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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader of the Council**

**Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith,  
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To endorse the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group in respect of the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal.

**Summary**

2. This report outlines the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the following recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group be endorsed by the Council:-
  - (a) That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2015/16 has been satisfactorily undertaken by this Sub-Group and that there are no issues which need to be discussed in more detail.

**Reason**

4. The recommendation is supported by the following reason :-
  - (a) To enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

**Paul Wildsmith  
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

**Background Papers**

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

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no issues in relation to Health and Wellbeing.
Sustainability	There are no issues in relation to Sustainability
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	None.
Groups Affected	None.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not adversely impact on the Strategy.
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. The Appraisal Sub-Group (a subsidiary body of the Human Resources Committee) undertakes an annual appraisal with the Chief Executive and reports its recommendations to the Council.
6. In accordance with the process (approved by Council at its meeting in November 2010) the Leader and Deputy Leader met with the Chief Executive to review the Chief Executive's personal assessment and identify objectives for the coming year.
7. The Sub-Group then met on 3 November, 2016 to undertake the appraisal. It reviewed the Chief Executive's self-assessment and agreed the Chief Executive's objectives for 2016/17 A copy of the Chief Executive's self-assessment is attached as an **Appendix**.
8. The Sub-Group made the following recommendation to Council:-

That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2015/16 has been satisfactorily undertaken by this Sub-Group in accordance with the agreed process and that there are no issues which need to be discussed in more detail.

## **Conclusion**

9. The Chief Executive's appraisal has been undertaken by the Appraisal Sub-Group of the Human Resources Committee. As this is a Committee constituted by Council, Council is required to endorse the recommendation of the Sub-Group.

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## CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPRAISAL – SELF ASSESSMENT 2016

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### 1. Purpose

1.1. This paper reflects my personal assessment of the period since my last appraisal (November 2014). My intention is to draw out, for discussion with members of the Appraisal Sub Committee, the key strands of the work I have been doing. In that respect it covers the three main elements of my role:

- Leading the organisation within the parameters set by Members, with line management of the Chief Officers Executive and other posts, and overall responsibility for our performance, and governance.
- Representing the Council and borough, and working in a variety of external settings to secure resources and influence that help deliver the Councils' goals and maintain its standing.
- Building and maintaining relationships and partnerships within Darlington that help deliver the Council's goals.

### 2. Overview

2.1. Within a broad and diverse portfolio I would identify six principle matters that I have focused upon over the last eighteen months:

- a) The review of resources and, supporting the Director, the development and working through of an approach to a new MTFP
- b) Taking responsibility and giving leadership and support to the Children's Services Improvement Plan, following the Ofsted inspection.
- c) The development of the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Devolution Deal
- d) Representing the Tees Valley (and North East) on transport matters and pressing for inclusion within the new governance arrangements for devolved transport matters, Rail North and Transport for the North
- e) Maintaining oversight of the day to day performance of the Council, its relationships with key stakeholders, communications, and staff well being.
- f) Pressing to achieve, in the event unsuccessfully, a radical and innovative integration with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

I will develop these further below.

### 3. Resources

3.1. As Members are aware, the continuation of the Government's austerity programme and consequent cuts to local government funding, have over nearly six years, eaten away at scope for efficiencies. The previous MTFP delivered a balance of some 80% efficiencies and 20% service cuts. The Plan agreed by Council in June has a ratio that is almost reversed, 75% service reductions/cuts,

25% back office cuts/efficiencies. Producing the Plan was one of the most challenging things that, supporting Paul Wildsmith, I have had to do in Darlington. That is because we are approaching the point at which the Council may not be able to discharge its legal obligations.

3.2. No Council exists simply to perform a set of legal duties. Members are elected with goals and aspirations to make improvements to the lives of the residents of the borough. The Council in addition is a signatory to a set of ambitions and priorities for Darlington, One Darlington Perfectly Placed, which presumes there is scope to improve services and outcomes. Given the severity of the financial projections, the approach it became necessary to adopt, was to set aside the ambitions of One Darlington, Perfectly Placed, and focus very precisely, on what became the Core Offer budget.

3.3. That approach required a whole series of “star chamber” meetings with Directors and Assistant Directors, peer challenges between senior managers, external challenge, discussions with Cabinet Members, and legal testing and equality impact assessments that ran over nearly eighteen months.

This process was hard because it required staff, who are employed and come to work to make a difference, to take an entirely clinical look at how costs could be shaved to a basic minimum, almost regardless of the impacts on people. And it required those staff to be repeatedly challenged by me on whether they could go further. It is a huge tribute to the professionalism of the senior workforce, and the sense of collective responsibility across the management of the Council, that we were able to offer Members a balanced budget and some small scope to retain services and functions that are not statutory, but contribute to their aspirations. But it has inevitably had an impact on morale and motivation that is a priority for me in the months to come.

3.4. The MTFP agreed in June makes a whole host of risky assumptions, including in areas of high demand volatility. For example, the numbers of looked after children is currently rising, almost entirely as a consequence of new approaches being adopted by the Courts in care proceedings. Similarly reducing demand for adult social care, relies upon a level of cooperation and collaboration with the NHS, which is itself struggling with financial pressures (and liable as a result to be tempted to “shunt” costs to others). The impending crisis in the residential care market will add further to the risk of rising costs.

Maintaining progress against the plan, and reviewing risk to delivery, will remain a priority for me and the Management Team.

#### **4. Children’s Services Improvement Plan (Ofsted)**

4.1. I hugely regret the judgement passed to the Council by Ofsted in September 2015. I remain of the view that it was a harsh judgement, when compared with other inspection reports that I have seen subsequently, but there is no doubt that there were areas of our performance that were, and are simply not good enough. The factors behind this decline in performance are complex, but do include the implications of disinvesting (in previous rounds of cuts) in sufficient

capability for effective data collection and performance management, and in management capacity to support staff and create the sort of culture that puts children first.

4.2. My first priorities, in agreement with the Leader, and Lead Member, were to, secure effective interim management, identify and address the immediate safeguarding risks and start to develop a comprehensive Improvement Plan and governance. Alison Murphy was appointed alongside a number of other key Interim roles, Brian Boggon was seconded over to support Alison, I set up and chaired a Improvement Action group (meeting weekly and now fortnightly) and worked with the DFE to establish the Children's Improvement Board, swift action produced improvement in timescales for assessments, and the Improvement Plan was signed off in the Autumn. On the appointment of the new Director, Suzanne Joyner, the senior structure was reviewed and three new Assistant Directors appointed to who are now in post. Quarterly updates have been provided to Cabinet, and I continue to give support and challenge to the Suzanne and her team to maintain momentum.

4.3. Ofsted, the Improvement Advisors, Red Quadrant, and the DfE have all expressed satisfaction that progress is being made, and that in areas of critical importance to outcomes, such as assessment timescales and placement stability, this is being sustained. Liquid Logic has been implemented and is bedding in and will support further improvement in performance management. Greater consistency and clear standards and expectations are being rolled out. Notwithstanding the progress being made it is important to be realistic about the timescale for the Council to achieve the standard of service that it wishes to see. Other Councils now regarded as high performing but previously rated Inadequate have spent between three and four years on their improvement journey. In part the timescale reflects the volatility and shortages in the social care workforce, authorities are working with high turnover in a profession with high levels of stress. The improvements to the quality of social work practice rely upon achieving a better measure of stability in the workforce and management, and this is the task currently being addressed.

## **5. Tees Valley and Regional Work**

5.1. Consistent with the long tradition of close collaboration and aligned strategy, the Tees Valley determined to be amongst the first wave of combined authorities, and a Devolution Deal. I have, as a veteran of previous attempts at wresting powers away from Whitehall, played an active part in the Chief Executive's group and alongside the Leader, in developing the local proposition, governance and consultation arrangements. I have made sure that there have been regular briefings for all Members at key points in the process.

5.2. In particular Darlington holds the lead on transport, and with two of the four strategic transport priorities within the borough, the last eighteen months have required a lot of lobbying.

5.3. In part this has related to the schemes, for us Bank Top and an East West road link, where presentations and meetings have taken place with senior officials

from Virgin Rail, Network Rail, HS2 Ltd, Department of Transport, the former Northern Powerhouse Minister, Lord Heseltine, and others. This lobbying has positioned the Tees Valley schemes firmly in the sights of key opinion formers and will continue over the coming six months until the conclusion of the Network Rail and Highways England forward investment plans. We are under no illusion that while strong, there are plenty of other contenders for the funds.

- 5.4. And in part the lobbying has concerned our ability to be at the right tables to influence. As Co-chair of the North East Strategic Transport Group (with the CEX of Newcastle), I was able to steer through a deal to see the North East region have its own “management unit” within the northern and transpennine franchises rail franchises. I also played an active role in presenting the regions aspirations for these franchises, to the bidders and to DfT. The further challenge was the emergence of Transport for the North, as a vehicle for creating a statutory regional Transport Authority. Alongside colleagues from the LEP, the Leader and I worked to push for the governance of TfN to be properly inclusive of all areas of significant economic potential – successfully. Until the appointment of Andrew Lewis three months ago, I represented the Tees Valley on the TfN monthly Executive Board.
- 5.5. I have also been the lead Chief Executive for our membership of the Key Cities Group, a lobbying and research vehicle pushing the case for the growth potential of small and medium sized “cities”. And I supported the chair of a Tees Valley Task and Finish Group examining the economic potential of the arts and cultural sectors in job creation and reputation management, and have held the lead CEX role.
- 5.6. We now have a Combined Authority and are working towards implementation of a Mayoral model. This will continue to demand a significant part of my time, alongside Ian Williams and other members of his senior team. I have passed on the lead culture role and the TVCA is recruiting a stronger senior team, but Darlington’s best interests will continue to be served by close and constructive engagement. While our economy is robust, much of what needs to be achieved by way of infrastructure and site development needs public sector pump priming, and the TVCA will remain a crucial resource.

## **6. Council Performance and Day to Day Management**

- 6.1. Setting aside the financial challenges described above, the last eighteen months have seen strong performance across most services. There have been challenges in maintaining support for my Performance Clinics as I directed the work of the Organisational Planning Unit to focus on the Children’s Improvement Plan following the Ofsted inspection, and this has left the other services light on support. The performance management framework has needed updating and this is underway at the present time with the goal of achieving an approach more proportionate to the capacity we are likely to have to support this work.
- 6.2. Nevertheless I have continued to focus with Directors on performance and notwithstanding the challenges there are a whole host of positive outcomes to report:

- a) A 5% increase in the proportion of adults with a learning disability living in their own home, and placing us just above our CIPFA family group.
- b) A 5% increase in the use of assistive technology to enable people with support needs to remain living independently.
- c) An increase of 3% has seen the percentage of older people still at home 91 days after hospital discharge running at the target of 80% (a key measure of the effectiveness of the re-ablement service)
- d) A sustained decrease in the percentage of women smoking while pregnant (15.4% as at December 2015, compared to 19.6% for 2014/15)
- e) 65 capital projects run by the Council in 2015/16 are projected to outturn 1.53% under their approved budget of £109.2m.
- f) In year collection rates are holding up – Council tax 95.17% and we have returned to 99% overall collection levels despite the challenges of collecting 20% from those on CT support – NNDR 98.4% - Housing Rents 98.15%.
- g) Over a quarter of a million pounds has been raised to support the Civic Theatre/Hippodrome regeneration project, and I continue to support the Foundation Chairman, Charles Tompkins, and our Fundraising Manager.
- h) The Dolphin centre continues to attract large numbers – in excess of a million – whilst achieving 91% satisfaction levels.
- i) From the Local Environment Quality Survey just under 5% of wards failed to meet standards, with 94% satisfaction on Litter.
- j) Benefit claims continue to be processed quickly, supporting the most vulnerable, currently running at 9 days.
- k) Sickness absence rates showed a small but important improvement - 8.8 days per FTE, down by 0.53 FTE from the previous year and against a background of great change and stress for employee.
- l) Being credited with the second highest rate of economic growth nationally is indicative of the inherent advantages the town has for business, but also the culture and efforts of the Council in nurturing good relationships with business.
- m) The creation of new jobs, pressure for contractors to operate apprenticeship schemes, and the Foundation for Jobs, have all helped to tackle previously high levels of unemployment. The current percentage of young people who are not in employment, education or training is 7%, of whom only 1% are unknown. This compares to figures



of 9% and 13% for the North East and England.

- n) Over the last 15 months the Council has processed and approved planning permission for approximately 2,000 new homes.
- o) As an overall measure of the Council, External Audit conclusion of VFM is that the Council has proper arrangements in place to secure VFM and we had unqualified accounts.

6.3. As staff and management numbers continue to decline addressing the challenge of ensuring that workloads are manageable and that productivity is maximised is imperative and a priority for COE. Staff communications and workforce issues remain close to my heart. We have continued to improve communications with the notice boards in staff toilets, and scope to receive briefings via personal emails for those staff who are not office based. Talk Time sessions are well utilised across the Directorates, as are personal letters of thanks for particularly good service. I have started again with a monthly blog to highlight in particular positive messages about good performance and outcomes. A significant programme of support has been utilised for those colleagues facing, or concerned about the loss of their jobs.

## 7. Partnerships and Forward Strategy

7.1. The Council, at its last MTFP review identified three conditions to describe a state where it could be sustainable. Much of my time has been focused in supporting colleagues and working with partners to progress these.

7.2. **Strong Communities** – this is very much the territory in which the Darlington Partnership and linked partnership arrangements now operate, developing approaches to reduce demand, build community-led models of delivery, target vulnerable communities, invest in prevention, etc

- a) Darlington Cares continues to grow and to see CSR activity informed by key Council priorities.
- b) The Foundation for Jobs continues to develop and run programmes of activity to inspire young people in the industries of the future, and this year has won funding from the schools, and from the Royal Academy of Engineering.
- c) Good Friends won a Local Government Chronicle award for its partnership approach to befriending and is an increasingly important strand in reducing demand for social care.
- d) The Creative Darlington Board, and the seed-corn money invested by the Council is seeing growing levels of investment secured from the Arts Council and Lottery to support a vibrant community arts programme. Key events such as the IncludeFest, Halle orchestra, Jabberwocky Market, and DfC Arts Festival have been supported and facilitated by the Creative Darlington partnership.

- e) The Partnership agreed to support a new model of bi-monthly residents magazine with partner financial and content contributions, and with themes aligned to agreed priorities. This has had positive resident and partner feedback.
- f) The Best of Darlington awards continues to secure growing numbers of nominations and sponsors eager to celebrate strong and vibrant community.
- g) The Partnership organised the first Ingenious Festival in 2016 as a showcase for Ingenuity in all its forms with plans underway for a bigger and better programme in 2017.
- h) The Partnership is now developing a model to promote volunteering in public services, as a further response to the closure and reductions in services.

Following the re-structure to delete the Assistant Chief Executive post , the Creative Darlington Manager, Darlington Partnership Manager and Head of Communications report to me. I invest significant time in addition to maintaining good relationships with my peers in other public services, businesses, neighbouring Councils, the Colleges, voluntary organisations, the press and others. I tweet, focusing on positive stories about the town and our services. Given the continued media criticism of the role of the Local Authority Chief Executive, I feel it is even more important to be open and accessible.

**7.3. A Growing Economy** – this is largely the framework for working with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, but I play an active part alongside Ian Williams, the Leader and Lead Member, in business visits and in promoting the borough and its economic opportunities.

**7.4. Every Public Pound Well Spent** – regrettably the most significant opportunity for achieving this goal, integration with the Clinical Commissioning Group (DCCG), was rejected by the Darlington CCG in favour of pursuing a horizontal tie up with two neighbouring CCG's, Hartlepool and Stockton. This was a huge disappointment to me, given the investment made by the Council, and the, in my view incontrovertible case for place based integration of aligned and co-dependent public services. We continue to progress a constructive relationship with the DCCG, and other NHS bodies.

**7.5.** For the Council the main focus here has been the development of the MTFP as described above, including models to align services such as the Dolphin Centre and Central Library. There are in addition discussions taking place with other partners in the Police and Fire, on options to integrate and align activities, recognising in particular the likely impacts on these partners from some of the cuts being made to Council activity. We have an emerging closer tie up with the probation company to support grounds maintenance for example, and the DCCG and County Durham Community Foundation have matched our voluntary sector fund within the Futures Fund. Effective procurement and good use of technology also feature in the workload. The new IT system being implemented in social care for example, has the potential to significantly improve productivity.

## 8. Looking Forward and Priorities

- 8.1. Oversight of resources issues, and implementation of the MTFP, including specifically...
  - strategies and progress to reduce demand and support quality in adults and children's social care
  - strategies and progress to reduce demand and build member/community involvement in environmental maintenance
  - strategies and progress to deliver housing and business growth
  - achievement of the Council-wide spending reductions
  - contributing to lobbying efforts around Council spending pressures
- 8.2. Oversight of the Children's Services Improvement Plan with the goal of moving towards the lifting of formal DfE intervention
- 8.3. Ensuring the completion and operation of a new Performance Management framework, an up to date Corporate Policy Framework, and a new Corporate Plan
- 8.4. Contributing to the development and implementation of Tees Valley Combined Authority plans, programmes, and governance and advising the Leader.
- 8.5. Continuing the lead role on transport for the TVCA, and supporting the Leader in his role as Chair of the Transport Committee
- 8.6. Ensuring the contributed contribution of the Darlington Partnership and the Cares Board to mitigate the impacts of service cuts on our community, and to progress implementation of One Darlington Perfectly Placed.
- 8.7. Continue to support fundraising for the Civic Theatre and to take a lead in supporting the work of Creative Darlington, including the production of the boroughs first Cultural Strategy.
- 8.8. Maintaining active and constructive engagement with stakeholders within Darlington, neighbouring authorities, and regional and national bodies such as the LGA, ANEC, etc
- 8.9. Maintaining a close focus on workforce morale, productivity and prioritisation and continuing to promote the borough as a fantastic place to invest, and to work.

In twelve months' time, I would hope to be making significant progress with our spending reductions, our children's services are significantly better, elected Members are spearheading a major growth in volunteering efforts, approval has been given to move ahead with the Bank Top regeneration, and the town is continuing to lead the way in growth and innovation. I would expect to continue to support Monitoring and Coordination Group, to be available to all elected Members and to offer at least bi-annually, opportunities for Members to question me on my role and work.