal Audit service be assessed by an external organisation every five years. He noted that the last assessment had been made in 2019 and asked why another had not been arranged.

Answer:

The new Global Internal Audit Standards have only recently been finalised and consequently an independent assessment against these new standards will be scheduled for this calendar year.

Item 10 – Ecological emergency

Councillor Smith noted that it was positive to read that there were two new sites for future deliveries. He asked whether there was a timeline in mind for the development of these sites.

Answer:

We are working towards having the first site operational mid-2026. The second site may take a little longer to bring forward but timescales will be refined over the coming months.

Item 14 – Cabinet Special Urgency Decisions

Councillor Davies asked for clarification on the timeline of the Cabinet decision around the upgrades on NCN1.

Answer:

Given this was a decision taken in 2023, it would not have been covered in the Special Urgency Decision Report covering January 2025 to January 2026.

However to confirm, the Upgrade of the National Cycle Route (NCN1) – Direct Contract Award was considered by Cabinet on 1 November 2023.

The Forward Plan for this period is available [here](#), and the webpage notes it was published in October 2023. The report does not indicate that it was taken as a Special Urgency or General Exception Decision.

Councillor Robertson asked why the two decisions outlined in the report were classed as special urgency. He also asked that Council be provided with the value of the transactions in future special urgency reports. Councillor Dixon explained that the Tyne Coast College decision needed to be made urgently so that funding could be released from the Department for Education and keep the work programme on track. Councillor Robertson asked for further explanation around the other decision outlined in the report. Councillor Dixon explained that this was down to external funding, but a written response could provide further detail.

Answer:

There were two decisions detailed in the report. The Variation of Development Agreement between the Council and Tyne Coast College was an exempt report due to the commercial and confidential details which it included, as per Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. Therefore it is not possible to outline any specific financial details from this report. It was considered under the Special Urgency Rule in order to enable the release of funding from the Department of Education that the land transfer would trigger, enabling the continuation of the work programme in line with the required timescales. Occasionally, due to circumstances outside of the Council's control such as when decisions involve other partners, stakeholders, or central government, we may receive notice of

required decisions to be made at short notice and it is important that we use mechanisms at the Council's disposal – such as the Special Urgency Rule – to ensure the efficient functioning of Council business and to ensure external funding opportunities are not lost.

Regarding the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund this report is in the public domain and as per paragraph 8 of that report, the phase 1 contract value for South Tyneside Council was estimated as up to £901,000. Special Urgency Decisions are rare but ensure the Council is able to make decisions in a timely manner, particularly when they involve regional partners and stakeholders. If the Council had not taken this decision in a timely manner, it could have significantly impacted the North East Combined Authority's ability to access funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure programme. That would have not only delayed current delivery plans, but may have also jeopardised future funding allocations from central government.

Item 15 – To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

Councillor Davies presented the following question which he had submitted:

Given that:

South Tyneside is home to diverse and well-established communities and has a strong record of promoting community cohesion through its policies, partnerships and engagement with residents; and

The Council's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy and wider community programmes seek to ensure that all residents are treated with dignity and respect and feel safe and welcome in the borough; and

From time to time, incidents involving damage to public property or the unauthorised display of symbols on council-owned infrastructure can give rise to concern among residents and community groups about the impact on community cohesion;

- 1. How does the Council, at a strategic and policy level, respond to such incidents and work with partners—including community organisations, schools, faith groups and other stakeholders—to promote positive community relations and inclusive civic participation; and*
- 2. Can the Council provide that supporting community cohesion and ensuring residents feel safe and welcome remains an ongoing priority within its corporate and partnership arrangements?*

Answer:

South Tyneside is proud to be home to diverse and well-established communities and has a strong record of promoting community cohesion through

its policies, partnerships, and engagement with residents. The Council's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, alongside wider community programmes, seeks to ensure that all residents are treated with dignity and respect and feel safe and welcome in the borough.

From time to time, incidents involving damage to public property or the unauthorised display of symbols on council-owned infrastructure can give rise to concern among residents and community groups about the impact on community cohesion. The Council takes these matters extremely seriously, and responds promptly and proportionately.

Lewis Spence (member of the public) had submitted a question which was read out by the Mayor:

Will the Council review its arrangements for civic events to allow attendees, where they wish, to voluntarily reimburse the cost of their catering or attendance? If you deem such a mechanism not currently possible, can the Council explain why this is the case?

Answer:

The Council is proud to celebrate and commemorate important events for the people of South Tyneside. It continually seeks to manage its resources carefully and ensure value for money in everything it does. The cost of catering associated with civic events has been raised regularly and the Council publishes on an annual basis the costs of associated hospitality.

