

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**15 NOVEMBER 2018**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook**

**COUNCIL PLAN 2018-21 – MID YEAR UPDATE REPORT**

Summary

This report provides an update on the Council Plan.

Recommendations

That the report be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To allow Members to receive information about the Council Plan.

Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code).

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

#### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

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**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Council Plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the report be noted.

**DETAIL**

The full report is attached at Appendix 1.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. The Council Plan, whilst covering all of the Council's services, does not include any policy changes and there are therefore no community impact implications as a direct result of this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. This report is aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan although there are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report.

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

The development of the Council Plan is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

**CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no corporate parenting implications as a direct result of this report.

## **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES**

This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. This report therefore covers all of the Council Plan Policy Principles.

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Education related Not specifically

Background Papers: None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: N/A

Property: N/A

# **Big Plans, Bright Future**

## **COUNCIL PLAN 2018-21**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Though we continue to face huge ongoing financial and economic challenges, we remain very ambitious for Stockton-on-Tees and this year has seen us continue to deliver for our residents and businesses. The scale of the challenge is unprecedented and leaves us facing more incredibly difficult decisions.

We are committed to developing the Council and ensuring we deliver high quality, customer focused services that meet the changing needs of our communities. We have:

- Been shortlisted in no fewer than 6 award categories, and also for the prestigious 'Council of the Year' award at the Association of Public Service Excellence Awards, winning the 'Best Service Team of the Year: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural' Award
- Maintained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the sixth consecutive year, securing the highest possible "compliance +" rating in 12 categories
- Continued to implement improvements in direct response to the Ipsos MORI residents' survey undertaken across the Borough in 2015.
- Received another extremely positive report from our Auditors, who said: "The Council is well aware of the financial challenges it is facing in the future" and "The Council remains well placed to face these challenges and officers continue to keep the overall position under close review"
- Continued to invest in our employees through the Shaping a Brighter Future programme, maintained our Silver Investor in People award and achieved the highest 'Continuing Excellence' level in the Better Health at Work Awards.
- Restructured and reduced the size of our senior management team to ensure it reflects the council's changing shape and size.
- Continued to challenge and change the way we work through our Smarter Working in Stockton programme as we continue to deliver our services with a 25% reduction in the size of our workforce since the programme of cuts began in 2010/11.

## OUR VISION

### ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

...is of an economically prosperous Borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.

**BIG PLANS FOR AN OUTSTANDING BOROUGH**

### COMMUNITY SAFETY

...is to make the Borough a place where levels of crime and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

**BIG PLANS FOR KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE**

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

...is for a place where people are supported to be healthy.

**BIG PLANS FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE**

### ADULTS

...is that people can get the right level and type of support at the right time to help, prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.

**BIG PLANS FOR THE CARE WE PROVIDE**

### ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

...is to make the Borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces, affordable and desirable housing.

**BIG PLANS FOR OUR PLACES AND OPEN SPACES**

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

.....is of a great place to grow up, where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to be the best they can be in life.

**BIG PLANS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF OUR BOROUGH**

### STRONG COMMUNITIES

...is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

**BIG PLANS FOR HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES PROSPER**

### ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

...is of a Borough where our heritage, festivals, cultural activities and leisure facilities help us attract visitors and investment, and where sport and active leisure opportunities help people sustain healthier lifestyles.

**BIG PLANS FOR GREAT EXPERIENCES**

## OUR COUNCIL

...is of a Council that prides itself on being open, honest and fair. On leading by example. On having big plans and the determination to see them through. We're facing difficult financial challenges and we can't do all we used to do so we're facing some tough decisions. Throughout this we'll stay focused on delivering genuine value for money, on setting the highest standards of public service, on communicating clearly and regularly with the community we serve and on being challenging, innovative and well organized.

**AMBITIOUS, EFFECTIVE AND PROUD TO SERVE**

## OUR POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Council has to take decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered with the resources available. In doing this we have to take account of a number of factors such as reduced funding, changing demographics, increasing demand for services and new legislation and national policy direction. However under-pinning all our decisions are our four policy principles. We apply these principles to all our decision making. Wherever possible we will:

➤ **Protect the vulnerable by**

- protecting people who are subject to or at risk of harm
- helping people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- supporting people who are financially excluded
- assisting people whose circumstances make them vulnerable

➤ **Create economic prosperity by**

- ensuring the businesses and people of Stockton-on-Tees are part of a thriving and productive Tees Valley economy

➤ **Tackle inequality through improving**

- health
- job opportunities, skills and training
- educational attainment for all
- affordable housing and fuel poverty
- financial inclusion

➤ **Help people to be healthier by**

- providing mainstream services that are available where needed
- providing preventive services that are available where needed



## OUR CULTURE

We deliver services by drawing on our **workforce culture** – the values and behaviours we have agreed we want to encourage here at the Council.

We are an organisation where we all make a positive contribution at work for the whole Council. Where we never lose sight of the fact we are here to serve the people of the Borough.

This is a place where...

- We are valued, trusted and supported
- We are heard
- We take responsibility for our own development
- We work hard
- We are not afraid to try something new
- We belong

## OUR RESOURCES

We've had to adapt to funding unprecedented funding reductions over the last eight years and are still confronted with having to find further savings. At the same time demand for services – particularly adult social care and children's services – continues to rise.

Finding additional savings by 2020/21 isn't going to be easy. Many difficult decisions will need to be made. We've made difficult decisions in the past which means we are as well placed as we can be in the future.

What we can be sure of is that we are in as good a position as we can be. We have a strong track record of sound financial management and we have been dealing with these problems successfully for many years. We have continued our programme of service reviews through our **Medium Term Financial Plan**:

- We have restructured and reduced the size of our senior management team to ensure it reflects the Council's changing shape and size, with further reductions planned
- We're continuing to focus on managing demand and reducing costs in our big areas of spend such as adult social care, children's social care, energy and waste
- We have received another extremely positive report from our Auditors, who said: "the Council manages its finances carefully to balance service needs and available resources in the short and medium term. The Council's most recent MTFP recognises the ongoing financial constraints and the need to continue to review services to identify cost efficiencies."
- We have made a long term commitment to continue to invest in our employees through the **Shaping a Brighter Future** programme
- We are challenging and changing the way we think about work, how we do it, our supporting infrastructure and how we can work smarter through our **Smarter Working in Stockton** programme

## OUR PEOPLE

Working closely with elected Members and with a close and constructive relationship with Trade Unions, the Council's workforce of 3,250 people strive to deliver the very best services across the Borough in the face of unprecedented challenges arising from reductions in funding and increased demand for services.

