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

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio.

**Environmental Services**

**Street Scene**

**Refuse Collection**

2. Each year Street Scene hires an additional fleet of collection vehicles to undertake 'double collections' over the Christmas and New Year period. This enables the service to 'catch-up' both refuse and recycling collections in the minimal time frame. Previously this method of 'catch-up' has worked without issues, however, this past Christmas period vehicles which were hired, upon delivery, were found to have numerous operational defects, and could not be utilised to undertake collections. This led to a delay in scheduled work, however, all collections were caught up by Thursday 6 January 2011. Street Scene is urgently reviewing this method of collection to determine the best provision for forthcoming holiday periods.

**Anti Social Behaviour**

3. The Anti Social Behaviour Team are currently involved in a number of operations/initiatives, working in partnership with several agencies and the Police:
  - (a) Operation 'Winter Nights' is currently ongoing with the deployment of the mobile unit into hotspot locations for anti-social behaviour and burglary.
  - (b) Operation 'Staysafe' which targets alcohol related anti social behaviour and vulnerable young people continues to be a success. Alcohol related anti-social behaviour is down by 6% this year compared to 2009.

**Housing**

**Regeneration of Parkside**

4. Major work to regenerate Parkside has been agreed with investment of £3.3M over two years. Under the plans 180 properties in the area will be assessed for replacement kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems. Environmental work such as new fencing, paths and work to boundaries will also be carried out. Tenants will also be offered the opportunity to have dropped kerbs and off-road parking in front of their homes where it is practical. If it is not practical other off-road parking such as lay-bys will be provided. The work also includes

up to 66 one-bedroom flats being converted into 33 three-bed family houses to provide a better mix of affordable housing in the area to meet demand. The Council will liaise with any tenants affected by this work to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum. Any tenants living in the one-bedroom flats who wish to move will be given statutory home loss payments and, where relevant, disturbance costs, to help cover the costs of relocation.

5. Traffic calming measures will also be explored for Wordsworth Road in consultation with Ward Councillors and residents. Residents have been consulted on the proposed work which was approved by the Tenants Board earlier this year. As a pilot scheme, two empty flats were converted into a family home earlier in the year and residents were invited to see the work and comment on the proposals.

### **Housing Benefit Changes from April 2011**

6. The following changes will be introduced in April 2011:
  - (a) There will no longer be a 5 bedroom Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for customers in the private sector. The maximum level customers will be able to receive will be for a 4 bedroom property.
  - (b) There will be an overall cap on all LHA rates, to restrict the maximum that anyone can get.
  - (c) The provision to pay up to £15 a week LHA in excess of a customer's rent will be removed.
  - (d) LHA rates will be set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of rent levels in Darlington. Rates are currently set at the median point, which will mean that all LHA rates in Darlington will reduce.
  - (e) The LHA size criteria will be adjusted to allow for a non-resident carer, where a disabled customer has an established need for overnight care.
  - (f) There will be staged increases in the rates of non-dependant deductions for both HB and CTB. By April 2014, these increases will bring the rates to the level they would have been had they been fully uprated since 2001 (when the rates were frozen), to reflect growths in rents and Council Tax.
7. These changes will come into effect as follows:
  - (a) Changes to the LHA rates will affect anyone making a new claim for LHA, or anyone changing their address from April 2011. Existing customers will have their LHA amended on the anniversary date of their claim, over the period April 2011 to March 2012, depending on when they made their LHA claim.
  - (b) In addition, for existing customers there will be transitional protection of up to 9 months following the claim review date (apart from the LHA excess provision, which will be removed when claims are reviewed). This transitional protection means that many existing customers will not be adversely affected until January 2012, and some will see no change until December 2012.

- (c) The changes to non-dependant deductions will immediately affect all HB/CTB claims from April 2011.

### **Impact of the changes**

8. It is estimated that these changes will affect customers in Darlington as follows (figures have been based on people currently claiming benefits):
- (a) The removal of the 5 bedroom LHA rate will affect 16 families, who will lose approximately £12 to £13 a week HB.
  - (b) The overall benefit cap will largely only affect London and the more expensive areas in the South East.
  - (c) The removal of the £15 a week excess LHA provision will affect 782 customers. Some of these are having the excess paid directly to their landlord to clear rent arrears.
  - (d) The LHA rates set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile will affect everyone who claims LHA (currently 2,938 customers). Rates for some customers will reduce by up to £10 a week. It is estimated that this change will result in an overall reduction in LHA rates and associated HB of around £870,000 each year.
  - (e) The increases in non-dependant deductions are not yet known. However, 578 customers currently have their HB/CTB reduced by these deductions. It is expected that the highest rate of HB deduction, currently £47.75 each week, will increase to around £69 each week by 2014. Some people will lose their entitlement to HB/CTB altogether as a result of these increases.
9. To help implement these changes, the Department for Work and Pensions have announced the following measures:
- (a) The provision to allow the direct payment of Housing Benefit to landlords will be temporarily extended to give Councils wider discretion to make direct payments to landlords, if it will help customers secure or retain a tenancy. This is intended to be used in circumstances where landlords are prepared to reduce rents to a level that is affordable for the customer.
  - (b) The amount the Council will receive in Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) will increase. DHPs are additional sums of money available to Local Authorities to “top-up” a person’s HB or CTB, to alleviate hardship. The aim is to give more flexibility to Local Authorities to help a greater number of new and existing customers who face a shortfall in rent because of the changes to the Housing Benefit rules. However, the amount Darlington will receive for 2011-2012 is not yet known.

### **Changes from April 2012**

10. From April 2012, the age limit for the shared room rate for single people will be increased from 25 to 35. This means that anyone aged 25 to 34 in self-contained accommodation will have their HB based on the shared room rate of LHA.
11. This change is likely to affect anyone making a new claim for LHA, or anyone changing their address from April 2012. Existing customers will have their LHA amended on the anniversary date of their claim, over the period April 2012 to March 2013, depending on

when they made their LHA claim.

## **Longer Term Reform – Changes from April 2013**

### *Increases in LHA based on the Consumer Prices Index*

12. Specific details of the changes from April 2013 are not yet known, but the following changes are planned to be implemented:
  - (a) Increases in LHA rates will be based on the Consumer Prices Index. LHA rates are currently set by the Rent Service, based on the levels of local rents.
  - (b) HB for working age social rented sector customers will be restricted for those who are occupying a larger property than their household size and structure would warrant.
  - (c) People receiving HB who are also claiming Jobseekers Allowance will only receive their full HB award for a period of 12 months. After that period, their HB will be reduced by 10% and they will continue to be ineligible for the full out of work HB rate until they have left the benefit system and been in work for a period.
  - (d) An overall maximum limit on the benefits one family can claim will be set at the amount “the average family gets for going out to work”, which will be around £26,000 a year. The cap will apply to the combined income from benefits including Jobseekers Allowance, Tax Credits, HB and CTB. It is proposed that the full amount of primary benefits and tax credits will be paid, and the cap would be applied by Local Authorities on HB and CTB.
  - (e) For the increases in non-dependant deductions, the rates for 2011-2012 have now been published. Overall, 578 customers currently have their HB/CTB reduced by these deductions and some people will lose their entitlement to HB/CTB altogether as a result of these increases. For example, the highest rate of HB deduction, currently £47.75 each week, will increase to £60.60 each week from 1st April 2011.
  - (f) A new single fraud investigation service will be created covering all benefits and tax credits (including HB/CTB) and an additional 200 investigators will be recruited nationally.

## **Universal Credit**

13. All means tested benefits (including Housing Benefit) and tax credits paid to working age customers are to be replaced by a single Universal Credit. The aims of this proposal are:
  - (a) To simplify the system by removing the complexity of claiming different benefits and tax credits, and
  - (b) To unify the rate at which benefit is withdrawn when someone starts work to ensure that everyone in work will be better off.
14. A White Paper setting out how the new scheme will work has now been published. At this stage there is no detailed information about how some aspects of the scheme will work, but key features of the proposals that affects Local Authorities are:

- (a) Universal Credit (including housing costs) will be administered by the DWP.
- (b) Universal Credit will be introduced from 2013, with no new claims for Housing Benefit being received by Local Authorities from October 2013. Existing claims for Housing Benefit will be migrated over to the new system by October 2017.
- (c) Transitional protection will apply to ensure no one is worse off under Universal Credit.
- (d) Housing costs for social rented sector tenants will continue to reflect actual rents charged and amounts will be paid direct to social housing providers.
- (e) Discretionary elements of the current benefit system, including Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans will be administered by Local Authorities.
- (f) There may still be a role for Local Authorities in administering non-mainstream Housing Benefit cases (for example, people living in supported or temporary accommodation).
- (g) Local Authorities may also have a role to play in delivering face-to-face contact for those who cannot use other channels to claim and manage their Universal Credit.
- (h) Housing Benefit for pensioners is likely to be integrated into Pension Credit, although no details have been produced.

#### **CTB to be replaced by locally administered rebate scheme**

- 15. CTB will not form part of the new Universal Credit, but from 2013 will be replaced by local schemes designed and administered by Local Authorities, possibly within certain parameters. This could be in the form of a grant to Local Authorities, but the overall amount will be cut by 10% from existing levels

#### **Development & Commissioning**

##### **Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment**

- 16. The Safer Neighbourhoods Unit, in conjunction with partners, has produced the annual Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment. The Darlington Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has used the information contained within the document to set its priorities for the next twelve months.

##### **Domestic Abuse**

- 17. This year the 2010 “White Ribbon” campaign slogan is, “Are you man enough to swear?” - to swear a ‘pledge’ against domestic abuse. As part of this men were asked to sign the white ribbon pledge, and put their pledge in a “swear” jar. Clubs, organisations and work places were asked to:
  - (a) Display white ribbons, and publicity material
  - (b) Raise awareness by publishing a statement in your communications network
  - (c) Make an announcement at half-time on match/game days

- (d) Have management and frontline staff wear a White Ribbon badge on or around the 25 November.
18. Donations from the events will provide support for women and children experiencing domestic/sexual violence.
  19. Bulbs were planted in the shape of a White Ribbon in Stanhope Park on the 25 November.
  20. The Domestic Abuse Team and members of the Volunteer Support Service sent Saturday 27 November - handing out white ribbons, as well as offering advice and promoting the services available in the Borough to support victims of domestic abuse.
  21. The Women's Group have organised several fund raising events to raise money for a children's party for those families affected by domestic abuse.
  22. The Government is planning to re-write the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWAG) including changes to the structure, with reference to economic, political philosophy and delivery framework, which reflect the current political climate. The inter-ministerial group for VAWAG is scheduled to meet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 to agree key priorities/outcomes. The following items will be discussed: Long term solutions for women with no recourse to public funding, Sexual Assault and Referral Centre (SARC) funding, sustainable funding for Rape Crisis Centres and the implementation of "Sexual Consent" within the current school curriculum.
  23. The CSP Mischief Week campaign was launched in the run up to bonfire night (28/10/10 – 5/11/10). The main objective of the campaign was to raise awareness of the dangers of bonfires and fireworks and promote and direct people to organised events. A proactive week of action involving a number of relevant partners visited schools, youth centres, Streetscene visited known problem areas. There were various forms of communication to the public to increase confidence that the Partnership was taking action. Joint inspections of premises selling fireworks were held to ensure they were compliant and registered. Streetscene removed several bonfires. Overall for Darlington the issues were minimal and Bonfire Night was a success.

### **Community Safety Plan 2008-2011**

24. Grant funding for the CSP, and associated projects/campaigns, is largely intact for the current year but work is ongoing to find any in-year savings and to re profile budgets for the cuts anticipated for 2011 onwards.
25. The Early Implementation Grant for 2010-11 was allocated by the Department of Health against the Paramedic and Assertive Outreach posts. Early indications are that the paramedic project can make significant savings for both health and criminal justice agencies.
26. The latest Performance Report on how the Darlington Community Safety Partnership is performing against the nine indicators in the Safer Drinking: Safer Darlington Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy indicates a very positive position with 8/9 at Green or Amber and 1 red. The red area remains drunk and rowdy behaviour. However, early indications are that there has been a significant upturn in the reduction of the rate of increase in alcohol-related hospital admissions (NI39).

27. The relocation of adult substance misuse services has begun, with one of the services now operating from the new premises. The services are establishing a Reference Group with local businesses and residents to discuss and address any issues that may arise as a result of the relocation. This freed up premises to move the Young People's Substance Misuse Service (SWITCH) into more suitable premises which has now taken place.
28. Following the publication of the government Public Health White Paper, 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People', and the revised Drug Strategy; there will be work undertaken over 2011-12 to ensure substance misuse services in Darlington are fit for purpose.

## Crime and Disorder Performance against Targets

### Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC)

29. Serious Acquisitive Crime includes Domestic Burglary, Robbery, Theft of Motor Vehicle and Theft from Motor Vehicle. The CSP target is to reduce SAC by 8.2% by 2010/11.
30. The table below shows overall performance based on the **last rolling 12 months**:

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 31/10/10	Performance against Target
1933	1774	1311	- 26%

### Theft of Motor Vehicle (TOMV)

31. There was a 32% reduction in thefts from motor vehicles in the rolling 12 months to October 2010, compared with the rolling 12 months to October 2009, and the CSP is performing well within its target for the year.

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 31/10/10	Reduction against Target
419	356	185	-48%

### Theft from Motor Vehicles (TFMV)

32. There was a 31% reduction in thefts of motor vehicles in the rolling 12 months to October 2010, compared with the rolling 12 months to October 2009. The CSP is performing well within its target for the year:

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 31/10/10	Performance against Target
987	938	596	-40%

### Robbery

33. The number of robberies reduced by 52% over the rolling 12 months to October 2010, and performance is within target for the year:

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 30/09/10	Performance against Target
58	58	37	-36%

## Domestic Burglary

34. For the rolling 12 months to October 2010 there was a 5% reduction in domestic burglaries: however, the CSP set rigorous targets for 2008-11 and based purely on performance to date, there is a risk that the target will not be achieved. Forecast performance is currently suggesting an outturn of 536. Since May this year, figures for domestic burglary have been steadily increasing month on month.

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 30/09/10	Performance against Target
469	422	497	18%

## Perceptions of ASB – NI 17

35. This indicator measures the percentage of people with high levels of perceived anti-social behaviour (ASB) within the Borough.
36. The Place Survey 2008 indicated that 17.1% of people perceive there to be a high level of anti-social behaviour in their area, which was an improvement on previous general survey results.
37. The CSP have set a target to reduce this to 14.1% by 2011. However, the place survey scheduled to take place later this year has now been cancelled, and data for NI17 will not be collected.
38. Durham Constabulary conducts quarterly surveys which include questions on perceptions of ASB, though the sample population is much smaller than that used for the place survey. Data from September 2010 for the CSP indicated that the percentage of people who perceived a high level of ASB in their area was 10.5% ( $\pm 6.2$ ). The roll up figure for the last four quarters is 7.8% ( $\pm 2.5$ ).
39. CSP performance over the year to date is set out below. Please note that the CSP has not set specific reduction targets in respect of ASB incidents.

Anti Social Behaviour Incidents	Year to Date		
	October 09	October 10	Change
Incidents	7749	6409	-17%
Per 1000 Population	77.4	64.1	-13.3%

Youth Related Anti Social Behaviour Incidents	Year to Date		
	October 09	October 10	Change
Incidents	2810	2191	-22%
Per 1000 Population	28.1	21.9	-6.2%

Alcohol Related Anti Social Behaviour Incidents	Year to Date		
	October 09	October 10	Change
Incidents	2786	2607	-6%
Per 1000 Population	27.8	26.1	-1.7%

## Assault with Less Serious Injury (AWLSI) – NI 20

40. This includes actual bodily harm and other injury and racially/religiously aggravated actual bodily harm. Figures for the rolling 12 months to October 2010 are detailed below:



2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 31/10/10	Performance against Target
789	569	564	- 1%

41. Forecasts to the year end indicate an outturn of 599, so there is a real risk that the CSP will fail to meet its target for this indicator. Over the year from 01 April to 31 October, 351 offences were committed, meaning that over the remaining 5 months of the year, if the CSP records more than 218 offences the target will not be achieved – the average per month this year has been 50 offences.

#### Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse – NI 32

42. This measure came into place in 2009/10 and relates to the repeat victimisation rate of those individuals supported through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
43. Between April and October 2010, 41 cases went to a MARAC, 8 of which were repeats, meaning that the repeat victimisation rate currently stands at 20%.

#### Alcohol Related Admission Rates – NI 39

44. For 2009/10, the provisional rate of alcohol related admissions per 100,000 population is 2152, an increase of 1% from 2008/09. This would achieve the target of no more than 2207 admissions. The final figure will not be released until January 2011.

#### Drug Users in Effective Treatment – NI 40

45. The outturn for 2009/10 is now available, and shows that the target was achieved. This was due to more service users entering treatment and better retention of those who entered treatment. The baseline has been revised (from 416) following a national data quality audit by the National Treatment Agency (NTA), the target would have been achieved using either baseline. Performance in 2010/11 is currently green.

2008 Baseline	2009/10 Target	12 Months to 31/03/10	Performance against Target
406	430	473	110%

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to 31/07/10	Performance against Target
406	447	471	105%

#### Prolific and Other Priority Offending (PPO) Rate – NI 30

46. A new PPO cohort was selected for 2009/10, with a reduction target of 23% against a baseline of 121 convictions. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) target for the year was 93 proven offences against this cohort, and at the year end a total of 56 had been recorded, meaning that the CSP performed well within its target. In order to achieve the same reductions as the national cohort, the CSP would have had to record 98 offences, so at this level, the CSP also performed very well.

#### CSP Delivery Plans

47. Refreshed delivery plans have been developed in line with the priorities identified from the Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment. There are some actions which are not currently on target due to capacity issues.

**Councillor Bill Dixon**  
**Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio**