



12th November 2025

Dear Councillor,

I hereby summon you to attend a meeting of **Peterlee Town Council** on
Monday 17th November 2025 In the **Council Chamber, Shotton Hall,**
Peterlee, SR8 2PH, at 6.30pm

Mr I Hall
Town Clerk

Members of the public are very welcome to attend our meetings. We have a limited number of designated public seating in our Council Chamber and so any members of the public wishing to attend to observe the meeting are advised to contact the Council in advance so that we can reserve a seat for you: council@peterlee.gov.uk or (0191) 5862491.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. To receive declarations of interest

Members are reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. Please seek advice from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk **prior to the meeting** if in doubt. Members are reminded that they can check their published declaration of interests here: <https://bit.ly/2wVyeLA>

3. Public Participation

Members of the public will have an opportunity to put questions to the Council. This item of business to last no more than 15 minutes, as per Council Standing Orders.

4. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the following meeting:-

- a. Council Meeting held on 3rd November 2025 (Copy attached)

5. Tax Base and Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant Allocation 2026/27 Report of the Town Clerk (Attached)

- 6. Q2 Budget Report**
Report of the Town Clerk (Attached)
- 7. Disposal of Surplus Furniture and Equipment from Shotton Hall**
Report of the Town Clerk (Attached)
- 8. Future of the Play Areas in Peterlee**
Report of the Neighbourhood Services Manager (Attached)
- 9. Code of Conduct Complaint**
Report of the Town Clerk (Attached)

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Town Council** meeting held on **Monday 3rd November 2025** at **6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Shotton Hall, Peterlee.

Present: Councillor R. Moore (Mayor) and Councillors J. Black, P. Brown, D. Burrell, M-L. Franklin, S. Franklin, D. Hawley, K. Hawley, D. Howarth, A. Laing, I. Pygall, S. Simpson, and D. Wright

Also Present: Ian Hall (Chief Officer and Town Clerk), Deborah Woodhall (Resources Manager), and David Anderson (Locum Democratic Services Manager) and Louise Hudson (Democratic Services Assistant)

C.112/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, M.A. Cartwright, P. Cartwright, B. Fishwick, D. Meadows, H. Pygall and M. Tough.

RESOLVED: That the apologies be noted.

C.113/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

C.114/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No Public were present.

C.115/25 MONTHLY UPDATES FOR DURHAM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Councillor S Franklin reported that Lord-Lieutenant, Susan Snowdon planned to retire on 1 April 2026 and that the King had appointed Michael Butterwick, CBE, DL, as His Majesty's next Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Durham.

The Chair expressed his well wishes to the Lord-Lieutenant and offered his congratulations to Michael Butterwick.

C.116/25 MINUTES

a. Council Meeting held on 20th October 2025

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the above meeting be approved.

C.117/25 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, which had previously been circulated, regarding consultation that Durham County Council (DCC) was carrying out its Council Tax setting for 2026/27 financial year. The item had been deferred from the previous meeting pending further information being obtained, particularly in relation to confirmation that DCC would continue to pay the Town Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant as previously agreed. It was noted that no further information had been obtained.

Following detailed discussion Members were of the opinion that a response should be submitted to Durham County Council setting out the implications for local council tax payers if the LCTRS grant was not honoured as previously agreed.

Given the timescales involved it was suggested that the Town Clerk circulate a draft to members by email for comment before submission before the deadline.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk circulate a draft response to Members for comment, prior to submission to Durham County Council.

C.118/25 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE – CONTINUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Detailed consideration was given to a report of the Resources Manager, which had previously been circulated, regarding continued engagement with Investors in People (IIP).

Following consideration Members were of the opinion that the decision should be deferred until the situation with regard to the budget for 2026/27 financial year was known. In the meantime it was suggested that alternative approaches to organisational development be investigated.

RESOLVED:

1. That the continued engagement be deferred until the budget for 2026/27 is known.
2. That in the meantime, alternative approaches to organisational development be investigated.

C.119/25 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in view of the confidential nature of the items to be discussed, the Council passed a formal resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 & the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, Part 1, due to the commercial and personal information contained in the report.

