

**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE
MONDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2025**

CABINET

Tuesday, 4 November 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Harker (Chair), Curry, Garner, McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Roche and Wallis

INVITEES – Councillor Snedker

APOLOGIES – Councillor Dulston

C32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C33 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON
ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

No representations were made by Members or members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

C34 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS CABINET HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2025

Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 7 October 2025.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

REASON – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

C35 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

There were no matters referred back for re-consideration to this meeting.

C36 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Scrutiny considered at this meeting.

C37 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026-2027

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the draft Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme (also previously circulated) for 2026/27 prior to approval by Council on 27 November 2025.

The submitted report stated that the previous scheme had become operational on 1 April

2024; Councils were required to set a CTS scheme each year and as part of that exercise were required to consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme, and where changes were made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should be applied to anyone affected by those changes; and that no significant changes were proposed to the existing scheme.

It was reported that the scheme had been considered by the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 31 October 2025, who agreed its onward submission to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that Cabinet consider and approve the draft CTS scheme for 2026-27 at Appendix 1 and for it to be submitted to Council for decision.

REASON – The recommendation is supported for the following reasons:

- (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2026-27 by 11 March 2026.
- (b) The CTS schemes since 2013 have all been implemented successfully without any major challenges.
- (c) The continued application of a reduced entitlement for working aged people is still appropriate, given the current financial position of the Council.

C38 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 2

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance providing a forecast of the 2025/26 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process.

The submitted report stated that it was the second revenue budget management report to Cabinet for 2025/26 and that the latest projections showed an overall decline of £1.872m on the 2025/29 Medium Term Financial Plan, which was due to £2.880m of departmental pressures and a decline in corporate reserves of £0.481m, offset by £1.489m of additional balances following the 2024/25 outturn.

RESOLVED – It is recommended that:

- (a) That the forecast revenue outturn for 2054/26, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.
- (b) That further regular reports be made to monitor progress and take prompt action if necessary.

REASONS – The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To continue effective management of resources.

- (b) To continue to deliver services to agreed levels.

C39 PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - QUARTER 2

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services and the Executive Director – Resources and Governance providing the latest Capital resource and commitment position, to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council's capital programme; an update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council; and requesting that consideration be given to a number of changes to that programme.

The submitted report stated that the projected outturn of the current capital programme was £339.385m against an approved programme of £339.992m; the investment was delivering a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and services; the programme, including commitments, remained affordable within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29; the Council was managing 19 live projects, with an overall projected outturn value of £131.241m, the majority of which were running to time, cost and quality expectations, but were being monitored given the current pressures on resources in the construction sector nationally; and that the projects were managed either by the Council's in-house management team, a Framework Partner or by Consultants sourced via an open/OJEU tender process.

RESOLVED – It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) That the status position on construction projects, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.
- (b) That the projected capital expenditure and resources, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.
- (c) That the adjustments to resources, as detailed in paragraph 21 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS – The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To inform Cabinet of the current status of construction projects.
- (b) To make Cabinet aware of the latest financial position of the Council.
- (c) To maintain effective management of resources

C40 TO CONSIDER THE USE OF LAND AT FAVERDALE INCLUDING FORMER ST MODWEN LAND FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN AND NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY CREDITS

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection to seek approval for the use of land at Faverdale East Business Park (partly former known as St Modwen Land) specifically including use of the site to generate Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality credits but also to investigate the possibility of disposal of part of the land for employment purposes.

The submitted report stated that the site is approximately 35 hectares (shown at appendix 1) and that it is wholly owned by Darlington Borough Council (DBC), comprising land previously in DBC ownership and land purchases from St Modwen in 2020. The land was identified as an existing employment site in the Local Plan and it was always intended it would be used for employment purposes.

The report explained that during discussions with a prospective developer it came to light that nearly 25% of the site is listed as Open Mosaic Habitat which is defined by Natural England as priority habitat. This part of the site is expensive to replace if developed but highly valuable in biodiversity terms.

The report clarified that there has been interest in part of the site for employment purposes and this needs to be investigated to ensure the best value for the Council. Consideration needs to be given as to whether part or all of the site could be used for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nutrient Neutrality (NN) Credits.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:

- (a) To approve the use of part of the land to generate Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality Credits. Primarily for sale on the open market but also for use in Council developments.
- (b) That Officers are authorised to initially register the land labelled Area one (Shown on the plan at APPENDIX 2) with Natural England for the purposes of Biodiversity Net Gain credits and to market the credits.
- (c) That officers investigate the sale of Areas two and three on the plan at Appendix 2 for employment purposes. If the conclusions are that the land will generate a greater income for Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality credits within two years of this decision that officers are authorised to register with Natural England either Area two or three or both sites
- (d) That the necessary funds are approved from existing budgets and the capital Investment Fund to allow fencing off parcels of land and for the registration of the land with Natural England so that the credits can be marketed.
- (e) That the Council enters into a Conservation Covenant with a registered 'Responsible

Body' to ensure that the land is maintained in accordance with the Habitat, Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

REASON – The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) That the statutory requirement for developments to provide at least 10% in biodiversity net gain has put into question the viability of the site for employment purposes, either due to the lack of developable land or the costs associated with developing the whole of the site.
- (b) There is a financial benefit to the Council if the conclusions are that the site would be better used for environmental credits, with the land registered with Natural England for the sale of credits.
- (c) By registering Area one we can seek the financial benefits at an early stage and by further considering Areas two and three we ensure we get the best value for the Council.
- (d) If the land is registered in phases, the land needs to be physically separated to manage the land.
- (e) To register the land with Natural England there needs to be a Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan in place and a legal agreement to ensure the HMMP is delivered.

C41 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

C42 TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS :-

C43 QUESTIONS.

**DECISIONS DATED –
FRIDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2025**