

# Council Agenda



**6.00 pm Thursday, 24 September 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>**

**Members of the Public may submit questions to be asked on their behalf of the relevant Portfolio Holder. Questions should be submitted to Paul Dalton ([paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk)) by 6.00 pm on Wednesday, 23 September 2020.**

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 16 July 2020 (Pages 1 - 6)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
  - (a) The Public;
  - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
7. Council Reports.
  - (a) Register of Village Greens –  
Report of the Managing Director  
(Pages 7 - 10)
8. Cabinet Reports.

- (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 11 - 12)
  - (b) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 13 - 16)
  - (c) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 17 - 22)
  - (d) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 23 - 28)
  - (e) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 29 - 34)
  - (f) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 35 - 42)
  - (g) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 43 - 46)
  - (h) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 47 - 56)
  - (i) Town Centre Car Parking –  
Report of the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services  
(Pages 57 - 72)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 73 - 74)
  - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 75 - 78)
  - (c) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 79 - 82)
  - (d) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 83 - 86)
  - (e) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 87 - 90)
10. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



**Luke Swinhoe**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Wednesday, 16 September 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](mailto:paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk) or Telephone 01325 405805

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## COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 July 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, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright.

### 10 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 30 JANUARY, 20 FEBRUARY AND 25 JUNE 2020**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Council held on 30 January, 20 February and 25 June 2020.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as correct records.

### 11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### 12 **ORDER OF SEALING DOCUMENTS**

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

### 13 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**Death of Former Councillor Geoff Walker** – The Mayor reported on the death of Former-Councillor Geoff Walker, who had sadly passed away on 12 April 2020. The Mayor referred to Former-Councillor Walker's years of service on the Council, and invited Councillor Lucas to say a few words on behalf of the residents of the Red Hall and Lingfield Ward.

As a mark of respect, Members observed a short silence in memory of Former-Councillor Walker.

**Srebrenica** - The Mayor informed Members that it was the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that Councils and elected representatives had been encouraged to remember and acknowledge both the victims and survivors of Srebrenica. Members observed a short period of silence and reflection to honour the victims and survivors of this terrible atrocity.

### 14 **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 was one question, with notice, from a Member to a Member of the Cabinet, who received an answer thereon.

**(NOTE:** The question, with notice, was raised by a Member on behalf of a Member of the Public, in accordance with Paragraph 27 of the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol).

**(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.

**16 COUNCIL REPORTS.**

**(1) MANAGING DIRECTOR'S APPRAISAL**

The Assistant Director – Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members endorse the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group in respect of the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal.

The submitted report stated that the Appraisal Sub-Group had met on 9 March 2020 to consider the Managing Director's Performance Appraisal, in accordance with the previously agreed process. The Appraisal Sub-Group noted that, as this was the first appraisal for the new post, no targets had been set for review, however the Managing Director did present a report on the priorities he had been working on following consultation with the three leaders he had worked with since his appointment. It was reported that the Appraisal Sub-Group had agreed the Managing Directors priorities for the following year.

**RESOLVED** – That, in respect of the Managing Director's Appraisal, the 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** – To enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

**17 CABINET REPORTS.**

The Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio since the previous meeting of the Council, with a particular focus on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolio thereon.

**18 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**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor C. L. B. Hughes, and seconded by Councillor Ali:

'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.'
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The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Mrs. Scott, and seconded by Councillor Dulston:

'Delete paragraph 1 as it stands and replace with:

- (1) Highlight to vulnerable residents of Darlington that they should apply to the Hardship Fund, the Crisis Fund and the recently funded Food Poverty provision.

Delete paragraph 2 and replace it with:

- (2) To write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to request that families who find themselves in need of Universal Credit receive their first payment straightaway rather than going deeper into debt.

Delete paragraph 3 and replace with:

- (3) That we continue to lobby our two MP's on behalf of the welfare of children and young people in Darlington.

Amend the penultimate paragraph of paragraph 4 after 'others' – replacing 'and to provide the first such report to full Council as a matter of urgency' with 'and to report to Council at the earliest opportunity'.

Amendment Carried.

The Amendment then became the Substantive Motion and was put to the meeting and carried.

## **19 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES.**

Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2020/21.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Councillor Lee replace Councillor Howell on the Audit Committee;

(b) Councillor Mrs. Culley be appointed as the Named Substitute for Councillor Renton on the Tees Valley Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee;

(c) That Councillor Donoghue be appointed as the Named Substitute for Councillor Mrs. Jones on the Tees Valley Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee; and

(d) That Councillor Wright be appointed to the vacancy on Cruse Bereavement Care (Tees Valley).

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**COUNCIL**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**ITEM NO.**

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## **REGISTER OF VILLAGE GREENS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Charles Johnson**  
**Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To put in place a procedure for the determination of applications to make corrections to an entry in the Register of Village Greens.

#### **Summary**

2. The Constitution currently delegates decisions regarding the determination of new applications for inclusions on the register of village greens (under the Commons Act 2006) to the Assistant Director Law and Governance. If an objection is received an independent Inspector is appointed to determine the application.
3. The Constitution does not provide for the determination of other applications regarding village greens, such as applications to add or remove land from the register where the applicant believes that a mistake was made in registration.

#### **Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The change to the Constitution as detailed in the **Appendix** to this report is approved to take effect from 1 October 2020.
  - (b) The Assistant Director, Law and Governance is delegated to update the Constitution to reflect the changes identified.

#### **Reasons**

5. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) To enable decisions to be taken effectively and in a timely manner as set out in the Commons Act 2006 ('the Act') and the Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2014 ('the Regulations'); and
  - (b) To ensure that the Constitution is accurate and up-to-date.

**Paul Wildsmith  
Managing Director**

**Background Papers**

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

Luke Swinhoe: Extension 5430

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications
Health and Well Being	There are no specific Health and Well Being implications
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no carbon impact implications in this report
Diversity	This report has no direct impact on diversity issues
Wards Affected	All Wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally
Budget and Policy Framework	The decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report implements structural and legislative changes
Efficiency	The report has no direct implications for efficiency
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

**MAIN REPORT**

**Information and Analysis**

6. The Council is the Commons Registration Authority for the Borough. The Act designates to the Commons Registration Authority responsibility for the maintenance of the registers of commons and village greens; the processing of applications for land to be added to the registers; and the processing of applications to correct mistakes in the registers. The Regulations set out how these responsibilities and procedures are to be carried out.
7. The Council's Constitution prescribes the framework for Council decision making and the procedures that are followed. Part One of the Appendix sets out the current provision within the Scheme of Delegation for dealing with applications for land to be added to the register. However there is no provision for dealing with applications to correct the register where the applicant believes that a mistake was made in registration.
8. Until now we have not previously received an application to make a correction of the register. We received an application to make a correction in July. We need to put in to place arrangements to deal with this application and any future applications.

9. For dealing with applications where the applicant believes that a mistake was made in registration the Regulations set out circumstances in which it may be appropriate for the determining Authority, or their Inspector, to request further representations from interested parties and hear oral representations from the applicant, and, if considered appropriate, hold a public inquiry.
10. It is proposed to amend the entry in the Scheme of Delegation from that set out in Part One to that set out in Part Two of the Appendix in order to enable decisions on uncontested applications to be made by the Assistant Director Law and Governance, and to enable decisions on contested matters to be able to be referred to an Independent Inspector.

### **Financial Implications**

11. There will be financial implications where an Independent Inspector is appointed, but this will be an unavoidable consequence of maintaining an appropriate process for determining contested issues concerning village greens. The volumes are likely to be very low.

### **Legal Implications**

12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires that the adoption of a local authority's Constitution is exercised by the Council.

### **Summary**

13. Members are asked to approve the proposed change detailed in the Appendix to this report for inclusion in the Constitution to take effect from 1 October 2020.

**SUGGESTED CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION**

**PART 1 – CURRENT ENTRY IN SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Determining new applications for inclusion on the register of village greens (under the Commons Registration Act 2006) - Assistant Director Law and Governance. If an objection is received an Independent Inspector shall be appointed to determine the application.

**PART 2 – PROPOSED AMENDED ENTRY IN SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Determining applications affecting the registers of commons and village greens (under the Commons Act 2006 and any subsequent legislation) - Assistant Director Law and Governance. In the case of contested matters, or matters which require oral representations or an inquiry, an Independent Inspector may be appointed to determine the application.

**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW**

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**Council's Continued Response to COVID19**

1. The Council continues to operate in challenging times, I am extremely proud to be Leader of this Council as its staff continue to do great things against the background of the pandemic. The vast majority of our services are back to "normal" although operating in different and safe ways. We look forward to the day when all services are back, in particular I look forward to the Hippodrome presenting magnificent new shows in our fantastic building. In the meantime, we are utilising the building for alternative entertainment and I hope many people will enjoy what is on offer.
2. Whilst things appear to be returning to "normal", I fear the risk of a surge in cases, we have seen it elsewhere in the Country and the risk is real. We as the Council, and Councillors need to be vigilant in setting the example for others to follow, and continue to remind people that the virus has not gone away, it is just held at bay and we all need to continue to follow Government guidance and be sensible to protect ourselves, families and the wider public.
3. The work of the Council during the pandemic has been exemplary and it has certainly brought our Public Health service to the very fore of our thinking. It is appropriate given this is the last Council meeting before our Director of Public Health, Miriam Davidson, retires and to put on record our thanks to her for all her work with the Council over the many years she has worked at the Council. Thank you, Miriam and best wishes, for your retirement.

**Suzanne Joyner**

4. As Members of the Council will be aware, Suzanne is leaving the Council next month to take up a similar post with Rotherham MBC and again as this will be the last Council before her departure, I would like to put on record the thanks of the Council for all the work Suzanne has done for the Council over the five years she has been with the Council. Thank you, Suzanne and good luck, for your new job.

**Save our Loco Campaign**

5. I have set up a cross party group to put pressure on the National Railway Museum and Science Museum Group that the NRM are part off. All local political leaders have requested support from their national leaders to help us retain Locomotion No 1 in Darlington which is its rightful home and has been for the majority of the past 160 years. Our local MP Peter Gibson has met with Dame Mary Archer DBE, chair of the Science Museum Group to put our case. The Mayor will be launching his intention to hold an international virtual event to bring together Mayors around the world where Railway firsts happened.