The events team within the Council is small and already has a high workload supporting many events during the course of the year. The administration associated with receiving donations from some participants at events towards catering costs could become cumbersome and disproportionate to the expected small sums involved such as the calculation of unit costs, confirmation of attendees and associated communications, issuing of invoices and pursuit of payment. It also runs the risk that it becomes politicised with requests made to identify who has and who has not made a contribution at specific events which would need to be recorded. Participants may also seek to pay different amounts depending upon their judgement of the level of catering to which they believe they have personally benefitted.

If participants are concerned about the costs they may of course choose to decline to attend, make a contribution to the mayor's charity as a goodwill gesture which is an alternative that has been suggested to persons who have previously made this proposal or if an elected member choose to forgo an element of their allowance on a voluntary basis.

Sophia Malik (member of the public) had submitted a question which was read out by the Mayor:

Does the council allow for cycling to be claimed through expenses? If not, in line with the councils net zero commitments for 2030, would the

council consider reviewing and updating its policy to include cycling as expensed travel?

Answer:

We currently do not have provision for employees to claim bicycle mileage in our Travel and Subsistence Policy. Our current payroll system is also not able to process the payments. However, we are currently implementing a new people and payroll system, iTrent, and this will have functionality to do this. This new system will be live later this year.

If the payment of bicycle mileage is something that the Council would like to consider, we could explore options and add this to our Pay and Reward action plan.



The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Date: 30 January 2026
Ref: TD/JS

Email: mcfaddenp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

In Support of Government Efforts to Tackle Youth Unemployment

I am writing on behalf of South Tyneside Council to express our strong support for your government's commitment to reducing youth unemployment and economic inactivity.

The scale of the challenge in our borough remains significant. 6.7% of our 16 to 24 year olds are claiming out-of-work benefits, rising to 8.9% among 18 to 24s and 10.4% for those aged 18 to 21. Combined with high economic inactivity - where one in three (33.2%) working-age residents are currently inactive - this challenge demands coordinated and well-resourced national and regional action.

Structural inequalities and labour market barriers play a major role in shaping these outcomes. As the Social Mobility Commission has highlighted, regional inequalities persist despite some progress. We see this daily, in an economy where opportunity is uneven and where too many young people lack investment, tailored support, pathways and confidence needed to move into secure employment.

Across South Tyneside, our partners are working tirelessly to support young people into education, training and work. The South Tyneside Partnership will convene an Economic Inclusion Summit in March to bring together public, voluntary, health and employment sectors to examine the drivers of inactivity, identify gaps, and promote innovation and collaboration in service design.

Local delivery of the Connect to Work programme is now underway, offering targeted, one-to-one employment support to economically inactive residents with complex or health-related barriers. Our Employment and Skills Navigators - previously funded through UKSPF - are now integrated into this offer to strengthen personalised support for residents facing the steepest challenges.



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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We recognise that inspiring our youth and instilling a desire for work must start immediately, at a young age. Our work in schools through South Tyneside Works and Connexions South Tyneside ensures pupils from primary age onwards understand the world of work, are inspired by local industries, and are equipped with the knowledge and support to make informed decisions about their futures.

We also recognise the role of our local firms, having leveraged private-sector investment to deliver nationally recognised programmes such as our STEM careers initiative with Dogger Bank Wind Farm, and our schools consistently perform well against the Gatsby Benchmarks relative to neighbouring authorities.

The voices of young people also shape our approach. South Tyneside Youth Council's 2024-26 campaign found that young people want greater access to volunteering to grow confidence, employability skills and readiness for work. They have now produced a practical employer guide and are developing a film to highlight the benefits of youth volunteering across the borough, ensuring their voices are heard.

Our Young Health Ambassadors programme is helping to tackle mental health related barriers to employment. These young ambassadors are trained to deliver peer support in schools, run stigma-reducing mental health campaigns, and gain key skills, confidence and aspirations through involvement in community and wellbeing projects.

Apprenticeships are central to our local economy, particularly given the importance of our manufacturing and industrial base. However, businesses, especially SMEs, face significant barriers, including:

- Financial constraints and lack of clarity around funding;
- The loss of national support programmes such as the ASK service;
- Restrictive eligibility rules for young people under 19; and
- Burdensome Math's and English entry requirements which prevent many from applying for quality roles.

Local employers consistently report the perceived cost of taking on an apprentice - including salary and training time - as a major deterrent, despite their desire to invest in young talent. Colleges also report sectoral challenges such as age restrictions in construction and lack of employer incentives atop of resource pressures.

While we certainly welcome reforms to the Apprenticeship Levy and the additional support outlined in the Budget, further targeted flexibility and support for SMEs would help unlock more high-quality opportunities in sectors vital to our regional growth. This year, we anticipate an impact on apprenticeship figures following the loss of the ASK service, and with this an impact on our youth's future prospects.