C.120/25 SALE OF LAND AT ESSINGTON WAY – SECTION OF FORMER TREE NURSERY

Members considered the presentation given by the potential buyer of land at Essington Way, who assured them that if purchase was approved the land would only be used to expand their current business and would not be used for residential development.

It was noted that a covenant was included in the sale to prevent residential development.

RESOLVED: That the sale of the land be approved on the terms previously agreed.

C.121/25 REQUEST TO USE LAND AT HELFORD ROAD

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, which had previously been circulated, detailing action taken, in consultation with Members, concerning a request to use land at Helford Road in relation to a fireworks event.

RESOLVED: That the action taken, in consultation with Members, be endorsed.

Report to:	Peterlee Town Council:
Date:	17 th November 2025
Report of:	Ian Hall, Chief Officer & Town Clerk
Subject:	Tax Base and Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant Allocation 2026/27
Report Purpose:	To inform Members of correspondence received from Durham County Council indicating that it will cease the LCTRS grant payments to town and parish councils entirely in 2026/27. The letter also gives an indicative tax base for Peterlee Town Council for the financial year 2026/27. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 2.
Detail:	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant Durham County Council has written to all town and parish councils advising that as part of their Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 16), they are proposing to cease the LCTRS grant payments to town and parish councils entirely in 2026/27. This is to assist the DCC in meeting its significant budget challenge next year. Public consultation on this and other Phase 2 budget proposals will run from 21 November 2025 to 4 January 2026, however DCC have advised that parish and town councils should plan their budgets on that basis at this stage. Indicative Council Tax Base DCC has advised that Peterlee Town Council's indicative tax base (note that this is subject to the agreement of the changes to the LCTRS 2026/27 at County Council on 10 December 2025), and the impact of withdrawing the grant payments to town and parish councils is shown below for your council will increase from 4,708.00 for 2025/26 to 4,780.30 for 2026/27. This will increase the ability to raise funds, but it will not make up for the withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant. Next Steps Officers are working through the implications of the withdrawal of the grant, the increase in the tax base together with other inflationary pressures. It is suggested that a workshop be arranged for members to discuss the implications for the Town Council.
Recommendation:	1. That the correspondence from Durham County Council be noted.

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2. Officers prepare a draft budget taking into account the withdrawal of the LCTRS grant, increased tax base and other inflationary pressures.
3. A budget workshop be arranged to be held on Tuesday, 18th November at 10.00 am

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance	Loss of £190,455 in LCTRS grant from 2026/27. Increase in Tax Base (indicative at this stage) resulting in approximately £29,466. additional revenue.
Staffing	No immediate impact, though future budget decisions may affect staffing resources.
Risk	Significant financial risk if grant withdrawal proceeds; potential reputational risk if services are reduced or precept increased substantially.
Equality & Diversity	Withdrawal of the LCTRS grant disproportionately affects low-income households and deprived communities such as Peterlee.
Crime & Disorder	No direct implications.
Consultation	Durham County Council public consultation runs from 21 November 2025 to 4 January 2026.
Procurement	No direct implications.

Report to: Peterlee Town Council

Date of Meeting: 17th November 2025

Subject: **2025/26 Financial Year – Second Quarter Budget Summary Report**

Report of: Ian Hall, Town Clerk

Report Purpose: To provide Members with a budget summary report to the end of the second quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, in line the Council's Financial Regulations¹.

Background: This budget report is intended to satisfy the requirement of s5.8 of the Council's Financial Regulations to provide Council with a report on income and expenditure against the Council's budget heads on a quarterly basis.

The working process that enables this report is as follows:

- End of Quarter budget report produced and circulated to Budget holders by Finance Team;
- Variance report produced and discussed with each budget holder;
- Report to Council for discussion and approval.
-

This report represents the Council's position at the end of the second quarter of the 2025/26 Financial Year, i.e. as at 30th September 2024.

Q2 summary: The 2025/26 Quarter 2 overall budget outturn per budget head is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.
At the mid-point of the 2025/26 financial year, the Council's overall financial position remains sound, with total income and expenditure broadly in line with the approved budget profile. Careful financial management, continued monitoring by officers, and proactive cost control measures have helped maintain stability despite ongoing national inflationary pressures.