6. A strong plan is in place to engage the local community positively with Locomotion No 1 and instil a sense of pride and ownership within Darlington and the wider Tees Valley. This includes a specially commissioned contemporary dance piece to be both performed live and filmed for extensive use on social media, a dance flash-mob in the town centre involving participants from the local area, an exhibition in Darlington Hippodrome, and the Hippodrome's drama students voicing accounts of the Locomotion's first journey as imagined by local schoolchildren. Artwork for the public-facing campaign has been designed by Jonny Lancaster, a popular local artist who specialises in vintage rail-style posters. The petition will be relocated to Change.org to gain traction and momentum nationally and internationally.

### **Strategic Transport**

7. The Tees Valley Combined Authority and Local Authorities have worked together to support the return to education. This has involved working with bus operators to secure additional services on the routes most likely to see an increase in demand when schools return. Let's Go Tees Valley launched a '**Back to School**' **behaviour change campaign** to help students get back to school/college safely. This behaviour change campaign is part of measures planned to help reduce demand on public transport due to schools reopening.
8. There have been a number of initiatives and announcements to support Active Travel in light of COVID-19. The Department for Transport announced an Emergency Active Travel Fund that would be released in two tranches. The Combined Authority and Local Authorities worked on schemes to submit to Government for tranche two in an incredibly short space of time seeking to deliver the priorities within the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The final bid included a scheme in Middlesbrough and a scheme in Darlington, the Darlington scheme focussing on improvements on Woodlands Road. We await feedback on the bid, but if successful the delivery of the scheme will need to be accelerated to meet the funding criteria.
9. The Tees Flex service launched in February 2020 and there was good uptake in the initial weeks. However, COVID-19 had an impact but there are signs of a recovery as lockdown has released with strong passenger numbers across Tees Valley. A number of additional destinations have been incorporated into the service following requests from the public and. The Combined Authority will be promoting the service again to ensure the communities where it operates are aware of the service. Members are asked to continue to promote this service in areas where it operates.

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

**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO**

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**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.

**Operational Services**

2. A Task and Finish group with key stakeholders has been established in relation to the recovery of in house Day Opportunities. A consultation with individuals and their families has been undertaken and proposals and recommendations are now being firmed up. Operational staff continue to use the risk rating tool to ensure individuals and their families are supported through this time. This includes the ongoing use of Holicote short break services in supporting individuals and families through the challenges that have arisen for people as a result of the pandemic.
3. The service continues to provide a seven day working response and this discharge pathway is now well established. The new model has been effective in supporting individuals from discharge into the community. Our reablement service continues to play a vital role in enabling individuals to regain independence skills and confidence at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the new model has along with partners been successful in maintaining the flow from hospitals.
4. Operational teams have adapted and embedded changes to the approach required in response to infection control measures. They have robust risk assessments in place providing them and the people we are working with an increasing confidence and assurance. Therefore, the number of face-to-face contacts has continued to increase as a result in both community and care home settings.
5. Work with key stakeholders, including health partners has now started in relation to winter planning and the anticipated challenges of COVID-19 during this time. Officers are involved in preparing for winter and are participating in a system wide planning event. This will ensure that partnership learning from the response to COVID is incorporated within preparations for winter.

**Commissioning and Contracts**

6. The latest position regarding the picture in care homes is a positive one in terms of COVID. Monitoring calls continue to be made to all care homes. COVID related deaths have dropped dramatically over the last 8 weeks and no COVID positive cases have been reported for either residents or staff.
7. 18 of the 20 Older People's residential homes have received their testing kits and have undertaken testing of both residents and staff with all results to date having been negative. The remaining homes are on track to undertake tests upon receipt of

testing kits which is expected to happen in the next few days. Where issues have arisen, support has been given to homes by Public Health colleagues as appropriate.

8. Learning Disability/Mental Health residential homes are scheduled to receive testing kits imminently. PPE supplies are reported to be plentiful.
9. A contract with the Alzheimer's Society for the provision of a Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator commenced on 1 April 2020. The postholder has initiated work to support the development of Dementia Friendly communities within and across Darlington. This work has been focussed on Haughton, Springfield, Whinfield and Cockerton, and has included the delivery of online Dementia Friends information sessions and the development of a Dementia Voice Project, designed to ensure that the voice of people living with dementia is heard when developing Dementia Friendly communities in Darlington. Work is due to start in Northgate and Hurworth shortly.
10. The postholder has worked alongside the existing Dementia Advisor, to ensure a holistic approach is taken and is also developing links with other key stakeholders who can support the delivery of a Dementia Friendly Darlington.
11. Commissioning officers have been working with colleagues across the Tees Valley to strengthen domestic abuse services. The Council will co-host an on-line event for professionals with a view to sharing best practice during the Covid 19 emergency period. This will help to profile predicted future demand for services and to highlight further opportunities for collaborative working.

### **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership**

1. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners (SSP) continue to meet every three weeks and engage with wider partners on a rotational basis by inviting key leads to provide an overview of current issues and provide assurance for their service areas.
2. Statutory Partners invited me to attend as cabinet members with portfolios for Adult Services and provided me with an overview of current arrangements and how they have been adapted due to C-19 to enable the key statutory partners to have oversight on vulnerable adults. Partners reiterated the benefit of having a joint approach to safeguarding and obtaining a whole family approach. I was also assured of the transparent and open approach and opportunity to further scrutinise partnership activity.
3. Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust and Education sector attended in July. Partners were assured of the measures in place and how services have adapted to cope with the crisis and continued to engage and support families. It was positive to hear agencies are working together to support each other which demonstrates there are robust partnership arrangements in place even during these unprecedented times.
4. The Chair of the Quality Assurance and Performance Management sub-group provided a presentation on work to date. Partners were assured by the amount of activity that has taken place between this group and the Learning and Development sub-group. Partners were encouraged at the activity undertaken and agreed the

presentation provided a good view across collective systems and it was clear to see what is working well and what needs to be driven forward.

**Councillor Rachel Mills**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults**

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**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio.

**Health and Well Being Board**

2. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 3 September 2020. The main discussion item was the Darlington response to the COVID-19 pandemic with contributions from each Board member reflecting on how it has impacted on service users. The Board received a presentation from the COVID-19 Health Protection Board providing an update on the delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.
3. Representatives of local NHS provider services and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group provided updates to the Board on their preparations for Winter demand, seasonal flu vaccination programme and the local response to the directive from Sir Simon Stevens. "Implementing phase 3 of the NHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic". (August 2020)

**Ofsted Annual Engagement Meeting**

4. On 29 July, the Director of Children and Adults Services and representatives from Children and Education Services met with Ofsted for the Annual Engagement Meeting. The meeting considered the self-assessment submitted to HMI and they acknowledged our continued progress.

**Front Door**

5. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) has continues to encourage telephone contacts from partner agencies to ensure relationship-based approaches to dealing with concerns about children.
6. Following the national trend of a decrease in contacts and referrals during initial phase of lockdown, in June and July they started to increase back up to near normal levels, again in line with national trends. There were 671 and 810 contacts received in those two months respectively, an increase from April and May where there were 540 and 652 respectively.

**Early Help**

7. Early Help Services have continued to respond to 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.

8. Services usually delivered through the children's centres are being delivered online, with advice about children's development, school readiness 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.
9. 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.
10. The Early Help Service continue to develop integrating services and approaches to reduce parental conflict, into local services for families under the programme, Reducing Parental Conflict with funding allocated from the Dept of Work and Pensions (DWP). Practitioners have received awareness training on how to support families and identifying need, and a working group are developing digital resources, toolbox for families, and promotional websites to support children's emotional well-being.

### **Corporate Parenting Panel**

11. The Panel met on the 20 July 2020 virtually, with three young people involved alongside Members and Officers. The focus of the Panel on this occasion was to enable Panel members to speak directly with young people to understand how the lockdown had been for them personally, and how supported they had been by their Social Worker or Personal Advisor.

### **Child Protection, Looked After and Care Leaver statistics**

12. At the end of June 2020 there were:
  - 334 children in need (CiN) – the number of children being supported with a CiN plan has slightly reduced from 366 in Q1
  - 95 children subject to child protection plans – This is a 25.2 per cent reduction when compared with June 2019 (127).
  - 291 children in care – Our increase in numbers is significantly affected by the public health emergency. Family Courts buildings had to close which impacted on the hearing of attended contested cases and work going into the Court [save for urgent hearings] was reduced whilst revised plans and arrangements were being put into place. As a result, a number of cases were unable to conclude or be issued which has resulted in the LAC figures continuing to increase. Had the matters progressed in the usual way pre-COVID then it is likely there would have been a reduction of children in care to potentially pre-COVID levels. Court recovery groups comprising Local Authority Officers, Legal Services and CAFCASS have been set up to manage and prioritise children's cases and a pilot is underway to consider this national issue. Throughout the public health emergency the Family Court has continued to operate and deal with matters in alternative ways such as telephone and video hearings. Attended hearings are now taking place and measures are in place to ensure the safety of those attending the Court buildings. The hard work of those in the family justice system continues during these difficult times and the work done to date has been

exceptional in light of those difficulties. Permanence planning continues to be a priority and matters are progressing through the usual processes to ensure that children can leave care where appropriate to do so.

### **Children with Disabilities**

13. To minimise and reduce the risk of Covid-19, interim 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. From 27 July, Harewood Hill Lodge has provided an extended service to the full-service user group. Children and staff have been “grouped” as far as possible to minimise the risk of cross infection.
14. 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. More recently an increased number of doorstep and actual visits have taken place, although virtual visits have continued, and have worked very well for many children and families.

### **Fostering**

15. Our foster carers have been flexible to help us to provide placements to meet the needs of children. Most children have remained in placement with only a small number of moves taking place in accordance with care planning requirements.
16. Where foster carers have had capacity, we have agreed a small number of exemptions to the fostering limit, or variations to the foster carers terms of approval to enable them to care for siblings or to provide emergency placements.
17. Supervising social workers have continued to progress prospective foster carer assessments and the ‘Skills to Foster’ training programme has been delivered virtually.

### **Adoption**

18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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**

21. The Education Service has continued to support schools in their preparations for pupils returning in September. The Education Strategy Group has met during the Summer holidays to inform plans for a full return of pupils.
22. The Education Psychology Service has developed a recovery curriculum that schools can use to help with the emotional support of pupils returning after the period of school closure.
23. The Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children operated normally through the partial school closure period albeit in a fully “virtual” model in order to support schools, social workers, carers and pupils. The PEP process continued as “normal” for children in care, so each had their termly education plan and review, the only difference was that the meeting took place virtually.
24. Children in care were supported by a creative arts project, a reading scheme and a variety of online resources available from the new Virtual School website. Some children were also supported with outdoor activities and sports equipment.

## **Special Educational Needs**

25. Following cabinet approval for the SEND resource bases work has started on site at Red Hall Primary School, with the foundations going in for the new unit and some adaptations in the existing school well underway.
26. The site is being prepared at Rise Carr College and work is due to start there shortly.

## **School Forum**

27. There has been no School Forum meeting since the last Council update.

## **Learning and Skills Service**

28. Courses at Learning and Skills will restart early September albeit largely online in the first instance. Apprenticeship recruitment has been taking place online and training with learners is planned to restart in September on a one to one basis. Risk Assessments and Safe Schemes of Work are in place for all locations.

## **Employment Support**

29. Routes to Work staff continue to support clients with significant pastoral support during the pandemic to supplement employability skills support. Youth Employment Initiative tutors continue to offer employability skills support online and are seeing a definite upturn in number of clients being referred.

## **Commissioning and Contracts**

30. The Tees Valley Children’s residential care contract which commenced in April 2020 has now reopened for new providers to join. Officers in Darlington are proactively engaging with providers of children’s residential care in their locality to encourage participation in this contract arrangement.

## **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership**

31. Statutory Partners invited me to attend as Cabinet Members with portfolio for children and provided me with an overview of current arrangements and how they have been adapted due to C-19 to enable the key statutory partners to have oversight on vulnerable children. Partners reiterated the benefit of having a joint approach to safeguarding and obtaining a whole family approach. I was also assured of the transparent and open approach and opportunity to further scrutinise partnership activity.
32. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners (SSP) continue to meet every three weeks and engage with wider partners on a rotational basis by inviting key leads to provide an overview of current issues and provide assurance for their service areas.
33. Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust and Education sector attended in July. Partners were assured of the measures in place and how services have adapted to cope with the crisis and continued to engage and support families. It was positive to hear agencies are working together to support each other which demonstrates there are robust partnership arrangements in place even during these unprecedented times.
34. Partners were provided with an overview of the findings of a six-week review of the front door telephone contact arrangements, which is part of the Strengthening Families Programme, and were assured by the examples of positive feedback from partners who welcomed the opportunity of having a telephone conversation rather than emailing, to help them consider what it is they are worried about, which is in line with relational practices and is allowing further opportunity to continue to develop better relationships operationally.
35. The Chair of the Quality Assurance and Performance Management sub-group provided a presentation on work to date. Partners were assured by the amount of activity that has taken place between this group and the Learning and Development sub-group. Partners were encouraged at the activity undertaken and agreed the presentation provided a good view across collective systems and it was clear to see what is working well and what needs to be driven forward.

**Councillor Jon Clarke**  
**Children and Young People Portfolio**

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**COUNCIL**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

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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 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.
8. Members of the Planning Committee agreed at the last virtual meeting in August to grant planning permission for housing at Neasham Road, which incorporates a large proportion of affordable housing which will contribute significantly to the identified shortfall of affordable housing stock within the Borough.

## **Environmental Health**

9. The 2020 Air Quality Annual Status report has been submitted to Defra and forms part of the Review and Assessment process under the Environment Act 1995. The report details the results of the nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube monitoring carried out at 15 locations across the borough and demonstrates compliance with national air quality objectives. In addition, the report includes information on steps taken to address air quality such as a strategy to expand the vehicle charging point network, raising awareness to members/public on impacts of poor air quality, highway improvement works and reductions in license fees for taxi vehicles that are electric, hybrid or use other sustainable fuels. The conclusions within the report were accepted by Defra and the feedback positive advising that the Council continue their good work.

## **Covid-19**

10. Environmental Health Officers have been busy dealing with the Governments Covid 19 guidance in relation to the retail and hospitality sector. Officers have been advising businesses on compliance which has allowed the majority of the businesses in the town to reopen. A particular emphasis has been given to the hairdressing and beauty sector who have received a visit as the controls in place in those premises is particularly important. Officers have also carried out night time visits in partnership with Durham Constabulary to licensed premises to ensure that track & trace procedures are in place and that licensees are aware of their responsibilities.

## **Gypsies & Travellers**

11. Environmental Health Officers have dealt with 11 illegal encampments in the Borough since lockdown began. This year has been particularly busy due to the cancellation of the traditional Appleby fair. Officers used legal powers to move the camps from public land and ensured that the areas were vacated quickly.

## **Commercial Waste issues**

12. Covid-19 has been a particular problem in relation to commercial waste bins as restaurants and take-aways have closed or waste companies have struggled to collect waste. Environmental Health Officers have dealt with many businesses to ensure that the responsible owners have taken remedial action to clean up their bin areas.

## **Local Plan**

13. The Local Plan was placed on deposit on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August for 6 weeks and this period ended on 17<sup>th</sup> September. The Governments White Paper suggests radical reforms to the Planning System including new look Local Plans. This will not affect the current Local Plan as we are at a point where it will be progressed under current regulations.
14. A briefing note will be prepared for Members on the significance of the changes suggested in the White Paper.

## **Climate Change**

15. Following Cabinet's approval of the Strategy in July and subsequent clearance through call-in, work is progressing on a rolling action plan. Initial conversations have been held with each of the Lead Officers tasked with developing actions for their areas. We are also exploring potential funding sources to ensure we take advantage of all opportunities as they arise.

## **Town Centre**

16. Since non-essential retail has been allowed to reopen followed by the hospitality trade, we have seen the town centre slowly become busier and more vibrant. A large amount of signage and floor stickers are in place to remind people to socially distance and we must continue to reinforce this message to help keep people safe and show Darlington is a safe and secure town to visit. Officers and Cabinet colleagues have worked closely with town centre businesses as we have introduced changes to enable social distancing and will continue to monitor and adapt the changes required as guidance is updated and requirements change.
17. In Coniscliffe Road, Skinnergate and Blackwellgate, we are running a pilot scheme of road closures to allow the hospitality businesses in those areas to put pavement cafes out into the road enabling them to trade safely increasing their capacity. The road closures are in place Thursday to Sunday, 4.30pm to 10.30pm, allowing pavement cafes to operate from 5pm to 10pm. The pilot started in August with a planned end of late September/early October. Officers have also put out bunting and flags to improve the overall feel and atmosphere of the area. At the time of writing, the pilot has been well received by the businesses in the area and customers who have enjoyed the experience. We will review the overall success of the pilot with the businesses involved and, if they are keen to continue in future years, officers will look at how more permanent arrangements can be put in place that will enable a similar offer to operate throughout the summer months.

## **Business Investment Team Update**

### **Business Enquiries**

18. Business development enquiries are starting to slowly pick up following the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, enquiries for development land availability and new business start-up opportunities appear to be at the forefront.

## **Covid-19 Response & Recovery Work**

19. The Strategic, Response and Recovery Roles:
  - (a) Strategic Role – working across Durham/Darlington and Cleveland LRFs to monitor the economic impacts
  - (b) Response Role – based on the feedback from data monitoring, develop appropriate responses to emerging situations

- (c) Recovery Role – signposting and supporting business enquiries, and establishing business development workshops to help local SMEs

### **Local Impacts**

- 20. In terms of local impacts, there are a few available measures which demonstrate the impact on the local economy in such a short period of time and in real-time.
  - (a) Claimant Count: - The most immediate measure is the unemployment rate – the claimant count. The claimant count has significantly increased after March 2020, and in particular, within the age grouping 25-49 which has increased by over 1,000
  - (b) Footfall Count: -Latest data from the footfall cameras provides a good proxy measure on the responsiveness of the town centre to opening again.
- 21. Key headlines from this data shows:
  - (a) Footfall for the year to date is 17.9% down on the previous year.
  - (b) The number of visitors counted for month commencing 6 July 2020 was 598,605.
  - (c) The busiest day in month commencing 6 July 2020 was Saturday 1 August with 40,576 visitors.
  - (d) The peak hour of the month was 11:00 on Saturday 1 August 2020 with footfall of 5,027

### **Local Actions**

- 22. The commencement of lock down brought many challenges to the economic life of Darlington.
- 23. Since lockdown was first introduced, there has been a rapid increase in the number of businesses seeking advice and support from the Council. Most of these enquiries were seeking emergency financial assistance.
- 24. The Council has managed and developed grant schemes to business on behalf of the Government. The approach has been to try and make the schemes as user-friendly as possible, within the confines of Government guidance, and to ensure public money is safeguarded against fraud. The Council worked hard to get funding to businesses as quick as possible, and as a result, the Council featured in the top 10 quickest LA payers in the country.
- 25. The Business Support Grant system saw 2,093 businesses receive grants of £10,000 and £25,000 with a total of £23.765m being awarded.
- 26. Business rates discounts worth £16.6m were also efficiently awarded to 682 local retail, hospitality and leisure businesses providing full exemption for business rates for 2020/21.
- 27. A Discretionary Grant scheme has been implemented with a total of £1.2m Government funding, 105 businesses qualified for grant support.

