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**TRANSFORMING THE COUNCIL -  
HOW WE WORK**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader**

**Responsible Director – Chief Officers Executive**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. This report continues the ongoing review of Council structures and working arrangements within the context of changed national policy, our Business Model and the delivery of our Community Strategy. The report proposes changes to the way the Council works and to make changes to the remits of the five Scrutiny Committees.

**Background**

2. The national policy context will result in significant changes to the public sector as a whole. Members will need to be kept informed about the range of changes proposed for the delivery of health services; the proposals for wider powers for community groups and individuals through the localism agenda; the proposals for Police and Crime Commissioners; and the wide ranging proposals which touch almost every aspect of the council's service delivery. This report proposes a number of ways in which information can be provided to Members to keep them informed about these changes and support them in the work they are doing within their communities.
3. The Council began the review of its structures in November 2010 with its staffing resource. The model adopted was to create two groups of service accountabilities aligned with One Darlington, Perfectly Placed, for People and Place, with a third group, Resources. In May following the local elections the Leader of the Council and his cabinet colleagues reviewed Executive functions and Cabinet Portfolios to align them with the People, Place and Resources groups and with an emphasis on efficiency and capacity to enable the Council to deliver its ambitious programme of change within the model. The review of Scrutiny remits follows that continuum and aims to align the Committees with the Sustainable Community Strategy key outcomes.

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that the remits of the Scrutiny Committees be amended as detailed in paragraphs 21 - 41.

## Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To align the Committees with the outcomes from the Sustainable Community Strategy and the wider business model.
  - (b) To enable continued support to Scrutiny with reduced management capacity.

## Chief Officers Executive

## Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific impacts on Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	The role of the Committee will be changed but there will be no specific impact arising from this report.
Carbon Impact	The intention is to reduce the amount of paperwork presented to committees.
Diversity	There are no specific diversity implications.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report aligns the Scrutiny remit with the Sustainable Community Strategy, which should help to ensure that the outcomes of the strategy remain the key focus.
Efficiency	The report aims to reduce management time expended in supporting Scrutiny whilst providing an enhanced service.

## MAIN REPORT

### Context

6. The starting point for a re-design is the functions the Council has agreed, together with its priority objectives. Within the Business Model the Council agreed four key functions:
  - (a) Championing the interests of citizens and business.
  - (b) Support strong partnership to set a vision and direction for the Borough and its services.
  - (c) Promote the Borough to secure investment and support.
  - (d) Ensure the provision of good quality services.
7. The Community Strategy; One Darlington Perfectly Placed, articulates two priorities for Darlington that the Council has signed up to. Against the backdrop of the recession and decline in funding the Darlington Partnership has re-affirmed its commitment to these priorities, whilst acknowledging that the timeframe within which those ambitions might be achieved will of necessity be prolonged. It is therefore appropriate to reflect these two priorities in setting the shape for how accountabilities should be organised within the Council.
8. One Darlington captures a set of priorities for people that embrace learning, safety, health, and well being, with a specific drive to reduce the inequalities in outcomes within neighbourhoods and specific communities.
9. Perfectly Placed captures a set of priorities for borough that equip it to be a place where people wish to live, to invest, work, study and visit. The focus embraces good development, a clean and sustainable environment, and economic prosperity.
10. Alongside this set of key outcomes and the priorities of the Community Strategy, a number of principles have been applied to the development of a Council structure to secure an organisation that:
  - (a) Has clear management accountability for delivering outcomes for the people of Darlington and outcomes for the place in accordance with “One Darlington Perfectly Placed”.
  - (b) Is an effective strategic commissioner of services, focused on outcomes.
  - (c) Supports Members and communities to foster self reliant and resilient communities.
  - (d) Provides consistent, high quality customer experiences.
  - (e) Has the capacity and discretionary leadership to deliver transformation.

- (f) Has the form, competencies and values to be efficient and effective.
- (a) Is rigorous in using evidence of need and of what works to design and prioritise services.