We pride ourselves that we value, care for and invest in our employees, we do this because we are ambitious and want to continue to deliver our services well. This investment in employees has been a long term commitment which is encapsulated in our **Shaping a Brighter Future** programme.

This programme is looking at who we are and how we do things, at staff support and development, at helping employees to make the very best of their existing skills and talents and develop their potential, to cope with stresses, and to be happy and well-motivated in the job that best suits them.

The 2016 Employee Survey results provided a measure of the value of the investment in our employees from their perspective. The results showed that:

- we continued to maintain a high survey response rate at 70% and extremely positive results with only 1 of the 44 questions yielding a positive agreement rate lower than 50% and 16 questions scoring an agreement rate over 75%
- we compare very favourably with a national Civil Service survey conducted in the same period last year
- the employee response rate and results are extremely good and should be celebrated, particularly when they are read in the context of significant change and work pressures and alongside the extremely positive MORI residents' survey from 2015.

During the last year we have continued to build on this and have maintained our Silver Investor in People award and also achieved the Gold Better Health at Work award accreditation.

## OUR WAYS OF WORKING

We are a successful organisation with a long and positive track record of continuous improvement.

We are challenging and changing the way we think about work, how we do it and how we can work smarter through our **Smarter Working in Stockton** programme:

- Providing digital access to our services
- Using existing and new technologies to help us work differently
- Making optimum use of the places where we work
- Ensuring that our policies, processes and procedures are as efficient and productive as they can be
- Ensuring our infrastructure is fit for purpose for a modern organisation

## OUR CUSTOMERS

We are committed to developing the Council and ensuring we deliver high quality, customer focused services that meet the changing needs of our communities.

We have continued to implement improvements in direct response to the Ipsos MORI residents' survey undertaken across the Borough in 2015. The results showed:

- a general improvement from the last survey and help us to focus our work in areas that we think need improvement
- our results are very positive with almost 9 in 10 residents satisfied with the local area (just 7% are dissatisfied)
- over 7 in 10 are satisfied with how the Council runs things (just 12% are dissatisfied)
- 7 in 10 trust the Council a great deal/ fair amount (with only 7% saying "not at all")
- Almost 7 in 10 agree that the Council acts on residents' concerns a great deal/ fair amount (just 6% say "not at all")
- Almost 6 in 10 agree the Council provides value for money (19% disagree)

Last year we also maintained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the sixth consecutive year, securing the highest possible "compliance +" rating in 9 categories. We have also launched the new "My Views" consultation portal, which provides an improved online platform to support consultations on service changes and proposals.

As part of the **Smarter Working in Stockton** programme we will consider the most appropriate customer access solutions and, in particular, look to enhance and develop digital solutions.

## OUR PLACE



# During the last year in Stockton-on-Tees



## OUR PLACE

Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts; a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages.

The principal settlements are Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, and Yarm; whilst Wynyard is expected to grow into a substantial residential location.

The River Tees courses through the Borough and sustains a variety of uses; from a working river upstream; a leisure destination; and forming part of the tranquil green corridors.

The Borough is bounded by County Durham to the north; Darlington to the west; Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Hartlepool to the east; and Hambleton to the south.

Stockton-on-Tees benefits from good access to the strategic road network – A1M, A19, A66 and A67 – and a network of bus routes that provide frequent services to connect residents to work and leisure destinations predominantly across Tees Valley, and for the movement of goods and services.

There are six train stations in total providing frequent access to destinations in Tees Valley and across the North, and a direct link to London via the East Coast Mainline.

The south east of the Borough is home to Durham Tees Valley Airport.

The Borough covers approximately 20,000 Hectares with a population of about 195,700 people living in 85,700 households.

Using indices of multiple deprivation, the Borough is ranked 88th most deprived out of the 326 local authorities in England. However, whilst 28% of the population live within the top 20% of most deprived areas of England, 28% live in the 20% least deprived areas.

## OUR REGION

Stockton-on-Tees is part of the wider Tees Valley region covered by five local unitary Councils (Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool).

The five Councils have a long track record of public and private partnership working to address strategic economic development and transport matters and have, through Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU), pooled strategic economic functions – covering business engagement, economic strategy and intelligence, inward investment, marketing and promotions, strategic transport, and investment planning.

This success of this strong partnership working has been built upon and further formalised through the creation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority which came into effect in April 2016. The first Tees Valley Mayor was elected in May 2017.

The creation of the Combined Authority has given us the opportunity to negotiate a devolution deal with Government. The devolution deal, which was agreed in October 2015, included a commitment of £15m per annum additional investment funding for 30 years and was firmly focused on driving economic growth across a range of areas: transport; education and skills, housing and place; business growth; culture; and innovation and energy.

With opportunities for further funds to be added in future and the flexibilities to use funds between years it allows for much more ambitious investment planning in the Tees Valley than we have previously enjoyed.



## ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

**Have a successful business base where existing companies have experienced sustainable growth and new businesses have been created and attracted**

We have continued to provide advice and guidance to support retail businesses.

We have provided a package of support to existing retail businesses and those new retail businesses wanting to test trade their business idea to support the sustainability and diversity of the Borough's town centre offer.

We continue to work with strategic partners to influence and attract investment opportunities to the Borough, and continued to raise the profile of the Borough as a place to do business with the use of the 'Made in Stockton' brand.

We continue to influence the quality of the services and information to ensure local businesses receive the maximum level of support available and have supported the operation of an effective market for business support services.

We continue to develop and evolve the evidence base to understand further the sectors in the Borough that represent opportunities for growth and investment.

We have worked with strategic partners and universities to enable businesses to benefit from innovation, enabling digital technologies to secure growth and improve productivity.

We have increased the number of strategic and growth businesses that we are supporting in order to secure growth and investment.

We are working in partnership so that more local businesses are exporting, accessing new markets or new local supply opportunities.

We have encouraged targeted recruitment and training to increase the number of jobs locally as a result of public and private sector contract opportunities.

## Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that businesses are attracted to

We continue to engage with key partners and developers to deliver high quality forms of development and ensure that attractive, vibrant, and distinctive places are developed.

We have prepared a Local Plan for Examination in Public that included policies for the long-term use of land that is sufficient and of a high quality to be attractive to new investment.

We have acquired land at Belasis to safeguard employment uses at a strategic employment location.

Works are ongoing to deliver place based regeneration works across Stockton Town Centre including:

- The Globe refurbishment works continue
- Public realm enhancements completed on Silver Street and Bishop Street
- Hampton by Hilton hotel works continue
- Townscape Heritage works under development
- Proposals being developed for Southern gateway to the town centre
- Targeting the vacant premises in the town centre by working with property owners and agents to ensure their reoccupation and reuse
- Continued support to Stockton Town Centre BID in the delivery of its 5-year Business Plan
- Improvement works completed in Stockton Town Centre, Teesdale and Northshore to complement the Durham University International Study Centre students welcome events

We are working in partnership to continue the development of a Master Plan and Delivery Plan for Tees Marshalling Yards.

We have progressed the design works for the new Ingleby Barwick leisure facility.

We have secured additional funding for schools and Academies to respond to increasing changes to pupil demographics.

Works have commenced on site for the Crematorium.

We continue to work with private sector partners to deliver Phase 3 of the residential development at North Shore.

We are on with the development of a River Tees Delivery and Management Framework.

We continue to work in partnership to explore District Heat and Power Networks.

We have completed the England Coastal Path Phases 1, 2 and 3.

We have delivered enhanced Green Infrastructure at various sites across the Borough.

**Ensure that people have the opportunity to learn/train and gain the appropriate level of skills to maximise the employment opportunities available in the economy**

We continue to work with Stockton Learning and Skills service to target provision to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are targeting recruitment and training approaches to maximise employment opportunities for local people, e.g. Hampton by Hilton Hotel.

We continue to encourage employers to invest in workforce skills development through the provision of funding and training support.

We are working with key further and higher education partners to facilitate pathways into employment for local people.

We have provided apprenticeship opportunities for young people to gain employment in a wide range of industries to learn vital skills and seek improvements in their wellbeing.

We have helped to increase overall skill levels by improving access to appropriate learning and training and are encouraging people to undertake higher level/degree apprenticeships.

We are working with partners to increase participation in the labour market by creating a range of opportunities for under-represented groups.

## ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

### Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that people choose to live, work, play and visit

We have commenced of the Targeted Action Area initiative, working to support our local communities in North Thornaby and Central Stockton. Activities undertaken to date include:

- The establishment of multi-agency working group: Cleveland Police, Cleveland Fire Brigade, North Star Housing and Thirteen amongst partners have all committed to work collaboratively with the Council to address local community issues
- Extensive service mapping undertaken with a range of VCSE partner organisations to support this targeted approach
- Pilot 'Operation Clean Up' took place in Central Stockton, Council service teams worked in partnership with Thirteen/the police/local schools and the wider community. 26 streets received environmental improvements (which included 6.7 tonnes of waste/rubbish/overgrown bushes etc. being collected)
- North Thornaby 'Operation Clean Up' is to take place in October
- Extensive consultation exercise commencement which will inform the Councils proposal to introduce Selective Licensing in parts of central Stockton and North Thornaby.

We have prepared a Local Plan for Examination in Public that included policies for the long-term use of land that recognises commitments and housing allocations to meet housing need across the Borough.

We continue to engage with key partners and developers to deliver high quality forms of development and ensure that attractive, vibrant, and distinctive places are developed.

We are dealing with a number of high profile planning applications for large scale housing developments in various areas within the Borough such as Stockton, Norton, Yarm and Wynyard.

We are working with partners, commercial organisations and the wider community to reduce Borough-wide CO2 emissions.

The Big Community Energy Switch scheme continues.

We continue to progress the Affordable Warmth Strategy Action Plan to deliver projects that make a difference to the most vulnerable residents who need support.

We continue to work with Thirteen on 2 key town centre redevelopment sites; phase 2 West End Gardens and Alma Street. When complete, 86 units of additional affordable housing (for sale and rent) will be delivered.

We have carried out a procurement exercise to appoint a Joint Venture partner to work with the Council to deliver the Victoria housing site redevelopment.

26 new affordable housing units have been delivered at Morley Carr Farm, Urray Nook and Northshore.

1040 properties / 158 landlords are now members of the Council's private sector Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

17 private sector residential properties have been returned to use/ occupation.

### **Deliver effective environmental services**

We continue to encourage residents to access the range of recycling facilities available which will assist in decreasing the amount of waste disposed of in wheeled bins.

Refuse and recycling collections continue to be delivered effectively across the Borough with satisfaction levels of more than 90%.

We continue to concentrate resources to areas where the greatest levels of litter are generated including primary and secondary retail areas, main arterial routes and key residential areas, whilst also ensuring that we maintain a regular presence across the remainder of the Borough.

We have increased the number of wildflower areas that have been planted across the Borough.

The summer grass cutting programme has gone well and we are reviewing areas where grass cuts can be reduced to allow some rural and semi-rural areas to return to a natural state of cultivation.

We are considering the reduction of herbicide treatment in locations which are deemed appropriate to allow a greater level of biodiversity.

We were crowned Horticultural Services Team of the Year in this year's APSE awards.

We have worked closely with several external organisations to bring three of the former visitor centres in our Country Parks back into use (Wynyard, Billingham Beck and Cowpen Bewley) giving park users access to other activities and amenities which in keeping with the Council's aspirations for the use and development of our well used parks.

We continue to address statutory functions in compliance with national environmental health legislative requirements, standards and codes of practice.

# COMMUNITY SAFETY

## Deliver effective community safety services

We continue to deliver effective community safety services in and around our local communities. This has been evidenced with the continued investment in frontline services such as civic enforcement and also further investment in the CCTV network.

We continue to respond to community safety concerns raised by the public and elected members, responding to 4,480 request for service in the first half of the year.

We have continued to invest in the ongoing replacement program of old equipment, bringing online ultra-high definition cameras that are capable of much better range and obtain evidence at much greater level of quality. Recent schemes to benefit from this program include an upgrade at Ropner Park, a new scheme in Teesdale with the purpose of supporting the student population and further updates to security at all our main depots and buildings.

