

Council Agenda



**6.00 pm Thursday, 16 July 2020
via Microsoft Teams**

In accordance with Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held on a virtual basis. Members of the Public can view a live stream of the meeting at:

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/livemeetings>

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meetings of this Council held on 30 January, 20 February and 25 June 2020 (Pages 7 - 28)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Order of Sealing Documents
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
 - (a) The Public;
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
 - (c) Members to the Acting Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham and Darlington.
7. Council Reports.
 - (a) Managing Director's Appraisal –
Report of the Assistant Director - Resources
(Pages 29 - 32)
8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 33 - 34)

- (b) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 35 - 40)
 - (c) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 41 - 50)
 - (d) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 51 - 56)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 57 - 66)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 67 - 74)
 - (g) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 75 - 82)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 83 - 90)
9. Notice of Motion - To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor C. L. B. Hughes, and seconded by Councillor Ali –

Protecting Children and Young People during the pandemic

‘This Council notes:

1. Today, many children are living in families where parents are newly unemployed and reliant on universal credit. The working age population in Darlington currently claiming Universal Credit (UC) is 6.6% some 4,653 people; nationally it is 4.5%.
2. There were over 3 million new claims for UC since mid-March nationally and more workers are at risk of losing their jobs. The number of people on UC in Darlington has risen by 1,598 within just the past two months. Whilst the government has increased the UC standard allowance, working age benefits are still at their lowest level relative to average wages in several decades
3. There are currently 9,900 furloughed workers in Darlington. Changes to the furlough system and further business collapse and redundancy will inevitably lead to many furloughed workers joining those on UC over the next few months. Furloughed workers have been receiving 80% of their pre-crisis wage but- if they are made redundant- UC will only cover 53% of their previous wage.
4. Before the pandemic, there were estimated to be 8,705 children in Darlington (35%) living in poverty with this number anticipated before the pandemic to increase to 39% by 2020-21. Economists believe that number will be much higher now. Many families where jobs have been lost, where someone has been furloughed or where working hours have been reduced are likely to experience a drop in income, some a significant drop. Rising unemployment more generally risks a higher incidence of indebtedness, destitution and child poverty. Shoring up UC to help avoid increases in child poverty and economic insecurity must now be an urgent priority for government.

Council notes with concern:

5. The impact that the two-child limit is having in Darlington according to the latest national official statistics for the first two years of this policy (to April 2019):--
 - 156,540 households had been affected by the two-child limit, equivalent to 18% of all households claiming tax credit or UC with three or more children,
 - For the families affected, this translates to an average annual loss of approximately £2,780 per child,
 - The majority of those affected were working families (59%), the majority were couples (61%) and the majority had three children (58%),
 - Extrapolating these figures to the beginning of April 2020, before the pandemic and the unprecedented rise in UC claims, it was estimated that 1,200 Darlington families and 3,900 Darlington children were being hit by the two-child limit.
6. That many parents whose hours have been cut as a result of the lockdown and/or social distancing measures can no longer reach the earnings threshold at which they are exempted from the benefit cap for families;
7. The difficulties faced by a small number of families in Darlington who are currently denied recourse to public funds as a result of their immigration status;
8. The families who find themselves in need of UC not receiving their first payment for 5 weeks by which time many have built-up substantial debt;
9. The problems faced by those families just above the UC thresholds who are having difficulty buying food, paying utility bills and meeting many of their family's basic needs.

Council therefore resolves to:

- (1) Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to request-
 - a) The suspension of the two-child limit on Universal Credit and tax credits affecting more than 3,900 children in Darlington,
 - b) The suspension of the benefit cap for all families in light of the fact that many have had their working hours cut during the pandemic,
 - c) The suspension of No Recourse to Public Funds conditions so that all vulnerable individuals are entitled to receive support during the coronavirus crisis,
 - d) That families who find themselves in need of Universal Credit receive

their first payment straightaway rather than going deeper into debt,

- e) A £10 per child weekly uplift in child benefit to help all families meet the additional costs of raising a family during the crisis.
- (2) Write to the Children's Commissioner enclosing a copy of this resolution to request her continued support for the calls we are making to address child poverty in Darlington.
 - (3) Write to the MP for Darlington and the MP for Sedgefield enclosing a copy of this resolution and requesting support and assistance in securing these urgent actions to protect the welfare of children and young people in the Borough of Darlington.
 - (4) Instruct the Managing Director to commission an on-going Child/Young Person Poverty Needs Assessment to gather key data for policy focus and effective strategic action to meet the Darlington Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2022 stated ambitions articulated by Darlington Borough Council and partners (Education Providers, Mental Health/ Health Providers, Police, Businesses, Voluntary Sector, Community Groups, Faith Communities and others) and to provide the first such report to full Council as a matter of urgency.'
10. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 8 July 2020

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Baldwin, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, Howell, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Paul Dalton, Elections Officer, Resources Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays Email: paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk or Telephone 01325 405805

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 30 January 2020

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, Howell, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Paley and A J Scott

42 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2019**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 5 December 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

43 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

44 **SEALING.**

Presented – The Register showing the documents which had been sealed since the last meeting of Council.

45 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

Death of Ron Hogg, Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham and Darlington, and Death in Service - The Mayor reported on the death of Ron Hogg, Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham and Darlington, who had sadly passed away on 17 December 2019, and invited Councillor McEwan to address the meeting.

The Mayor also informed Members of the Death in Service of Keith Shield, and invited the Assistant Director, Transport and Capital Projects, to address the meeting.

As a mark of respect, Members stood and observed a short silence in memory of former colleagues.

The Queen's New Year Honours - The Mayor reported that Valerie Cadd, Chair of Governors at St. John's Church of England Academy, a Leader and Commissioner for Girlguiding UK, and a resident of Darlington, had been awarded the British Empire Medal for services to education.

RESOLVED - That the congratulations of the Council be conveyed Ms. Cadd for the receipt of her Award.

46 QUESTIONS - TO ANSWER QUESTIONS (WHERE APPROPRIATE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN FROM):-

(1) THE PUBLIC;

There were no questions, with notice, from members of the public.

(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;

There were no questions from Members, where notice had been given, for the Mayor, Members of the Cabinet, or the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees.

(3) MEMBERS TO THE ACTING POLICE, CRIME AND VICTIMS' COMMISSIONER FOR DURHAM AND DARLINGTON.

The Acting Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham and Darlington attended the meeting, addressed Members and answered questions thereon.

47 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES REVIEW

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by the Council in relation to the adoption of a new Scheme of Members' Allowances.

The submitted report stated that the Independent Remuneration Panel had produced a report with recommendations in accordance with the Council's terms of reference for the Panel and included a wide range of issues and the Panel's reasoning for its recommendations. The submitted report recommended some limited changes to the existing scheme, which included an increase in the basic allowance for all Members, an increase in the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of the Audit Committee, and the removal of some Special Responsibility Allowances for Scrutiny Vice-Chairs and the Chair of the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group.

RESOLVED – (a) That the recommendations of the Independent Panel be agreed in full, with the exception of the recommended increase in the Basic Allowance to all Members of the Council.

(b) That the Basic Allowance remain at the current rate of £8,188 for 2020/21, and thereafter be subject to any annual indexation that might apply.

(c) That it be noted that the financial implications will be an overall saving of approximately £10,000.

(d) That the Members' Allowance Scheme, as detailed at Appendix 2 of the submitted report, be amended as detailed in (a) and (b) above, and be published accordingly.

REASON – To implement a new Members' Allowances Scheme with effect from 1 April 2020.

(2) COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2020/21

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) to determine the Council's tax base for 2020/21.

The submitted report stated that, in accordance with Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the Council had to decide its tax base by 31 January in the year preceding that for which the tax base applies.

RESOLVED – (a) That the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2020/21, be approved.

(b) That the tax base for the Council and the individual tax base for the parishes, as set out at Appendix 2 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASON - To comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2020/21 to be set by Council in February 2020.

48 CABINET REPORTS.

The Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio during the previous cycle of meetings. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolios.

49 MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) on the revised Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and to provide a half-yearly review of the Council's borrowing and investment activities.

The submitted report stated that the Prudential Indicators were examined by the Audit Committee on 20 November 2019, and it was agreed at that meeting that the updated Prudential Indicators and revised Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit for borrowing be referred to Council, via Cabinet, for approval. It was also reported that the Audit Committee was satisfied with the Council's borrowing and investment activities, the reported Prudential Indicators, and the revised borrowing limits.

The Prudential Indicators were set in three statutory annual reports to Council, and the submitted report followed the Council's approval in February 2019 of the 2019/20 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy. The key objectives of the three annual reports were to ensure that governance of the large amounts of public money under the Council's Treasury Management activities complied with legislation and met the high standards set out in the codes of practice, to ensure that borrowing was affordable, and to report performance of the key activities of borrowing and investments.

The submitted report also outlined revisions to the Prudential Indicators in terms of a reduction to Operational Boundary to £185.498M, and a reduction to the Authorised

Limit to £194.773M to allow for any additional cashflow requirement.

RESOLVED – (a) That the revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8 and 15 to 18, be examined.

(b) That the over-spend in the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) of £0.033m, as detailed in Table 12, be noted.

REASONS – (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

(b) To inform Members of the performance of the Treasury Management function.

(c) To comply with the Local Government Act 2003.

(d) To enable further improvements to be made in the Council's Treasury Management function.

50 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

The Scrutiny Committee Chairs each submitted a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken by their relevant Scrutiny Committee during the last cycle of Committee meetings.

51 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

52 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM - NOTICE OF MOTION - TO CONSIDER TWO MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MRS. H. SCOTT, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR HARKER

(1) PROCEDURAL MOTION

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Mrs. H. Scott, and seconded by Councillor Harker:

That Council agrees, because of urgency, to suspend the procedural requirement of 7 clear working days' notice (Rule 22 and 106 of the Council Procedure Rules apply) and to allow motion concerning the relocation of Locomotion No. 1 (as set out below) to be moved and considered at the Council meeting on 30 January 2020.

Motion Carried.

(2) LOCOMOTION NO. 1.

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Mrs. H. Scott, and seconded by Councillor Harker:

This Council notes that, on 27 September 1825, Locomotion No.1 pulled the first train

on the Stockton and Darlington Railway. For more than 160 years Locomotion No 1 has been in Darlington and is regarded as one of the most important parts of the Town's railway heritage. With funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority, the Council has major plans to create a revamped railway heritage quarter centred around the Head of Steam Museum. Locomotion No 1 is by far, the most important part of the Town's railway legacy and it will form the centre piece of the railway heritage quarter and the celebrations of the bi centenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway

Locomotion No.1 has been on long-term loan from the National Railway Museum (NRM) which is part of the Science Museum Group. The NRM has now announced that it is planning to relocate Locomotion No. 1 from its Darlington home to Shildon.

Council therefore resolves and agrees that:-

- (a) this Council is outraged by the decision of the National Railway Museum (NRM) to seek to relocate Locomotion No 1 from the Head of Steam Museum in Darlington and relocate it to Shildon;
- (b) This Council urges the NRM to reconsider its decision; and
- (c) This Council will use all and every means available to it to oppose the decision made by the National Railway Museum.

Motion carried.

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 20 February 2020

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, Howell, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin and Wright

APOLOGIES – Councillors Boddy, Lister and A J Scott

ABSENT – Councillors Baldwin

53 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

54 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Mayor informed Members of the Death in Service of Paula Matthews, Integrated Support Worker, and invited the Director of Children and Adults to address the meeting.

As a mark of respect, Members stood and observed a short silence in memory of former colleagues.

55 **QUESTIONS - TO ANSWER QUESTIONS WHERE APPROPRIATE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were nine questions, with notice, from members of the public, all in relation to the Local Plan 2016-2036; and answers were provided thereon.

56 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Chief Officers Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek approval for a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2020/21 to 2023/24, including setting a budget and Council Tax increase for 2020/21.

The submitted report stated that the Council had faced significant challenges over the previous decade following the economic downturn and reduction in public sector spending. It was reported that the Council had been successful in responding to these challenges, however there were still financial pressures to be faced particularly in respect of a growing elderly population and pressure in the Children's Social Care sector.

The submitted report stated that the Council had received its definitive financial settlement on 6 February 2020, with no change from the draft released in December 2019, and that the settlement was in line with the Chancellors spending review announcement with the continuation of Revenue Support Grant (RSG), New Homes Bonus (NHB), additional social care monies of £2m and the ability to raise income for

Adult Social Care through the precept. It was reported that the settlement was for one year only, so assumptions as regard future years had been made.

A limited number of amendments to the draft MTFP proposed for consultation were highlighted within the submitted report, with the main changes being in relation to the increase in the National Living Wage, the impact of Quarter 3 budget management and the receipt of settlement figures.

The submitted report outlined that the Council had undertaken a significant consultation exercise in 2016, following an in-depth and detailed review of all services, which had resulted in the agreement of a Core Offer budget and allowed for a small futures fund allocated to discretionary services. In addition, in subsequent MTFPs, Members agreed to use unallocated balances of £4.7m to invest in five areas which hold great value to the community.

The submitted report stated that the core offer remained challenging, with some significant pressures arising in children's social care, however through innovative financial investments, economic growth successes, and a positive pension triennial review, it was anticipated that the Council could deliver the agreed balanced plan, extend the MTFP for a further year, and allocate an additional £1.8m to bolster the Futures Fund themes whilst retaining usable balances of £3.683m.

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Harker, and seconded by Councillor Snedker:

'To approve the MTFP conditional on:

1. Paragraph 8 (a)(iii) being deleted from the recommendations.
2. Cabinet investigating the costs and timescales of reintroducing Sure Start and Youth Outreach Services, together with expanding the scope of the Climate Change programme.'

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, a request was made by five Members for a named vote on the Amendment. A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Cossins, Crumbie, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley and Snedker (19)

Against the Amendment – Councillors Allen, Bartch, Bell, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (25)

The Amendment was Lost.

NOTE: Councillors Dr. Chou and Howell were not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.

In accordance with the requirements of the Budget and Policy Framework Rules a vote on the recommendation was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Motion – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumby, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (44)

Against the Motion – (0)

Motion Carried.

NOTE: Councillors Dr. Chou and Howell were not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.

RESOLVED - (a) That the Revenue MTFP, as set out in Appendix 7 of the submitted report, be approved, including the following;

- (i) Council tax increase of 1.99% plus the 2% adult social care precept to fund social care for 2020/21 totalling 3.99%.
- (ii) Schedule of charges as set out in Appendix 3.
- (iii) The Futures Fund investment of £1.8m as set out in paragraph 62.

(b) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval, be approved.

REASONS - (a) The Council must set a budget for the next financial year.

(b) To enable the Council to continue to plan services and finances over the medium term.

(c) To ensure decisions can be made in a timely manner.

57 DARLINGTON CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Council's proposed Capital Strategy for 2020/21.

The submitted report stated that the production of a Capital Strategy was a requirement for Council's following the publication of the revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2017. It was reported that the Strategy provided an overview of how capital expenditure and financing plans are decided upon, and provided a framework for the development, management and monitoring of the Council's capital investment plans. The submitted report stated that the Strategy also highlighted the resource streams available in terms of funding to the Council and the risk management approach taken.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Capital Strategy for 2020/21 – 2023/2024, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved;

(b) That the Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the submitted report, with the priorities summarised in Annex A, be approved;

(c) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Capital Budget for 2020/21 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval, be approved.

REASONS - (a) To ensure the Council adopts the Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2017.

(b) To enable the Council to invest in its assets.

(c) The Strategy is approved by Council.

(d) To ensure decisions can be made in a timely manner.

58 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - MTFP 2020/21 TO 2023/24

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to proposals for the revenue budget, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2020/21 in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan to 2023/24, and the 30 year business plan.

The submitted report stated that, the first time since 2016/17, Local Authorities had once again been given the discretion to inflate rents by CPI plus 1%, which meant an average £2.02 increase in weekly rents, and after four consecutive years of compulsory reductions of rent minus 1% it was recommended that rents be increased to the maximum allowed. It was also recommended that, where appropriate, service charges had an inflationary increase.

The submitted report highlighted that as the Government had lifted the borrowing cap on the HRA, and this meant that the Council could borrow an extra £9m to fund its housing capital programme in 2020/21, which would be supplemented by a Homes England grant, which meant that the Council would be able to build 100 affordable homes per annum over the next 10 years.

RESOLVED - (a) That an average weekly rent increase of 2.7% for 2020/21 be implemented giving an average social rent of £71.30 and affordable rent of £82.55;

(b) That garage rents and service charges are increased as detailed in Table 3 of the submitted report;

(c) That the budget, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved.

(d) That the Housing Business Plan, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the submitted report, be agreed.

(e) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be given delegated powers to proceed with new build schemes for affordable rent using the funding as identified in Paragraph 16 of the submitted report.

(f) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be given delegated powers to acquire dwellings in the private sector as opportunities arise, particularly as part of regeneration initiatives as highlighted in Paragraph 17 of the submitted report.

REASON - To enable the Council to deliver an appropriate level of service to tenants to meet housing need and to support the economic growth of the Borough through housing development.

59 **PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2020/21**

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Council adopt the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2020/21 to 2022/23 relating to capital expenditure and Treasury Management activity, a policy statement relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision, and the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21.

The submitted report outlined the Council's Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 – 2022/23 and set out the expected treasury operations for this period. It was stated that the report fulfilled key legislative and guidance requirements.

The information contained within the submitted report regarding the Council's capital expenditure plans, treasury management and prudential borrowing activities indicated that they were within the statutory framework and consistent with the relevant codes of practice, prudent, affordable and sustainable, and an integral part of the Council's Revenue and Capital Medium Term Financial Plans.

RESOLVED - (a) That the Prudential Indicators and limits for 2020/21 to 2022/23, as summarised in Tables 1 and 2 of the submitted report, be approved and adopted;

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement, as detailed in paragraphs 35 to 39 of the submitted report, be approved and adopted;

(c) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23, as summarised in paragraphs 43 to 69 of the submitted report, be approved and adopted;

(d) That the Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21, as contained in paragraphs 70 to 109 of the submitted report, be approved and adopted.

REASONS - (a) To comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) guidance on investments.

(b) To comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.

(c) To approve a framework for Officers to work within when making investment

decisions.

60 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2020/21

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to setting this Council's Council Tax for 2020/2021, which was required to be set before 11th March 2020.

In accordance with the requirements of the Budget and Policy Framework Rules a vote on the recommendation was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Motion – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd. Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (44)

Against the Motion – (0)

Motion Carried.

NOTE: Councillors Dr. Chou and Howell were not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.

RESOLVED – (a) That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for 2020/21 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act and relevant regulations:-

(i)	the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils, which is its expenditure	£216,772,909
(ii)	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act, which is its income	£164,415,000
(iii)	the amount by which (i) exceeds (ii) calculated by the Council for the year in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement	£52,357,909
(iv)	The amount at item 5(iii) above, divided by the council tax base in paragraph 13 below, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts)	£1,570.93
(v)	the aggregate of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as in the attached Appendix 1	£178,909

(vi) the amount at 5(iv) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 5(v) above by the amount at paragraph 13 below, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept relates £1,565.56

(vii) That the basic council tax for 2020/21 calculated for dwellings in those areas that have parish precepts be as set out in **Appendix 1**, column 5

(viii) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in **Appendix 2** as the amount of Council Tax for 2020/21 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

(b) It be noted that for the year 2020/21 The Office of the Durham Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner has stated the following amounts in the precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown : -

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p
Police Authority	143.49	167.41	191.32	215.24	263.07	310.90	358.73	430.48

(c) It be noted that for the year 2020/21 County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has stated the following amounts in the precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown: -

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p
Fire Authority	70.32	82.04	93.76	105.48	128.92	152.36	175.80	210.96

(d) The Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act hereby sets the amounts set out in **Appendix 3** as the amounts of council tax for 2020/21 for each of the categories of dwellings.

61 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/2021

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting approval of the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2020/2021 in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

The submitted report stated that the Localism Act 2011 required the Council to agree a written Pay Policy on an annual basis and publish specific information relating to the

Council's highest and lowest paid employees.

RESOLVED – That the proposed Pay Policy 2020/21, as detailed at Appendix A of the submitted report, be approved, and arrangements be made to publish the Policy on the Council's intranet for public access.

REASON – To enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

62 BOROUGH OF DARLINGTON PROPOSED SUBMISSION LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) that sought approval for changes to the Darlington Local Plan, following the consultation which occurred between 21 June and 2 August 2018.

The submitted report also sought agreement for the publication of the Proposed Submission copy of the Local Plan for the statutory six-week period to allow representations to be received prior to submission for independent examination; a number of delegated powers for the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Economy Portfolio Holder; and approval of the revised timetable and process for producing the new Local Plan (including the revision of the Local Development Scheme).

The submitted report stated that the new Local Plan would cover the period 2016 to 2036, with the ambition to submit the Local Plan for inspection by the end of August 2020, with adoption likely by April 2021. It was stated that the submitted report followed a previous report on 6 June 2018, which agreed the consultation on the Draft Local Plan, which was subsequently carried out for a six-week period between 21 June and 2 August 2018. The submitted report summarised the responses received, and highlighted changes to the recommendations to the original Draft Local Plan.

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Harker, and seconded by Councillor Layton:

'To reject the local plan as it currently stands and request that Cabinet:

1. Undertake a further period of extensive consultation, specifically to reassess residents' views about the scale of development currently proposed in the draft Local Plan.
2. Further consider and determine, based on residents' views, to what extent proposed development should be reduced, and specifically whether Skertingham should be fully withdrawn.
3. That Cabinet represent the Local Plan (as may be amended) to Council as soon as is practicable thereafter.'

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, a request was made by five Members for a named vote on the Amendment. A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Cossins, Crumbie, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley and Snedker (20)

Against the Amendment – Councillors Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Howell, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (25)

Abstentions – Councillor Keir (1)

The Amendment was Lost.

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Howarth, and seconded by Councillor Haszeldine:

‘To reject the Local Plan as it currently stands and request that Cabinet:

1. Remove the Skerningham Strategic Allocation, and
2. Bring back the Local Plan to Council, as soon as is practicable thereafter.’

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, a request was made by five Members for a named vote on the Amendment. A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Cossins, Crumbie, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley and Snedker (20)

Against the Amendment – Councillors Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Howell, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (25)

Abstentions – Councillor Keir (1)

The Amendment was Lost.

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Snedker, and seconded by Councillor Holroyd:

‘To make the following amendments to the Draft Local Plan

Section 5.1.10 Energy Efficient Design (page 22)

1. ‘Delete “These standards will be updated over the coming years to further improve the energy efficiency of new homes on an ongoing basis”, and replace with “Through a local variation to the NPPF we will increase the energy efficiency standard for new homes built in the Borough every year, for the next

ten years to reach Passivhaus standards by 2030, or sooner if mandated by national government policy decisions”.’

Section 10.6.22 Renewable and Energy Efficient Infrastructure (page 116)

2. ‘Policy Policy IN 9 notes the Council’s support for applications for renewable energy infrastructure. Wind generation applications cannot be granted permission unless “the development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan”

However the Local Plan does not make land allocations for wind or solar generation.

Request that the Local Plan be revised to identify suitable land allocations for wind and solar energy development.’

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, a request was made by five Members for a named vote on the Amendment. A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Cossins, Crumby, Curry, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley and Snedker (20)

Against the Amendment – Councillors Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Howell, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (25)

NOTE: Councillor Haszeldine was not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.

The Amendment was Lost.

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Curry, and seconded by Councillor Allen:

‘To add a paragraph after letter (f) of the recommendations, and insert at (g):

‘To delay the forwarding of the deposit to open up the ability for one more report to be submitted for consideration. This delay and the acceptance of the report will strengthen the policies within the Local Plan and protect the Council even more than now.’

This would therefore make it necessary to amend subsequent paragraph lettering.’

The Amendment was Lost.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, a request was made by five Members for a named vote on the Substantive Motion. A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared :-

For the Motion – Councillors Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Howell, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait, Tostevin and Wright (24)

Against the Motion – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Cossins, Crumbie, Curry, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley and Snedker (20)

Abstentions – Councillor Keir (1)

NOTE: Councillor Haszeldine was not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.

RESOLVED - (a) That the changes to the Plan in response to representations received as highlighted in Appendix 1 and 2 of the submitted report, be agreed.

(b) That the extra changes to the Plan and Policies Map suggested by Officers and as a result of an Inspectors Advisory Visit (undertaken on 4 September 2019) highlighted in Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be agreed.

(c) That the recommendations not to make further changes to the Plan as highlighted in Appendix 4 of the submitted report, be agreed.

(d) That the changes in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 5 of the submitted report), be agreed.

(e) That the Local Development Scheme (2020-2023) (Appendix 6 of the submitted report) is approved to take immediate effect.

(f) That the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan be approved for a six-week pre-submission representation period.

(g) That, following the conclusion of the pre-submission representation period, the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Economy Portfolio, be authorised to make any minor editing and formatting changes necessary.

(h) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Economy, be authorised to thereafter submit the Proposed Submission Local Plan (including any changes made under 18(g) above) and other required documents to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

(i) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Economy, be authorised to ask the Inspector appointed to hold the Examination, to recommend such modifications to the Proposed Submission Local Plan and submission documents as may be necessary to satisfy the requirements as to soundness.

(j) That Council agrees that the Proposed Submission Local Plan be approved to be

placed on deposit to allow representation and then be submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination.

REASONS - (a) Local Planning Authorities must prepare a Local Plan that sets out the local planning policies for their local planning authority area. Government guidance requires that Local Plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and be consistent with national policy, in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

(b) The Council is required to have an up to date Local Development Scheme (Planning & Compulsory Act 2004, as amended by Section 111, Localism Act 2011).

ANNUAL COUNCIL
Thursday, 25 June 2020

PRESENT – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Baldwin, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, Howarth, Howell, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, M Nicholson, K Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Newall.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

2 THE MAYOR OR MANAGING DIRECTOR TO MAKE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT MAY BE NECESSARY.

There were no announcements made.

3 TO ELECT A MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020 / 2021.

Consideration was given to the election of a Mayor for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

RESOLVED – That Councillor McEwan be elected Mayor of the Borough of Darlington for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

Following his election, the Mayor made and subscribed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and:-

- (i) Was invested with the Chain of Office;
- (ii) Tendered his thanks to the Members of the Council for having elected him;
- (iii) Announced his decision to support the charities relating to youth unemployment, Dementia Friendly Communities, grass roots health and well-being schemes, and the Lullaby Trust (formerly the Foundation for the Study of Infant Death); and
- (iv) Announced that his Mayoress for the Mayoral Year would be his wife, Mrs. Amanda McEwan.

4 RETIRING MAYOR - VOTE OF THANKS

A vote of thanks was proposed to the retiring Mayor and Escort.

RESOLVED – That the cordial thanks of the Council are due, and hereby tendered, to Nick Wallis and Sandy Thorne-Wallis, for the exemplary manner in which they have discharged the duties of the high office of Mayor and Mayoress of this Borough during the past Municipal Year.

5 TO APPOINT A DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020 / 2021.

Consideration was given to the appointment of a Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

RESOLVED - That Councillor C. L. B. Hughes be appointed Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Darlington for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

6 APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES 2020 / 2021.

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the membership of the various Committees for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – (a) That the appointment of Members to the various Committees, as detailed in the Appendix to the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That the appointment of Cabinet Members by the Leader and their respective Portfolios, as detailed in the Appendix to the submitted report, be noted.

(c) That any consequential changes be made to the Council's Constitution.

REASON – To comply with the nominations received.

7 REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES 2020 / 2021.

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to representation on other bodies for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – That the nominations to the other bodies, as detailed in paragraph 6 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASON - To comply with the nominations received from the Political Groups.

8 TO APPROVE A PROGRAMME OF ORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2020 / 2021 MUNICIPAL YEAR.

Submitted – A programme of Ordinary Meetings of the Council for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – That the programme of ordinary meetings be approved.

9 CORONAVIRUS - REVISED DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) which outlined a number of changes and adjustments required to enable meetings to be held, and to some of the conventions applied at meetings. The submitted report presented information to Members on the suggested approach to meetings during the current pandemic, and the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol was set out in Appendix 1 of the submitted report.

RESOLVED – (a) That the approach suggested for meetings held during the coronavirus pandemic be noted.

(b) That the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol be adopted with immediate effect.

(c) That the Monitoring Officer be delegated to add the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol as an addendum to the Constitution and to make any consequential changes to the Constitution that are necessary.

REASONS – (a) To enable meetings of Councillors to go ahead with appropriate adjustments to take account of the coronavirus pandemic.

(b) To give some flexibility moving forward with format for meetings, dependent on national and local conditions concerning the pandemic and the risks posed.

(c) To provide some clarity about the way in which meetings will be held during the pandemic and that this is reflected in the Constitution.

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COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S APPRAISAL

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Heather Scott, Leader of the Council

Responsible Assistant Director – Elizabeth Davison

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. The Appraisal Sub-Group met on 9 March, 2020 to consider the Managing Director's Performance Appraisal in accordance with the previously agreed process.
3. In considering the documentation, the Sub-Group noted that as this was the first appraisal for the new post, no targets had been set for review although the Managing Director presented a report on the priorities he had been working on following consultation with the three leaders he had worked with since his appointment.
4. The appraisal sub group agreed the Managing Directors priorities for the next year.
5. This report outlines the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that the following recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group be endorsed by the Council :-

That in respect of the Managing Director's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Managing Director's Appraisal for 2020/21 and has agreed that the Managing Director will undertake a 360 degree review of his performance and that a further meeting of this Sub-Group be held in six months' time to share that review information.

Reason

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

Elizabeth Davison
Assistant Director Resources

Background Papers

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

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.
Impact on Looked After Children	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. The Appraisal Sub-Group (a subsidiary body of the Human Resources Committee) undertakes an annual appraisal with the Managing Director and reports its recommendations to the Council.
9. The Sub-Group met on 9 March 2020, to undertake the appraisal. It reviewed the Managing Director's self-assessment and agreed the objectives for 2020/21.
10. The Sub-Group made the following recommendation to Council :-

That in respect of the Managing Director's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Managing Director's Appraisal for 2020/21 and has agreed that the Managing Director will undertake a 360 degree review of his performance and that a further meeting of this Sub-Group be held in six months' time to share that review information.

Conclusion

11. The Managing Director'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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**COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020**

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Council's Response to COVID19

1. Council will have seen the detailed report on the Council's response on the Cabinet agenda, and many references are included in my Cabinet colleagues' reports, so I will not go into the detail, but allow them to highlight the great work of Council, partners and volunteers.
2. I would like to use my report to thank all the Council staff, partners and volunteers for their work during the pandemic so far. I would also like to say thank you to my Cabinet colleagues, some who are new to post, for their leadership in responding to the pandemic thus far, as we all understand this challenge is far from over. Colleagues have worked tirelessly with our dedicated officers to deliver appropriate and much needed decisions; to respond in very short timescales, after working with limited information, but making the best decision possible. It has been very tough, and for all of us, a steep learning curve given none of us have experienced anything like this before.
3. I think it is key that the Council continues to give leadership to the pandemic response, and I and Cabinet colleagues will be promoting messages about staying safe and reminding people that the virus has not gone away, and that the releasing of lockdown is conditional on us all abiding by the guidance. Outbreaks in other parts of the country should be warnings to us all.

Planning for Recovery

4. We have been taking steps to return Council services to "normal" as part of our recovery planning, but there are much larger challenges ahead.
5. Recovery is the responsibility of a wide variety of partners, locally and nationally and we will be working collectively to achieve recovery. At the present time, not all the information is available or the plans in place, so this is why Cabinet have withheld the Council Plan it referred to Council earlier in the year, to allow time to review it in light of COVID19.
6. Early indications suggests significant social impacts as a result of unemployment and job insecurity, and key to part of the recovery planning will be working to alleviate, as far as possible, with available resources the impacts on the community of Darlington.
7. The Council's long-term ambition, reflected in our draft Council Plan, to grow the economy for the benefit of all in the Borough, will continue to be our driving force, but achieving such ambition, may well take longer, and require different interventions, but as a Council and Borough, we must continue to aim high to

achieve the success for Darlington despite these significant setbacks of COVID19.

Save our Loco Campaign

8. I am working cross-party with the political group leaders in Darlington, rail partners, local press and officers on the campaign to retain Locomotion No 1 in Darlington, where it rightfully belongs. We are lobbying senior politicians to support our cause from all the main political parties and will be relaunching the public campaign in the near future.

Strategic Transport

9. The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan is now adopted and work to develop programmes, projects and initiatives to deliver the outcomes are being progressed. There have been a number of initiatives and announcements to support Active Travel in light of COVID-19 and all local authorities and the Combined Authority are working together to put credible applications into government.
10. The Darlington Station Improvement Scheme is progressing, design work on the new station interchanges are being progressed by the Council in parallel with the process to acquire the land needed to deliver the improvements. Network Rail are progressing the design of the rail station and track elements of the project. An integrated project team reports progress to the Project Board that includes myself, Department for Transport, TVCA, Network Rail and Rail Industry representatives. When the development work further advanced more public engagement will be undertaken.
11. A business case for Darlington Northern Link Road continues to be developed, design work and ecological surveys are progressing to inform the design. Further public engagement is anticipated later this year with the business case expected to be completed early next year. Strategic Transport projects have long development and lead-in periods into national programmes and the business case will be used to seek entry into a future national fund or programme.

**Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE
Leader of the Council Portfolio**

COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Adult Services since the last meeting of Council. The following are the main areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Services, with a specific focus on Covid 19 pandemic response.

Workforce

2. Staff throughout the directorate were predominantly able to rapidly move to home based working, which was positive in terms of our ability to continue to operate services. There are some exceptions to this, however where staff are building based, risk assessments were completed and social distancing measures put in place to ensure health and safety.
3. To support our understanding of how services were being impacted by the crisis, a workforce capacity tracking tool was developed. This tool enables us to track changes in staffing capacity and capability, highlighting pressure points and, therefore, supporting managers across the service to monitor and review service capacity on a daily basis.
4. Alongside the capacity tracker, a directorate 'pool' of staff who were unable to undertake their normal work or work from home was developed, so that there was a single line of sight of resources available at any given time. This has meant that through close monitoring of pressures, staff have been temporarily reassigned to different roles to build capacity in priority areas. This has included staff from in house day service moving into the Reablement team and staff from Business Support taking on new roles to support hospital discharge functions and brokerage. This has led our 'people services' to be in a position where we have been and continue to be able to effectively manage workforce capacity in a responsive and considered way. Staff have been flexible in their approach in moving to other roles, and the Workforce Development Team and service area managers have provided required training and support to enable them to undertake new tasks. Staff report that they are enjoying new experiences.

Legislative Changes

5. Within the Coronavirus Act 2020, the government introduced legislation that enabled Local Authorities to make easements to their Care Act duties and responsibilities. Under the Care Act easements, Local Authorities do not have to complete a detailed assessment of people's care and support needs, prepare or review care and support plans and the duty to meet eligible need has been replaced by a power to meet need. It is, however, expected that a Local Authority will take all reasonable steps to meet eligible needs, but if they are unable to do so the power enables them to prioritise those people with the most pressing needs.

6. Before implementing the Care Act easements a Local Authority is required to demonstrate that they are needed, as a last resort, to manage significant increases in demand and/or staffing shortages.

Operational Services

7. It is a very positive reflection on services in Darlington that we have not needed to implement the Care Act easements and have continued to manage demand and deliver Care Act duties throughout this challenging period. All adult services assessment teams, including Reablement, have remained open and have continued to deliver services to members of the public as needed.
8. Staff from across all services have risen to the challenges that COVID has presented in an innovative, supportive and caring manner. Changing circumstances have meant that a great deal of work, both preparatory and reactionary, occurred in a relatively short period of time to ensure that teams in need have been supported. Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) were refined and regularly updated by all teams throughout lockdown, highlighting responses to staff absence and capacity needs within teams.
9. To assure the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) of her statutory duties, a 'Rag Rating' system was undertaken to quickly identify the most vulnerable service users as well as those whose vulnerability may have increased as a consequence of the lockdown restrictions. This has been invaluable in allowing managers to identify, monitor and track the needs of the most vulnerable adults. The system has continued to be developed and integrated into the electronic case management system, which will enable ongoing use.
10. Following government guidance in relation to infection control and social distancing, a decision was made on 23rd March to temporarily close in house day services for people with learning impairments. The buildings from which day services operate could not comply with social distancing requirements and thus had to close to ensure the safety of the vulnerable adults who attend. Social workers have been in close contact with service users and families affected and, where needed, support at home has been provided/increased. However fortunately Holicote short break centre has remained open and has been able to offer periods of respite to individuals identified as requiring additional support.
11. On 19th March the government published 'COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements'. This required Local Authorities to work with NHS Community Health colleagues to implement a new hospital discharge model that would be capable of responding to the surge in demand that was anticipated as a consequence of the pandemic. The new model provides assessment capability from 8 am to 8 pm, 7 days a week. The hospital discharge and admission avoidance pathway was identified as a key area of activity because it is critical to relieving pressure on the NHS. Internal staff from Adult Services were reassigned to increase capacity within the Reablement service, which forms a key element of the discharge pathway.
12. The service as a whole has also had to adapt its operating model to comply with social distancing requirements and infection control guidance. Where possible, assessment and support planning activity has taken place remotely using technology. Where face to face contact or home visits were needed, they have taken place, following risk assessments and with the use of appropriate PPE.

Members of the public have been understanding and supportive of this approach and many have themselves asked for visits not to take place and have preferred telephone contact.

13. Although the service was well prepared to receive the anticipated surge in demand, during the initial period of emergency the demand for services reduced. This is evident in the number of contacts received. For example, during April and May this year a total of 1451 contacts were received, compared to 2087 for the same period last year.
14. We believe that some of this demand has been picked up by the COVID 19 Community Hub, by the emergence of community support groups and volunteers and anecdotally through more family members being at home to provide support due to 'Stay at Home' guidance. However, we are now seeing the number of contacts increase back to nearer normal levels and expect demand to be within normal levels in the coming weeks.

Strategic Commissioning

15. The focus of the Commissioning, Contracting and Brokerage team has been to support the care sector during the COVID 19 emergency period, working closely with all local care providers to ensure that safe, high quality services continue to be provided to our most vulnerable people within the Borough. The mutually recognised close working relationship with both providers and NHS partners has provided a strong foundation, which has helped to address the complex and challenging issues presented by the COVID 19 Pandemic, and continues to do so.
16. The care sector consists of
 - 32 registered care homes which includes homes for older people, people with physical sensory impairments, learning disabilities and mental ill health
 - 17 Homecare providers who support people with a range of care needs either in their own homes, in "Extra Care "schemes or in supported living environments
 - A range of community based services within the voluntary sector which support vulnerable people, including Day Services and direct payments services
17. Officers have and continue to have daily contact with residential care homes and homecare providers, to monitor the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic and provide support and advice. Data is collected and analysed daily, enabling officers to provide effective, prompt support. This monitoring enables the Director of Adult Social Services to fulfil her statutory duty of being assured of the Councils continued delivery of core duties in terms of basic safety, maintaining human rights and safeguarding. This is further supported through the quality assurance work that LA officers have and continue to undertake with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as part of the new national Emergency Support Framework.
18. In line with all other Councils, a compensatory uplift on commissioned care packages was provided, at 5%, which also supported cash flow for the homes, with a 2-week in advance payment arrangement being in place. These are in addition to the usual annual cost of living uplifts provided.

19. Throughout the pandemic, the Team worked particularly closely with the Care Home Sector, where the outbreak nationally and locally was more severe than in other care settings. As at June 16th, 70% of all local care homes for older people and 37.5% of care homes for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental illness have been impacted by COVID 19. There have been 39 confirmed deaths within care home settings, with 16% of residents and 8% of staff testing positive.
20. Local Authorities were required to produce a local Care Home Support Plan, requested by the Minister for Care. The Care Home Support Plan was developed in consultation with the care home sector, including care homes that we do not contract with, and our local NHS partners – Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) and the Tees Esk and Wear Valley Trust (TEWV).
21. The Darlington Care Home Support Plan was published on 3 June <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/a-place-to-live/residential-and-nursing-care/>. The plan will be central to ensuring that as we move into the “recovery phase” of the COVID 19 Pandemic, the Council and its NHS partners continue to support the sector and that system vigilance is maintained in light of national COVID 19 alert levels.
22. Whilst the Homecare sector has been impacted to a lesser extent than care homes, the Council has supported the sector equally, recognising the critical role that domiciliary care plays in supporting people to live independently for as long as possible in their own homes. As at June 16th, there have been 2 confirmed deaths within homecare provision, with 7 service users and 8 staff testing positive for COVID 19.
23. The Commissioning, Contracts and Brokerage function brokered extra capacity in the domiciliary care sector to support and facilitate hospital discharge arrangements. 450 extra “block” hours per week have been commissioned on behalf of the Tees Valley CCG, through the Council’s two existing primary domiciliary care providers. The Council also doubled the number of hours available in its Rapid Response service to support the efficient and effective transition of care homes from hospital settings into permanent domiciliary care settings.
24. Commissioning has also played a key role in a number of initiatives to support the Voluntary Sector during the emergency period including the Volunteer Hub that operates 7 days a week. Volunteers were mobilised to support domiciliary care providers thereby releasing capacity to support hospital discharge arrangements.
25. Support has been provided to ensure adequacy of cash flow for the Council’s Direct Payment Service, operated by Darlington Association on Disability, and Day Service providers including Age UK and Darlington Mind. This support consists of payments in advance arrangements and continuation of payments in those cases where people are unwilling or unable to access services as a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Recovery

26. As we now move into restoration and recovery, officers are further developing local plans with partners which focus on sustainability of the market, recovery and contingencies for a potential second outbreak and/or the combined impact of

COVID 19 in conjunction with winter pressures. Officers are also feeding into the recovery groups that form part of the Local Resilience Forum.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

27. Partners welcomed David Gallagher as the new Statutory Safeguarding Partner representing the Health Sector. David's appointment, as Chief Officer, follows a restructure of the North East Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). David has responsibility for the Tees Valley and Darlington CCG.
28. To maintain a strong oversight of safeguarding issues, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners have increased their meetings, to give them opportunity to consider safeguarding arrangements from across the sector and its partner organisations.
29. Updates have been provided from partners on business continuity measures they have implemented as a result of C-19. It was positive to see all agencies reporting good staffing levels during the peak and beyond, and some re-deploying staff to the front line where necessary. This has enabled service delivery to continue, with safeguarding remaining a priority.
30. Two additional multi-agency groups have been established during C-19:
 - Children's Critical Safeguarding Group
 - Adult Critical Safeguarding GroupThese groups ensure that safeguarding arrangements continue to be in place and are robust and effective to ensure the most vulnerable children, young people and adults in Darlington continue to be safeguarded. The groups have adapted practices to ensure there is a multi-agency line of sight on the most vulnerable children, young people and adults.
31. All agencies report they are continually monitoring performance data to obtain an understanding of the changing landscape. Measures are being implemented by agencies to ensure recovery mechanisms are in place, which will be subject to government guidance, to establish what this will mean for service delivery going forward.
32. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners are now inviting key leads from partner organisations, to attend their meetings to appraise and assure them on the current position within their sectors, and will include mental health providers and education representatives.

Councillor Rachel Mills
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

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**COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020**

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Children's Services since the last meeting of Council. The following are the main areas of work under the Portfolio for Children's Services, with a specific focus on COVID-19 pandemic response.

Workforce

2. Staff throughout the directorate were predominantly able to rapidly move to home-based working, which was positive in terms of our ability to continue to operate services. There are some exceptions to this, however where staff are building based, risk assessments were completed, and social distancing measures put in place to ensure health and safety.
3. To support our understanding of how services were being impacted by the crisis, a workforce capacity tracking tool was developed. This tool enables us to track changes in staffing capacity and capability, highlighting pressure points and, therefore, supporting managers across the service to monitor and review service capacity on a daily basis.
4. Alongside the capacity tracker, a directorate 'pool' of staff who were unable to undertake their normal work or work from home was developed, so that there was a single line of sight of resources available at any given time. This has meant that through close monitoring of pressures, staff have been temporarily reassigned to different roles to build capacity in priority areas. This has led our 'people services' to be in a position where we have been and continue to be able to effectively manage workforce capacity in a responsive and considered way. Staff have been flexible in their approach in moving to other roles, and the Workforce Development Team and service area managers have provided required training and support to enable them to undertake new tasks. Staff report that they are enjoying new experiences.

Legislative Changes

5. Flexibilities in care planning processes for children in care and adoption pathways has been introduced through the Adoption and Children (Corona Virus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, which came into force on the 24th April 2020. Other than introducing virtual methods of working, including initial and review health assessments, the LA has not implemented any of the amendments
6. Children's Services have remained operational throughout the pandemic. The Emergency Duty Team, which provides the Council's out of hours service, has continued to operate normally.

7. On 30 April 2020, the Secretary of State issued a notice to be in force from 1 May to 31 May 2020 to modify the duty in section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to secure special educational provision and health care provision in accordance with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans. The notice means that local authorities and health bodies must use 'reasonable endeavours' to discharge their duties, considering for each child and young person with an EHC plan what they can reasonably provide in the circumstances.
8. In Darlington normal decision-making processes for SEND have continued through the Covid-19 period. The Multi-Agency Panel (MAP) continues to meet virtually fortnightly, with well attended panels taking place since the current circumstance began. Assessment for EHCPs have continued to ensure placements have continued to be made in a timely manner.

Safeguarding and Assurance

9. The Council and our partners completed RAG rating of all children and families that were open to services at the start of lockdown, to ensure clarity for who would be of most concern and prioritised for visits. Each organisation carried out Covid-19 Risk Assessments, to enable them to identify the most high-risk families that required continued management and prioritisation should staffing levels be affected by the pandemic, inclusive of face to face home visits. The RAG rating continues to ensure that the situation for each child can be seen quickly and a decision made regarding frequency, type of visit and also whether there are any health issues that needed to be considered for the child, their parent or carer.
10. The risk assessments are completed for all children who become active to the service and are also reviewed to ensure they remain live and reflect the child's current situation.
11. The individual RAG rated lists from each organisation were combined to produce two Multi-Agency templates for children who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and Children who have a social worker, both of which are held centrally by the Council, enabling the most vulnerable to be supported and to safeguard children who are at risk.
12. A multi-agency group was established within the first week, known as the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group (CSPG) to ensure strategic oversight across all agencies of all vulnerable children, which included those with a Social Worker, those with an EHCP and those receiving Continuing Health Care. CSPG meet bi-weekly, and is responsible for the management, oversight and response to any emergency regarding the most vulnerable children in Darlington. They direct services to meet need in line with the multi-agency high risk red rated children who have been identified as being at 'Significant risk of serious injury/death' using the risk assessment tool.
13. A new set of guidance was developed by partners in the early stages of lock down, which determined organisational practices and engagement with children and families in line with government measures. The guidance was approved by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners.

Vulnerable Children School Attendance

14. Since the start of lockdown, and the partial school closures on 23 March, 100 per cent schools in Darlington have remained open for the vulnerable children and those with critical worker parents. This compares positively with the national average 61 per cent of schools being open in April 2020. In doing so, our schools recognised the importance of continuity of care and accessibility, in contrast to some other local authority areas where a 'hub' model has been adopted, meaning some children could not attend their usual school at that time.
15. All of Darlington's schools have made arrangements that enable children with a social worker to continue to attend, and children and their parents are encouraged to do so. Attendance is monitored daily as schools share daily attendance logs with the council.
16. Each individual child's circumstances was risk assessed with recommendations made about school attendance, based on the child's best interests, and these are reviewed regularly. This has been applied to children who are subject to Child Protection (CP), Looked After Children (LAC), Child in Need (CiN) or accessing Early Help services, and those with EHCP.
17. Whilst in the early stages of lockdown attendance was lower than we would have liked, the continued multi-agency focus on our vulnerable children being in school, and driving this as the key protective factor, has resulted an increased attendance rate.
18. On 15 June 2020 average attendance at school for children with a social worker was 26 per cent. This compares favourably with the last published Department for Education national attendance estimate for this cohort which was 18 per cent as of 11 June 2020. Current attendance rates for specific groups are:
 - Statutory school age LAC – 26 per cent
 - Statutory school age CIN – 19 per cent
 - Statutory school age CP – 34 per cent
 - Children with an EHCP – 17.6 per cent on 15 June, increasing from 8.7 per cent on 24 April
19. Throughout the pandemic there has and continues to be a strong multi-agency focus on attendance. Liaison between Head Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Social Workers and health colleagues has ensured that the most vulnerable children have received a coordinated approach to their education and online learning.
20. Schools have further developed their practice in order to support vulnerable families during this period. This has included delivering free school meals and regularly contacting or visiting children they consider most vulnerable.
21. An agreed schedule of welfare checks and revised safeguarding protocols is in place to ensure that any children with a social worker that isn't in school has frequent contact with the school, and so that school can quickly raise any issues with the relevant social worker. Where required, increased visits from social care has been put in place.

Front Door

22. Throughout early stages of lockdown referrals reduced substantially (as they did nationally), with 38 children being referred during April 2020 compared to 104 during

April 2019. Since June numbers have steadily risen to nearer normal levels, with 76 children referred during May 2020 compared to 88 during May 2019.

23. Although the number of contacts received regarding domestic abuse decreased (17.3 per cent of the contacts during April and May 2020 compared to 20.9 per cent during April and May 2019), a larger number of these progressed onto referred onto social care than last year. This suggests a rise in the severity of the abuse and a higher level of impact/risk/concern for the child.

Early Help

24. Early Help services have continued to respond to all contacts from professionals and members of the public, maintaining a focus of regular contact with families. Staff have offered advice and guidance on how to manage stress, reduce conflict between parents and children, and using restorative practices to help families build relationships, to help sustain positive changes they have made.
25. Services usually delivered through the children's centres are being delivered online, with advice about children's development and regular video sessions around play and positive interaction, proving very popular with families. Some families have needed more than virtual contact, and visits to families in crisis have been undertaken.
26. Some families required food parcels, which were delivered by staff adhering to appropriate working practices, and who used the opportunity to speak to children and families through windows and doors, gathering the voice of the child and gaining a better understanding of what life was like for them in lockdown.
27. Staff continue to review and offer telephone and virtual home visiting support where necessary for those RAG rated as green, and have been creative in responding to need, using technology and social media, enabling 200-300 parents to access various sessions.
28. Where communication with some children has proved challenging, we increased use of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) to better support this. Video calls with young people on the autistic spectrum has brought a different range of challenges, and staff have been creative in engaging children in rapport and conversations.

Missing Episodes

29. Most children have adhered to lockdown measures well, with missing episodes reducing, 38 episodes relating to 28 children were reported during April and May 2020 compared to 66 missing episodes relating to 38 children reported during April and May 2019.
30. Return home interviews have continued through virtual visits, and overall the experience in respect of this mode of communication is positive with 93.5 per cent of interviews being carried out in time compared to 76.2 per cent during April and May 2019 and 71.0 per cent of children engaged in their interview compared to 55.5 per cent during April and May 2019. Reasons for the missing episodes include children feeling they needed to get out for a while and meet up with friends (usually saying at a safe distance). Most children and young people have understood the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, and staff have given information about the virus.

Assessment and Safeguarding

31. The Assessment and Safeguarding teams have continued to undertake assessments, reviews, multi-agency meetings by adapting to virtual mediums such as Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, and WhatsApp video calls. Where it has been safe to do so and social distancing could be applied, or PPE available and worn, face to face home-visits have taken place for Children in Need, children subject to Child Protection Plans and children who are in care. Where it has not been safe to undertake physical home-visits, virtual visits have taken place, and the children seen via video and spoken with also. As PPE became more available to the teams, the number of physical visits are significantly increasing.
32. Virtual decision-making forums for care planning of children have successfully been maintained with regular attendance from organisations and meetings such as Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Reviews continuing remotely, using varied modes of communication applications, ensuring the focus of the Independent Reviewing Officers work has continued.

Children with Disabilities

33. To minimise and reduce the risk of Covid-19, changes were made to the number of children accessing Harewood Hill Lodge short break centre. Risk assessments identified the most vulnerable children and they have been provided with a service that was/is targeted for a group of vulnerable children/young people with a disability. Staff have been grouped into different 'bubbles' so that if any child or staff member show any Covid-19 symptoms, the specific 'bubble' can isolate and not affect others.
34. Children and families have been very understanding of the change to the way social workers have stayed in touch by virtual contact. As a result of the medical vulnerabilities of some of these children, parents and carers have been "shielding" so have accepted virtual visits as being beneficial by keeping everyone safe, whilst providing a good level of support.

Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

35. The Council, Health services and schools have and continue to work together to ensure that provision is available for children and young people with an Education

Health and Care (EHC) Plan. School Leaders are working closely with health and social care partners to identify and support their most vulnerable pupils to ensure they are receiving the required services they need where they can't access these via school.

36. A multi -agency risk assessment process has been established involving schools, health services and social care to ensure that these young people are able to attend school where possible and receive appropriate support when they cannot attend. A risk assessment has been completed for all 799 children and young people in receipt of an Educational Health and Care Plan in Darlington.

Children in Care

37. From the beginning of April there has been a total of 26 children brought into care with 61.54 per cent of these being placed with extended family members. The circumstances have varied with some as a result of care planning pathways in progress and others due to immediate safeguarding needs.
38. During the pandemic the Family Courts have needed to adapt to new processes and have reduced the type of hearing they will list in order to manage virtual Court hearings. The Courts remained open for urgent applications in respect of children who are at risk of significant harm and require oversight of the Court, resulting in children who require safeguarding by being accommodated with the Local Authority throughout this period.
39. However, non-urgent applications have been unable to be lodged with Court, and this has meant that some children have not been able to exit care in the timescales that would ordinarily have been applied, it has also caused some delay in being able to progress with care planning. Consequently, the number of children in care is continuing to rise as the number of children who are able to leave care has been significantly reduced due to these working practices.
40. The Family Courts will re-open to non-urgent applications on the 1 July 2020, they will have a backlog of matters from several Local Authorities including Darlington to have to timetable.
41. Contact between children in care and their families has been via virtual methods. Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom have been favourites of the children and family members and although this has been challenging for all concerned, everyone has adapted well with this way of working. Young people have found it extremely positive and for some children in specific circumstances, they have been able to have increased virtual contact, which has been of benefit to all.
42. There has been minimal movement in placements as a result of Covid-19 and moves have only taken place when there have been risks of infection with a need to protect the child, other children in placement and/or their carers.
43. Therapeutic Practitioners are supporting social workers with young people and family mental health and well-being, enabling plans to be put in place to reduce risk and escalation.
44. Social Workers have used notelets and postcards as well as Moonpig cards to celebrate young peoples' birthdays, sending texts and using FaceTime to conduct

virtual visits. This virtual contact has included a “check-in” with carers prior to the phone being passed to the child to view their room.

45. The participation workers hold weekly meetings to capture how young people are dealing with the Covid-19 restrictions and capture their thoughts followed by a quiz with the Darlo Care Crew.
46. Residential Homes have been working as per regulations and standards, with staff maintaining a focus on safeguarding children in their care, and despite some challenging situations, there has been very little movement in placements.

Care Leavers

47. Our care leavers have remained in contact with services and have been supported in various ways during the pandemic has included. Increased telephone support/virtual contact home visits with those who have required this level of support, and normal weekly fare share food delivery was re-diverted to Kings Church so that workers could collect and deliver to care leavers that need this support each week.
48. Continued weekly access to the Psychological Well-being Practitioner for Care Leavers has continued via telephone and there are plans to progress this to video calls. Appointments are available evenings and Saturdays.
49. An informal Corporate Parenting Panel is being planned for late July, as it has been unable to meet due to lockdown restrictions. In line with other democratic meetings this will be virtual.

Fostering

50. Our foster carers have been flexible to help us to provide placements to meet the needs of children. The majority of children have remained in placement with only moves taking place as a result of health needs of foster carer or care planning purposes.
51. Foster carers have continued to receive virtual support from their supervising social workers and have maintained buddying arrangements in place with other carers. They have facilitated a range of methods in encouraging contact between children and their families.
52. Supervising social workers have continued to progress prospective foster carers and provide virtual visits and training sessions. In line with the Adoption and Children (Corona Virus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 the fostering team have been unable to secure the provision of medical reports for prospective foster carers, as GP's have not been available to provide medical examinations. This flexibility has meant that prospective foster carers have been able to progress through the assessing stages albeit they will not be approved without the full medical report. The Designated Doctor for Looked After Children has worked with the medical adviser to the Fostering panel to plan for “virtual medicals”.

Adoption

53. Adoption Tees Valley has remained operational using remote means to engage adopters and liaise with assessing social workers in the local authority. For children who have an approved plan for Adoption, Family Finding is continuing, and children are being matched. Virtual matching panels are taking place with matches being recommended to the Agency Decision Maker for approval.
54. The Courts, not hearing adoption applications at this time, will ultimately generate delays in the making of Adoption Orders. The cohort of children are being tracked by the local authority and the data is being used to inform the Teesside Court Recovery Group as to the scheduling once the Courts commence hearing of cases.
55. Adoption Tees Valley have been awarded a grant from the DfE to enable our special guardians to have membership of Grandparents Plus for support and advice over the next 12 months.

Education

56. During the lockdown period daily meetings between the LA and the Regional Schools Commissioner have been in place, and daily updates have been issued to schools from Education Services. The updates include the latest attendance information, any new guidance or developments from DfE and any questions that have been raised with the DfE. In addition, the Education Strategy Group has been meeting weekly throughout the Covid-19 period.
57. Briefing sessions with the Director of Public Health and Public Health Principal have been accepted by all schools, colleges and early years settings. These sessions were very well received and education providers tell us that they have found them very useful.
58. The Educational Psychology Service has developed and provided resources for education colleagues on mental health issues, the recovery curriculum and critical incident management.
59. The Schools Forum met on 14 January and agreed the School Funding Formula, Growth Fund and central budgets for schools and early years for 2020/21. The 19th May meeting was cancelled due to lockdown restrictions, however the final budget position for 2019/20 was circulated and showed a continuing cumulative pressure in high needs budgets.

Schools Wider Reopening

60. Following the period of partial closures since 23 March, schools/settings were advised by the Government that Early Years settings and primary schools could reopen to pupils (Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6) from 1 June, with Secondary Schools following on for Year 10 and 12 from 15 June.
61. Schools, educational settings and early years childcare providers have completed risk assessments and have put in place a range of protective measures to ensure they can safely re-open to more children and staff. Schools will reopen to different year groups at different stages in June, based on their assessments. These re-openings will be purposely slow and considered, only building to a wider opening when schools are confident to do so and it is safe and right for children and families.

62. Parents are being notified by schools regarding re-open and the steps they have put in place to ensure social distancing guidance and safety measures can be followed.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

63. Contract monitoring has been undertaken with private residential homes operating in Darlington. Out of the eight private residential homes, seven homes are Ofsted graded Good or Outstanding and one home is currently Requires Improvement (RI). The home graded RI is due to be inspected imminently. Officers from the Council have been monitoring progress against the home's Ofsted Improvement Plan, of which all actions are complete.
64. No matters of contractual compliance were identified and positive outcomes for children and young people were evidenced around self-development and holistic wellbeing. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic a robust RAG rated provider liaison and intelligence tracker has been in place with all external providers of care and support to Darlington Children and Young People, providers have worked in partnership with Council Officers to be innovative and solution focused to ensure service disruption remained to an absolute minimum.
65. Darlington have been successful in an application to be part of the 2020-21 sites to implement the proposals for new Mental Health Support Teams in schools as set out in the Children and Young People Mental Health Green Paper and Long-Term Plan for the NHS. This multi-agency work will progress in line with the funding allocation timescales and is a great example of positive joint commissioning work between our schools, the LA and Clinical Commissioning Group.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

66. Partners welcomed David Gallagher as the new Statutory Safeguarding Partner representing the Health Sector. David's appointment, as Chief Officer, follows a restructure of the North East Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). David has responsibility for the Tees Valley and Darlington CCG.
67. To maintain a strong oversight of safeguarding issues, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners have increased their meetings, to give them opportunity to consider safeguarding arrangements from across the sector and its partner organisations.
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- Children's Critical Safeguarding Group
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- These groups ensure that safeguarding arrangements continue to be in place and are robust and effective to ensure the most vulnerable children, young people and adults in Darlington continue to be safeguarded. The groups have adapted practices

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70. All agencies report they are continually monitoring performance data to obtain an understanding of the changing landscape. Measures are being implemented by agencies to ensure recovery mechanisms are in place, which will be subject to government guidance, to establish what this will mean for service delivery going forward.
71. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners are now inviting key leads from partner organisations, to attend their meetings to appraise and assure them on the current position within their sectors, and will include mental health providers and education representatives.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People

COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy Portfolio.

Planning, Development Management and Environmental Health

2. One of the large housing sites between Burtree Lane and the A167 has moved closer to commencement as they have signed their S.106 legal agreement. Development on the early phases of Stag House Farm including the link road are underway.
3. Further work is being undertaken relating to the Development Management Charter, which sets out the reasonable expectations of both developers and objectors within the Development Management System. This is an important document which sets out how the development process operates in an open and transparent manner. In addition, a report is being finalised which will form a new planning enforcement protocol. This will demonstrate how we deal with planning matters when things go wrong within the planning process. A report will be brought to Members of the Planning Committee for consideration when complete.
4. A planning application has been approved for the refurbishment of the crematorium with associated chapel and facilities.
5. Further negotiations are continuing with regard to the Burtree Garden Village Government designation.
6. The Development Management process is continuing to operate as normal, including the delegated process and Chair delegated process, despite most members of staff working from home. The interim consultation processes that were introduced initially following the lockdown have now been reinstated and are operating as normal.
7. The Planning Committee which has been paused during the lockdown is anticipated to re commence 'virtually' towards the end of July. The operational details of how this occurs is still being finalised.
8. The Planning enforcement/compliance service is now working as normal including site visits seeking to resolve planning disputes and breaches. Members of the public can access this service either via our web site or contacting the officer via his telephone.
9. Environmental Health have been operating a near "normal" service during COVID 19 and continued throughout to investigate and respond to service requests across all our service areas.

10. Since the lockdown period started on 23 March 2020 and to the end of May 2020, officers in Environmental Health have dealt with 154 additional enquiries relating to the social distancing issues and business closure requirements. This work is continuing as well as assistance being given to businesses on re-opening, it is not yet known the impact there may be on the service in investigating outbreaks of COVID 19.
11. Most breaches of the legislation have been resolved informally, however warning letters have been sent to two businesses who were working when they should not have been.
12. A barber has been served with a Prohibition Notice to try to prevent them working, however information has been received that the barber is still working, and further investigations are continuing with regard to this.
13. Environmental Health have noticed an increase in several areas of work during COVID 19 compared to the same period last year with the number of requests for rat treatments (141) increasing by 52%, domestic noise complaints received (71) increasing by 31% with the most noticeable increase being in relation to nuisance from garden bonfires (47) an increase of 176%.

Business Growth & Investment

14. The commencement of lock down brought many challenges to the economic life of Darlington. Since lockdown was introduced, the Business Investment team has received 168 enquiries from businesses seeking advice and support. The majority of these enquiries were seeking financial assistance.
15. The Business Investment team have worked alongside Business Rates to promote and support the update of the emergency cash grants introduced by Government. Initially, this was focussed on the Small Business Grant and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant. This was then followed up with the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme.
16. Alongside this direct support, the Business Investment Team have been providing advice and guidance to a range of support services to help our businesses community, particularly in relation to the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
17. The Business Investment Team have also been engaged in the development and implementation of a number of recovery plans, both at a strategic and local level e.g. Town Centre Recovery Planning, Tees Valley LEP Recovery Planning.
18. Throughout this crisis, a large number of Darlington employers have made significant contributions to the response to the pandemic, making a real impact in supporting local residents and vulnerable communities. Examples include:
 - (a) The Mowden Pub, who spent the entire lockdown cooking and delivering free homemade food to vulnerable people
 - (b) Cleveland Bridge UK has launched a new workplace initiative to support the King's Church Foodbank in Darlington

(c) Darlington College have provided essential PPE supplies to Darlington Memorial Hospital and St Teresa's Hospice

19. Amazon are fully operational with over 1500 people now employed on site. From the recruitment that has taken place, around 50% of new employees have been recruited from Darlington and the biggest employment has been in the 18-27 age range with around 50% of the work force falling into this demographic. We are continuing to work closely with them and are hopeful further recruitment will take place over the coming months in anticipation of the Christmas trading period.
20. CPI, on behalf of the Bioindustry Association (BIA)-led vaccine manufacturing group, is leading the work stream to manufacture the Imperial College London Coronavirus vaccine candidate. This includes establishing the scaleup and development of the vaccine platform technology, which will ultimately allow for the manufacture of the millions of doses required as soon as the vaccine candidate passes clinical trials.

Business Support Grants

21. During the lockdown period, we have awarded 2,049 Business Support Grants to local businesses worth £23.26 million. This has ensured that Darlington has outperformed most other Councils by delivering these grants promptly and in line with Government guidelines. We are currently in the process of delivering the agreed Discretionary Business Grant scheme to provide further help to Darlington businesses.
22. Business Rates discounts worth £16.40 million have been awarded to 667 local retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, providing a full exemption for Business Rates in 2020-21.
23. On 28 May, the Council launched the Government Funded Discretionary Grants Scheme for small businesses. This scheme is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs. The Council were allocated circa £1.2m by Government. Applications for the first round of Discretionary Grants closed on 11 June 2020. The Council has awarded and paid 89 discretionary grants totalling £890,000. The unallocated balance will now support a second round of Discretionary Grant Applications.

Future High Street Fund

24. The Council submitted its Future High Street Fund bid to Government on 3 June. Darlington Borough Council is seeking £7.7m of Future High Street Fund (FHSF) monies as part of a £32.8m high quality housing led regeneration scheme to transform the town centre. The scheme is critical in delivering a 'living town centre' in Darlington, a primary aim of the Town Centre Strategy. The scheme is focused on the Crown Street and East Street area of the town centre. It builds on earlier master planning work that highlighted the opportunity for a town centre housing scheme that regenerates vacant sites and premises and exploits the potential to open-up the River Skerne via high quality public realm improvements. The scheme will provide a mix of tenancies while also contributing towards Darlington's need to increase the number of affordable homes; meet ambitious housing need targets; and deliver our vision for an attractive and vibrant, transformed town centre.

Darlington Indoor Market

25. In April 2020 Market Asset Management (MAM) obtained planning approval to commence the refurbishment of the Indoor Market. Work will entail repair and maintenance of the market roof, the redesign of the current stall layout, installation of public toilets, access improvements, enhancement of the west elevation of the building and the introduction of number food and beverage operators. MAM are currently completing the required procurement and tender exercises for the work and it is anticipated that work will commence in September.

Local Plan

26. The Local Plan remains suspended as in the current climate I am advised that the Council could not meet the legal requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012. The Plan will progress when the requirements can be met either when measures allow or if the Government amend the legislation.

27. At the time of writing the Planning Policy team is currently operating on a reduced staffing level due to two members of staff securing different employment, one member of staff seconded to the Garden Communities role and one member of staff on maternity leave. The remaining staff are carrying out a business as usual, preparing background evidence for the Local Plan Examination, responding to planning application consultations, assisting in planning appeals, carrying out plan monitoring and assisting Middleton St. George in the preparation of their Neighbourhood Plan.

Climate Change

28. The Council is continuing to work towards increasing its energy efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint. Actions already completed include:-

- (a) Switching to a zero-carbon electricity tariff
- (b) Installation of new LED streetlighting
- (c) Installation of LED lighting in office buildings
- (d) Addition of nine electric vehicles to the Council fleet
- (e) Climate Change Champions have been appointed across the Council

29. The Climate Change Strategy has been agreed by Cabinet as well as a training module for all staff.

30. The four main principles of the Climate Change Strategy are:-

- (a) Reduce our overall energy consumption
- (b) Reduce our demand for fossil fuel-based energy
- (c) Contribute to a greener grid
- (d) Sequester carbon (offsetting)

31. Work is continuing on the development of a rolling Carbon action plan.

Cross Party Working Group

32. Five meetings of the cross-party working group have taken place. Much of the business has been fact finding, including:-

- (a) an overview of local authority housing and current building standards
- (b) the benefits of a 20mph speed limit for the urban area
- (c) an update in respect of tree coverage in the Borough and ongoing tree planting schemes
- (d) Durham County Council's approach to achieving its carbon target

District Heating System

33. A bid has been approved for grant funding to carry out a Techno-economic Feasibility Study for a potential District Heating System in the Borough. If the results are positive the next stage would be to prepare a detailed project submission.

Councillor Alan Marshall
Economy Portfolio

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COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Public Health Response to COVID-19

2. An extensive report has been prepared by Cabinet detailing the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes the decisions taken by officers, in consultation with Cabinet during the emergency phases of the pandemic.
3. The COVID19 pandemic has been described as the single largest challenge faced by the Country since the second world war, the scale of the challenge has been unprecedented, and I would like to acknowledge the loss of life and the hardship caused by the pandemic.
4. I would like to pay tribute to our Public Health Team and Miriam Davidson, the Director of Public Health for the support and commitment shown over the last few months, and in particular the delay of her retirement. The support for partners and the community has been exceptional and is to be commented. In addition, our Housing team and leisure teams have worked tirelessly around the clock to support our housing tenants and residents throughout this pandemic.
5. On the 11 March 2020 the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic indicating the new disease was spreading globally. While the outbreak initially occurred in China, it spread rapidly. By mid-March 2020 Europe became the epicentre for the disease.
6. As with other respiratory illnesses, symptoms of COVID-19 can include a new cough, fever, runny nose and other symptoms, including loss of smell or taste. Most people experience mild to moderate illness and recover without needing specialist treatment. It can be more severe for some people.
7. In England the tripartite partnership of DHSC, Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England provides strategic oversight and direction for the health and adult social care response to a pandemic with Department for Education (DfE) leading on the Children's social care response.
8. In the initial stages of the outbreak, the NHS and PHE were proactive in contacting people who had been at risk of being infected, testing them, and where people tested positive tracing who they may have come into contact with and managing/treating the cases.

9. Public Health England, supported by staff at regional centres provides specialist technical expertise and advice. Darlington Borough Council has been in regular contact with these agencies.
10. A UK-wide lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020, the instruction was “Stay at home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives”. The government advised that police would enforce the rules re social distancing and closure regulations.
11. On 16 April it was confirmed that lockdown would be extended and set out “five tests” that must be met to allow easing of restrictions.
12. **“Our Plan to Rebuild the UK (COVID-19 Recovery Strategy)”** was launched on 11 May 2020. This set out a five-point scale to indicate the level of threat to society due to COVID-19 and included a phased approach to recovery, with incremental steps to relax control and public protection measures.
13. We responded locally, working with PHE, ensuring that local stakeholders received the necessary guidance and that information and advice was shared with services within the council. The council worked very closely with PHE on detection and tracing of cases during the early phases of the outbreak providing advice to those affected. Links to the national coronavirus information and advice from government and PHE were provided via our website and we supported the national public information campaign via our social media channels.
14. We have worked with partners nationally and regionally to respond to the pandemic. When the emerging threat was recognised COVID-19 Response Planning arrangements were established, staff communications put in place and briefings reported to Members. Throughout February 2020 advice from PHE was communicated to schools, local communities, and businesses.
15. The council’s Public Health team led the initial planning and response to the outbreak, liaising with NHSE and PHE on the regional command and infection control arrangements, in line with the North East Influenza Pandemic Framework.
16. The team has been proactive in assessing government guidance on the virus, providing public health advice in relation to the guidance to council services and partner organisations.
17. Through our collaborative approach to public health, County Durham and Darlington Councils have in place a dedicated, public-health commissioned community infection prevention and control team, which has been at forefront of our efforts to contain and mitigate the pandemic, not exclusively but largely supporting care homes.
18. A key element of the national response has been the introduction of testing to monitor and enable containment of the spread of the virus and to develop intelligence which can support the development of treatments and vaccines.
19. The Director of Public Health has worked with regional colleagues from NHSE, Public Health England and local NHS foundation trusts to develop and coordinate local testing programmes for NHS workers, social care staff and key workers from LRF responding organisations including the council.

20. As part of this, through our Occupational Health service, COVID-19 testing is available for all council employees who have coronavirus symptoms, with tests and results provided quickly through local hospitals.
21. Since the end of April 2020, the council has worked with the LRF on the use of Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) under the National Testing Programme.
22. The NHS Test and Trace Service was introduced on 28 May 2020. The purpose is to trace the spread of the virus, isolate new infections and interrupt the further spread of COVID-19.

In order to do this the Test and Trace service will:

- (a) Ensure people who develop symptoms of COVID-19 can be quickly tested to find out if they are infected.
 - (b) Trace contacts of people who test positive for coronavirus and, if necessary, advise them to self-isolate.
23. Contact is expected to be the responsibility of Public Health of England, North East Health Protection Team while the Council is responsible for the management of the impact of cases or contacts in a range of settings.
 24. The DHSC requires every Upper Tier Local Authority to develop a Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP) and Darlington's went live on 30th June 2020.

The plan will centre on 7 themes:

- (a) Care homes and schools.
 - (b) High risk places, locations and communities.
 - (c) Local testing capacity.
 - (d) Contact tracing in complex settings.
 - (e) Data integration.
 - (f) Vulnerable people.
 - (g) Local Boards including a new member-led Board to communicate with the general public.
25. The government has allocated additional resources to councils to support Test and Trace and the implementation of plans.
 26. The council focus is on restoring services and supporting the community in recovery. With partners the council is reviewing plans to prevent or mitigate secondary outbreaks of COVID-19. Work is underway to understand the impact of COVID-19 locally and will inform council planning for the future.

Public Health Commissioned Services

27. Recognising the impact of COVID-19 on mental health the Council is working with partners to develop "Darlington Connected" to promote positive mental health and connections across the Borough.
28. Mental health support to schools is recognised as a priority. Joint work with education representatives are reviewing plans, including the Mental Health Support Worker roles, established as a result of successful Trailblazer bid.

29. Where possible work has continued on the Healthy Weight Plan, eg providing supporting information for families in receipt of free school meals to accompany the supermarket vouchers.
30. Regular contact has been maintained with all providers of Commissioned Services throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. Contract monitoring and performance meetings have been successfully managed remotely with technology.
31. Services adapted their models of delivery in the following ways:
 - (a) Face to face contacts in the 0-19 Years' Service reduced to essential visits based on clinical risk and patient safety. Majority of appointments have taken place by telephone.
 - (b) Safeguarding Single Point of Contact Service extended to provide additional support.
 - (c) In Sexual Health Services a Single Point of Contact triaged callers and essential appointments were available. Supplies were available online and pharmacy service was maintained.
 - (d) Substance misuse and stop smoking services adapted ways of working similarly. Weekly motivational support has been maintained as have required prescribed treatments. The new provider of substance misuse services "We Are With You" is preparing for commencement mid-August 2020.

Health and Well Being Board

32. The Health and Wellbeing Board has not met during the COVID-19 emergency. The decision was taken by the Chair in recognition Board partners were fully engaged in emergency response.
33. I have also met virtually with the new Chief Executive of the Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and with the Chief Executive of Healthwatch Darlington.

Housing Services

Housing Income

34. We have ensured that despite the financial challenges the lockdown has brought, tenants have continued to be fully supported to pay their rent and sustain tenancies. Rent arrears in May were 3.3% of the annual debit which is an increase from the year-end figure of 2.8% but the increase is lower than other social housing providers nationally. Since April over £3.7 million has been collected towards rent and arrears with weekly collection rates over 94%. Numbers of Universal Credit claims have significantly increased as of this time last year by 66.5%, with over 1285 council tenants claiming Universal Credit and I have ensured that the team continue to provide specialist support to those people who have lost employment and claimed Universal Credit. We have made arrangements that this support and guidance continues to help ensure that residents are supported in maintaining payment plans and maintaining tenancies.

Customer Services

35. During the lockdown period, we facilitated contact with over 6570 vulnerable customers who were dealt with by our Housing and Lifeline staff where residents were offered help and assistance as appropriate. This proactive work has helped to reduce the immediate effects and allayed some of the concerns of these residents and prompted more than 300 referrals being made to Darlington Community Support Hub for emergency food, medication and advice and to Darlington Support for help with shopping, befriending and dog walking. We also ensured that Housing staff be involved within the Darlington Community Support Hub where they were able to answer emergency calls on a wide variety of topics to assist residents during these exceptional times.

Housing Options/Homelessness

36. This has been a very demanding time for our Housing Options team with a significant increase in the number of presentations for homelessness, rough sleeping or at risk of being homeless. This situation has been reflected across the country.
37. To meet this increased demand, we have ensured that additional temporary accommodation has been sourced through procuring hotel accommodation and ensuring our Tenancy Management Team increase the number of temporary Council accommodation units. The work done by this team has been guided by the information from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government ensuring that all vulnerable homeless applicants were placed in accommodation regardless of their need and status.
38. To ensure that all applicants could self-isolate additional items were purchased such as fridges and microwaves for their rooms in the hotel as well as furniture packages and carpets for the temporary accommodation. Each presentation has been assessed by a Housing Options Officer and they have all been given a personalised housing plan which will support them with in their longer-term housing solutions.
39. Over the period of April and June 2020 Housing Options have worked with 359 clients who have approached us for support around their homeless situation. Of these 243 were emergency presentations resulting in 116 being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. The remainder were given appropriate advice and support, including money advice, support to access social or private housing, access to bonds and prevention loans and referral to specialist services. We currently have around 40 households placed in temporary accommodation. I believe that the additional presentations represent some of the hidden homeless and sofa surfers and will ensure we take this opportunity to further work, engage and support them.

Allocations Team

40. We have continued to maintain the housing waiting list over this period and at present have 1665 active housing applications. The team have continued to work from home and in April and May have ensured that 242 applications were checked and activated. Appointments have been carried out over the phone and they will continue to do this as we look at the Council's overall recovery plan and future demands on the service.

New Build

41. I have reviewed the Council Housing new build programme and agreed to recommence the two stalled construction sites at Fenby Avenue and Allington Way 3, providing 70 much needed new homes. The future programme has also been reviewed and in particular I have focused on 4 sites which officers have been progressing. I have agreed that three of these at Neasham Road, East Haven and Skinnergate should be progressed through the planning application process, providing potentially an additional 206 dwellings. One scheme at Harris Street has been withdrawn due to concerns about loss of green space. Other potential sites have been identified and will come forward in due course.

Lifeline Team

42. The Lifeline Officers have ensured that all essential services have been delivered over this difficult period. All our sheltered, extra care and good neighbour schemes have had a staff presence throughout
43. I have ensured that all government guidance has been followed making key decisions around
- (a) Extra Care – closing of the dining area and delivering meals to tenant's flats
 - (b) Closing of communal areas to discourage gatherings
 - (c) Encourage and support each tenant to self-isolate within their own flats
 - (d) Correct use and guidance of PPE, ensuring the safety of staff
 - (e) Use of vehicles – one person per vehicle
 - (f) Correspondence and verbal updates have been given to our tenants throughout to ensure we have met the guidelines and that these are understood by all.
44. To ensure our tenants were not socially isolated, staff have been innovative in creating ideas to deliver virtual activities within the schemes supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our tenants. Over all our schemes we now deliver 34 weekly activities, which include, bingo, quizzes, virtual coffee mornings.
45. In recent weeks 27 one off events have also been delivered throughout the schemes, such as VE Day where we delivered cupcakes and sweets, social distancing clap for carers, Easter events including delivering of chocolate eggs to every tenant throughout the schemes.

46. Activities are delivered safely and follow the government guidelines and as these change we are able to increase or change the way these are delivered. Thinking ahead we have recognised that our shielded tenants are feeling very isolated and some are frightened to go outside so we are working with Creative Darlington around a project called Unforgettable Experiences to deliver group activities, build support and relationships and in turn help them gain confidence.
47. To enable tenants to see their families we have introduced safely managed family visits in the outside areas, to support mental health and wellbeing. Our Leisure Services staff provide support to the schemes as part of the Move More initiative which delivers a gentle exercise programme to support the physical wellbeing of our tenants. Whilst we have had to cut back on this project due to the guidelines we are now delivering some social distance chair-based exercises in the garden areas of the schemes.
48. Throughout April and May the Lifeline team have carried out,
 - (a) 7550 welfare calls by telephone
 - (b) 171 physical welfare checks
 - (c) 1335 call outs where a person has activated the emergency call
 - (d) 1849 lifts for clients who have fallen
 - (e) Facilitated 26 hospital discharges by installing essential equipment.

Repairs and Maintenance for Council Tenants

49. Essential gas servicing and other regular safety checks have continued during this time with appropriate measures in place to ensure staff and tenants have been kept safe throughout this process. Whilst we were required to put all our routine and general repairs on hold during the lockdown period 642 urgent and emergency repairs were completed for Council tenants. Overall, we saw a 33.5% increase in these types of repair with the biggest increase relating to blocked drains. Some routine repairs also became more urgent as time went on. From 18th May 2020 routine repairs recommenced in accordance with government guidelines, starting with clearing the backlog before accepting new repair requests from early June 2020.

Digital Tenancy Portal

50. The Digital Tenancy portal is now available once again for ordering routine repairs. The portal enables tenants to access their housing account to check their current rent balance, make online payments, report repairs, send messages and view and print their rent statements. It is accessible 24/7 using a smartphone, tablet or laptop/PC which is how many of our tenants now want to engage with us. It reduces the number of phone calls and visits to Customer Services. Work is currently progressing to enable new features of the portal, such as allowing tenants to book their own appointments and set up direct debits.

Neighbour Nuisance

51. Whilst reports of neighbour nuisance and ASB have remained similar to previous years, there has been an additional 18 Covid related breaches which have been dealt with in partnership with Darlington Police. These were mainly large gatherings inside Council tenanted properties and the surrounding areas. There has also been an increase in those who are suffering with mental health issues during the lockdown period and those individuals have received appropriate advice support and signposting.

Darlington Sports Village

52. In May 2020 the Council received a completed Due Diligence report from Grant Thornton on the proposals detailed by Darlington Mowden Park Rugby Club on the development of a Sports Village at the Darlington Arena site. The report highlighted a number of risks that the Council would be exposed to if they were to support the submitted business plan. It was therefore agreed that the Council could not support the business plan for the development of a Sports Village but would work with the rugby club in the development of an alternative approach to ensure the future of the club. Since receiving the due diligence report the rugby club have decided to explore their options and have entered into a financial arrangement with a third party. This has led to the loans secured on the Arena being repaid and the Council has now been released from the guarantee that was in place since 2017.

Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

53. The Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex have remained closed to the public since Tuesday 17 March 2020. The Leisure teams have been redeployed to various essential roles including Darlington's Community Hub. The team have supported a number of functions within the Hub including the call centre, control room, outreach driving and deliveries and food packing, all of which have been essential to facilitate this emergency service for residents shielding. In addition, the team have also supported Lifeline services, CCTV, the Food Bank and more recently Street Scene.
54. Eastbourne pre-school, which is based at the Sports Complex reopened on 20 April 2020 for vulnerable children and children of key workers.
55. The Dolphin Centre is currently open for town centre toilet use and Eastbourne Sports Complex opened from Tuesday 9 June 2020 for limited track usage.
56. A new shop front canopy was installed at 16 Horsemarket to provide alternative pavement café options and to highlight the presence of 16 in the market square when reopened. A takeaway service has been available since 15th June and has included new features such as a range of homemade waffles and afternoon tea which have been popular. Following the government announcement that cafes, bars and restaurants can open, both the Bistro and pavement café welcomed public back on Monday 6th July celebrating a new menu. The menu includes our "Chefs promise" a commitment to healthy options.

57. Although gyms have remained closed, the team have been working hard to keep in contact with customers and members. The Dolphin Centre app has been updated ongoing with advice on exercise that can be done from home to keep people active during lockdown. There has also been a series a workout videos posted on social media delivered by gym team members called *Workout Wednesdays*. There will soon be the opportunity for customers and members to book onto home coaching or small digital classes delivered by the team via Microsoft Teams which will form part of our long-term digital offer.
58. Pools remain closed and are following strict guidance from the Pool Water treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG). Various methods of testing have been completed including die testing to check flows and water circulation and pool temperatures have been reduced throughout. Water safety messages will continue to be regular in the lead up to the summer holidays and in preparation for further easing of lockdown.
59. Connect Health who deliver the muscular skeletal contract on behalf of the NHS have agreed Heads of Terms during this period to become a tenant in the vacant registrar's area at the Dolphin Centre from November 2020.

School Meals and Community Catering Service

60. The school meals and community catering service has continued during this period with care homes receiving a varied menu, which has included themed days such as afternoon tea to animate the experience. School meals have been greatly reduced but have continued to support schools in accommodating vulnerable children attending school and children of key workers.

Northgate Initiative

61. As the impacts of the health crisis subside, what is clear is there will be a significant economic and social impact which will affect disadvantaged communities such as Northgate the hardest. An early action will be to understand the consequences of this and to revise the initiative accordingly.

Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

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COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Local Services Portfolio.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

2. Due to the onset of COVID-19 all schemes were put on hold. Following a letter from Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Transport Minister for Roads, Buses and Places) to everyone working in the Highway construction and maintenance sector dated 24 April urging authorities to continue with routine highway maintenance and to try and maintain as close to a 'business as usual approach as possible'.
3. The Highway Asset Management team started to look at ways of ensuring works could start how the current programme of works could be constructed with safety to the general public and the construction workers being paramount. The following is part of the agreed programme:
4. Highway Maintenance schemes complete:
 - (a) Feethams: Carriageway reconstruction (0.100km)
5. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Carriageway Patching prior to Microasphalt (various – 31 locations)
 - (b) Estoril Road South (Full Extents): Carriageway reconstruction/recycling – (0.490km)
 - (c) Fenby Avenue (52 Fenby Avenue – Harris Street): Carriageway reconstruction/recycling (0.250km)
 - (d) Barnes Road (Claxton Avenue - Staindrop Road): Carriageway resurfacing (0.140km)
 - (e) A67 Merrybent (40mph sign heading east): Carriageway resurfacing – (0.460km)
 - (f) A67 Yarm Road (Morton Palms – Farmhouse): Carriageway resurfacing – (0.720km)

Highway Improvement Schemes

6. All construction sites were closed during the lockdown. Preparations began to reopen sites in the week commencing 25 May 2020. A review was carried out of the whole Capital Programme to identify schemes that needed to be prioritised. The B6280, Lingfield Way junction, the B6279, Haughton Road throughabout scheme and the Rethinking Victoria Road Project have been prioritised to start over the summer months.

Town Centre

7. Measures were introduced to assist with social distancing on some of the main pedestrian routes into the town centre to allow businesses to re-open safely. This included a number of measures, including reallocating parts of carriageways for pedestrians. The requirement for social distancing continues and the scheme has been reviewed and amendments made to assist business. This will need to be kept under review as guidance and circumstances changes. This has required the loss of a number of on-street parking bays and the repositioning of loading bays and a number of disabled parking bays. Provision was made for people with mobility issues to access the widened footway area by providing temporary dropped kerbs. The overriding consideration has been public health, whilst trying to balance the needs of the business. The measures are under review in the town centre and adjustments being made and measures are still being considered for the town centre.
8. Measures have been put in place to ensure that people queuing for buses do so in a socially distanced manner. This has involved placing information at bus stops, vinyls placed on the footway to show passengers where to queue and assistance from Arriva staff and Civic Enforcement Officers to help passengers and the general public to remain safe. Temporary bus stops and changes to stopping patterns were introduced to minimise queuing on the footways. No problems were reported from passengers.

Head of Steam

9. Events and Exhibitions for 2020 have been rescheduled to take place in 2021, which will mean a bigger and better programme.
10. The museum's presence on the internet and social media has been increased by positing the 'Street Wise: What's in a Name?' exhibition online, which has been well received. In addition, the museum hosted a 'Virtual Vintage Rally' and planning is being undertaken around any future events which can also be held virtually.
11. Accessible family learning materials have been made available online and on social media. Museum staff have been proactive in making contact with schools, detailing ways in which we can support them in their teaching.
12. Signposting has been provided towards DBC and other external providers for support and welfare and work undertaken to develop wellbeing activities for all ages. Collaborative work has been undertaken with Tees Valley Museums on joint resources and cross promotion, as well as planning for reopening the Museum.

Rail Heritage Quarter

13. Work has continued on the development of the Rail Heritage Quarter during the lockdown. The Architects, Space have moved forward the concept floor plans for the Goods Shed, Carriage Works, New Build Shed and 1861 Shed, as well as starting to think about and developing plans for the outside spaces. Meetings have continued using Teams and some site survey work has been carried out where it has been safe to do so. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant delay on the project and we are on target to complete RIBA Stage 3 by October/

November this year. A brief has been developed to engage a specialist interpretation design consultant to take the interpretation design start forward alongside the building design work.

14. I have agreed with the Leader the installation of four train sculptures on the remodelled Haughton Road roundabout, one facing each of the four approach roads. The sculpture will be 4 metres wide 2.8m high and the trains will be cut in 5mm steel sheet with 3mm overlay for the detail. The four trains will be Locomotion No 1, Tornado, Derwent and The Price of Wales.

Creative Darlington

Response to COVID-19

15. Creative Darlington has distributed information on funding programmes offered by Arts Council England and other parties in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
16. We understand eight proposals from individuals, organisations and enterprises in Darlington seeking Emergency Funds from Arts Council England have been offered support of approximately £87,000 in total. Creative Darlington has also commented on the North East Cultural Partnership's North East Culture and Tourism Recovery and Resilience Plan and continue to liaise with various cultural organisations, enterprises and artists in Darlington regarding proposals in development responding to the pandemic.

Darlington @ Home

17. Following conversation between Tracks and Creative Darlington, Creative Darlington supported the first nine 'Darlo@Home' online concerts, which ran between 10 April 2019 and 2 May 2019 and encompassed a mixture of evening concerts on weekdays and daytime 'Big Little Gigs' concerts on weekends for a family audience. Musicians were paid to perform live and to share their performance digitally via the Tracks Facebook page, with Tracks curating and promoting the programme with support from Darlington Borough Council. As of 9 May 2020, Tracks advised the first nine online gigs had secured a total view count of 9,487 with a reach figure of over 20,000.
18. Darlo@Home programme received ongoing backing beyond 2 May 2020 within Darlington's events programme and has been promoted within #LoveDarlo. Darlo@Home concerts have offered people an opportunity to enjoy live music safely in Darlington as part of a diverse programme, providing artists a paid opportunity to share their music, including artist Nadeja whose performance was watched by family members in Brazil.

Stay at Home Stories

19. Creative Darlington approached Undivided Pictures and agreed a call out to people either living or working in Darlington to create their own original short film (five minutes or less) within social distancing guidelines. A panel shortlisted the films submitted and a public vote to followed to select the most popular film, with the producer of that film offered vouchers for use at Darlington Hippodrome as a prize. 1,609 Votes were cast for the shortlisted films and 21 year old Julia Moss created the most popular film, based around a poem she wrote – The Great Unknown – which captured some of the emotions she felt during lockdown.

Abode in a DL Postcode

20. This programme is a modification of an artist in residence model, through which artists would usually be invited to propose how they would react to a period of developing their practice in a particular setting or location. Instead, Abode asked artists to generate proposals regarding how they might work with one of a number of digital programmes within their own residence, offering an opportunity to safely explore and continue their practice. The Auxiliary approached Creative Darlington with a proposal to support the Abode idea in Darlington, having initiated the programme elsewhere in Tees Valley. Creative Darlington offered a budget and backed a Call Out, which enabled four proposals involving Darlington artists to be taken forward.

It's All Happening – ODDMANOUT

21. Darlington based ODDMANOUT Theatre Company were offered 'New In Town' support for a programme of creative community engagement which will involve people in Darlington and has been launched recently offering opportunities for creative engagement online. 'It's All Happening' is also being supported by Arts Council England through project funding.

Libraries

Interim Home Delivery Service

22. Since the library closed its doors on the 17 March, staff have been working hard behind the scenes to offer services to those people staying safe at home during Lockdown. An interim home delivery service was offered to Darlington Library members aged over 60 whereby the library would deliver a selection of books to the doorstep, (maintaining appropriate social distances), which was replenished every 4 weeks. This has been incredibly well received with 233 people currently benefiting from the scheme and we have decided to continue the service indefinitely due to its popularity and the continuation of social distancing.
23. Darlington Library was the front runner of our peers in offering home deliveries, with libraries around England and Wales making contact and replicating our model.

Reminiscence Gift for Care Homes

24. During Carers Week we delivered a free Reminiscence Book to Care Homes in Darlington aimed at sparking reminiscence and opening discussions between carer and resident about their early life and tales of the past. The books have been created by Darlington Libraries Centre for Local Studies and are themed around the 1940's to tie in with VE Day celebrations.

Educational Support to Looked After Children

25. We recognised that children living in care may be more affected by the disruption in learning and their routine so we teamed up with Darlington Virtual School to supply and deliver an exciting gift to all 113 children in long term care. The BookTrust Letterbox pack contains carefully selected books, learning resources and games designed to spark imagination and excite children to ensure learning at home is fun and interactive.

Virtual Library Activities

26. The library is usually bustling with activities for children and families so in the wake of our closures we took to social media and provided story times, arts and crafts and learning related content by video. We are now transitioning to providing a Summer Reading Challenge scheme online to encourage reading and book sharing at home. The Bookstart in Darlington Facebook page has attracted 2309 followers.

Boxes of Imagination

27. For schools who were maintaining teaching for the children of Key Workers, we put together an offer of a 'Box of Imagination'; a box full of fiction, non-fiction, picture and audio books, which we delivered alongside a box of props and costumes supplied by the Hippodrome. These were delivered for loan free of charge.

Darlington Hippodrome

28. Since closing to the public on 16 March 2020 due to COVID-19, our focus has been on the re-scheduling of shows where possible into autumn 2020 and spring 2021 and in some cases the announcement of cancellations. Work has been on-going to communicate updates to customers and issue ticket transfers and refunds where appropriate. At point of refund, the Hippodrome team also presented the option of donating the full or partial value of their ticket to support the theatre and the show's producers during this difficult time. £12,000 has been donated to date.
29. The theatre's online engagement has been active throughout the closure period. Highlights include:
- (a) Youth theatre and dance classes quickly moved into online formats.
 - (b) Successful trial dance sessions for adults, which we plan to introduce into the theatre when we re-open.

- (c) The Theatre's twice weekly online quiz has an average audience of 1,500 people joining in.
- (d) Our recent backstage tour of the theatre has already been viewed by over 3,000 people.
- (e) The Theatre's vast collection of online heritage learning resources has supported the current home learning environment many families find themselves in.
- (f) We continue to explore new and exciting ideas for online engagement, recognising that it may be sometime before audiences can physically join us in the theatre.

Events

- 30. To support Creative Darlington's contribution towards 'Tracks of Darlington', providing live performances of local musicians via social media in April, the events team continued the sessions during May and June, which included the first duo performance from the Unplugged Beatles.

Town Centre Entertainment Programme

- 31. The Events team have devised an entertainment programme which commenced in July to coincide with Darlington's recovery plan, including: walkabout street theatre, (that doesn't attract a crowd and can cover numerous locations) on Saturdays and Mondays and local buskers will also complement the street theatre to adding a vibrancy to the town centre during the transitional period.

Environmental Services

- 32. From the 24 March 2020, the majority of Street Scene services were stopped with the exception of Refuse and Recycling collection and a response crew for street cleaning to deal with health hazards. To enable these services to operate, safe systems of work were introduced, which included additional vehicles and staff so that a safe 2 metre distance could be maintained.
- 33. Street Cleansing and emptying of dog and litter bins was reintroduced on 20 April 2020. Further Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance services were partially reintroduced from 27 April 2020 and services were fully reinstated from 1 June 2020.
- 34. The Household Waste Recycling Centre was closed from 24 March 2020 and reopened on 28 April 2020 with appropriate social distancing measures in place, which had an impact of successfully reducing capacity on the site but resulting in queuing traffic on Whessoe Road. An appointment system was introduced from June, which is proving to work well, ensuring social distancing can be maintained and reducing any queuing traffic on Whessoe Road.
- 35. The Arboricultural service was initially suspended upon commencement of the lockdown, however the service is now back to full resource as of 1 June 2020.

36. The Building Cleaning service continued throughout this period with staff operating safe systems of work to ensure social distancing is maintained.
37. The Cemeteries and Crematorium service continued throughout this period, providing increased capacity when required.

Councillor Andy Keir
Cabinet Member with Local Services Portfolio

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**COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020**

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

Council Tax and Business Rates collection

1. Despite the financial challenges that the lockdown has brought to residents and businesses in Darlington, £10.9 million of Council Tax and £3.6 million of Business Rates has been collected. Collection levels are only slightly less than the same period in 2019/20 and appear to be much better than other Councils in the region.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

2. The number of residents applying for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support has increased significantly during the lockdown period, with the overall total now 11,823, the highest level since May 2016. We have ensured that residents adversely affected by the lockdown have received the support they require promptly, with no backlog of benefit applications. Over half the working age people receiving Council Tax Support (53 per cent) are now also receiving Universal Credit, a substantial increase from 47 per cent in April 2020.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

3. The Investment and Funding, Capital Projects, and Building Design teams all continue to operate on a work from home basis. There have been some limitations in terms of on-site surveys within specific projects, but desktop work has been able to continue with minimal impact. We have seen some delayed costs from COVID-19 related effects on one scheme, but this was managed within the available budget.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020-21 – Quarter 1

4. The Quarter 1 Revenue Budget Management report provided an early forecast of the 2020-21 revenue budget outturn position. The impact of COVID-19 on both expenditure and income levels is projected to be significant particularly in regard to lost income from our leisure and culture facilities, increased expenditure supporting our social care providers and impacts on council tax and business rates. At the time of writing the Government have provided a grant of £6.231m to assist with the pressures however there remains an estimated overall in year pressure of £6.484m.
5. There is a significant amount of uncertainty in regard to future pressures and this early projection uses best estimates and assumptions based on the Governments recovery plan on reopening. The projected pressure is significant in the context of the Councils overall MTFP however at this stage the deficit in 2020/21 could be met from general fund reserves. The position will be constantly reviewed and I will be continuing to lobby the Department and the Treasury on the need for additional COVID-19 resources.

Human Resources

6. There has been a significant amount of work in the HR section during lockdown which started with a staff skills audit to understand what skills employees had over and above those they need for their current roles for example skills gained in previous roles and personal lives which could be of use in the emergency situation. This was followed up by the establishment of our reallocation services which was a clearing house for moving staff into different roles where necessary to support service impacted by absence and self-isolating or to provide emergency services. The service worked extremely well with 100+ staff reallocated to different duties over the COVID-19 period. The most significant movement was staff reallocated from Leisure and Community Safety to the Hub, along with support to and street scene areas, along with cleaning staff. All staff were fully briefed and trained before commencing new duties.

Absence and self-isolation

7. Whilst a number of staff needed to self-isolate either because of their own symptoms or those of family members, the overall absence levels for the Council in relation to COVID-19 has been low with no significant impact on service delivery. However, it should be noted that at the beginning of lock down there were no testing facilities available so some employees may have had the virus but were not officially diagnosed.
8. From 20 April, all employees (and agency workers) were able to access testing for COVID-19 where they had symptoms and the symptoms were within days one to five. There has been a steady stream of enquiries and requests for testing since the service opened. The service is open seven days per week and employees are triaged through HR and Occupational Health and results are fed back through HR / OH with appropriate advice re isolation and returning to work as appropriate to individual and manager. At the time of writing there have been 53 employees been tested through Darlington Memorial Hospital.
9. Seven employees have tested positive and have been subject to an investigation following the RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) investigation guidance. None of the employees above have been deemed to have contracted Coronavirus from the work environment. Thankfully there have been no reportable deaths in service for COVID 19 for any employees.
10. This has and continues to be a difficult time for all so effort has been focused on staff wellbeing, ensuring that the programme remains on the agenda for employees during the lockdown period. A number of events have been held virtually including two Resilience Sessions focusing on positivity. We have been promoting the Mental health first aiders and mentors have been who are available on a confidential basis to all staff if they are struggling and would like to talk and have hosted informal 'chat' sessions to give employees the opportunity to talk about how they are feeling, what is working well and what isn't in the new way of working.
11. Managers were provided with a guide to staying connected to assist with communication and team connectivity whilst working from home and the importance of keeping in touch has been widely promoted. The intranet has a specific page for coronavirus FAQ's which has been constantly updated and added

to as new guidance has been released to help employees along with all the risk assessments for working during COVID-19. There has also been continual communications on the weekly briefing and Occupational Health briefings on caring for yourself, staying safe out and about, and home working.

Furlough

12. The Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has tight guidelines for eligibility and is not applicable for all staff. However, the Council has made use of the furloughed scheme for a number of our leisure and culture staff in income generating areas who could not work due to the closure of the facilities and who were reallocated to other service areas. 113 staff in this area have been furloughed and to date £124k has been received. A further claim has been submitted for employees in the Construction, Highways and cycle and pedestrian trainer services covering the period they were not working, we are awaiting confirmation of this claim being successful.
13. Employees can remain on Furlough leave up to 30 October when the scheme ends but constant reviews will take place to 'unfurlough' employees as services resume or employees are reallocated to other areas of the Council. At the time of writing 132 staff are furloughed.

Agile Working

14. The mobilisation of the Councils workforce to home working has been very successful, we have over 40 per cent of staff working from home or using home as a base. This has been enabled through the rapid roll out of Microsoft teams, the video conferencing application, and the Councils Systems and process team and Xentrall ICT teams have worked tirelessly to enable as many staff to homework as possible. Whilst there were some initial technical issues around PC capability, they have been resolved with most staff reporting that working from home is working well with some saying their productivity has increased as travelling time to and from work and between meetings has been reduced.

Health and Safety

15. The Health and Safety Team have provided significant support throughout the period, reviewing work practices and risk assessments and implementing the wealth of government guidance, to ensure the safety of staff and members of the public.
16. A Corporate risk assessment has been produced to manage the risks of working during COVID-19 and specific safe systems of work have been developed in consultation with the trade unions and working closely with Public Health, for various activities including Hub operations, emergency call out, home visits, refuse collection, passenger transport. Working with Darlington Support risk assessments and guidance have been developed for some key volunteering tasks.
17. With the government's clear message work from home where possible, the team has assisted managers and staff to do so safely, providing guidance in various forms on; the home work environment and steps needed to reduce the risks from

display screen equipment, lone working and mental health and the importance of keeping in touch. A number of briefings have been produced with key information including Display Screen Equipment, The Unexpected Homeworker and Staying COVID-19 Secure, building arrangements and PPE.

18. Health and Safety have been heavily involved in the recovery plan and ensuring workplaces are ready for the safe return of staff, advising on social distancing measures, hygiene and cleaning arrangements and have also developed an AC10 module 'Your Safe Return to Work – Staying COVID-19 Secure' which will provide information and guidance on measures that have been taken to provide a safe work environment for staff. As required by the government we have displayed the 'Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020' poster in all our workplaces.
19. There has been a significant amount of work with our schools, providing support and assistance to teaching staff completing risk assessments for remaining open to the children of key workers and the return of specific year groups, regularly consulting with trade unions and visiting maintained schools to see how the arrangements are being implemented in practice.

Xentrall Update

20. This year is turning out to be like no other and Xentrall have had a very busy time since March getting to grips with hurriedly mobilising both Councils whilst also putting in place various special arrangements for all the side-effects of the UK COVID-19 lockdown which relate to paying suppliers and paying our staff. All this, at the same time as protecting and mobilising its own services and staff and running all the vital day-to-day services that the Councils rely on, but often go unseen. This was done while self-isolating and social distancing like everyone else.
21. A snapshot of these recent Xentrall activities and achievements is shown below.

Xentrall HR

- Went live with phase 3 of payroll on ResourceLink for over 3,500 staff in Academies
- Kept paying almost 16,000 people, whilst implementing an upgrade to ResourceLink
- Quickly set up all of our staff working from home, including testing of all required links to systems such as BACs and HMRC
- Completed Year End on ResourceLink and the old PSE system
- Set up emergency process for payment of staff in case of system failure

Xentrall Design & Print

- Produced hundreds of critical information letters for different services via the re-directional postal service set up between D&P and the Post Room
- Continued to support "business as usual" services with provisions for daily/scheduled print items such as letters and printed payslips
- Supported key projects by producing items such as urgent labels or menu sheets for the food boxes and information leaflets on Covid-19 and producing vital signage and packs for the town centre and Council offices.

Xentrall Finance

- Achieved all of our year-end processing to deadlines set before lockdown and despite staff being displaced
- Completed year-end system changes and reconciliations working jointly from remote locations. This was slow going but down-time was minimal for Council services taking into account the unusual circumstances we were in
- Maintained service delivery on day to day processing to ensure Academies are supported, suppliers are paid promptly, and customers are billed accurately where direct debit collection is in place
- Supported both Councils in processing grant funding payments to small businesses and retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. In a two-week window, Creditors processed over 2,900 payments totalling over £33m in state funded aid and all in addition to our usual supplier and interfaced payments
- Put additional payment runs in place for Stockton, Darlington and Academies in to ensure we get money to suppliers as soon as possible
- Assisted both Councils in the set-up of payment systems to Support Hubs for vulnerable /shielded individuals who require assistance with shopping and medicines pick up
- All teams have also continued to support business as usual and mostly working from home

Xentrall ICT

- Rapidly rolling out 140 laptops across Stockton and Darlington and 400 Jabber iPhone installs, taking us to over 2,500 people using softphones instead of physical handsets
- Implementing Microsoft Teams to the whole workforce across both Councils to enable better collaborative and remote working
- Intensive behind the scenes work on the network, firewall, antivirus, remote connectivity infrastructure that supports a massive increase in remote workers, from originally around just over 100/day to now thousands
- Mobilising our Service Desk and associated systems to being home-based and assigning additional staff to help manage the upsurge in calls, with ICT staff pulling together and taking on roles they haven't previously experienced
- Scouring suppliers for ICT kit, including elusive laptops and headsets
- Delivering innovative IT solutions to enable both Stockton and Darlington Support Hubs to become a reality
- Remaining calm and level-headed throughout and ensuring the wrong decisions weren't taken due to pressures and urgency and a measured approach and the longer-term view prevailed, thus keeping the Council's systems and data safe
- Delivering innovative solutions to keep some large older service applications running and available in a remote working environment
- Providing a stream of user information and self-help guides to support home working
- Keeping all the normal systems and services running that you'd expect on a daily basis from ICT, including upgrades, COVID-19 hot-fixes to systems and year-end processing
- Continuing to deliver Council-wide changes behind the scenes to improve the remote working experience whilst mitigating the risk associated with applying this to a fully remote workforce

22. Since the UK restrictions came into place during March, Xentrall have continued to provide a full range of services and underpin the vital functions of both Councils, whilst in addition, stepping up and providing additional services specifically in response to the pandemic situation. None of what has been achieved collectively could have been done without the dedication of all the teams across Xentrall and the years of investment in our systems, processes and most importantly the professionalism and skill of our staff. So much effort and additional hours have been put in and staff will continue to do so to ensure everything runs as seamlessly as possible. Acknowledgement must also go out to service users who have co-operated and been understanding throughout. There has been some brilliant feedback.
23. In terms of the remainder of 2020/21, Xentrall will continue to follow the Council's instructions regarding COVID-19 safety whilst supporting all services in their own remote service delivery activities. As well as supporting the original emergency planning aspects of the pandemic, Xentrall are also integral in the recovery planning and activities taking place.
24. Xentrall will continue to also help both Councils retain the benefits that have been gained through mass home working and to help exploit the technology enabled opportunities and innovation that have also arisen across services.

Democratic

25. Following lockdown all member meetings were cancelled which meant that some decisions had to be postponed. On 28 April 2020, a single Member Executive decision making session took place with the Leader making a number of decisions that would previously have been considered by Cabinet. Decision making has also continued by officers making delegated decisions in consultation with Cabinet members as appropriate..
26. During the initial suspension of Member meetings, some Democratic staff were redeployed to other areas. While electoral work on the Police and Crime Commissioner election and the Tees Valley Mayoral election stopped, work has been continuing on electoral registration throughout.
27. The reinstatement of Member meetings in June required very significant levels of planning and preparation with officers working very hard to support members to be able to participate in remote meetings. Although there have been technical issues, it was an achievement to be able to hold a fully remote meeting of Annual Council involving the numbers of Members and officers in attendance. Remote meetings are ongoing.

Legal

28. The Legal Team moved to remote working following lockdown with some staff still attending work to deal with post and accessing hard copy materials when needed. Normal workloads have continued but also with additional work being required on specific issues concerning service and contractual changes occasioned by coronavirus. Court work has continued, but with quite a lot of time has been spent working through the changes introduced by Court Service to move to electronic documentation and remote hearings.

29. The land charges services was suspended from 24 March because it was not possible to deliver the service remotely because following lockdown staff were unable to access material held in hard copy format. As part of the recovery process the service was reinstated on 18 May.

Procurement

30. Normal work has continued, with the team mostly working remotely. A particular focus has been to support decision making regarding requests for supplier relief for contracts that have been affected by Coronavirus. Significant work has been done to assist with the procurement of PPE stocks

Complaints and Information Governance

31. The Complaints and Information Governance Team made a transition to full remote working just prior to lockdown and have continued operating fully remotely since then. This has not had a significant impact on members of the public, as very few complaints are made in person and most information requests must be made in writing. Complaints investigations are also currently being conducted remotely wherever possible, which again has not had a significant impact on the service provided as officers are making extensive use of the video call functionality within Microsoft Teams. In line with Government guidance and the stated positions of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner's Office communications have been made that some timescales may not to be adhered to while services target resources at meeting the needs of those most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Registrars

32. At the start of the pandemic following government instructions, birth registrations were suspended and marriages and other ceremonies unable to take place. These changes while difficult for the public, protected staff and enabled them to focus on the surge in death registrations. The Team coped well with the increase in death registrations and the move to a telephone only service. An additional member of staff was seconded to support the Team.
33. Throughout the pandemic staff have continued to attend the customer contact centre rather than work remotely because of the need to access certification materials, which are kept in secure storage. The contact centre facility has worked very well, with customers only allowed into the building at their designated time. Advance information is provided to help provide the public with reassurance if they have concerns about entering a public building.
34. Things are now returning to a more normal levels of death registrations for this time of year. From the 1 June the Office was allowed to recommence birth registrations. A backlog had built up during the period when this service was suspended, but staff are working hard (including Saturdays working) to catch up and are completing around 100 registrations a week. It is hoped that we will be back at normal levels of births appointments by the end of July.
35. Notices of Marriage are now allowed to be given again in person at the office. Weddings have been permitted to take place (with restrictions) from 4 July and we will be holding our first weddings since lockdown on 10 July. We have been

working with our wedding venues (hotels) as much as possible to keep them informed and help them with queries and bookings. Risk assessments and processes ready for the resumption.

36. At present there remains a blanket ban on citizenship ceremonies.

Councillor Charles Johnson
Cabinet Members with Resources Portfolio

COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Stronger Communities Portfolio.

Equalities - COVID-19 and Impact

2. Throughout the pandemic, work has been underway to monitor the likely equality impacts on Darlington. As early as March we were mapping the areas where the risk of loneliness was highest, and we have continued to map the impacts of the pandemic itself and the side effects on different wards.
3. We are developing a good insight into the likely impacts of COVID-19 with particular attention being paid to equalities, which focuses on the different protected characteristic groups. National and local data continues to show that the impacts are affecting different groups differently and a detailed matrix has been maintained throughout to record impacts and guide advice.

Equalities Training

4. The Equalities training programme has been paused due to the Coronavirus pandemic meaning face to face training is not currently possible. Face to face training will not resume until at least September, but work is ongoing to look at bringing these sessions back digitally. Trial sessions will be set up in the coming weeks.

Website Accessibility

5. The accessibility and usability of the corporate website has always been of high importance to the council and there has been a rolling programme of developments and improvements for a number of years. With physical access to many council services being restricted during the COVID-19 lockdown, the need for a highly effective website has been more important than ever before.
6. Recently (since January 2020), a lot of work has been underway to make the website more user friendly for a wider range of people, and to meet a number of Government standards that will be enforced from September 2020. The most notable work has involved :-
 - a redesign of the home page, making it more task focused so people can quickly access the most popular services and the latest news from the council.
 - ensuring the code that sits behind the website meets strict web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1).
 - making good progress with fixing existing documents to make them accessible, and continuing to ensure that all new documents meet the new standards as much as possible.

- Working to ensure all pages are written in plain English.
- Page owners being identified and systems are being put in place to ensure pages are regularly reviewed and updated as required.
- looking at options to commission some manual testing of the website using various assistive technologies to help us better understand what else can be done to help people easily access the information they need.

Community Safety

General comment - The role and responsibilities of Community Safety during COVID-19

7. Members of the Community Safety Team were deployed to support the work of the Darlington Community Support (Outreach) Hub between 25 March and 3 May 2020. During this period the Outreach Hub provided vital support to shielded, isolated and vulnerable members of the community through the provision of urgent pharmacy requests, food and welfare support.
8. The department was also instrumental in the development and growth of an emergency food supply which was distributed to those restricted by the pandemic.
9. On 4 May 2020, Community Safety personnel (with the exception of Civic Enforcement) returned to their daily tasks and local services have continued to be delivered efficiently through a combination of office based and virtual working activities.
10. On 1 June 2020, members of Community Safety were briefed and directed to provide additional support to town centre users to promote a safe and secure environment for residents, retailers and visitors.

Civic Enforcement Service

11. During the initial stages of lockdown, Civic Enforcement was utilised by the Outreach Hub to assist with distribution of urgent supplies, however, their role also extended to tackling anti-social behaviour, working closely with the Police to enforce social-distancing and provide high visibility patrols throughout the Borough to promote reassurance in our communities.
12. As the pandemic evolved, the role of Civic Enforcement remained flexible to include other duties including the supervision of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) (following opening), the policing of the town centre after the easing of lockdown and dedicated patrols to tackle environmental crime within the Borough.
13. CCTV and dog warden services remained unchanged throughout this period.
14. In order to support the staff at the Household Waste Recycling Centre and assist in the management of traffic levels, Civic Enforcement Officers carried out traffic management duties for several weeks. Feedback from staff at the HWRC and members of the public was exceptional.

Deployable Cameras

15. New covert camera kit has been ordered during this period to support the fight against fly tipping and back lane waste in Darlington. Six dome cameras are now available, four of which are currently deployed: two at the HWRC, one at Lakeside for nuisance motorcycles and one remains at Fryers Field for the monitoring of anti-social behaviour.

Closure Notice

16. A Closure Order application for 38 Forster Street has been compiled and submitted to obtain a Court date. The occupants of the property have been causing nuisance to other residents in the street due to numerous (up to 80 per day) visitors purchasing drugs.

Environmental Crime

17. COVID-19 has partly restricted the investigation of environmental crime, however, Civic Enforcement Officers have continued to obtain witness statements over the telephone and seize evidence where possible. A number of £400 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for fly tipping offences during the period.

Road Safety Scheme for Schools

18. A decision was taken to consult with all schools involved in the pilot to ascertain the best way forward for them individually once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted to some degree, and more pupils return to school. Once the views of the schools have been considered, a decision will be made on how to launch the scheme.
19. Designs for the programme's posters, leaflets and banners have been completed and orders will be placed once the group has made a decision on the launch.

Community Engagement

20. The Community Resilience Officer has maintained contact with Arcus (LGBTQ+), Darlington Association on Disability and the UNITY group via e-mails/telephone calls and information from Police Community Cohesion Officers.
21. No increase in reported hate crime has been recorded during the reporting period (due to COVID-19 restrictions or otherwise). Concerns have been raised that 'disabled priority' areas in shops, bus stands, etc. may lead to a rise in hate incidents/crimes, however, Police/PCSOs and CEOs have been made aware of the proposed changes and will ensure patrols are targeted to the appropriate areas.
22. The Community Resilience Officer had previously organised for the Crown Prosecution Service to attend a number of consultation / information events with Darlington groups, however, these had to be cancelled due to the lockdown. In June, an alternative online event took place in lieu of this.
23. During the reporting period, discussions between DBC and Arcus have taken place regarding the potential to hold a 'Virtual Pride': finding a way to mark Pride without

having a parade and live Market Place event.

Trading Standards

24. On 5 June 2020, Trading Standards issued a press release warning to people trying to sell products falsely claiming to protect against COVID-19, stating they would be tracked down and stopped, regardless of where the attempt at trading took place.
25. A Darlington seller advertising face masks on eBay, which claimed to be 'reusable' and with 'virus protection' was identified by a Trading Standards Officer, following a sweep of online selling platforms. After informing eBay about the problem items, they were removed from sale within 48 hours.
26. Following complaints from members of the public, Trading Standards issued a cease and desist warning to a trader operating in Darlington. Based on information obtained, the team believed that the trader was making unsubstantiated and misleading claims about the deterrent effects of a property cleaning service they were offering to protect against COVID-19.
27. Trading Standards seized more than 249 packs of illegal cigarettes and 11 packs of hand rolling tobacco following a routine visit to a Darlington store. The visit was to investigate the alleged sales of cigarettes to under-age children, however, an empty cigarette gantry gave the officers cause for concern. A thorough inspection of the premises was carried out resulting in the location and seizure of the illegal goods. The trader received a warning about under-age sales and an investigation into the illegal goods remains ongoing.
28. On 4 May 2020 and following an investigation, a letter of warning was sent by Trading Standards to a Darlington car dealer in relation to the commission of unfair trading practices. The team will continue to monitor the trading activities of this car dealer.

Private Sector Housing

29. Reactive service requests reduced at the start of lockdown which allowed two officers to be seconded to the Darlington Community Support (Outreach) Hub assisting in setting up outreach and dispatch functions for the initial six weeks of the response. Requests have since increased to the typical volumes usual for this time of the year.
30. Following government guidance, the Private Sector Housing Team have adapted well to carrying out property inspections, including physical property inspections with restrictions and using remote ways of working in order to comply with the statutory duties the team enforce.

The Northgate Initiative

31. Northgate Ward has one of the highest concentrations of private rented property in the Borough. The Private Sector Housing team continue to focus on making residents and landlords aware of what constitutes a decent and safe home and

what remedies are available to them should their home not meet these standards.

32. Work has been undertaken to promote the changes in legislation that occurred at the end of June 2020. The new regulations require landlords to have the electrical installations in their properties inspected and tested by a person who is qualified and competent, at least every five years. The Regulations apply to new tenancies from 1 July 2020 and existing tenancies from 1 April 2021.
33. Work continues to be undertaken to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in the ward. Private Sector Housing are working with Council Tax to identify and target empty properties to ensure they are returned to use. Since the project commenced in December 2019, 13 long-term empty properties in the area have been returned to use. The overall percentage of empty properties has decreased from 7.73 per cent to 6.48 per cent (28 properties).

PREVENT

34. Durham Police Prevent Team, and counter terrorism units nationally, advise that there has been an increase in online radicalisation as well as other online fraud and scams. A campaign advising on the dangers of online radicalisation ('Who is talking to your child online?') aimed at parents and carers went out to all Darlington schools in May in an attempt to negate this increase in online activity.
35. A tension monitoring package that includes a new form, toolkit and toolbox talk presentation is now available on the intranet and tension monitoring is now a standing item on the Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group agenda. One tension monitoring report was received in relation to COVID-19 and this related to telephone calls and comments made about members of the Chinese community (or those perceived to be from the Chinese community) and the likelihood of them spreading the virus. No similar reports have been received since.

Eyes & Ears

36. The original plan to deliver 'Eyes & Ears' presentations to staff and sessions to the public in community venues has been postponed and consideration is now being given to how the scheme could be rolled out as a PowerPoint / online package / Academy 10 module until we are able to deliver as originally planned.

The key issues and themes are:

- (a) Fuel Poverty
- (b) Safeguarding - children
- (c) Safeguarding - adults/older persons
- (d) Social isolation and loneliness
- (e) Child Exploitation
- (f) Stray / Dangerous Dogs

- (g) Environmental Crime
- (h) Safety – adults with health problems
- (i) Anti-Social Behaviour
- (j) Community Tensions

Licensing

37. At the beginning of the lockdown period, Licensing staff were largely redeployed to establish the Community Outreach Hub whilst maintaining the licensing function. Although demand for licensing applications reduced in the early stages, a high level of telephone calls and e-mail enquiries from concerned businesses were received. Many of the issues raised have been resolved by shared learning with other local authorities, partners and professional bodies.
38. The Licensing team are now assisting with the recovery plan for Darlington and the licensing office has been adapted to safely accommodate customers by appointment when authority is given to open once again.
39. The lockdown period has highlighted the pressing need to digitise the licensing processes. Staff have been working on a rotation basis to maintain the licensing function and begin the process of digitising our paper-based files. Work has been undertaken on a new system for online taxi licence applications and a system called IDOX has now been approved. Process mapping and development work has commenced in conjunction with IT, to introduce the system as soon as possible.
40. The first draft of the Taxi Licensing Policy is almost ready for the Licensing Committee to approve for consultation. A number of changes have been proposed which is hoped will be looked at favourably by the trade without compromising safety standards. A new vehicle age policy is proposed in line with the North East Strategic Licensing Group in response to our requirements to reduce emissions. This policy is due for implementation in January 2021.
41. Work has commenced on the new Licensing Act Policy, which again is due for implementation in January 2021. This policy will be updated in light of the new Section 182 guidance issued in 2018, however, the main change will be to reflect the 2016 Immigration Act.
42. A draft Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy has been produced and consideration is being given to any learning from the pandemic experience which may be prudent to incorporate into the final document.

Crime and Disorder

43. There has been a 22 per cent decrease in the number of reported crimes during the period 1 April to 31 May 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 457 crimes. Crimes showing an increase include: Burglary and Public Order. All other categories of crime are showing a significant decrease.

44. There has been a 42 per cent increase in the number of reported anti-social behaviour incidents in Darlington during the period 1 April to 31 May 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to an increase of 256 incidents. However, if COVID-19 related anti-social behaviour incidents are removed there would be a 26 per cent decrease in incidents. This equates to a decrease of 160 incidents.
45. There has been a 69 per cent decrease in the number of reported anti-social behaviour incidents in the Town Centre during this period compared to the same period in 2019/20 and this equates to 59 incidents. If COVID-19 related anti-social incidents are removed there would be an 82 per cent decrease. This equates to a decrease of 70 incidents.

Data Analysis

46. The Systems and Data Analyst adapted the Daily Briefing to include incidents that were specifically related to breaching COVID-19 regulations.
47. A dashboard was designed for COVID-19 related incidents to record the increase/decrease in the number reported during the lockdown period.

Flood and Water Management Act

48. The Council is working in partnership with Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency on a study to identify the impact of flooding in Darlington; this will inform the management and response to flood events and inform any investment that may be needed. In addition, the Council has commissioned further work to understand the impact of various scenarios on the culverts and bridges that exist across the Borough and how they would cope under various scenarios in terms of flood intensity and their capacity. This will also assist in the management of flood events and prioritisation of investment and response.

**Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

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