28. There has been a wide variety of Government support to business, not administrated by the Council, and although the Council's Business Support team have provided support as appropriate, the Tees Valley Combined Authority agreed to be the single point of contact for business support across the region and the established a call centre for this purpose.
29. As a Council we have worked to help businesses in the town centre open safely, which has not been without challenges, but our overriding guidance in such decision-making, must be public safety.
30. Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, Darlington Borough Council have continued to provide business with a wide range of other support, including:
  - (a) DBC have refreshed on-line content for the Covid-19 business Support web pages to provide a clearer approach to the information, guidance and support for businesses, employers and employees
  - (b) Promotion of TVCA grant programme for kickstarting leisure and hospitality restart.
  - (c) Significant town centre promotion, including Thursday to Sunday road closures to encourage evening economy
  - (d) Pease Pudding traders market restarted in Town Centre
  - (e) £25m Town Bid submitted to Government
  - (f) Looking to extend YEI and DWP programme to help unemployed and NEETS

## **Recovery Planning**

31. The impact on the local economy has yet to be fully realised, but already, there is an emerging picture of differential impact, across industry sectors, occupations and places. As a more granular understanding is developed of the intensity and scale of impact, it's already clear that some parts of the economy will face long term obstacles to growth, and others that may never recover.
32. Because of the impact of Covid-19, Darlington's entire economic base has been adversely affected. Throughout the summer, officers have been working with colleagues and stakeholders across Tees Valley to develop a Tees Valley Recovery Plan, setting out how the Tees Valley can form a key part of rebuilding the UK economy. The key priorities/themes of the draft Recovery Plan include:
  - (a) Confident People, Confident Businesses: Ensuring our businesses and residents are resilient and confident during the re-opening of the economy. This theme of activity will encourage people spending and enjoying Tees Valley again, which will help firms survive and build confidence in the region.
  - (b) Education, Skills & Jobs: This theme of activity will provide opportunities for young people, preventing long term scarring as a result of unemployment and developing the skills necessary to support productivity driven growth.
  - (c) Agile Companies & Competitive Workers: This theme of activity will enable firms to be agile and our workers to become more competitive, enabling these key components of our economy to readily adapt to changing economic conditions. More broadly, this will enable a rebound from the crisis and ensure resilience to the evolving demands of a changing world.

- (d) The Building Blocks for Growth: This theme of activity will deliver transport, business and digital infrastructure to attract firms and investment, creating jobs for decades to come. This will create construction sector jobs for today, whilst building to support the future economy.
- (e) Tees Valley - fit for Health & Social Care: Putting Tees Valley at the forefront of ensuring a resilient UK by delivering critical services to the national economy and securing long term jobs in our area is another theme of activity.
- (f) Bringing Business Home: The final theme of activity is establishing Tees Valley as an exemplar region in green technologies, leading the way in low carbon sectors, delivering innovation and meeting the UK's net zero target.

### **Business Week 2020**

33. Plans are underway for this year's Darlington Business Week 2020. With the significant challenges faced by all our businesses, this year's activities will focus on recovery and diversification. In the circumstances and the challenges of social distancing, this year's programme of events will be entirely virtual and on-line. Topic themes and ideas include:

- (a) Business Resilience planning
- (b) Diversification and utilisation of technology
- (c) Building Your Business through Workforce Skills Development
- (d) Marketing, engaging with old customers and attracting new ones.
- (e) Retail and Leisure sector support

### **Promoting Local Procurement Opportunities**

34. The redevelopment of Darlington, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Teesside Airport Railway Stations will be transformational for the Tees Valley region and provide thousands of passengers with faster, more frequent services. Work is due to start soon on these projects and it is important that local businesses and local workers feel the benefits from these investments. To support this, local supplier events are to be held to engage with local SME's and share information on forthcoming opportunities.

**Councillor Alan Marshall**  
**Economy Portfolio**

**COUNCIL**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO**

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**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:-

**Darlington Local Outbreak Control Plan**

2. Cabinet considered the Darlington Outbreak Control Plan, which was published at the end of June 2020 to meet the requirement set by the Department of Health and Social Care.
3. The main purpose of the Local Outbreak Control Plan is to prevent and control outbreaks. Adhering to national and local guidance is key to prevent local outbreaks and a second wave of infection. A communication plan describes local approaches to delivering messages for the public for their own and others' protection.
4. We recently launched our 'Keep Darlington on the right track' campaign, which includes posters, adverts and key local messages for residents of Darlington. I would encourage all members to share the materials in their local communities.
5. Cabinet noted the Local Outbreak Control Plan is focused on seven themes including settings e.g. care homes and schools, higher risk locations and communities of interest, workplaces, data integration and testing capacity.
6. The COVID-19 Health Protection Board (chaired by the Director of Public Health) has the management responsibility for the Outbreak Control Plan and overall management of the local response. The Health Protection Board meets fortnightly, frequency can be increased if required i.e. in the event of an outbreak.
7. The role of a Local Outbreak Engagement Board is delivered through the Darlington Health and Wellbeing Board which met on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.  
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/11967/darlington-local-outbreak-control-plan.pdf>
8. I undertook a visit to a number of licenced premises in Darlington with Durham Constabulary recently, where we focused on track and trace compliance and drug enforcement action.

**Public Health**

9. The contract to deliver the new STRIDE service (Support, Treatment and Recovery in Darlington through Empowerment) was operational from 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The COVID-19 Health Protection Board (chaired by the Director of Public Health) has the responsibility.

10. We Are With You are the new providers of the service and offer a range of flexible treatment options, including:
  - (a) A range of ways to access support, dependent on the individual's circumstances and preferences. This includes face to face, as well as online and telephone.
  - (b) A range of different interventions, groups and activities to support people in their recovery.
  - (c) Support offered in different community settings.
11. As the service mobilises, new opportunities will be introduced including a new Ambassador programme with Intuitive Thinking Skills, using the skills of those with lived experience to support others; Recovery Academy Darlington programme (RADAR) will be provided offering quasi residential rehabilitation in Darlington and the establishment of a new local Recovery Partnership, inviting partners and stakeholders to come together and help shape and develop the local service.
12. The COVID-19 pandemic has given further emphasis on the need to put plans in place to tackle obesity, given that there is strong evidence to suggest that living with excess weight put people at much greater risk. The Government has recently launched an Obesity strategy which supports our local work to implement the Childhood Healthy Weight strategy for Darlington. The action plan will be revised to respond to COVID-19 and to align with the measures set out in the Government strategy.
13. It is proposed that a key priority for this work in the first instance focuses around encouraging regular physical activity and maximising on potential changed behaviours that may have arisen as part of lockdown when an increase in the number of people participating in daily exercise was seen. This will include the promotion of cycling and walking, use of green space and active travel. There are clear links to physical activity and positive mental health.
14. For many people their mental health has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and features prominently across recovery in the short and long term. The public health team are developing a mental health strategy to underpin work happening locally to promote and support good mental health. Developed as a partnership approach, 'Darlington Connected' will have three main aims:
  - (a) To standardise communication and promotion of good mental health
  - (b) Training and workforce development across the system
  - (c) Connecting people to the range of services and activities that are available locally that support good mental health
15. I also undertook a visit to the Neasham Road Caravan Site, where I engaged with members of the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller community, sharing public health messages and I intent to create a regular forum for feedback.

## **Health and Well Being Board**

16. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. The main discussion item was the Darlington response to the COVID-19 pandemic with contributions from each Board member reflecting on how it has impacted on service users. The Board received a presentation from the COVID-19 Health Protection Board providing an update on the delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.
17. Representatives of local NHS provider services and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group provided updates to the Board on their preparations for Winter demand, seasonal flu vaccination programme and the local response to the directive from Sir Simon Stevens. "Implementing phase 3 of the NHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic" (August 2020).
18. As chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board I have asked for feedback on how the board operates. Members of the board will soon receive a survey to complete which will focus on what we do well, what we would like to change, and general feedback from partners about our setup.

## **Housing Services**

### **Universal Credit**

19. Our Housing Income Team have continued to provide a pro-active and supportive stance in relation to rent arrears throughout these difficult times. This has produced good results with the arrears levels at a lower level than this time last year and slightly less than national levels for arrears. This is despite the number of our tenants receiving Universal Credit (UC) continuing to increase with nearly 25% of customer now in receipt of UC.
20. The team focus has been particularly to help our tenants to make affordable repayment plans and to manage and prioritise their Universal Credit payments to ensure priority debts, are paid. It has been especially important for the team to offer digital support throughout this time to help tenants access their digital tenancies and to access their on-line Universal Credit journals to report changes and any problems to the DWP, to ensure that payments reflect their current circumstances.
21. The team have collected over £8.6M since April and have also continued to assist tenants in making applications to Northumbrian Water for their Social Tariff funding, which has meant that since April, nearly £23K has been awarded to Council tenants to help reduce their water rates bills.

### **Digital Tenancy Portal**

22. The Digital Tenancy portal remains active to tenants and work is progressing on testing and implementing new features of the portal, such as allowing tenants to book their own appointments and set up a direct debit. 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. It reduces the need for phone calls and wait times and there is no need to visit

customer services for those transactions.

## **New Build Housing**

23. The Council's latest new build affordable housing development at Mickleton Close, Lascelles Park is now fully complete. The latest scheme has seen the construction of 12 two-bedroom houses and two three-bedroom homes to compliment an earlier new build scheme on this site of two bedroomed apartments and family homes. This is part of a long term commitment to build more affordable homes for rent to meet the needs of local people and our vision to build strong and balanced communities, making sure properties are available for families as well as older people and those in most need.
24. Our new properties have been very popular, with demand for all the developments far outstripping supply. The feedback from the new tenants at the viewings for the new homes at Mickleton Close was that they were very impressed with the standard of the properties and the room sizes were much larger than expected
25. Work is also currently underway on phase two of Lancaster Close, Darlington which is due to complete in late 2021.

## **Homelessness**

26. Homeless presentations and requests for support and assistance from our Housing Options Team continues to be high as a result of the government commitment during the pandemic that anyone who presents as homeless, regardless of their need, is placed in emergency accommodation. Accommodation is in the form of temporary homeless accommodation, emergency supported accommodation, out of area placements and where necessary hotel accommodation. 173 households were placed in Bed and Breakfast and emergency accommodation in the first quarter 20/21 compared to 91 in the same period last year but we have now increased the availability of temporary accommodation to provide improved outcomes.
27. Our approach is shaped by the belief that every person matters, and can, with the appropriate support, move from rough-sleeping into long-term, sustainable, accommodation.

