
**OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
PORTFOLIO**

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:

Community Energy Solutions Partnership

2. A partnership has been formed with Community Energy Solutions which is a non-profit making company established by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and One North East. The aim of the partnership is to deliver energy efficiency improvements to those areas identified as most deprived in addition to more isolated locations which do not have access to mains gas supplies. This follows on from the successful sub-regional energy efficiency programme funded by the Regional Housing Board through Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP2) funding between 2006-08 managed by the Tees and District Energy Advice centre (TADEA). The TADEA programme attracted total funding of £300K and delivered affordable warmth to many vulnerable low income households in the Borough along with providing discounted energy efficiency measures for those local people with the financial means to contribute towards the costs.

Affordable Housing

3. It is expected that formal submissions will be tendered to the Council within the next two weeks in respect of the delivery of new affordable housing on three surplus school sites at Beaumont Street following initial short listing. The Housing Strategy, Estates, Planning and Building Control teams have been working closely with private developers to deliver new affordable housing on each of the three sites in accordance with the Council's adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. The detailed s106 planning agreement has been agreed and each of the three sites will boast mixed tenure housing options including outright sale, shared equity and social rented accommodation to meet local housing aspirations. The three sites which are owned by the Council represent a pioneering approach to the delivery of affordable housing in accordance with best practice published by the Housing Corporation and will incorporate new higher design and quality features to meet the Corporation's new enhanced design and quality standards guidance published in April 2007.

Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP3)

4. Darlington, together with the other Tees Valley local authorities submitted a funding application for Regional Housing Board funding for the period 2008-11 in July 2007 based on housing priorities identified within the newly published Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Strategy (July 2007). The total application for funding was in the region of £46M for the three year term. Although the application for funding exceeds the total funding made available to the region the Tees Valley Sub-Region maintains a high quality reputation for delivering on its priority housing objectives and investing wisely to create sustainable communities. The outcome of the funding application is anticipated to be early in 2008 and initial feedback has been very positive.

Growth Bid

5. The five Tees Valley local authorities have been working closely together towards submitting a “growth bid” in response to the recently published Housing Green paper. Up to now identified growth areas have been confined to southern local authorities where demand for affordable housing is seen as being most acute. Recently the Government has encouraged northern local authorities to submit proposals for housing growth that will assist with meeting growing housing demand and facilitate more rapid house building rates than have been achieved in recent years. The Tees Valley sub-region was invited to make a bid for growth status based on a successful track record of delivering major regeneration and affordable housing schemes to budget, and, within project timescales. The growth bid application submitted on 31 October 2007 for assessment, will recognise Darlington as a major economic gateway to the Tees Valley sub-region with excellent transport infrastructure and sufficient capacity to deliver housing growth to achieve growth status. The outcome of the application is not likely to be known until 2008.

Supporting People Commissioning Strategy

6. The Supporting People team are currently undertaking consultation on a commissioning strategy for housing related support services in Darlington. The unique way the existing services were inherited onto the Supporting People programme, means that none of these had formally been commissioned by the Council or subject to a formal procurement process. The Supporting People team have undertaken significant work with service providers, service users and other stakeholders to review and improve services, and by looking to procure these services we can ensure that we are providing the best outcomes for service users in Darlington. We can also expect the quality of services to be driven up as providers realise they are in a competitive environment. This in turn will encourage innovation.
7. The Darlington Supporting People Commissioning strategy is intended to give direction in meeting the vision and the priorities of the 5-year Strategy. It will establish the process for deciding the appropriate method of procurement, how any re-tendering exercises will be undertaken and what outcomes are expected.

Service User Forum

8. On 24 October, I attended a Forum held by the Supporting People team for its service users. Over 80 people attended, reflecting the many diverse groups that benefit from the Supporting People programme. The recent national Supporting People strategy reaffirms that service users should play a central role in the delivery of the programme. Supporting People has an established history of offering choice and control to the people who use its services. Individuals can have a clear say over what support they receive and how and when they receive it. In addition, the Supporting People team in Darlington has commissioned new services that are more appropriate and responsive to what people want. However, we need to encourage more vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities to get involved in the delivery of the programme, and this formed the basis of the Forum. Workshops facilitated by staff from both Darlington and other neighbouring authority's Supporting People teams sought to explore with service users the many ways in which they could become involved with the programme. The Forum successfully identified that service users wanted to become more empowered in the design and commissioning process. Many of the people attending the Forum put their names forward to get involved with groups and the Supporting People team is now in the process of setting these up. Whilst the views of service users will remain key to the delivery of the programme, a new process of placing service users at the heart of the decision making process will be key to the future development of the programme.