We have dealt with 1799 incidents in the first half of this year, which have resulted in 252 arrests. We have also carried out 410 footage reviews to support investigations, 60% of which were successful in providing evidence or new lines of enquiry.

We continue to work in partnership to manage the large increase in demand around Halloween and Bonfire Night, as part of Operation Trojan.

## Deliver effective licensing services

We have worked with various organisations at national and local level during National Licensing Week in June to help to raise awareness of licensing and its impact on everyday lives.

We launched Setting The Bar to all on-licensed premises operating in the Borough, promoting the benefits of operating above the minimum requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 in order to provide a higher standard of premises.

We are working on a policy review to meet the requirements of The Gambling Act 2005 which requires the Council to prepare and publish a Statement of Principles every three years.

We have completed preparations for legislative changes that come into force in October 2018 relating to the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals)(England) regulations 2018. These regulations will update and make changes to the current animal licensing regime and applies to pet shops, catteries, kennels, home boarders, doggy day care, riding establishments, dog breeders and performing/exhibition of animals

We continue to work collaboratively with responsible authorities to enhance customer service, fulfil statutory duties and ensure licensed premises are acting in accordance with their license.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### Give every child the best start in life

We have launched the new 0-19 service in four family hubs across Stockton. The new service integrates health visiting, school nursing and family weight management services and community outreach provision. Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and Family Action have been commissioned to deliver this transformational approach to working with children, young people and families. Work undertaken to date this year includes:

- Safe transfer of eligible staff to new service provider
- Integrating teams and establishing a clear vision and shared set of principles
- Re-focusing of service provision on prevention and early intervention, and working restoratively with families
- Increasing service access through the development of a single point of contact and increasing the reach of mandated contacts
- Developing a universal service offer for children, young people and families
- Focusing on improving quality of practice, embedding performance management across the service.

We have continued to focus on improving the oral health of children in the Borough through support to the supervised tooth brushing programme in early years settings and primary schools, the provision of toothpaste and toothbrushes at universal contacts by the 0-19 service and the roll out of the fluoride varnish programme targeted to schools which have the highest rates of dental decay.

Working with partners from across the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, we are piloting a holiday enrichment programme to offer children, young people and families, healthy and nutritious food, alongside family focused enrichment activities within local communities. A wide variety of activities have been delivered across the summer including breakfast clubs, cooking clubs and nature walks with further activities planned for October half term and Christmas. Over 900 children have benefitted from the programme to date with an interim evaluation scheduled to report back during October.



## Address ill health prevention

We have invited the LGA to conduct a peer review of physical activity opportunities and services.

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for Stockton has been published by the Health and Wellbeing Board, concluding that current community pharmacy provision in Stockton is sufficient.

We launched the national diabetes prevention programme as part of a national roll out of the programme to the Durham, Darlington, Tees and Hambleton and Richmond areas. The structured programme offers weight management and physical activity advice to people at risk of developing diabetes. Patients will be identified by their GPs or through the NHS health check.

We now have defibrillators in place in Stockton centres, including Billingham, Thornaby, Stockton Town Centre and on their way to Norton and Yarm. All defibrillators are in lockable cabinets and linked to the North East Ambulance service who will disclose the pincode for the cabinet in case of a cardiac arrest. The North East Ambulance service also provides CPR and defibrillator training with every newly installed defibrillator.

We have launched a winter health campaign including the promotion of flu vaccination. We are working with care homes and home care providers to promote flu vaccinations for patients and staff.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Giving children the best start in life

We launched the Family Hubs in April 2018. The development of the range of functions operating out of family hubs continues to develop, and the delivery of universal services from community settings has continued.

Take up of the existing free entitlement to 15 hours of education remains at 100%.

We are on track to deliver the required numbers of places in relation to the roll out of the 30 hours of support overall, and to support a gradual increase in uptake. There are currently around 45% of parents registered from those eligible. Current provision includes capacity for around 1600 places, and demand is forecast to rise further.

### Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

School performance outcomes for 2018 are very positive and will be reported separately to cabinet in October 2018

We have completed the Review of School Inclusion being undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee, and an action plan reported to the Committee at its meeting in September.

There will be no further rounds of the National Strategic Schools Improvement Fund programme. However, the programme for the delivery of the Combined Authority 'Educational Collaboration and Improvement Fund' remains under development and will be launched in 2018/19.

We are reviewing High Needs Funding spend to ensure best value for money whilst also meeting the specific needs of the child.

We have significantly improved to 100% of the proportion of EHCP's (excluding exceptions) being issued in 20 weeks, compared to 66.9% nationally.

Requests for statutory assessment has continued to rise: we had the second highest number of applications and completed the most EHCPs in the North East.

We continue to develop the Enhanced Mainstream school (EMS) programme with the addition this academic year of two Physical Medical Primary EMS provisions and a Social Emotional and Mental Health EMS for children with Mental Health Difficulties.

## Delivering effective early help – supporting families

We are on with the work to refine early help approaches. Work is underway to develop a different approach to working with schools which places less emphasis on the use of Early Help Assessment forms and process, and focuses more on the sharing of information on vulnerability. This will be developed further in 2018/19.

We now have a single Early Help Manager taking on responsibility for refreshing the early help offer, including consideration of closer working with schools, the role of a coordination hub, and the further evolution of Family Hubs. This followed a review of the management of Children's Services, which commenced in March 2018 and concluded in May 2018.

We are working on developing an approach to identify vulnerability as part of the work on early help, and will include a specific focus on the targeted action areas of Stockton town centre and the Mandale and Victoria area of Thornaby as part of the wider proposals agreed by Cabinet.

We are working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs. Work continues with the CCG, and building on the People Select Committee's recent review to design a new approach to supporting children with emotional health needs, including work on a proposal for trailblazer status.

## Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children, backed by outstanding social work practice

We have successfully developed the in-house Family Group Conferencing service, which is well regarded by social care teams and has seen some success in enabling young people to stay safely at home.

Performance of the children's hub continues to be strong and well regarded by professionals and by Ofsted in the Hartlepool ILACS inspection.