## **Lifeline Services**

28. Our Lifeline Team have worked throughout the pandemic to ensure that there have been a range of activities available to the tenants living in the sheltered and extra care complexes. The focus has been on maintaining wellbeing and mental health but the approach has needed to ensure that delivery of activities is COVID safe.
29. This identified a need to have better access to digital devices that tenants can use to stay engaged and access a range of services remotely. Generous donations of second-hand devices have been greatly appreciated but thanks to the Government's Infection Control Fund, £5000 has now been allocated to Lifeline Services to procure 40 mobile tablets. A further allocation has been made directly to the care provider operating in our Extra Care Schemes so both services are working closely together to maximise the overall availability of digital devices. These will enable residents to access virtual appointments with GP's and hospitals,

engage with family, access key websites and use digital services and for development of learning, skills and hobbies.

30. I have also undertaken a visit to our lifeline teams, where I thanked them for their hard work over lockdown.

### **Eastbourne Sports Complex**

#### **Outdoor Classes**

31. Our Move More Team have started an outdoor programme at Eastbourne Sports Complex to encourage participants back into classes. The sessions have been delivered safely following the government guidelines and have ranged from walking groups, to Keep Fit and HIIT classes with a total of 10 classes per week. The classes have been extremely popular with over 80 people attending each week.

#### **Sheltered Housing Project**

32. Our Move More Team have started to deliver socially distanced outdoor sessions to the residents in the sheltered housing schemes. The gentle exercise sessions are offered to all residents and follow the government guidelines on outdoor exercise.

#### **Tackling Inequalities Fund**

33. With the support of Tees Valley Sport, the Darlington Move More Team have successfully supported Breathe Easy Darlington, Red Hall Community Association, Groundworks North East, Sporting Force and Darlington Table Tennis Academy in securing funding from Sport England Inequalities Fund.
34. Each charity/club is responding to the direct impact of the lockdown on the people who access their services for support and a total of £15,000 has been awarded to help them to do this. Activities range from setting up walking groups, to outdoor family exercise sessions, to Mental Health and wellbeing support to rebuild confidence.

#### **The Dolphin Centre**

35. As part of the phased recovery, the Dolphin Centre opened for public swimming and gym use on 27 July. Access for residents is based on a booking system with maximum capacities in line with government and national governing body guidance. The availability of these services has been very welcomed by customers and feedback around safety on site has been excellent.
36. The pool programme began with adult lane swimming, swimming club usage and water-based classes. The introduction of weekend family swimming was introduced on Saturday 15 August, with further programme developments taking place throughout September.
37. In week three of the gym reopening the programme was extended to include inductions for new customers and new members to use the facility.

38. September also saw the Dolphin Centre revert to operating times that were very close to normal operating, which again was very welcomed by customers.
39. Catering services are now fully open with the Bistro and Pavement Café operating along with 16 Horsemarket, which is accessible as a wet weather option. Again, capacity is limited to reinforce the 2-metre social distancing and safe working practices. The introduction of the “Eat Out to Help Out” on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday during August was very popular with customers.
40. On the 10 August customers were welcomed back to access some limited badminton court usage on weekday afternoons with Dolphin Premier Badminton Club on site from 30 August. A programme of exercise classes were introduced in early September, including: Spinning, Circuits, Pilates and Tai Chi.
41. Darlington College have delivered a number of courses on site to young adults to develop local employment skills, including: basic computing, health and safety and stewarding qualifications.
42. I visited the team at the Dolphin centre recently, which involved looking at the COVID safe working practices for both colleagues and customers. I also visited the construction site where work is currently underway on the bowling, soft play and M&E project, which is due to complete at the end of November.

**Councillor Kevin Nicholson**  
**Health and Housing Portfolio**

**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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

**Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Contract**

2. Cabinet welcomed an update on the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) project; noting that Durham County Council and Newcastle City Council had committed to join the project. This would increase the ERF from a 250,000 tonnes per annum facility to a 450,000 tonnes per annum facility, reducing the cost of the contract through the gate fee to each authority.
3. Cabinet approved Darlington Borough Council to enter into an Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) with Middlesbrough Council, Stockton Borough Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Durham County Council and Newcastle City Council in respect of the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) project.
4. Cabinet also approved that the formal procurement for the project be commenced.
5. Cabinet authorised the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Assistant Director – Resources, Assistant Director – Law and Governance and the Responsible Member for Local Services to accept minor changes to the IAA.
6. Cabinet approved the extension of the existing waste management contract with Stonegrave Aggregates; and to the extension of the lease for the Household Waste Recycling Centre to tie in with the extension to the waste management contract.

**Highway Maintenance Schemes**

7. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
  - (a) Patching Prior to Micro-asphalt (Various sites) – 31 locations
  - (b) Micro-Asphalt: 69 Sites – (16.025km)
  - (c) Fenby Avenue: Carriageway reconstruction/Recycling (0.250km)
  - (d) Barnes Road: Carriageway resurfacing (0.140km)
  - (e) A67 Merrybent: Carriageway resurfacing (0.460km)
  - (f) A67 Yarm Road (Morton Palms): Carriageway resurfacing (0.720km)
  - (g) Hercules Street (Back Lane): Reconstruction (0.070km)
  - (h) Surface Dressing: 4 Sites (9.650km)
8. Highway maintenance schemes due to start:
  - (a) Bates Avenue (Footway): Footway Reconstruction (0.230km)
  - (b) Cleveland Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction/Recycling (0.490km)

- (c) Stanhope Road South/Coniscliffe Road, West Street: Carriageway reconstruction (0.260km)
  - (d) Victoria Embankment: Drainage/Channel Works (0.450km)
  - (e) A68 West Auckland Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (2.210km)
  - (f) C38 Sadberge Road / Middleton Road: Carriageway Haunching (5.210km)
9. Highway maintenance schemes complete:
- (a) Feethams: Carriageway reconstruction (0.100km)
  - (b) Estoril Road South: Carriageway reconstruction/Recycling – (0.490km)

### **Highway Improvement Schemes**

10. The B6279 Houghton Road roundabout improvement scheme is substantially complete with some minor works outstanding including landscaping. The improvement scheme has been delivered by Darlington Borough Council and is jointly funded by the Council and Tees Valley Mayor and Tees Valley Combined Authority through the Department for Transport's National Productivity Investment Fund.
11. B6280 Yarm Road/Lingfield Way junction improvement scheme is now complete. This was also funded from the Department for Transport's National Productivity Investment Fund. The scheme assists traffic leaving Lingfield Way and compliments the works recently undertaken by Highways England at Morton Palms roundabout.
12. Work is underway on the Rethinking Victoria Road scheme following delays due to COVID-19. Following extensive engagement with local residents and businesses in late 2018 and 2019, the scheme was awarded £675,000 funding from the Combined Authority's Sustainable Access to Employment programme. A further contribution of £300,000 has been committed from Darlington's Local Transport Plan budget. The scheme will see the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, the signalisation of the Clifton Road/Park Place junction, widened footways on the northern side, improvements to the back lane which forms part of the cycle route, some new trees and lighting. The works are programmed to finish by the end of the financial year and are the first stage of improvements in the area around Darlington Station.

### **Head of Steam**

13. The re-opening of the museum continues to go well, with positive feedback received from visitors. We are looking ahead to an event to mark the countdown to 2025 and also planning how we can still bring Christmas magic to the museum without having a large-scale Santa event.
14. Throughout the duration of lockdown and the summer holidays, the museum shared ideas and activities on a daily basis via social media channels for schools and families, to ensure that we maintained engagement.
15. Ideas continue to be explored and developed looking at how the museum can continue to work with schools in line with Government advice and social distancing requirements. This will include the development and production of new digital resources, including: Early Railways and George Stephenson, The Romans at Piercebridge, and creative writing and local history.

## **Rail Heritage Quarter**

16. Work has continued on further developing the plans for the Rail Heritage Quarter over the last four months, working with partners on site. The intention is to submit a planning application late this year/early next year to enable the scheme to progress.
17. Alongside the work on the Rail Heritage Quarter, Officers have been working with colleagues in Stockton and Durham on developing proposals for the 2025 celebrations of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Work is currently underway in developing a proposal around a number of strands:
  - (a) Live outdoor theatre performance
  - (b) Young Inventors Programme
  - (c) Young Inventors Programme
  - (d) Live steam in Darlington and Stockton
  - (e) Mounting an exhibition of early locomotives in Darlington and Stockton
18. The 200 Year Celebration of the Stockton and Darlington Railway presents an opportunity to put Darlington and Stockton and the wider Tees Valley on the international map. I am looking forward to the outcome of the work currently taking place which will help us form the scale of our ambition for 2025.

## **Creative Darlington**

19. Creative Darlington has distributed information on Arts Council England's Cultural Recovery Fund programmes, developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund aims to help sustain cultural organisations and enterprises between October 2020 and March 2021 by supporting them to develop sustainable models of operation. There is expected to be a high level of demand on these programmes.
20. Creative Darlington supported artist, Paul Theo Murray, in developing a proposal to progress a guerrilla graffiti campaign in the Town Centre from late July 2020 to Pride weekend and beyond. The 'Now Then Darlo' programme has subsequently been developed and taken forward by Paul and supported by the Council's Town Centre and Events teams. The programme incorporates aspects of local heritage; everything from the Stockton & Darlington railway, to famous names past and present who have traded in the town, and reflections on the disappearance of Jimmy Hendrix's guitar here. In addition, the programme celebrated Pride and offered people the opportunity for their messages of thanks to the NHS and key workers to be shared in the Town Centre.
21. Creative Darlington offered budget support to Theatre Hullabaloo for the creation and distribution (through health visitors) of up to 775 Baby Play Packs to families in Darlington and the commission of a small number of short films, featuring artists, encouraging creative engagement which is accessible online.

The programme was designed to offer another opportunity for creative play to those families with young babies whose opportunities for creative play may have been limited during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

22. Creative Darlington offered support to Darlington based company, 'Unforgettable Experiences', to develop a pilot programme of digital engagement exploring the health and social benefits arising from engagement in creative activity. Creative Darlington offered advice and guidance on the selection of artists to deliver digitally accessible activity and provided some budget assistance to cover their fees during the pilot period. Unforgettable Experiences will also be undertaking a feasibility study to market test and gather evidence to see whether their service can support older people with dementia and neurological conditions to improve emotional wellbeing, stimulate cognition, improve independence and quality of life by providing access to arts, culture and heritage activities in person and online.
23. Following the success of the Last Train Home music festivals in Darlington in recent years, Creative Darlington has offered budget support to Tracks to create a series of films of bands performing which will be promoted in a digital campaign. We have also offered budget support to Tracks to programme a digital Hark! event which will explore the connections between music, literature and poetry.
24. The first Hark! event staged at Darlington Library in November 2017 was ticketed and attracted around 80 people to enjoy live readings by authors and short sets from a number of singers and bands with music connected to literary themes, however, both the digital Hark! event and the Last Train Home film series will now be digitally accessible in 2020.

## **Libraries**

### **Re-opening COVID Secure**

25. Crown Street Library has re-opened to the public for Quick Pick Book Borrowing and returning of books. Initial customer feedback suggests that our new policies have provided a comfortable and welcoming visitor experience and users have been happy to utilise our self-service machines with the support of staff.
26. Cockerton Library has also re-opened with reduced hours for book returns only and we look forward to extending this to include the Click and Collect Service, in addition to beginning the next phase of opening Darlington Library, by exploring safe and manageable ways to re-establish access to computers and visits to the Centre of Local Studies.

### **Library App**

27. The library has updated its Library Management System and introduced a Library App. The App allows users to self-manage their account from home: browsing the catalogue and choosing reservations, renewing books and delving into our online resources. It also allows them to borrow and return stock using their mobile device, which is increasingly desirable as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 landscape.

### **Support for disadvantaged children**

28. We worked with Kings Church and their network of foodbanks around Darlington to gift quality book resources to around 250 preschool and primary aged children. The books, supplied by the library, were distributed to those families around Darlington in receipt of food parcels.

### **Reading Rollercoaster**

29. We recognise that education and literacy skills have taken a dip recently due to Coronavirus. Schools have been closed and home learning has been a challenge for many parents; the libraries have been closed and groups which proactively develop speaking, listening, language and literacy skills have been on hold. To help address this, we have set children aged 0–16 years of age a challenge aimed at boosting their reading skills and helping them to be “back to school ready.”
30. We have incentives such as mascot and gaming parties, which children can win simply by borrowing books over the school holidays. We hope by encouraging children to read and share books as a family that children are better prepared for returning to school and that younger children are given as much help as possible to develop early language skills, which are being affected by the use of face coverings and limited interactions outside of the home.

### **Library Home Delivery Service**

31. The Library Home Delivery Service continues with 235 households benefiting from a free delivery of books. This service aims to decrease the feelings of isolation and loneliness in those aged 60 and above by providing books monthly, alongside a doorstep chat. The scheme is now being supported by Darlington Support who are delivering the books which have been specially handpicked by library staff.

### **Darlington Hippodrome**

32. The Hippodrome continues to follow government updates on theatre and live performance and awaits an announcement for when live theatre can be safely presented inside again without the need for social distancing. In the interim period, the Hippodrome continues to re-schedule upcoming shows to retain customers and secure a strong show programme for 2021/2022.
33. The Hippodrome re-opened to the public on Monday 7 September with an exciting programme of engagement activities and events to welcome the public back. The Hippo Lounge, Box office and galleries are open 10.00-14.00, Monday to Saturday, with events including backstage tours, ghost tours, life drawing, quizzes, adult dance classes and classic cinema nights complementing the programme of already established youth dance and theatre workshops. Going forward, space will also be made available for wider community use of the building, working with partnership schools and groups.

## **Events**

### **Pease Pudding Market**

34. The Pease Pudding Market commenced on Thursday 6 August in the Market Square. The market featured food and drink outlets with musical accompaniment provided by a DJ. This is a regular event, which is scheduled to take place fortnightly until the end of October.

### **Video Production**

35. A number of promotional videos have been produced to showcase the re-opening of businesses in Darlington. The videos feature Darlington's retailers, restaurants and pubs, and can be viewed on the Love Darlo website and the Council's social media channels.

### **'Darlo' Solo Run**

36. The annual Darlington 10K moved online during the summer as the virtual 'Darlo' Solo Run'. Those who wished to participate had 3 options to select from, which enabled them to complete 10km of running; either as one 10km run or a number of shorter runs which totalled 10km. These runs were completed in the participants' own time and in a place of their choosing during the period of 9 August and 6 September, with the option to register via the Race Beast website to receive a medal on completion.

### **Darlington Pride Weekender**

37. This year would have been the first Darlington Pride Weekender (a community event supported by the Council) comprising of a Saturday daytime event, Sunday picnic in the park and the traditional Monday night Gay Pride event. In place of public gatherings, a programme of virtual content was produced, including: music, dance, short films, speeches and messages. A wide range of community groups and organisations were involved over the 3 days, including: Councillors, CDDFRS, NEAS, Darlington OS, the Alzheimer's Society, YPOP, Stonewall, Arcus, More in Common and many more.
38. The Council also commissioned Tracks Darlington to produce three virtual gigs involving local singers, a band and a poet. Each gig incorporated messages on why Pride is important and signposted to relevant LGBT+ services.

### **Street Theatre**

39. Live street theatre performances and buskers have supported the re-opening of businesses in the Town Centre, with the aim of enhancing the visitor experience for the public. The entertainment continues to take place weekly on Saturdays and Mondays.

### **Darlington Summer Reunion**

40. The launch of the Summer Reunion evening initiative commenced on 6 August and ran throughout September every Thursday to Sunday, between the hours of 17:00-22:00.

The initiative was designed to support the hospitality sector with extending outside seating areas.

### **Mini Mish Mash Online Festival**

41. The Council, in collaboration with the music collective, Tracks, produced the Mish Mash Online Festival, which took place on 30 August. The family friendly festival featured online workshops for all ages, plus over three hours of exclusive performances from local bands.

### **Environmental Services**

#### **Waste Services**

42. During the lockdown period, Waste Services was identified as an essential service and has continued to operate unhindered throughout the current pandemic. Staff absence levels did not present significant difficulties and the service was able to operate smoothly as a result.

#### **Garden Waste Collection Service**

43. The popularity of the Garden Waste Collection service continues to grow with the number of properties subscribed to date just under 7,000; an increase of 2,200 on last year.

#### **Street Cleansing**

44. Street Cleansing Services returned to normal levels of resource in June. This was subsequently complemented by a further vehicle and crew commencing on 1 July to focus specifically on back lanes and fly tipping only, for a three-month period. Initial indications are that this additional resource has led to significantly improved standards of cleanliness in rear lanes.

#### **Grounds Maintenance**

45. Staff continue to undertake grass cutting duties as per the stipulated frequency and other than the occasional difficulty arising from inclement weather, have achieved the frequency as required.

#### **Cemeteries and Crematorium**

46. Numbers of burials and cremations as a result of COVID-19 are now reducing and therefore the Crematorium has reverted to the normal working practice of up to 12 cremations per day, as opposed to 15 per day during the initial period of the pandemic.

#### **Arboriculture**

47. The Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031 is currently being consulted upon.

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**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

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**Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits**

1. I have ensured that collection of Council Tax and Business Rates remain a high priority during the Covid-19 pandemic and residents have been supported with applications for Council Tax Support and other benefits. At the end of July, the in-year collection of Council Tax was 35.6 per cent compared to 35.8 per cent for the same period in 2019. Business Rates collection was 40.2 per cent compared to 39.1 per cent for the same period in 2019.
2. Applications for Council Tax Support have increased by 6.3 per cent since March and I have awarded an extra £1 million to support residents affected by the pandemic. In addition, I have also awarded a further £1.1 million of Council Tax hardship rebates to all working aged residents in receipt of Council Tax Support, which equates to £150 for each household affected.

**COVID funding**

3. The Council has received a further £0.943m in Covid-19 funding from the Government bringing the total to £7.174m. We will also be accessing the Local Government Income Compensation Scheme for lost sales, fees and charges which was announced in July. The scheme will compensate for the loss of sales, fees and charges income for 75 pence in every pound lost after the first 5% of planned income. The scheme is available for the full financial year and a claim is currently being prepared for the April – July 2020 period.

**Business Support Grants**

4. I have provided £24.9 million of support to over 2,000 Darlington Businesses through the Business Support Grant and Discretionary Support Grant schemes. This cash injection has come from central government to help businesses survive the difficult trading conditions through the lockdown period.
5. The grants and loans have been administered through Darlington Borough Council with staff working under pressure to meet deadlines and get support to those who needed it as quickly as possible.

**Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 1 2020/21**

6. Cabinet has received information on the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme.
7. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work, with the current project position statement showing that there are 42 live projects currently being managed with an overall project outturn value of £136.217 million. The

majority of the projects are running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.

### **Health and Safety**

8. The Health and Safety team have continued to work to ensure all staff are using safe systems of work and following the corporate risk assessment. They have also worked closely with schools during this period providing support and assistance to teaching staff completing risk assessments for children returning to school.
9. The annual review of the Corporate Health and Safety Statement of Intent has been undertaken and this year has included a specific reference to COVID-19 and our commitment to provide a safe and healthy working environment and the need to have in place suitable working arrangements to manage the risk.

### **Furlough**

10. As our cultural venues are reopening our furloughed staff have been moved onto flexible furlough which enables them to work part time basis. At the time of writing we have 128 staff on flexible furlough.

### **Xentrall Annual report**

11. Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership was established in 2008 and is now in its twelfth year.
12. The original business case identified a number of efficiencies and benefits to be delivered resulting in initial savings of £7.4 million over the original ten-year period. The partnership has delivered all of these plus additional efficiencies and benefits and has now achieved £17.2 million of savings.
13. Both the quality and performance has improved over this period with both customer and staff satisfaction increasing over the life of the partnership.
14. This is a significant achievement for a public/public partnership and it compares very well to other private sector partnerships many of which have failed over the same period or been brought back in-house for a variety of reasons. Both Councils have benefited both financially and through a continued programme of service improvements brought throughout the lifetime of the partnership.
15. In recognition the on-going success of this public/public partnership, in 2015, Members agreed to amend the original ten-year period into an on-going rolling agreement, which continues to this day.

### **Annual Procurement Plan**

16. In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet has approved a number of additional contracts to be added to the Annual Procurement Plan.

## **Member Meetings**

17. Remote Committee meetings are on-going and, apart from a few technical issues, seem to be going very well with some positive feedback being received.
18. In addition to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees being held remotely, there have been three remote meetings of the Planning Applications Committee and one of the Licensing Sub Committee, both of which have successfully involved external participation.

## **Annual Canvass (Electoral Registration) 2020**

19. This year's Annual Canvass commenced on 3 July 2020, under a new reformed process. An initial data match with national and local data sets suggested that a significant number of properties had no changes in composition of the household when compared to the previous year. As such, the residents within these properties were only required to respond to the Annual Canvass Form where there was a change within the household composition.
20. This allows Officers to streamline their approach, and target those non-responding properties where the data match suggests that there could be a potential change to the composition of the household. Annual Canvass Reminder Forms were issued in August, and further action will be undertaken throughout September and October to encourage the completion of outstanding forms.

## **Town Centre Strategic Acquisitions**

21. As part of the Council's on-going commitment to the Town Centre Strategy, we recently completed on the purchase of the former Sports Direct premises on East Street. We are continuing discussions with landowners regarding other potential strategic acquisitions.

**Councillor Charles Johnson**  
**Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio**

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**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO**

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

**Community Development**

2. In an effort to support communities to become more resilient in 2012, the Council worked with local employers to help them align and focus their corporate social responsibility activities. 'Darlington Cares' was formed by the Council and five private sector employers. It is a self-funding with contributions to its cost from its membership. It now has 26 employers as members and last year delivered 15,000 hours of employer supported volunteering focused on the environment, social justice and education. The support it has been able to provide across the town has been increasingly valued and a number of the initiatives it has developed have been shortlisted as finalists in national awards schemes.
3. As a consequence of lockdown, employers were unable to release their staff and volunteering ceased. Work is now underway to restart volunteering with great care being paid to risk assessments with specific precautions in place to accommodate Covid 19. Many of the members are eager to re-engage and volunteering programmes have tentatively resumed.
4. The Council has worked with Darlington Cares and Darlington Citizen' Advice Bureau to develop a Uniform Exchange Scheme. The Council's web team noticed that towards the end of July that there had been an unprecedented spike in searches on its website for assistance with buying school uniforms and early in August approached Darlington Cares and CAB Darlington to assist in delivering a scheme.
5. The scheme has attracted donations of second hand uniforms dropped off at a number of community-based donation points. All items of second hand clothing are checked for quality and are then laundered to ensure they are Covid safe and also so children can go to school proud of their uniform.
6. Since putting a request out for donations two weeks ago, around 4,000 articles of uniform have been donated with more continuing to arrive. 422 families have requested uniform and are in the process of being helped.

**Equalities**

7. On the weekend when the first Darlington Pride Weekender was due to take place, the community pulled together to host a virtual Pride Weekender. The event consisted of a programme of virtual content provided by members of the community who wanted to support the event. In total there were 46 videos posted, from councillors, businesses and DBC staff and members of the LGBT+ community. As well as music, poetry, dance and artistic content, there was signposting for young

people and a highlight on mental health.

8. The event met the council's public sector equality duty by fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. Over the three days contributions were shared by DBC Councillors, CDDFRS, NEAS, Darlington OS, the Alzheimer's Society, YPOP, Stonewall, Arcus, More in Common and more. Darlington Borough Council commissioned Tracks Darlington to produce 3 virtual gigs involving local singers, a band and a poet. Each gig also incorporated messages on why Pride is important and signposted to relevant LGBT+ services. Over the course of the weekend the page had a reach of 20,000 people.

### **Corporate Marketing Function**

9. Following a trial which started in February 2019, a small permanent corporate marketing function is being established within the communications team to strengthen the impact of key corporate campaigns and marketing activities. Some of the priority areas include enhanced promotion of the town centre, Darlington as a visitor destination, response to localised COVID issues, strengthening Street Scene related campaigns, helping to increase the uptake in fostering, and reinforcing our campaign to keep Locomotion #1 in Darlington. The team will also enhance the profile of the council within the local community by further highlighting the services provided by the council and its ambitions for the borough. Recruitment of the new team is underway with the aim of having it up and running in the autumn.

### **Community Safety**

#### **Darlington Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Action Plan 2020-2025.**

10. Following a period of consultation, the priorities for 2020-2025 have been identified as:
  - (a) Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable People;
  - (b) Promoting Safer Places;
  - (c) Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse; and
  - (d) Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
11. Work is underway to finalise the details in the plan.

### **Water Safety**

12. A life-saving campaign to highlight the dangers of swimming in open water was launched in Darlington on Friday 10 July with the backing of community safety leaders.
13. Darlington Borough Council, Durham Police and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, have pledged their support to Safe Durham Partnership's 'Dying to be Cool' campaign.

14. Led by Durham County Council, this year's campaign comes on the fifth anniversary of the death of teenager Cameron Gosling, from Crook, who died from cold water shock after he jumped into the River Wear near Bishop Auckland, on 5 July 2015. His family has supported the campaign each year, urging youngsters to think twice before going into rivers or any other open water before acclimatising first.
15. Sadly, at around 17.10 hours on Monday 17 August 2020 Anas El-Rifai entered the River Tees in the area of Broken Scar, Darlington and after getting into some difficulty in the water went missing.
16. Emergency Services attended the scene and following a comprehensive search recovered the body of Anas at around 23.30 hours the same day.
17. Our thoughts and condolences are with Anas's family at this incredibly sad time.

### **Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Group (County Lines - 100 licences)**

18. Darlington Borough Council's Community Safety Team has recently joined the Home Office Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) Group.
19. The purpose of the group is to bring local areas together and discuss emerging issues, share new and effective practice, useful documents and offer support to all EGVE areas.
20. The teleconference is also a forum to share interesting issues, new funding opportunities and the latest Home Office updates.
21. As part of the membership, Darlington Borough Council has been offered 100 free licences for the Violence and Vulnerability Unit on-line training course. The course has been developed to provide frontline practitioners with basic knowledge and information about 'county lines', gangs and exploitation. It is designed as a simple, low cost solution to equip frontline workers with the information they need to recognise and understand exploitation issues in their everyday work. The Community Safety Team are currently in the process of co-ordinating the delivery of training.

### **Home Office Safer Streets Fund**

22. Following an application for Home Office funding from the Safer Streets Fund, Darlington has been awarded £298,918 to support target-hardening and crime prevention measures in the Northgate and the North Road area of Darlington.
23. The funding is designed to improve security in areas particularly affected by acquisitive crimes such as burglary, vehicle theft and robbery. The money will go towards measures proven to cut crime. These will include window locks, internal lights timer, double locks on doors and external lights on a sensor.
24. The initiative went live in August 2020 and will be completed by 31 March 2021.

## **Purple Flag**

25. After a rigorous assessment process, Darlington is the first town in the North East to be awarded Purple Flag status in January 2020, a standard awarded to those places that offer safe and enjoyable nights out.
26. Due to COVID-19, the presentation of the award has been delayed, however, the Council, along with other organisations and businesses from across the town centre, are now required to complete the renewal process which is due for assessment in October 2020.

This will involve a similar procedure to the initial accreditation, but it is accepted that progress will have been hindered by the pandemic. The result of the renewal process will be announced in January 2021.

## **Love Parks**

27. Following an expression of interest, Darlington's North Lodge Park was selected by Keep Britain Tidy to participate in a national initiative designed to reduce low-level anti-social behaviour and littering.
28. Darlington is one of only eight sites nationally to support the initiative which will involve a campaign to reduce littering in parks, alongside perceptions surveys of visitors and litter/waste monitoring to gather feedback on its effectiveness.
29. A range of campaign materials have been provided by Keep Britain Tidy to be displayed in the park and a digital toolkit will be made available to be utilised throughout by colleagues in communications.
30. During the campaign, Keep Britain Tidy will be carrying out public perception surveys with analysis and reporting of the campaign in September 2020.
31. The Council will engage with local members and stakeholders throughout the intervention, with a view to increasing public perception of the issues and to increase confidence in the community.
32. The campaign was launched nationally on Friday 24 July 2020.

## **Civic Enforcement Service**

### **Environmental Crime / Back Lanes Project**

33. Following easing of lockdown, the Back Lanes Project is operational, and plans are in place to recruit an officer to drive this project forward. Early results of the project are starting to show, with the back lanes cleaner in certain areas and several fines being issued each week for littering, dog fouling and fly tipping.

### **Responsible Dog Ownership Project**

34. Following on from the dog Public Space Protection Order, a new exciting project has been implemented and will involve the dog walking business. The project aims to promote responsible dog ownership across the Borough and challenge/address irresponsible ownership. The first meeting of the newly formed group took place on

Thursday 6 August, with initial actions agreed as:

- (a) looking at the ease of reporting lost and found dogs;
  - (b) studying other successful dog walking schemes to empower our dog walking communities; and.
  - (c) working with local vets to promote our process for lost and found dogs.
35. The innovative project has already gained keen interest from bodies such as the Kennel Club and an article will be published in the next One Darlington magazine.

## **CCTV**

36. Following the deployment of new CCTV equipment, we have very quickly seen positive results in terms of apprehending fly tippers in Darlington. The equipment is frequently moved around the Borough into hotspot locations and has been key to the issuing of £400 fines. The first Court case is listed for September, with a number of other complex investigations ongoing.

## **73 Longfield Road**

37. A premises closure order for 73 Longfield Road is awaiting a Court date. The occupants have been involved in drug dealing and serious nuisance for some time. It is hoped that the closure order, if granted, will bring some respite to the local residents.

## **Trading Standards**

38. Acting on information received, Trading Standards issued a press release to warn residents that individuals claiming to be ex-offenders were selling goods door-to-door in the Borough. It was reported that some of the doorstep sellers were threatening and abusive. Trading Standards advised residents not to buy from these individuals as they were likely to be part of a team of scammers working in the area. Investigations are ongoing.
39. Two areas within Darlington have been identified that may benefit from being designated as No Rogue Trader Zones. These zones are clearly defined areas where residents have expressed a view that they would prefer not to be cold called at home by traders selling goods and services door-to-door. The aim of the zones is to give residents the confidence to say no to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold callers that they are not welcome. A consultation is underway with residents within those areas.
40. Trading Standards has responded to requests from local traders for advice and information on complying with trading standards laws covering goods such as toys and personal protective equipment.
41. Trading Standards alerted residents and traders to a key point within Health Protection regulations: that, if requested to do so by shop staff, consumers are allowed to remove their face covering for age identification purposes, including when buying age restricted products such as alcohol. The team advised that shops must keep within the law and have effective systems in place to prevent sales of

age restricted products under the minimum legal age. If a face covering is not removed and shop staff cannot check the consumer's age and may refuse the sale.