Tenant Enforcement Action

9. The following Tenant Enforcement Action has taken place recently:
 - (a) The newly created additional post of Tenancy Enforcement Officer was appointed to.
 - (b) An ex-parte ASB Injunction was ordered against a tenant from Cockerton East Ward for criminal damage and common assault. The same tenant has an Introductory Tenancy which was extended by 6 months but is now waiting to attend Court for a possession hearing on the 9th November as she has failed to amend her behaviour.
 - (c) A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant from the Park East Ward for ASB in respect of her son's behaviour, her housekeeping standards and poor garden conditions. Reparation plan is in place together with Adult Services involvement.
 - (d) A referral to the Family Intervention Project (FIP) was made for a Cockerton family.
 - (e) A joint prison visit was undertaken with an officer from the FIP team to carry out motivational and continuity work with the son of a tenant who will hopefully be allocated his own flat on release from prison in 2008.
 - (f) An ASB Injunction with power of arrest was ordered for a 12-month period against the son of a tenant living in Haughton West Ward.
 - (g) Court proceedings for possession were served on a Red Hall tenant with an initial hearing on 9 November.

- (h) Evidence of ASB was obtained on a camera that was installed in a property in the Lingfield Ward. Police now have the tape and the camera is still in the property.
- (i) Discussions are taking place with the Zone Active team to provide diversionary activities such as Boxercise classes with the first class starting in mid-November in the Coleridge Centre.

Anti Social Behaviour

10. Further to a number of complaints regarding a property in Bartlett Street, Darlington regarding alleged drug activity, noise and anti social behaviour, the Anti Social Behaviour Officer and local Police Beat Team worked closely to gather evidence and support the residents suffering from the anti social behaviour. In June 2007, having secured evidence of harassment, alarm and distress caused by the occupants of the property and evidence of class A drugs being consumed and sold within the property, the Police and Anti Social Behaviour Team jointly applied for a Crack House Closure Order to close the property for three months. The application was successful and the individuals involved were given notice to leave immediately. As part of the longer-term resolution to deal with the anti social issues, the Anti Social Behaviour Officer also applied for injunctions against both the individuals to prevent them moving back into the property or coming into the street.
11. A number of young people have signed Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA) following evidence that they are causing distress and intimidation in Eastbourne Park. Anti Social Behaviour Officers and Police PCSO's have worked jointly and spoken to the youths and their parents about the potential action that the Council can take to deal with their behaviour, should it continue. Since the home visits and the signing of the ABA's, the behaviour has discontinued.
12. Football nuisance dramatically affecting the lives of elderly residents in Ullswater Avenue was successfully tackled by the Anti-Social Behaviour officer over summer months. Youths as young as 8 years old regularly played football on a small grassed area in Ullswater Avenue opposite elderly persons' accommodation and open plan gardens. Residents bitterly complained that the ball bounced off their windows and damaged plants and they felt intimidated from the youths who would gesticulate threatening gestures through windows when collecting the football. The parents of the youths were all visited and were insistent that their children could play on this small area of grass. In an attempt to capture the nuisance and evidence that the elderly residents were advising, a camera was installed to observe the nuisance and parents and youths were informed. Although the camera did not record any nuisance, the football on the small grassed area ceased immediately and has not recurred to date.
13. A long running neighbour dispute in Nickstream Lane was recently resolved by the Anti Social Behaviour Officer, who arranged to simply get both parties around a table to discuss their issues. Having previously been friendly a number a years ago, a misunderstanding had led to assaults, verbal abuse, calls to the Police, intimidation, allegations and total misery for both families. Both couples met in a Council meeting room and during a discussion, controlled by the Anti Social Behaviour Officer and local Police Officer, they aired their concerns and points of view and agreed on a method of communicating for the future.