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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We also welcome the expansion of the WorkWell pilot nationwide. Nearly half of participants in the pilot cited mental illness as their primary barrier to work - something mirrored locally, where one in three PIP claimants experience psychiatric disorders and one in five report anxiety, depression, stress or mood-related conditions. This is why early intervention, wellbeing support and integrated education-employment-health pathways remain essential pillars of our local strategy.

Despite optimism, we are conscious that such initiatives target the economically inactive, meaning that those classed as unemployed are excluded based on funding constraints. Whilst local economic inactivity rates dwarf that of unemployment, the number of economically inactive residents who want a job is roughly the same as those who are unemployed. It's crucial that we avoid alienating half of the potential (out-of-)workforce through stringent criteria and ensure delivery of flexible support packages suitable for local areas' needs.

To this end, we are feeding into the independent review led by Alan Milburn into youth unemployment and inactivity. The cumulative impact of long-term underinvestment in young people, the lasting effects of the pandemic, and the scarring consequences of unemployment underscore the need for bold, joined-up action.

Targeted regional strategies and accompanying adequate funding are vital to the North East's success. As employment, employability and skills fall within my remit as a regional portfolio holder, we have ambitious long-term plans through the Mayor's New Deal for North East Workers which we are committed to delivering across the region.

As Leader of South Tyneside Council, I firmly believe that every young person deserves access to secure employment, meaningful apprenticeships and high-quality training. This Council recognises that reducing youth unemployment is fundamental to reducing poverty, improving health outcomes and ensuring long-term prosperity for our communities.

To this end, we ask for your continued support in enabling places like South Tyneside to deliver ambitious, place-based approaches to employment and skills, and for the government to recognise challenges outlined herein. We also extend a warm invitation for you to attend and speak at our upcoming Economic Inclusion Summit on 10th March, where your contribution would provide valuable national context and strengthen our shared mission.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Date: 19 February 2026
Ref: TD/JS

Via email: Wes.streeting.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing on behalf of South Tyneside Council to express our strong support for the Government's renewed focus on men's health. We welcome your commitment to tackling the persistent challenges men face and urge you to place prevention, early identification, and timely treatment at the heart of the Men's Health National Strategy delivery plan.

In South Tyneside, men continue to experience disproportionately high rates of preventable ill health. Recent local data indicates that men in the borough are significantly more likely to suffer from conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and chronic respiratory illnesses compared to the national average. For example, the rate of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease among men in South Tyneside is notably above the England average, and nearly 1 in 4 men are classified as obese, increasing their risk of related complications. These statistics underscore the pressing need for targeted prevention and early intervention efforts to address the underlying causes of poor health outcomes for men in our community.

We welcome and respect the role of the UK National Screening Committee in recommending evidence-based population screening programmes. With regards to prostate cancer screening, while we recognise that whole population screening may cause more harm than good, we also know that more targeted or opportunistic programmes run the risk of widening health inequalities. We urge the government to consider how men from the poorest backgrounds, and with the greatest needs, receive disproportionately more attention (proactive and personalised) through any kind of targeted programme.

Effective prevention and community engagement are critical to improving health outcomes for men, particularly in areas like South Tyneside where the impact of deprivation, alcohol misuse, mental health concerns, and high suicide rates is deeply felt. Local government is uniquely positioned to lead and support these efforts, drawing on close connections with our communities and the ability to deliver tailored interventions that address local needs.



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However, real progress depends on sustained and adequate investment in public health and place-based solutions. The public health grant is a vital enabler for local authorities to drive prevention and early intervention programmes that can transform lives and reduce long-term pressures on NHS and social care services. Without enhanced funding, our capacity to address these urgent challenges and scale up effective initiatives is severely limited.

In South Tyneside, we are proud of our innovative approaches and how we have sought to weave in the distinctive needs of men (and other priority groups), including through Pride in Place, Neighbourhood Health, and our Council Men's Network and wider Community Cohesion Strategy. Our Council Men's Network recently held a dedicated men's health week, working with local partners. We have dedicated programmes of work around suicide prevention, alcohol harm reduction and employment, all of which recognised the significantly increased risk in men.

These initiatives foster local pride, improve access to support, and strengthen community resilience, helping to tackle the root causes of poor health and reduce inequalities. By investing in such place-based solutions, we can build healthier futures for men across our borough.

We are keen to work in partnership with Government to ensure that the national strategy delivers real change on the ground. We would welcome the opportunity to invite you to the Borough and discuss how South Tyneside can contribute to, and help realise, the ambition of better health for all men especially those most at risk.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. We look forward to ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of South Tyneside Council

Cllr Ruth Berkley
Lead Member Adults, Health and Independence



Councillor Tracey Dixon
Leader South Tyneside Council

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