- Energy costs continue to be a key budget pressure, but there are early signs of stabilisation compared to last year's volatility:

	Q2 2022/23	Q2 2023/24	Q2 2024/25	Difference	% change from last year	% of current year budget
Gas	£7,845	£16,351	£14,304	+£8,531	+26%	41%
Electricity	£32,609	£41,140	£20,785	+£17,037	+42%	42%
Total	£40,454	£57,491	£35,089	-£22,402	-39%	36%

Table 1: summary of Q2 utilities expenditure over last three financial years

¹ Council's financial regulations are available from the Town Clerk

Utility costs — which were a significant concern in previous years — have stabilised considerably. At the end of September 2024, the Council had spent £35,089 on gas and electricity, representing a 39% reduction compared with the same period last year and indicating the early benefits of improved energy efficiency and contract management. The trend also suggests that the Council's decision to build additional contingency into the 2025/26 budget for utilities was prudent.

Income generation across the Council's operational services continues to perform well. The Pavilion has achieved strong results across all trading areas, with bar, bistro, and room hire income all tracking above the mid-year target. Similarly, sports and leisure facilities have benefited from external funding — notably the PitchPower grant (£45,909) — helping to offset maintenance costs and enhance local sports provision.

Expenditure in most service areas remains within or below the expected range for this stage of the year. Some underspends have arisen due to temporary staffing vacancies, lower utility consumption, and timing differences in event or project expenditure.

Taken together, the Quarter 2 results show the Council is operating within its approved financial framework and maintaining a modest underspend position. This provides a degree of resilience as it enters the winter period, where pressures such as energy use, maintenance demands, and seasonal staffing variations are expected to increase.

Q2 variances: A number of individual budget heads have variances in excess of the 'material' 15% limit prescribed in the Financial Regulations. Summary explanations for these material variances are provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

Recommendation: Members are recommended to note the content of this report.

Appendix 1: 2025/26 quarter 2 variance table by budget heads

N.B. Members' attention is drawn in particular to columns E and F which provide the *pro rata* (i.e. quarter 2 position) variances.

		A	B	C	D	E	F	
		2025/26	Q2	Q2 Actual	Variance	% of	pro rata	
		Budget	Forecast			Budget	variance %	
						(D/A)	(D/B)	
101	Central & Civic HQ Costs	694,993	398,774	335,962	-62,812	-9%	-16%	NET
102	Democratic Costs	49,500	33,750	12,181	-21,569	-44%	-64%	Expenditure
103	Corporate Management	26,175	11,544	10,306	-1,238	-5%	-11%	Expenditure
105	Other Costs and income	2,108,755	-1,054,477	-1,054,498	-21	0%	0%	NET
221	The Pavilion	482,090	245,760	200,971	-44,789	-9%	-18%	NET
240	Sport & Leisure	199,389	91,541	71,041	-20,500	-10%	-22%	NET
241	Hill Rigg House	20,761	13,100	9,221	-3,879	-19%	-30%	NET
242	Lowhills Road Bowling Club	499	-1	-1	0	0%	0%	Net
261	Eden Lane Community Fac	7,001	7,001	7,254	253	4%	4%	NET
262	Eden Lane Depot	39,735	21,768	15,257	-6,511	-16%	-30%	Expenditure
263	Eden Lane Bowling Club	1,588	1,294	1109	-185	-12%	-14%	Expenditure
280	Woodhouse Park	97,598	50,125	36,923	-13,202	-14%	-26%	NET
290	Sports Development	34,278	12,212	753	-11,459	-33%	-94%	NET
301	Parks General	260,068	129,030	123,287	-5,743	-2%	-4%	NET
325	Cemetery & Burials	53,670	26,838	28,999	2,161	4%	8%	NET
350	Allotments	16,709	6,146	7,441	1,295	8%	21%	NET
410	Town Activities	8,000	2,500	2,325	-175	-2%	-7%	Expenditure
430	Town Events	45,800	27,900	22,024	-5,876	-13%	-21%	NET
901	Capital Projects	63,000	10,000	31,047	21,047	33%	210%	NET
950	Earmarked Reserves	74,400	34,300	39,016	4,716	6%	14%	Expenditure

NB Negative figures (-) = underspend or surplus

Appendix 2: material (>15%) variances for quarter 2 by budget head

NB: negative variances indicate an underspend, whether through reduced expenditure or increased income or both.