11. The business model suggests that the Council of the future will be :-

- (a) Strongly focussed on ensuring good overall outcomes for the public and the place rather than managing day to day service issues (these increasingly the responsibility of others but retaining ability to ensure they deliver)
- (b) Clear and acknowledged leadership of “place” and facilitator of partnerships concerned with delivering One Darlington: Perfectly Placed
- (c) Significantly smaller in terms of directly employed staff
- (d) Many of its big budgets linked to contracts, or service level agreements or partnership delivery vehicles

12. Building from these foundations, the Council began the review of its structures in November 2010 with its staffing resource. The model adopted was to create two groups of service accountabilities aligned with One Darlington, Perfectly Placed, for People and Place, with a third group, Resources. The management was reviewed and streamlined. As a result the new Council is supported and advised by a significantly reduced management structure (reduced by 36%) carrying out existing functions and leading a significant transformation programme.

13. In May following the local elections the Leader of the Council and his cabinet colleagues reviewed Executive functions and Cabinet Portfolios to align them with the People, Place and Resources groups and with an emphasis on efficiency and capacity to enable the Council to deliver its ambitious programme of change within the model.

14. As part of that continuum there is now a need to reflect on how non-Executive Members engage with the changing shape of the Council, and at the same time are supported to work with their communities to find local solutions to needs and aspirations that do not rely on diminishing resources. There are four strands to this.

- (a) The Council restructure created the Communities Team and a programme of work is in development with the specific aim of reviewing the support available to members working within their communities, to assist members in developing the skills necessary to carry out that work and to assist and support communities with a view to transferring aspects of community service to the communities themselves.
- (b) The Council’s Scrutiny Committees have always enjoyed wide powers to scrutinise all aspects of the Council business and have made significant contributions to key policy changes the Council has undertaken. The Council has engaged in an ambitious programme of change across the Council and Scrutiny can make a significant contribution to the successful delivery of this programme.

- (c) The national policy context will result in significant changes to the public sector as a whole. Members will need to be kept informed about the range of changes proposed for the delivery of health services; the proposals for wider powers for community groups and individuals through the localism agenda and the wide ranging proposals which touch almost every aspect of the council's service delivery.
  - (d) The information revolution is well underway and provides the opportunity for Members to have improved ward based information readily available to them, without the need to absorb management capacity.
15. The initial review begins by seeking to ensure alignment with Cabinet and management structures and identifying new ways of working which reflect reduced capacity and resources, whilst acknowledging the developing demands on Members and the Council as a whole.
16. This report sets out some ways in which Members can be better engaged in the challenges facing the Council, be supported to work with their residents and local communities and be supported within the diminishing resources the Council has at its disposal:-
- (a) Cabinet Members and relevant Assistant Directors/Directors could host regular briefing sessions for all Members on issues within their portfolios and to receive comments and suggestions and to answer questions from Members;
  - (b) Given the scale of change in national policy, from health to policing, briefings could be arranged prior to each Council meeting at which Councillors can be updated on key issues impacting on the Borough including government initiatives and proposed legislative changes;
  - (c) Enabling Members to be kept aware of ward and borough wide activity and developments is important and we can build on existing communications, web and intranet pages to improve information flows. Work is currently underway to provide better access to ward based data, for example on street scene and highways. Member registration to the "My Darlington" facility will provide members with a range of ward based data already available direct to a single web page;
  - (d) All Member requests for information are now logged on to the Council's Respond system which logs community feedback through existing complaints, comments, information requests and a range of other customer feedback. The system will help to ensure Members receive responses to requests. The system should also highlight where information demand is arising so if possible it can be addressed through other means such as the monthly briefings and the web based information service; and
  - (e) There could be an expectation that Members demonstrate minimum levels of activity within their wards, through the production of for example at least a newsletter each quarter and no less than one annual Ward meeting, reporting in to Council.
17. The ideas above could assist the Scrutiny function by ensuring information is readily available to all Members. The above matters do not require Council decision making and can be readily implemented.