14. Investigation and witness support is ongoing due to a problem property in Lansdowne Street, Darlington. All night parties, drinking and shouting in the street and to the front of the property are affecting other residents in the street. The Anti Social Behaviour Officer is supporting other residents and gathering evidence against the perpetrators of the anti social behaviour with the intention of applying for an Anti Social Behaviour Order to permanently prevent the continuing distress caused to residents. Four people have been named and action is being pursued against each individually.
15. In total, over 1,400 individuals have been identified by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team due to their conduct. 970 individuals have been warned about their conduct and advised that future behaviour of an anti social nature will not be tolerated in Darlington. Of the 970, 108 have received a second warning and 30 have received a third and final warning.
16. 126 anti social behaviour interviews have been conducted by the Anti Social Behaviour Officers and for the 16 who failed to attend, home visits were made to complete the interview with a Uniformed Police Officer.
17. 55 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements have been signed with 19 breaches, who have all received warnings of legal action due to the breach.
18. Two Crack House Closures in privately rented properties have been carried out with landlords unwilling to work with us, and four injunctions have been gained to prohibit those who have caused residents misery and distress due to their inconsiderate behaviour from returning to the area.
19. Two ASBOs have been granted for persistent anti social behaviour for two years each and several more are currently being compiled

Motorbike Nuisance

12. There have been 11 motorbike byelaw prosecutions since April 2007.

Waste

13. Since April 2007, 43 Fixed Penalty Notices have been served for inappropriate disposal of household waste and 16 cases have been prosecuted, all successfully. 211 Fixed Penalty Notices have been served for littering and 16 cases have been successfully prosecuted.
14. Two Fixed Penalty Notices have been served for graffiti, both of which have been paid.
15. One Fixed Penalty Notice has been served for failing to produce a waste carrier's licence.

Dogs

16. Since April 2007, 20 Fixed Penalty Notices have been served for dog fouling with two prosecutions.

Vehicles

17. A court date has been applied for to hear a case concerning a car sales trader who regularly and persistently advertised cars for sale on the highway on Whessoe Road. The trader, who can not be identified at this time, has failed to pay the Fixed Penalty Notices served and will be prosecuted under the new provisions made available in the Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005.
18. Following a number of complaints regarding cars being advertised for sale on North Road in large quantities, a full investigation has been launched to trace and prosecute the trader responsible. Difficulties are being experienced due to the majority of the vehicles advertised in this area having been bought from auction sites and registered in the name of the previous owner, rendering the Anti Social Behaviour Team unable to prove that one trader is responsible. A covert operation has been initiated to identify those responsible.
19. Since April 2007, six Fixed Penalty Notices have been served for exposing a vehicle for sale on the highway and 12 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for abandoned vehicles.

Beacon Status for 'Better Public Places'

20. The Council's recent application for Beacon Status for Better Public Places has been short listed and the Assessment Team from the IdeA, together with an observer from Government Office North East, visited Darlington on Wednesday 14 November 2007 from 11.15 am to 2.15 pm. The team was taken on a tour of a number of sites throughout the Borough, including Pensbury Street, the Town Centre and West Park, finishing at South Park. The Leader of the Council formally welcomed the Assessment Team in the Outside In Education Centre in the park, followed by a presentation by the Assistant Director – Environmental Services. There was also the opportunity for the team to meet staff, partners and community groups over a buffet lunch.

Cleveland Criminal Justice Award

21. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISSP) Case Manager Andrea Wood has received a Cleveland Criminal Justice Award for her personal outstanding contribution to working with offenders. Andrea beat off 10 other finalists (all from the adult world of working with offenders) for her innovative work on knife crime.
22. Andrea established a programme following an alarming rise in the number of knife related offences nationally and locally. The programme aims to educate young people about the dangers of carrying knives and by exploring their understanding of the laws surrounding such offences. Whilst the majority of young people will never carry knives, research shows that one in five will carry one and 50% of young people know someone who does. There has been a clear culture change among some young people and of concern is the statistics which suggest that those carrying knives appear to do so as some "personal protection" however they are then twice as likely to become victims of their own weapons.