Code	Budget Head	pro rata variance %	variance £	Explanation
101	Central & Civic HQ Costs	-16%	-£62,812	Hire Income BBC, Wage savings, Utilities savings.
102	Democratic Costs	-64%	-£21,569	Elections not paid yet.
221	The Pavilion	-18%	-£44,789	Vacant positions, Increase in bar/bistro sales, Room hire
240	Sports & Leisure	-22%	-£20,500	Grant funding
241	Hill Rigg House	-30%	-£3,879	Utilities savings
262	Eden Lane Depot	-30%	-£6,511	Utilities savings
280	Woodhouse Park	-26%	-£13,202	Utilities savings, Wage savings
290	Sports Development	-94%	-£11,459	Funding
350	Allotments	21%	£1,295	Contribution towards works from grants

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410	Town Events	-21%	-£5,867	Under spend on events
901	Capital Projects	210%	£21,047	Awaiting payment for grant funding

Report to: Peterlee Town Council:
Date: 17th November 2025
Report of: Ian Hall, Chief Officer & Town Clerk
Subject: **Disposal of Surplus Furniture and Equipment from Shotton Hall**

Report Purpose: To seek approval for the Chief Officer & Town Clerk to arrange the disposal of surplus items from Shotton Hall that are not required for use at Hill Rigg House, and to secure the best possible price or community benefit from their disposal.

Background: Following the sale of Shotton Hall, a significant quantity of furniture, fixtures, and catering equipment has been placed in storage or temporarily located at Hill Rigg House.

A review has identified that many of these items are not required for current or future operational needs. Retaining them would take up valuable space and incur unnecessary storage and maintenance obligations.

Detail: The surplus items include, but are not limited to:

- Tables and chairs (various types and quantities)
- Kitchen and catering equipment
- Crockery, cutlery, and glassware (plates, knives, forks, spoons, bowls, etc.)
- Refrigeration and catering appliances
- Office furniture, old cabinets, and general storage units
- Chesterfield sofas and other soft furnishings
- Council Chamber tables and chairs
- Pictures and paintings (check with DCC on heritage)

To ensure best value and transparency, it is proposed that:

- The Chief Officer & Town Clerk be authorised to seek the best price for surplus items through a range of appropriate means.
- This may include approaching specialist resale companies, hospitality or catering suppliers, community organisations, local bars/restaurants, and interested individuals.
- Where appropriate, items may be offered to local community groups or charities at a reduced cost or donation if this delivers demonstrable community benefit.

All disposal activity will be undertaken in line with the Council's Financial Regulations and the Local Government Act 1972, s.127,

which permits the disposal of property no longer required for Council purposes.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to:

1. Note the report; and
2. Authorise the Chief Officer & Town Clerk to dispose of surplus furniture, fixtures, and equipment from Shotton Hall, securing the best achievable price or community value; and
3. Report back to Council on the outcome once disposal has been completed.

Appendix 1: Implications

	Detail
Finance	Any income received from disposals will be credited to the Council's General Fund. Minor costs may be incurred for advertising or transportation.
Staffing	Managed by existing officers within normal duties.
Risk	Disposal in accordance with Financial Regulations and audit trail will mitigate any risk of challenge.
Equality & Diversity	Opportunities may exist to support local community groups through reuse.
Crime & Disorder	None identified.
Legal	Disposal will be undertaken under the Local Government Act 1972, s.127.
Procurement	Not applicable.
Consultation	None required beyond Council approval.
Data Protection	Not applicable.

Report to:	Peterlee Town Council:
Date:	17 th November 2025
Report of:	Ian Hall, Chief Officer & Town Clerk
Subject:	Play Area Working Party
Report Purpose:	To inform Members of the recommendations of the Play Area Working Party held on 5 th November 2025.
Background:	The Council established a Play Area Working Party at its meeting held on 20th October 2025. All members were to be invited to take part in the Working Party meetings. (Minute No C.107/25 refers). The Working Party was established due to concerns regarding the growing vandalism issues affecting the Town's play areas and open spaces and to develop a long-term investment strategy to protect and enhance the facilities. The Terms of Reference, therefore, highlights two aspects to the review. Firstly, to deal with the immediate concerns to ensure current play equipment is safe and well maintained within the resources available. Secondly, to develop a vision with strategic objectives for the future provision of play areas and open spaces that meet the needs of residents and are sustainable in the long term. A meeting of the Working Party was held on 5th November 2025 in line with members wishes for meetings to take place on a Wednesday morning. Sadly only 2 members attended the meeting. The report sets out discussions of the Working Party, which concentrated on the immediate concerns, and its recommendations for consideration. The notes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 3 for information.
Detail:	Immediate Concerns The Working Party discussed the ongoing issues with the play areas, in particular the number of times each play area was subject to vandalism and the cost of repair and maintenance. The table on the following page sets out the areas most affected, initial investment made, age of equipment and the cost of repair and maintenance.

Play Area	Details and Concerns
Heath Close	Play area was installed in 2019, estimated installation fee was £130,000. Current repair costs for this area over the last 20 months have been more than £4,000 this is due to vandalism only.
Hampshire Place	Play area was installed in 2017, estimated installation fee was £25,000. Current repair costs for this area over the past 24 months have been more than £6,000 again this is due to vandalism only. Following the recent annual Zurich safety inspection in 2025, this play area has several safety concerns which were highlighted, one in particular being the Uni-Mini Piketo climbing assembly this has now come to the end of its life expectancy, and the replacement cost is £7,000 this does not include the required replacement of the safety surface, which would add another £2,000. We currently have this play area open after a prolonged spell of closure however the equipment mentioned has been temporarily fenced off for safety reasons.
Hill-Rigg House	Play area was installed over twenty years ago and has had little or known investment, this area has very little use from the community and now has limited amount of facilities following the removal of un-safe equipment. The safety surface currently in place needs replacement due to age related shrinkage, estimated costs for this would be £3,000. Another important safety concern is the access to this facility via a busy main road.

It had previously been agreed that the play area at Hill Rigg House on Lowhills Road would be decommissioned over time, with play equipment being removed as and when it became broken or vandalised rather than being repaired or replaced.

The Working Party was of the opinion that all equipment should be removed sooner rather than later, to prevent just one piece of equipment being left. This did not represent the play offer that PTC aspired to.

The two play areas that most frequently need repairing and maintaining are Hampshire Place and Heath Close. Hampshire Place play area had been closed for a number of weeks due to vandalism and the need to isolate unsafe play equipment which was expensive to repair.

Members agreed that the financial impact, as well as the staff time needed to continually repair and maintain these play areas is unsustainable, particularly when, in most cases, they simply become vandalised again the following week.

Members suggested that usable equipment at Heath Close should be relocated to alternative parks to avoid further damage. The MUGA at Heath Close was to remain open.

The Working Party proposed the following recommendations to address the immediate concerns:

1. That all equipment at the Hill Rigg House, Lowhills Road play area be removed.
2. That the Heath Close MUGA remain in place.
3. That the play areas at Hampshire Place and Heath Close be slowly decommissioned, with green spaces being created to fill the areas of the removed equipment.
4. That once only a few items are remaining at Hampshire Place and Heath Close, any working play equipment remaining be distributed between the remaining play areas at Eden Lane, Oakerside Drive and Woodhouse Park.

Developing a Vision and Strategic objectives

The development of a vision and strategic objectives was briefly discussed.

Further discussion is required to develop a vision and strategy for 'play' throughout the town to ensure that all areas have appropriate play provision that is sustainable in the long term.

The possibility of Woodhouse Park becoming a flagship park was discussed as this would enable the provision of play equipment and facilities for all age ranges and abilities at a single site which would be more secure and therefore sustainable.

It is however equally important that the strategy look at developing play facilities at all current locations that are appealing to residents and are sustainable and affordable in the long term.

It is suggested that the Working Party continue to meet to discuss the vision and strategic objectives.

Given the poor attendance at the first meeting, together with the importance of developing a strategic approach to the provision of play throughout the town, it is proposed that the Working Party consist of 6 members, with at least one from each Ward. It is felt that this approach would improve attendance and ensure that all wards are represented during the development of the vision.

The findings of the Working Party will be submitted to Council so that all members will have input to the vision and strategy.

- Recommendation:**
1. That recommendations 1 to 4 of the Working Party, be approved.
 2. That the Working Party continue to meet to develop a vision and strategy for play.
 3. That the Working Party consist of 6 members, with representation from each ward.

Appendix 1: Implications.

Finance: Estimated investment of £150,000–£250,000, potentially funded via capital budgets, Section 106 agreements, and external grants.

Staffing: No direct implications.

Risk: Moderate linked to capital costs, vandalism risk, and project delivery timescales. Mitigated through design, community engagement, and surveillance. Reduction in unsafe or damaged play equipment. Compliance with EN1176 & EN1177.

Equality and Diversity, Cohesion and Integration: Inclusive design to support children and families of all abilities.

Crime and Disorder: CCTV, lighting, and community ownership expected to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Consultation and Communication: Community engagement planned with residents, schools, and youth groups.

Procurement: No direct implications at this stage.

Legal & Data Protection: No direct implications at this stage

Working Party Name:	Play Area Working Party
Reports to:	Council
Membership:	6 Members
Chair & Vice Chair:	
Purpose	To recommend a long-term strategy for the sustainable development and management of the Council's play areas and open spaces. The Working Party will look at: Understanding The Issues Current Provision • Types of play. Fixed facilities (play equipment) and non-fixed play opportunities (open spaces) • Age range • Inclusivity • Locations • Condition and age of equipment Finance Revenue • Cost of general maintenance • Cost of damage due to vandalism and areas most affected • Revenue budgets Capital • Cost of replacing equipment that's at its end of life • Earmarked Funds and Potential Grant Opportunities Sustainable Provision How can the Council ensure that provision meets the needs of residents and is sustainable and cost effective?

Two Strands To The Review	A. Dealing With Immediate Concerns What the Council needs to do in the short term to ensure current play equipment is safe and well maintained within the resources available.	B. Developing A Vision / Strategic Objectives Development of a clear statement of the desired future state for play and the specific outcomes the strategy aims to achieve. <i>Example:</i> • Improve child development • Enhance community spaces • Promote active lifestyles • Ensure equitable access Stakeholder Involvement Collaboration with various groups to inform the strategy, including (for example): • Play England • Durham County Council • Children and young people themselves • Other local Developing 'Peterlee Plan For Play' Action plan to achieve
Delegated authority:	None	
Budgets:	None	
Meeting Frequency:	Monthly	
Public and Press access to meeting:	No	
Council Officers advising the Committee:	Town Clerk Neighbourhood Services Manager	

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

Notes of the meeting of the **Play Area Working Party** on **Tuesday 5th November 2025** at **10.00 am** in the Council Chamber, Shotton Hall, Peterlee.

Present: Councillors K Hawley and D Meadows

Also Present: Ian Hall, (Chief Officer and Town Clerk), Louise Hudson (Democratic Services Assistant) and Wayne Harriman (Neighbourhood Services Manager)

PAWP.1/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

PAWP.2/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

PAWP.3/25 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were provided with a copy of the Terms of Reference for review and consideration.

RESOLVED: The Terms of Reference be approved and adopted.

PAWP.4/25 INTRODUCTION

The Town Clerk and the Neighbourhood Services Manager discussed with Members the ongoing issues with the play areas, specifically the concern surrounding the number of times each play area is vandalised, repaired and maintained, all at a cost to the Council and staff time and asked for their views on how the Council can ensure that provision meets the needs of residents and is sustainable and cost effective?

It was explained that it had already been agreed at a previous Council meeting that the play area at Hill Rigg House on Lowhills Road would slowly be decommissioned, with each piece of play equipment being removed as and when it became broken or vandalised. With this in mind, Members were of the opinion that all equipment should be removed sooner rather than later, to prevent just one piece of equipment being left, as this was not typical of a play area.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reported that although all of the play areas experience vandalism and broken equipment, the two play areas that most frequently need repairing and maintaining are Hampshire Place and Heath Close and that Hampshire Close was, in fact, currently closed for this reason and has been for a number of weeks.

Details were given about each play area, i.e. when they were installed, the original cost, the number of times each play area had to be closed due to vandalism each year, the approximate annual cost of repairs, and which equipment is no longer usable.

In light of this, Members were asked their opinions on these play areas. They suggested that the financial impact, as well as the staff time needed to continue repairing and maintaining these play areas is unrealistic, especially when, in most cases, they simply become vandalised again the following week. Therefore, recommendations should be made to slowly decommission these play areas, with green spaces being created to fill the areas of the removed equipment.

In addition to this, to avoid any usable equipment going to waste, it was recommended that the MUGA at Heath Close remain open and that during the decommissioning of the two play areas, it was suggested that any remaining serviceable equipment be redistributed among the other play areas at Eden Lane, Oakerside Drive, and Woodhouse Park.

Due to the loss of one play area and the potential loss of a further two, it was suggested that Woodhouse Park could become the flagship park of Peterlee. This is because it caters to all age groups and it is already also used as a venue for larger summer events. This could then open up the potential to provide a better community building and someday open a café with an outdoor seating area, similar to other larger parks in County Durham.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That all equipment at the Hill Rigg House, Lowhills Road play area be removed.
2. That the Heath Close MUGA remain in place.
3. That the play areas at Hampshire Place and Heath Close be slowly decommissioned, with green spaces being created to fill the areas of the removed equipment.
4. That once only a few items are remaining at Hampshire Place and Heath Close, any working play equipment remaining be distributed between the remaining play areas at Eden Lane, Oakerside Drive and Woodhouse Park.
5. That Woodhouse Park becomes the flagship park of Peterlee, with future plans to look into providing a better community building and possibly a café.

Report to: Peterlee Town Council:

Date: 17th November 2025

Report of: Ian Hall, Chief Officer & Town Clerk

Subject: **Standards Complaint, Monitoring Officer Decision Notice**

Report Purpose: To inform Members of the outcome of a Standards complaint submitted to Durham County Council's Monitoring Officer regarding the alleged conduct of several Town Councillors.

Background: Durham County Council, as the Principal Authority, is responsible for assessing and determining complaints made under the Localism Act 2011 relating to potential breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Two linked complaints were recently submitted concerning the behaviour of Town Councillors during and following a Council meeting held in July 2025.

The complaints were considered jointly by Durham County Council's Legal Officer (Governance) in accordance with its published Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints.

Detail: Summary of the Complaint

The complaints related to:

- Alleged inappropriate behaviour and language used in and after a Council meeting;
- Allegations of conduct potentially contrary to the Peterlee Town Council Members' Code of Conduct, particularly around respect, courtesy, and reputation; and
- A disagreement concerning a Council decision previously taken on the provision of equipment to Members.

Decision of the Monitoring Officer

After reviewing the complaints, responses, and supporting material, the Legal Officer (Governance) determined that:

- The complaints arose primarily from differences in opinion between Members regarding Council business;
- There was insufficient evidence that the alleged conduct occurred in a formal Council capacity;
- The discussions referenced took place after the conclusion of the meeting when Members were not acting in their official roles;
- Any comments made were considered to fall within the right to freedom of political expression protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights; and

- The threshold for determining a breach of the Code of Conduct was not met.

Accordingly, the decision was that no further action would be taken in relation to either complaint.

Additional Observations

The decision notice also suggested that the Town Council may wish to consider arranging refresher Code of Conduct training for all Members, particularly following the 2025 local elections, to reinforce shared understanding of expected standards of behaviour and mutual respect.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Monitoring Officer's decision be noted.
 2. That refresher Code of Conduct training be arranged for all members at an appropriate time.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance No direct implications

Staffing No direct implications

Risk Refresher training would reduce governance and reputational risks.

Equality and Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Promotes awareness of mutual respect and equal treatment among Members.

Crime and Disorder No direct implications

Consultation & Communication No direct implications

Procurement No direct implications

Legal Determination made under the Localism Act 2011. No right of appeal.