## **SCRUTINY**

18. To enhance the effectiveness of scrutiny it is suggested that the scrutiny committees be aligned with the key themes of the Community Strategy in line with the other elements of the structural review already completed (Portfolios and Management structure).
19. In undertaking this alignment, it is also opportune to look at the concerns which have been expressed in the past about the significant workload of the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee. Unlike other Council Committees, the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee is expected to respond to agenda's set by external Health Organisations. The proposed changes to the NHS within the current Bill before Parliament, together with the on-going re-shaping of hospital services, presents a major challenge to the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee as it is currently constituted.
20. The five Scrutiny Committees with amended titles and remits were considered by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group on 4th July 2011.
21. The proposal will reduce the number of Cabinet Members and Officers attending Scrutiny and will enhance communication between Cabinet, Directors and Assistant Directors. There are very clear linkages between Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, Directors and Assistant Directors.

### **Scrutiny Committee 1: Efficiency and Resources**

#### **Cabinet Member: Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

22. The remit of the Cabinet member is almost wholly aligned to the Scrutiny Committee. Building Services and Capital Projects Management also sits within the remit of the Cabinet Member. These services are located within the Place group.

#### **Transformation Programmes: Organisation Design, Business Operations and Think Customer**

23. The Committee remit includes projects within three Transformation Programmes but some of these are not wholly aligned. For example Commissioning sits within the Organisational Design Programme but is likely to sit within Health, Adults and Children and Place as a function which is spread corporately. The key challenges for the proposed Committee are monitoring the achievement of significant areas of savings in areas like Procurement and Asset Management, delivering some of the organizational development changes like the workforce strategy and the Member Development programme, and delivering the change programmes set out in three programmes which involve change across the Council to the way we work currently.

**Resources Group**

24. The remit is almost wholly aligned to the new Resources Group with the addition of Capital Projects and Building Services. This does not represent a significant change to the Committee, and brings in Communications and Customer Services to the existing work of the Committee. This Scrutiny Committee reflects the major challenges the Council faces in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan and oversight of the implementation of the budget cuts and effects.

25. Services Covered by the Group are:

Finance Audit Insurance Information Governance Insight and Information	Procurement Estates HR Health and Safety Complaints Web	Legal Democratic Customer Services Registrar's Xentrall Share Services Building Services
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**Comments**

26. The Committee has good alignment across all areas and there is little change to the existing areas of responsibility.

**Scrutiny Committee 2: Place**

**Cabinet Members: Economy and Regeneration; Leisure and Local Environment and Transport**

27. The Committee deals with the three separate portfolios

**Transformation Programmes: Place**

28. A single transformation programme deals with the change programme within the Place area.

**Officer Structure: Place Group**

29. The remit is wholly aligned to the Place group with exception of Building Services and Capital Projects which sit within Resources Scrutiny remit. This would bring together the current Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee. The big strategic issues facing the Committee will be in the areas of Economic Strategy and Implementation and also there will be a review of Arts, Leisure and Libraries and these issues are helpfully contained within the single Place Transformation Programme.

Place Strategy Regulatory Services including Environmental Health Licensing Planning	Transport Policy Highways Car Parking Road Safety Local Environment including:	Leisure and Culture including Facilities Management Events and Programming Sports and Physical Activity Museum and Archive Services
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Building Control Trading Standards Emergency Planning Economic Development Business Engagement Climate Change Carbon Management Private Sector Housing Design and Heritage	Street Scene Waste Collection and Management Cemeteries and Crematoria Countryside/Rights of Way Parks and Open Spaces	Arts Management and Development Library Service Markets Management
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**Comments**

30. Although the Committee may seem to have a very wide remit, a significant part of work of the Department relates to Council functions such as Planning, Licensing, Regulatory Services and some Highways work which are not subject to scrutiny. In addition Building Services and Capital Projects work is dealt with by Resources Scrutiny Committee. Some elements are delivered through external contracts such as Waste Management. The proposal is that the Committee should focus on the larger strategic decisions such as the delivery of Economic Strategy and Implementation and also there will be a review of Arts, Leisure and Libraries with much of the information currently provided to members being provided through electronic means as ward based data via the web rather than report format.

**Scrutiny Committee 3: Adults and Housing**

**Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care and Housing Portfolio**

31. The Committee would wholly align with the remit of the Cabinet Portfolio.

**Transformation Programme: People**

32. The Committee would pick up the part of the programme which relates to Adult Services. This was previously a separate programme.