Darlington Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

Headline Performance at September 2007

20. At September 2007, the following reductions were achieved against the September 2007 targets (police figures):

- (a) -15.6% PSA1 Crime. There have been month on month decreases in PSA1 Crime since March 2007, with the current quarter seeing a reduction of 18% on the previous quarter.
- (b) -21.2% Criminal Damage. Damage has also seen month on month decreases since March 2007, with the current quarter seeing a reduction of almost 14% on the previous quarter.
- (c) -21.2% Theft from Motor Vehicle. Theft from Motor Vehicle offences have decreased month on month since March 2007, with the current quarter seeing a reduction of just over 32% on the previous quarter.
- (d) All other PSA1 crimes also reduced.

21. The table below provides an overview of all PSA1 crimes:

Crime Type	Oct 2006 baseline	Target to Sept 07	Latest 12 months	% Change from baseline
PSA1	7895	7421	6664	-15.6
Common Assault	258		244	-5.4
Criminal Damage	3276	2948	2583	-21.2
Burglary	574		524	-8.7
Robbery	89		76	-14.6
Theft from Person	147		145	-1.4
Theft from Vehicle	1659	1526	1308	-21.2
Theft of Cycle	295		287	-2.7
Theft of Vehicle	476		436	-8.4
Vehicle Interference	150		139	-7.3
Wounding	971		921	-5.1

Anti-Social Behaviour

22. The CDRP has a target to reduce ASB by 10% by March 2008.

23. At August 2007 there was a recorded decrease of 20% for the period April to August compared to 2006. The quarter to August saw a decrease of 10% on the previous quarter.

Darlington Drug and Alcohol Action Team

24. **Darlington DAAT Unit** is experiencing staffing changes as the DAAT Unit Manager moves on. Darlington PCT employ the unit staff and have already initiate the recruitment process it is hoped at a new manager will join the unit in early 2008.

Drugs

25. On 8 November, I met with the Regional Director of the National Treatment Agency plus officials from GONE, the Probation Service and Users/Carers to discuss the DAAT Units progress as part of the half yearly review. I am pleased to report the unit is still rated as Green and remains one of the highest performing DAAT's in the country.
26. **Adult Treatment Plan:** The new Adult Drug Treatment planning process to inform the 2008/9 treatment plan is already underway with the completion of the estimation of the number of problematic drug users within our population and a number of planned stakeholder events.
27. **National Drugs Strategy:** The new "draft" National Drugs Strategy has been disseminated as part of a national consultation exercise. The DAAT Unit received a number of comments from stakeholders and a feedback report has been submitted. The strategy is expected to be formally launched by April 2008.
28. **Young People Treatment Plan:** This year the Department of Health have launched a drug and alcohol treatment plan for young people due to be submitted in January 2008. DAAT planning groups have already met to consider the document and process whilst the needs assessment work has already commenced. In addition survey work across Darlington Secondary Schools is planned for delivery before 2008 to identify the "social norms" of our young peoples' behaviour in respect of drugs and alcohol. It is expected that this will inform planning and service delivery for 2008 onwards.

Alcohol

29. **Needs Assessment:** A comprehensive alcohol assessment of need has been collated providing a very complex picture of the level of alcohol misuse across Darlington. This is expected to inform future service planning.
30. **Brief Interventions:** The "SIPs" (Trail Blazers) national research project led by Newcastle University into alcohol brief interventions is progressing well within Darlington and is about to become operational. A number of GP surgeries and the Accident and Emergency service are fully engaged and ready to start whilst the Criminal Justice pre-pilot in Police custody, Probation, Prison and the Youth Offending Service has been completed. When the Criminal Justice site has been formally agreed by Government the research will commence late 2007. The research is due to complete late 2008/9, the outcome will be the identification of a brief intervention tool that can be used across public services.

31. **Alcohol Treatment:** An alcohol service specification has been developed by the DAAT Unit and Alcohol Treatment Group achieved through better coordination and the targeting of existing resources. A number of stakeholder events are planned as part of consultation. It is hoped that the service will become operational early 2008.

Licensing

32. On Friday 26 October 2007 Darlington Council's Licensing Section hosted a training session for officers and members in the Northern Region. Roger Butterfield, a nationally acclaimed trainer delivered two sessions – the first on street trading and the second licensing of sex shops. Delegates attended from as far afield as Bradford and North Lincolnshire. Members of Darlington Council's Licensing Committee attended this training.

Councillor Bill Dixon

Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety