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**OVERVIEW OF HOUSING, HEALTH AND PARTNERSHIPS PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main areas of work under my Housing, Health and Partnerships Portfolio were as follows:-

**Public Health**

2. The re-procurement of the Sexual Health and Contraception Service has been successfully evaluated and the mobilisation of the new contract for the service in Darlington commenced on 1 May 2018. The new service will be operational from 1 August 2018.
3. The Public Health Team has commenced a review of the NHS Health Checks which involves a needs analysis, review of service provisions and financial sustainability.
4. The Public Health Team has developed an Oral Health Plan for Darlington and two associated implementation guides. The guides are focused on different ages and settings: one is for children and the second for older adults in Care Homes. These will be launched during National Smile Month 14 May – 14 June.
5. The multi-agency Darlington Suicide Prevention Group, co-ordinated by Public Health has updated the local Suicide Prevention Plan. The plan identifies six key areas for action to support delivery of the two overall objectives of the national strategy: 'A reduction in the suicide rate in the general population in England' and 'Better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide'.

**Darlington Partnership**

6. Darlington Cares is an initiative established through Darlington Partnership which provides a means for Darlington's businesses to support the local community predominantly through employer supported volunteering. It has recently significantly increased its scale and is delivering a range of valuable activities in our communities.
7. The Partnership was launched in October 2012 by five local employers and now has a membership of 26. The initiative is self-funding with members contributing to its costs.

8. The Partnership focuses on the following objectives:-
  - (a) Children with the best start in life
  - (b) More people caring for our environment
  - (c) Enough support for people when needed.
9. The Partnership delivers a range of programmes from a 'busy readers' scheme, supporting school children with their literacy skills, supporting the food bank and a wide range of environmental works.
10. In October 2017 Darlington Cares reformed as it made plans for growth. The Partnership Director has also taken on responsibility of Director of Darlington Cares, a Programme Officer has been appointed and PR consultants have been appointed under contract. The new arrangements have been trialled for six months and now are confirmed. The mission the board has set is to significantly grow the volume of employer supported volunteering, significantly raise public awareness and for Darlington Cares to be recognised as a valuable asset for businesses.
11. During 2017 Darlington Cares delivered 4,800 hours of volunteering involving 978 volunteers across 99 projects that it had organised. It has set a target of 5,500 hours of volunteering for 2018 which the Board believes it will comfortably exceed.
12. There are new projects being developed to add the existing programmes :-
  - (a) Pick Pie and a Pint – this has proved extremely popular. Every month a litter pick is held in the Town Centre followed by a pie and a pint (or soft drink and something healthy) in a local pub paid for by private sector sponsors. Typically each event is attracting 50 or so volunteers.
  - (b) The Great Parks Auction – Darlington Cares member companies are bidding hundreds of hours of volunteering to secure their support for four of Darlington's parks. They will then work with the respective 'friends of' group to develop a schedule of work. At the end of the Summer the parks will be judged by a horticulturalist to determine which has been most improved. The auction took place on 19 of April with Capita, Cummins, Darlington Building Society and EE competing for Eastbourne Park, The Denes, Green Park and North Lodge Park. In total the four companies have committed to provide 2,135 hours of volunteering in the parks.
  - (c) The Big Community Challenge – Darlington Cares has taken on a major project renovating the now overgrown pond and nature garden of St Mary's School, Cockerton. From 26 April a large crowd of volunteers worked on the site and when completed the event culminated in a community picnic.

## **Health and Well Being Board**

13. At the meeting of the Health and Well Being Board held in March 2018 the priorities of the Board were discussed and an action plan was agreed for future meetings of the Board, to address those priorities through a focused 'life course' approach. The meeting of the Board held on 10 May 2018, which I chaired, was the first meeting to

follow this approach and the agenda focused on the priority of 'Starting Well', with a presentation being given on 'Early Help Offer' together with a number of reports and plans relating to children and young people.

14. Other issues considered at the meeting included a verbal update by the NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group on the Integrated Care Systems (formerly Sustainable Transformation Plan) and update report on the work of Healthwatch Darlington.

## **Equality Policy and Objective 2018 to 2022**

15. Cabinet approved the content of the proposed Equality Policy and Objective 2018 to 2022 which the Council is required to have in order to meet its commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as established by the Equality Act 2010.
16. The current equality scheme is an integral part of the Council's wider commitment, as outlined in One Darlington Perfectly Placed, to tackle inequality and narrow the gaps in health, attainment, prosperity and quality of life.
17. The proposed equality policy retains much of the content of the current scheme and reflects existing good practice undertaken by the Council, including use of Equality Impact Assessments to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the PSED, a commitment to continue ongoing engagement with service users and protected characteristic groups, and reference to the Council's complaints procedure and the importance of close working with partner agencies.
18. As the governance structure in the current scheme is no longer applicable it has been updated in the proposed policy to include a new Corporate Equalities Group, to be made up of Senior Managers from each service area, and accountable to the Chief Executive/Managing Director.
19. As the Cabinet has a key role in ensuring that decisions and strategies on its agenda are compliant with the aims and requirements of the equalities policy, it agreed that I will act as a Member 'champion' for equalities.
20. A consultation exercise was undertaken on the proposed equality policy and objective with a range of stakeholders both prior to and during a six week public consultation.
21. An engagement with stakeholders representing the majority of the nine protected characteristics was also undertaken during the pre-consultation period.

## **Housing Services**

### **New Build**

22. The Council's largest housing development in recent years at Earl Carlson Grove off McMullen Road, Lingfield has now been fully let. The development consists of 42 two-bedroom apartments and 20 three-bedroom houses and has proved to be hugely popular with over 200 applications being received in the first week they were

advertised. Tenants moved in on a phased basis from 23 April onwards. Work is also nearing completion on eight two-bedroom apartments at Jedburgh Drive, Branksome with properties being allocated this month.

## **Homelessness**

23. The number of people seeking emergency accommodation increased during the Winter months and on one evening seven individuals presented and were placed in temporary accommodation. However these numbers are relatively small compared to the total number of households who seek assistance throughout the year.
24. During January to March 2018 around 400 households sought assistance to prevent becoming homeless. The majority of these did not require urgent rehousing and our Housing Options Team was able to use a range of different methods to address their housing issues, such as:-
  - (a) Mediation with family and friends;
  - (b) Negotiation with landlords, including agreeing payment plans for outstanding arrears;
  - (c) Referrals for specialist debt advice;
  - (d) Provision of loans and bonds to enable families to access private sector housing; and
  - (e) Supporting individuals to apply for social housing, including Council accommodation.

For those in more urgent need:-

- (a) 72 households were placed in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation;
- (b) Ten families were placed in temporary accommodation; and
- (c) 31 placements were made into appropriate supported accommodation, depending on their age and specific support needs.

## **Red Hall**

2. The Friends of Red Hall Group have formally registered as a Residents Association with the Council which means they are now eligible for funding. They are playing an increasingly key role in the future of Red Hall and are currently working on a project to develop a community garden in consultation with the wider community. A fact finding visit to Todmorden in Yorkshire is being funded by the Healthy New Towns Project which has a long standing and successful community gardening project. This will provide information on how to run a similar type of project at Red Hall.

3. Groundwork Trust has been running a successful youth project at Red Hall (named #iwill) working with a group of teenagers who are taking an interest in their local community. Among the activities the young people decided to undertake were a litter pick and a cake bake to raise funds for a cancer charity. Links have been made between the group and the YMCA-led youth club that has recently been established. The youth club numbers have steadily grown since the first opening in February and now has 20 young people attending.

**Councillor A Scott**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Partnerships**