We continue to work on the delivery of the domestic abuse strategy and action plan. A new social care link post has been created to work directly with social care teams as a means of providing faster support and guidance. Similar proposals are being developed around emotional health and wellbeing and therapeutic advice and support.

We are developing a flexible model of working with young people and families who need more intensive support. Alongside the development of edge of care, safe families for Children and Family Group Conferencing offers for families, we are also working on a range of additional proposals to work with young people and families with very young children

We have seen the rate of contacts to children's social care reduce significantly by 13.6% from the corresponding quarter in 2017/18. This is encouraging and could suggest that there is better grip in early help services.

We have seen the rate of children in need reduce from the corresponding period last year, largely as a result of an increase in the rate of children ceasing to be a child in need. This is evidence of the impact of cases being stepped down to early help.

## A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and leaving our care

We have continued to see a rise in the numbers of children in care. This trend is also being experienced across the region. Regional comparative figures are not yet available, but will be assessed shortly.

We are continuing with a specific programme of work to identify and prioritise solutions. This project is exploring prevention; decision making; sufficiency of placements; opportunities to expand our approach to reunification; and a review of out of Borough placements. We continue to work with Dartington Design Lab, as part of a group of authorities working with them to understand trends and patterns in how we work as there is significant variation in rates of children in care between authorities, some of which can be explained by local factors such as culture, decision making and attitudes to risk.

We continue to work with ARC and a social enterprise, Blue Cabin, on a range of proposals to develop cultural and creative opportunities for children in our care. A programme of activity has already been developed including creative sessions and well attended visits to the theatre.

Adoption Tees Valley was established on 1 May 2018, based at the former CLC centre adjacent to Grangefield Academy. The main target for 2018/19 is for the service to be established and to sustain currently activity rates.

We are developing an enhanced Care Leavers offer to support independence - this is the subject of a reporting in scrutiny review for 2018/19.

We are exploring options for supporting an increase in the numbers of in house foster carers, and the capacity of in house fostering are being considered as part of the wider work on children in our care

The new Corporate Parenting Board meets for the first time in October. A new giving scheme, helping hands, will be launched in the Autumn.

## Work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently

We will be delivering further sessions on safeguarding and corporate parenting for members this year.

In line with the agreed regional approach and the formation of the regional Improvement Alliance, we will undertake a self-assessment across Children's Services which will be peer challenged and reviewed by two other Councils before being considered as part of a regional improvement plan. Both the LGA and the Department for Education are also involved in this work.

We received an annual conversation with Ofsted as part of the new Ofsted ILACS framework (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services).

We are leading on the discussions to consider and develop new safeguarding arrangements as required by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This Act provides for the abolition of LSCBs and their replacement with new locally developed arrangements. Initial proposals are being considered to explore closer working with Hartlepool Borough Council on a new safeguarding partnership. The proposal is that this will be launched in shadow form in December 2018, with a view to going live from April 2019, well in advance of the deadline of 1 September 2019.

The regional agreement on capping of agency rates has been in full operation since July 2018. Indicators are that this has stopped the internal market, but has highlighted a lack of agency workers overall.

## STRONG COMMUNITIES

### Deliver effective local democracy

The 2018 Annual Canvass is underway. Following initial write out, door to door enquires are being made to all non-responding properties. The response rate at the end of September was 72%.

We will be sending a Household Notification Letter to be sent to all properties in February 2019 to ensure the Electoral Register is complete and accurate ahead of the statutory election period. The letter lists all the electors at a particular address and invites residents to update details if necessary.

We have started planning the May 2019 Local Elections. A project plan has been drafted and high level plans reviewed.

We have concluded the Parliamentary Boundary review. If approved, the new constituencies will take effect at the next scheduled General Election in 2022.

Grindon Community Governance Order to be made. This will replace the current Grindon Parish Council with two new Parish Councils.

We are on with the refresh of the Member Induction Programme and the refresh of Members ICT equipment in advance of the next elections.

We are working on the refresh of Members Learning & Development Strategy underway.

We are on with the delivery of the Mayoral Strategy with awareness and much needed fundraising taking place for British Legion and Mary Thompson charities.

We have held successful new Mayoral events held including 'High Teas on the Teesside Princess' & 'Mayor's Music Night at Preston Hall'.

## Provide financial advice and support to our communities

We have carried out extensive work throughout the year through the Locality Forums, to provide support people through the introduction of Universal Credit and to support Foodbanks, Holiday Hunger programmes and prepare for the Get Winter Ready Campaign.

The Infinity Partnership work this year has focussed on support for people through the introduction of Universal Credit. The Partnership has produced support information, improved communication between organisations offering support and advice and has worked with local businesses to support their staff going onto UC.

We opened the latest Big Community Switch programme in August to provide access to cheaper fuel deals.

We have implemented changes required to support the roll out of Universal Credit.

We continue to provide financial advice and assistance through Welfare Support service, Back on Track etc.

We have reviewed the use of Section 17 payments in social care and the links with welfare support.



## Support the continued development of a strong and vibrant voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector

We have continued to work with Catalyst to support the VCSE sector. The annual review of the Council's partnership with Catalyst was undertaken this summer and delivery against all objectives continues to be strong:

- Catalyst continue to provide active and useful opportunities for members of the VCSE sector to share information and discuss issues through the Voice, Health & Wellbeing, Multicultural, Senior Leaders Breakfast, Disability, Environmental, Over 50's and Safeguarding Forums.
- The Centre of Excellence continues to offer training, research and development support for the sector. Specialising in supporting sustainability and governance across the sector.
- The outstanding work of the VCSE sector was recognised at the successful Catalyst Achievement awards in June.

We have worked with Tees Valley Community Foundation to support co-ordinated grant-giving and provision of free professional expertise to charities across the Borough. The annual review of the Stockton Borough Community Fund review was completed in the summer and 100% of available funds have again been distributed this year.

Significant support has been provided to Tees Credit Union to assist in their move to new premises on Dovecot Street in Stockton, following their merger with Moneywise. Officially opened in April, the new shop is providing improved access for customers, alongside additional on-line facilities.

We continue to work on developing a Community Cohesion Strategy.

We have continued to work with Catalyst and members of the Volunteering Partnership to deliver the Volunteering Strategy for the Borough:

- Progress has been made on a re-write of the Volunteering website. The designs and functionality are now complete and will be launched in the next few months.
- The annual Volunteers Market was held on Stockton High Street in June to showcase the volunteering opportunities at more than 50 organisations.
- A Volunteering Kitemark has been developed by the Volunteering Partnership and will be launched in the November to provide assurance about the standards of organisations offering volunteering opportunities. It is proposed that the Council will be one of the first awarded organisations.

We have continued to support the transfer of community assets and improve the governance and sustainability of community centres across the Borough:

- Support has been provided to Primrose Hill Community Partnership to re-open the Primrose Hill Community Centre. The Centre reopened in August. Working alongside Thirteen Group we have supported the Partnership to refurbish and reopen the centre.
- Work continues on plans to complete a Community Asset transfer of the Clarences Community Centre.

- Work to support improvements at The Glebe and Yarm Community Centre have been successful.
- Work to support the Willows Community Centre and to identify new operational arrangements for Parkfield Community Centre are underway.

## Deliver effective consultation and engagement

We have developed a new approach to consultation with young people as part of the Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative. BMBF is committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of the future of the Borough and through the initiative we aim to understand what young people want to make this happen. A six month BMBF survey was completed in September supported by face to face consultation sessions. These results will be used to form the basis of a wish list for young people. Developments are also underway to establish the BMBF group as a regular consultation group for issues in the Borough. The BMBF programme has also supported the engagement of young people in Borough life through the Correspondents programme through which young correspondents provide an on-line reporting service on events across the Borough. Their involvement at SIRF, The Great Tees 10K and Cycling Festival has been very successful.

We have continued to consult widely on major policy proposals and service changes affecting the Borough. In the first half of 2018/19 the Council carried out 28 external consultations and received 9,428 responses using the My Views online consultation portal, supported by more detailed consultation work with the Viewpoint panel and via drop in sessions. Consultations have been carried out on a wide range of issues, including:

- The new Local Plan
- Selective Licensing proposals
- Grave personalisation
- Proposed parking changes in Yarm

The Council has continued to support and facilitate active engagement in the life of the Borough through the Local Strategic Partnership and particularly the four Locality Forums. The Forums have met regularly throughout the year and continue to work on delivery of the Brighter Borough for All - Tackling Poverty Framework.

The recognition of people who dedicate their time and expertise to others in the Borough was celebrated at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Civic Awards at the AGM in May. The annual civic awards celebrate and promote the benefits of active engagement in the Borough and serve to encourage wider involvement.

Active involvement and pride in the Borough has been further supported through the "Our Beautiful Borough" photography competition. Over 500 entries were received and over 1,000 votes cast for the seven short-listed photographs which were exhibited in libraries across the Borough over the summer. The winning entry will be announced in October.

## ADULT SERVICES

### Focus on prevention and early intervention

The Better Care Fund has continued to support (to March 2019) a number of schemes, delivered by the VCSE sector to help identify residents of the Borough who are at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

We are working on the Improving Pathway of Care for Dementia scheme (BCF) that delivers an integrated service to support people with dementia (PWD) and their carers through their journey. This scheme builds on the existing partnerships between health, social care and VCSE sectors and embeds good practice. This joined up thinking enables PWD and their carers to live in their own homes independently for as long as possible through the provision of appropriate and timely support.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, the Council and CCG have provided the Stockton Adult Carers' Support Service which aims to identify and support as many Carers as possible across the Borough. It supports Carers to access good quality and relevant information, advice and support, and helps Carers to build capacity in their caring role, seeking with them ways to improve their own health, well-being and quality of life.

We have continued to develop The Livewell Dementia Hub as a single point of contact for anything relating to dementia. More than signposting, it works with partners from Health and VCSE sectors to provide assessment, information, groups and training.

We have worked closely with the CCG to implement a capacity tracker into the local care home sector: this will provide greater accuracy and reliability of information on care home capacity to professionals in support of service users.

## Work in partnership

The Community Integrated Intermediate Care (CIIC) project will act as the catalyst in order for services to come together and evolve into a multidisciplinary health and social care offer for the people of Stockton-on-Tees. Working in partnership with multiple health and social care services, the Council is designing a new model of community care that will put the person at the centre and reduce the need for multiple hand offs and assessments across health and social care in Stockton-on-Tees.

The High Impact Change Model (HICM) offers local care and health systems an approach to manage transfers of care locally. This model has been adopted in Stockton-on-Tees and as part of the Better Care Fund Transfers of Care workstream this model is being worked through with representation across the health and social care system to reduce delayed discharges.

The Better Care Fund plan for 2017/19 is a key deliverable of Stockton's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2018 which has been developed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. This strategy is Stockton-on-Tees overarching plan to improve the health and wellbeing of children and adults in our Borough and to reduce health inequalities. The Better Care Fund 2017-19 Plan has been signed off and jointly agreed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Stockton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

## Work with individuals, their families and carers

We have implemented The Dementia Advisor Service that supports people with dementia, their carers and families by providing specialist information on dementia, identifying support networks, and coping strategies and signposting and/or referring them to appropriate services. The Livewell Dementia also runs carer education programmes to improve carers' coping skills and resilience.

The learning disabilities partnership board brings together people with learning disabilities, carers along with relevant stakeholders to work together to improve the chances and opportunities for people with learning disabilities to lead a fulfilling and rewarding life.

We continue to support vulnerable adults who are self-neglecting through advisory services to social workers and other partner organisations as well as delivering physical clearance and animal welfare services to clients.

## Continue to work closely with the NHS

The Better Care Fund continues to support the Transfers of Care Work stream, which has links with a number of different work areas such as Delayed Transfers of Care, Continuing Healthcare, Home Safe Sooner and Trusted Assessor. Within all of these work areas there is representation from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Stockton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and North Tees and Hartlepool Foundation Trust.

The Proactive Intensive Liaison Service (PICLS, funded through BCF) provides specialist mental health input for people with dementia as part of Multi-Disciplinary Service. The proactive and integrated model of care supports individuals and their carers to manage their conditions successfully while reducing the need for a change in care setting through assessment and development of Emergency Health Care Plans. It also provides education on the detection and management of dementia and delirium to people with dementia, carers, care home staff and health and social care professionals to promote awareness, early identification and treatment of the conditions.

## Deliver our statutory duties

The Better Care Fund plan for 2017/19 is a key deliverable of Stockton's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2018 which has been developed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. This strategy is Stockton-on-Tees overarching plan to improve the health and wellbeing of children and adults in our Borough and to reduce health inequalities. The Better Care Fund 2017-19 Plan has been signed off and jointly agreed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Stockton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

We continue to ensure the market is providing sufficient capacity and quality to meet assessed needs.

## Safeguarding adults

Safeguarding adults at risk continues to be a priority. The Teesside Safeguarding Adults Board is in place with all key partners and organisations working together to protect adults rights to live safely and free from abuse and neglect.

Our response to concerns about people's safety will be proportionate, responsive, flexible and personal and will always be based on the individuals wishes and feelings alongside the best interests of the wider community.

### **Maximise the use of scarce financial resources**

We have undertaken a number of intelligence led reviews of services to inform future provision, including:

- A holistic assessment of the older people care home market that will provide the basis for a re design of how we purchase and manage residential care and work with the sector in Stockton on Tees;
- An evaluation of the impact of housing related support and how this provides support for people to live independently; and
- Strategic review of services for people with a learning disability, from transitions to support in residential care.

We (alongside other north east councils through ADASS) are looking at the opportunities for care and support through a Shared Lives model

### **Ensure the most effective and appropriate use of our own and our providers' workforces**

We are working in partnership with NHSE Leadership Academy to develop a "Well Led" leadership programme for registered managers of providers in Stockton on Tees. An innovative collaboration, this will look to deliver a more stable and competent leadership team across the independent and VCSE sector.

## ARTS, LEISURE AND CULTURE

**Deliver sustainable events and attractions that contribute to the delivery of vibrant and economically successful town centres and economic prosperity**

Our programme of events and specialist markets in Stockton High Street has attracted strong audiences and generated valuable positive media coverage.

The first Stockton Super Car Saturday was staged in the High Street in May, attracting an estimated 5,000 visitors.

The Stockton Cycling Festival in July incorporated the National Championship Circuit Race, alongside the closed road family rides, the sportive and the stunts and entertainment on the Riverside. Highlights of the national championship races were broadcast on BBC and Eurosport. 93% of Cycling Festival visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with the event.

In August, SIRF 2018 presented 150 shows, making it the biggest programme since 2000. 93% of SIRF visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with the event and 92% believe it is a good promotion of Stockton as a place to live, work or visit.

Following recommendations from the Emergency Planning College and the Council's Senior Management Team, an external appointment has been made for chairperson role for Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) from April 2018. ISAG have up to August 2018 reviewed 41 event safety plans, 21 of which are for Council Run events and 20 are for externally run events on Council land. It is expected that by the end of March total number of event review will be 56, split 28 Stockton Borough Council / 28 non Stockton Borough Council run events.

ISAG continue to be supportive to community groups, Town/Parish Council and other external event leads in helping them standardise their health and safety arrangement to ensure public safety/welfare.

We have welcomed 85,000 visitors to Preston Park, Museum & Grounds through the museum since April and continued to deliver a varied and inclusive programme of events for families. Efforts to attract additional visitors include our partnership with Northern Dales Farmers Market to deliver monthly markets in the museum, and our first Steampunk Festival in August in partnership with the well-established Whitby Steampunk. This attracted a new audience to the site with 2500 visitors attending.

We have continued to sustain and support the 200 volunteers of Preston Park Museum & Grounds and have diversified our volunteer programme to include park ranger opportunities.

**Deliver an effective library service that supports literacy, access to knowledge and inspiring activities for everyone in safe accessible spaces across the Borough**

We have secured funding from DCMS to further developing the Digital Offer and have been working with a number of partners including Learning and Skills, ARC, Public Libraries 2020 and local health providers to develop digital skills for our customers in our innovation Station. We have also worked to support health and well-being through immersive sensory sessions in our Imagination Station at Thornaby Library.

We have continued to work on plans for the new Leisure Centre and Library at Ingleby Barwick and work has now started on the new facility.

Fairfield Library was refurbished earlier in 2018 and reopened to the public in February. Work to complete the Nursery element of the building took place following on from the library alterations and the nursery is now fully operational, working in partnership with the library which opened in the early Summer.

We have continued to promote literacy and learning through reading activities, festivals and events in libraries.

In June a full programme of reading and writing related events was offered in partnership with the wider Tees Valley Library Services for the Crossing the Tees Festival, which included a new Short Story competition. A collection of the best short stories was produced by a local publisher.

Throughout the summer children and young people participated in the annual Summer Reading Challenge which this year followed the theme of Mischief Makers to celebrate the anniversary of the Beano comic. The theme has ensured a good response across the Borough.



## Support all sectors of our communities to secure enjoyment, learning and achievement through sport and active leisure

We have, in partnership with Tees Active and the voluntary sector, been developing and delivering services designed to meet the needs of the diverse communities across the Borough. This includes universal services and also targeted services for particular communities of need.

Tees Active have continued to develop and refine a responsive leisure offer across their portfolio of facilities that meet the changing needs of our communities whilst also being financially viable.

We continue to focus on targeted interventions to support some of the groups currently underrepresented in sport and active leisure. The Funky Feet programme continues to grow and thrive providing a positive start for the young-children of the Borough.

The Sisters-R-Doing-It initiative is attracting hundreds of women and girls from the Borough into running with a high percentage of those going on to engage in sustainable community running opportunities such as Parkrun.

The national award winning Sporting Steps initiative for adults with learning disabilities and/ or mental health conditions is improving the health, wellbeing and social connectivity of some of our most vulnerable residents whilst saving the authority significant sums of money. Plans are already in place to grow the capacity and reach of the programme to ensure more of our most vulnerable residents benefit from the Sporting Steps offer.

Voluntary sector sports clubs are the lifeblood of community sports participation. We continue to support clubs who make a big difference to the communities and members they serve. The new Club Development Framework has been developed to strengthen self-sufficiency providing clubs with advice and guidance and a positive framework that can support their sustainability and growth.

## OUR COUNCIL

### Deliver a balanced and sustainable medium term financial plan

We have prepared responses to numerous consultations covering the National Fair Funding Review and Review of Business Rates retention scheme.

We have supported reviews in Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care to reduce cost pressures.

We are overseeing the delivery of the savings programme and providing support to individual service reviews.

We have revised the investment strategy following the approval of the Treasury Management strategy in the budget report.

We have revised the budget monitoring procedures following a LEAN review, focussing on high risk areas of expenditure.

We have been assessing the financial implications of the pressures associated with SEND as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

We provide financial support to a range of schemes and projects.

### Maximise and safeguard income for the Council

Council Tax collection levels are in line with projections.

Business rate collection levels are in line with targets.

We have developed arrangements for the management of the new Hampton by Hilton hotel Joint Venture Company.

We have established new claims handling arrangements within the Insurance section.

### Ensure the Council uses its assets effectively

We have been working on reviewing and improving the information held on all Council assets.

We have completed the disposal of the former EDC.

## **Develop and ensure delivery of a robust governance framework**

We have continued to support full compliance with all statutory and legal responsibilities through:

- The provision of pro-active legal, Monitoring Officer and Proper Officer advice and support.
- The re-constituted Information Governance Group is working effectively
- A scheduled review of our use of RIPA has been undertaken and submitted to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office in September for audit.
- The Annual review of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's report was completed and reported to Cabinet in September.

A significant piece of work to update The Constitution has been ongoing throughout the year and a final proposed version will; be presented to Members in October.

We prepared the Statement of Accounts in line with statutory timescales (shorter than previous years).

We received a very positive Audit opinion and value for money statement reported to Cabinet in September.

We are on with reviewing contracts for Children in Care.

We have developed the Information Asset Register and successfully managed the implementation of GDPR.

## **Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services**

We have developed the approach for the Smarter Working Programme which was reported to Cabinet in September.

We have completed and implemented service reviews across a range of services including Finance and Assets, Insurance, Information and Governance.

## Continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees

We have continued to deliver the Shaping a Brighter Future programme to continue to grow the capability, flexibility and capacity of employees. The programme, now in its fifth year, continues to grow and flourish:

- The Talent Network now has over 600 members. Allowing employees to use their talents and skills on a range of projects and temporary vacancies in addition to their substantive role at the Council. Employees in the Network also continue to take part in Setting the Standard sessions 3 times a year.
- The Employee Wellbeing and Retention workstream is undertaking a programme of roadshows to all Council locations to better understand the wellbeing and retention issues of employees.
- The programme of Inspirational lunchtime speakers continues.
- The Headway self-awareness programme continues to develop the emotional intelligence and unlock the personal strengths of employees.
- The Recruitment Workstream has developed a new recruitment policy and set of procedures to include behaviour based approach to recruitment.

The programme of organisational and structural change needed to contribute towards meeting the financial challenge faced by the Council has continued. A further 16 employees were made redundant in the first half of the year and the programme of reduction through the management of vacancies and reorganisation continues. The total net reduction in the number of employees since the start of the savings programme seven years ago is now 1,131 (a reduction of 27% from the 2011 level).

We continue to work to enhance the diversity of the workforce through increased recruitment and retention of under-represented groups:

- The four equality staff forums continue to be active. The forums, which are led by employees, provide members with opportunities for networking, peer support and personal development. They also consult with the Council on a range of matters, and arrange annual events to support Council objectives, to raise awareness and celebrate diversity.

- The BME Forum has prepared an action plan to support the recruitment and retention of BME employees which is hopes to submit to the Scrutiny Review of BME recruitment which begins in October.

We continue to support our employees through change by improving internal communication, creating an environment where employees have the confidence to voice their ideas and providing support for those affected by change:

- The new designs for the intranet have been approved by CMT and will be implemented by the end of the year when systems changes are made to support access for employees from home.
- The use of the Hive online engagement tool continues. 13 fortnightly questions have been asked in the first half of the year. 3,020 responses have been received and action taken to address the matters raised. 522 Hive Fives (online peer recognition comments/thank you's) have been made.
- The Ask Neil and Bright Ideas suggestions schemes continue and the Chief Executive has continued his programme of visits and presentation to teams across the Council with 22 visits in the first half of the year.

## Deliver effective communication

We continue to focus our communication activity around the annual programme of key communication campaigns to support major activities and issues in the Borough. The activity in 2018/19 focuses on eight external campaigns:

- **Ambitious, effective and proud to serve** - At Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – we're all ambitious, effective and proud to serve
- **Creating economic prosperity** - We're playing our part in creating an economically prosperous Borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.
- **Improved health** - Our vision is for the Borough to be a place where people are supported to be healthy.
- **Exciting year-round programme of events** - We offer an exciting year-round programme of world-class events that deliver amazing experiences for our residents and visitors and bring huge economic value to the Borough.

- **Protecting the vulnerable** - One of the Council's key priorities is to protect the vulnerable, it's a policy principle which runs through everything we do.
- **Our beautiful Borough** - We have a beautiful and varied Borough including six thriving towns – each with their own distinct character and history. We value and support them all.
- **Do it online** - We're providing more of our services online. Visit [www.stockton.gov.uk](http://www.stockton.gov.uk) to carry out a wide range of Council business.
- **Local elections** - The next Local Elections in the Borough are on Thursday 2 May 2019. We'll provide you with everything you need to know about how, where and when to vote.

We continue to implement the programme to improve the eight websites for which the Council has responsibility and to further develop our 35 social media platforms. The followings on our main platforms have increased over the last six months – Facebook is up 15% from 9,545 to 10,961 and Twitter is up 3% from 15,069 to 15,505. We have relaunched our LinkedIn profile, increasing the following by 42% from 830 to 1,182 and have also launched a new Instagram page, which currently has 1,271 followers.

We have continued the practice of releasing more news through film, picture and written social media posts to supplement our traditional media work which continues to be busy. During the first half of the year the team dealt with 260 media enquiries and issued 128 press releases as well as managing a number of high profile media events, including a live BBC Breakfast broadcast from Stockton High Street on the day of the Grimsey Review 2 launch, and supporting major events such as SRF and the Simplyhealth Great Tees 10k.

We continue to deliver effective communication across the Borough through the distribution of Stockton on Tees News. The May and July editions have been distributed in the first half of 2018/19. New contracts from design, print and distribution have been let over the summer, following which a new distribution arrangement (through Royal Mail) will be in place for the November edition.