**Officer Structure: Assistant Director Adults and Housing**

33. The Committee would align with the responsibility of one Assistant Director who would provide the support to the committee. Commissioning functions sit with the AD Development & Commissioning would also be within the remit of the Committee.

Tenancy Support Asylum Seekers Learning Disability Mental Health Physical Disabilities Older People	Housing and Council Tax Benefits Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Council Housing Housing Options
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**Comments**



34. This reflects the on-going programme of transformation within Adult Social Care, which is expected to deliver major service changes and efficiency gains. As a result of this there will be a number of consultations to inform commissioning intentions which will be led by this Scrutiny Committee. There are some linkages in relation to Adult Social Care and Health, however, these two areas are facing major challenges over the next few years and the agenda is too great to continue to amalgamate these areas.

**Scrutiny Committee 4: Children and Young People**

**Cabinet Member: Children and Young People Portfolio**

35. The committee would wholly align with a single portfolio.

**Officer Structure: Assistant Director Children, Families and Learning**

36. The Committee would align with the responsibility of one Assistant Director who would provide the support to the committee. Commissioning functions sit with the AD Development & Commissioning would also be within the remit of the Committee.

Looked After and Adoption Services Youth Offending Services Anti Social Behaviour Family Intervention Prevention and Early Intervention	Targeted Services Identification and Assessment Placement/Admissions Logistics/Place Planning Disabled Children Special Needs	School Improvement 14-19 Virtual College Adult/Workbased and Family Learning
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**Comments**

37. This remit has not changed significantly from the existing arrangements, however, this Scrutiny Committee will reflect the changing shape of the Council’s relationship with schools, together with significant areas of service pressure in children’s social care and youth unemployment.

**Scrutiny Committee 5: Health and Partnership**

**Cabinet Member: Health and Partnerships**

38. The Committee would largely align with the remit of the Cabinet Portfolio.

**Transformation Programmes: People and Change, Health**

39. These programmes are largely aligned to the work of the Scrutiny Committee.

**Officer Structure: Assistant Director Development and Commissioning**

40. There is strong alignment with the role of the Assistant Director, although the role extends into work for both Children and Adults Services in relation to Commissioning, Policy and Strategy. There is therefore scope for the role to

draw in relevant aspects of the other services where they relate to health readily through the expertise of the Assistant Director.

Public Health Integrated health commissioning NHS GPs	LSP and theme groups Voluntary sector
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### Comments

41. This Scrutiny Committee will focus entirely on health and will need to respond to agenda set by external health organisations and groups. As mentioned above the work of this Scrutiny Committee will be significant and will need to focus entirely on health and the challenges ahead in terms of the proposed changes to the NHS within the current Bill before Parliament and the re-shaping of the hospital services.

### MONITORING AND CO-ORDINATION

42. The five Scrutiny Chairs, were, in principle, agreeable to the suggestion, however, the following issues were raised:

- (a) There was some concern expressed at the potential workload of the proposed 'Place Scrutiny Committee' which cut across three portfolio holders. The comments on this are set out in paragraph 25 above.
- (b) A question was asked about the membership of the Committees. The proposal is the creation of five new committees and that decisions about who is allocated to the various seats and Chairs is arrived at in the usual way through group decisions with no presumptions as to who would be the Chairs of the new Committees.
- (c) There was also some discussion around the close working needed between health and the adult social care agenda.

43. In discussing the concerns, it is clear that there is a greater role for the Chairs through Monitoring and Co-ordination Group to monitor work programmes to ensure that workload and impact is monitored and that Scrutiny Chairs work closely together when required. Monitoring and Co-ordination Group will need to be able to ensure work programmes are aligned, maximise the effectiveness of Scrutiny and ensure the greatest impact on the ambitious change programme the Council faces.

44. The alignment of portfolios would enhance communication between Cabinet, the Chief Officers Executive (COE) and scrutiny chairs and Committees. This could be further developed, for example, in dialogue around the establishment of work programmes that contributed to key corporate challenges.

### Conclusion

45. The Council is facing a period of significant challenges, presented by our own demanding agenda as well as the national policy context and the reduced resources. The proposal for change within this report aims to continue the work

already begun in reviewing the Council's structures and delivery arrangements to meet those challenges.

### **Chief Officers Executive**