## **Private Sector Housing**

### **Northgate Initiative – Empty Homes**

42. The Empty Homes Action Plan has three key objectives around reducing the number of long-term empty homes, using legislation to bring empty homes back into use and incorporating a risk-based approach in targeting problematic empty homes. Since the start of the project, through work carried out jointly by the Private Sector Housing Team and Council Tax Section, the following has taken place:
- (a) There has been a reduction in the total number of empty properties from 177 (7.73 per cent) in December 2019 to 149 (6.48 per cent) in June 2020.
  - (b) There has been a reduction in the number of empty properties over six months from 108 (4.72 per cent) in December 2019 to 95 (4.13 per cent) in June 2020.
  - (c) There has been a reduction in the number of empty properties over two years from 36 (1.57 per cent) in December 2019 to 35 (1.52 per cent) in June 2020.

### **Energy Efficiency**

43. An Energy Efficiency Action Plan has now been written to assist the aims of the initiative. The plan has four key objectives focussed on improving the current energy ratings through: enforcement, confirming information submitted in the Exemptions Register, identifying private rented properties that do not currently have an Energy Performance Certificate and providing support to those people living in fuel poverty around energy related behaviour.
44. As at December 2019, there were 148 properties in Northgate with either an F or G rating, with 69 of these being listed as rented properties. There has been an improvement in these figures as of March 2020, (the last set of issued figures) and this has improved to 142 properties in Northgate being registered as being either F or G, with 30 of these being listed as rented properties.

### **Warm Homes Fund**

45. Approval was sought from Cabinet in early December 2019 to participate in a Tees Valley Partnership to deliver the Warm Homes Fund Project. Participation in the project will deliver energy efficiency improvements for qualifying residents in the Borough which will include the Northgate Ward. The funding (£5,500,000 in funding across the partnership area) will:
- (a) install 1000 boilers and provide gas connections across the area;
  - (b) install 200 Air source heat pumps - renewable heating provision in rural areas; and
  - (c) assist 10,000 households with fuel poverty issues.

46. The project was initially anticipated to commence in February 2020, however, due to COVID-19 this was delayed. The appointed contractor, Marshall & McCourt, have produced a set of Safe Working Practices in line with government guidance for their engineers to ensure a safe working environment in each property. The instructions will be issued to all employees and accompanied by specific training.
47. The project will be up and running in the near future.

### **Innovation and Enforcement Grant/Stock Condition Survey**

48. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government awarded Darlington Borough Council £59,300 to support enforcement training and the completion of a Stock Condition Survey in Darlington.
49. Although the training element of this project has been delayed due to COVID-19, work has now commenced on the 'Data Warehouse' and current data sets include EPC data, Asylum Seeker properties, list of residential empty properties, completion certificate building control, gas installations, electrical Installations, solid fuel installations, environmental health service requests (noise, etc.), residential parking permits, school admissions, free school meals, tenancy deposit data and Council tax information.
50. The Stock Condition Survey will improve local knowledge of communities and housing standards in the private sector, enable intelligent targeting and proactive inspections to tackle unsafe and poor-quality housing and identify the worst landlords who will be challenged through effective and robust enforcement. This will provide improved and healthier living conditions for the most vulnerable across Darlington.

### **PREVENT**

51. Two Education sector Prevent webinars were held on 9 and 14 July. These were hosted by Darlington Borough Council, with assistance from Durham County Council, but delivered by the Durham Police Prevent Team. All Darlington schools (and Durham) were invited and attendance was approximately 40-50 school headteachers/safeguarding leads per three-hour session. The sessions were very well received and as a result, further 'information videos' and regular newsletter-style updates are planned by the team.
52. The Community Resilience Officer continues to provide advice to the Council's recovery team in relation to Prevent and, in particular, mobile hostile vehicle mitigation in and around pavement cafes and street events.

### **Community Resilience**

#### **Road Safety Scheme for Schools**

53. As we have now had confirmation that schools will re-open for the Autumn term. We are awaiting responses from the pilot schools as to how, and when, they would like to launch the scheme.

## Community Engagement

54. It was decided to hold a 'Virtual Pride' event this year and it proved to be very successful.
55. Across the week/weekend in August there were video performances from singers/entertainers, video messages of support from local Councillors and Council employees, emergency service personnel and national celebrities, as well as pictures/videos of last year's event shared by people who had attended. These were all hosted on the 'Darlington PRIDE weekender' Facebook site that was set up and was linked from the Council's website, Arcus website and many others.
56. The Community Resilience Officer has joined the 'More in Common Darlington' group and is working with them to coordinate events/publicity for Hate Crime Awareness week, which will take place on 10-17 October. This will involve linking up with 'Celebrating Communities' and UNITY as well as other groups representing different communities within Darlington.
57. The Community Resilience Officer organised for the Crown Prosecution Service to host an information/consultation/Q+A online event for people in Darlington which took place on 18 August. This event was publicised via the Council's website, UNITY Group, Arcus, DAD and Healthwatch.

## Licensing

58. The Licensing Department were aware that a government incentive would be introduced to increase the use of outside space (Pavement Cafes) for the hospitality industry in order to aid recovery, under the new Business and Planning Act. A great deal of preparation was carried out prior to implementation so that businesses could take advantage at the earliest opportunity. As a result, it was possible to immediately issue an additional eleven licences following the mandatory seven-day consultation period. The Licensing Committee agreed that no fee would be paid for pavement café licences issued under this Act, valid until September 2021.
59. The digitisation process is ongoing, with staff continuing to convert paper records. The procurement process for an on-line taxi licensing system (IDOX) has commenced and it is hoped that it will be in place by late 2020 or early 2021. In addition to this, an electronic workflow monitor called 'Enterprise' will be introduced to manage all licensing applications with greater efficiency.
60. The first draft of the revised taxi policy has been approved by the Licensing Committee for public consultation. This decision coincided with the Department of Transport issuing new statutory minimum standards. These changes had largely been anticipated and already featured in the revised policy.
61. Darlington's Licensing Act Policy is due to be reviewed by January 2021, however, concerns have been expressed nationally that with the closure of many licensed premises it will be impossible to adequately consult with the hospitality industry. The Local Government Association (LGA) considered that under the current circumstances it would be considered acceptable to delay renewing Licensing Act policies, a view that was supported by the Home Office. Licensing will seek approval from the Licensing Committee to delay implementing a new policy until

April next year.

### **Crime and Disorder**

62. There has been a 19 per cent decrease in the number of reported crimes during the period 1 April to 31 July 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 774 crimes. Crimes showing an increase include: Racially Aggravated Crime and Public Order. All other categories of crime are showing a significant decrease.
63. There has been a 21 per cent increase in the number of reported anti-social behaviour incidents in Darlington during the period 1 April to 31 July 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to an increase of 269 incidents. Incidents showing an increase include: Alcohol related ASB, Drugs related ASB and Youth/alcohol related ASB. However, if COVID-19 related anti-social behaviour incidents are removed, there would be a 14 per cent increase in incidents. This equates to an increase of 187 incidents.
64. There has been a 60 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 94 incidents. If COVID-19 related anti-social incidents are removed, there would be a 62 per cent decrease. This equates to a decrease of 98 incidents.

**Councillor Jonathan Dulston  
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

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**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Alan Marshall, Economy Portfolio  
Councillor Andy Keir, Local Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams  
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides an update on Town Centre Car Parking charges and seeks Council approval for funding to continue a range of parking offers to the end of December 2020, as reported to Cabinet on 12 September 2020.

**Summary**

2. Cabinet approved a series of parking offers to support the town centre in June 2018 and in October 2019. Members agreed to continue the offers and introduce further offers and some other initiatives to be investigated. The report recommended that the initiatives be reviewed in May 2020 with regard to their impact, the emerging Town Centre Strategy and importantly to have regard for the Council's overall financial position.
3. The response to COVID-19 delayed consideration of these offers and at the start of the lockdown period in March 2020 a decision was taken to temporarily cease all parking charges to support the control of the virus. Financial provision has been made for this to continue until the end of September 2020.
4. This report considers the impact of the offers prior to COVID-19, the temporary suspension of parking charges introduced as a result of COVID-19 lockdown and considers the continuance of an offer beyond September 2020.
5. Many local authorities have already reintroduced parking charges or controls but Members in recognising the challenges ahead want to try and support business and the town centre. However, as the recovery continues demand for parking is growing and more and more spaces are being taken by commuters and long-term parkers. It is important that we have spaces for short stay visits and for shoppers and it is considered appropriate to now revisit the approach.
6. Following consultation with Members and acknowledging the need for further business recovery, they wish to introduce an amended offer on parking to support the town centre and on the approach to the Christmas period.

7. More detailed information on the offers is included at **Appendix 1**, but in summary:
  - (a) The principle of charging to park will be reinstated across the town, but there will be a two hour free offer in most Council parking areas.
    - (i) Drivers will be expected to check details of the charges at machines.
    - (ii) In pay and display bays tickets will be issued for the free offer and must be displayed. Drivers will need to pay for time above the initial two hours where available.
    - (iii) In the MSCP there will be two hours free, but drivers will need to pay for time above the initial two hours.
    - (iv) The only exceptions or changes are:
      - a) Market Square - this area is presently limited to a 30-minute max stay. The free for two hours will be introduced to provide consistency across the town centre. The area will be free on Sunday, which applies to all areas.
      - b) Park Lane Car Park is a car park linked with rail journeys from the Station and as such no offers are proposed, other than free on Sunday, which applies to all areas.
  - (b) Parking in all Council parking areas will remain free on Sunday.
  - (c) The long stay parking offer in East Street car park be retained permanently.
8. It is noted that the Tees Valley Combined Authority is to consider initiatives to support Town Centre recovery and such support includes provision for parking offers. The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's MTFP is still being assessed and whilst the above measures would cost an additional £392,883 until the end of December 2020, Members consider the development and vibrancy of the Town centre to be top priority and a necessary initiative to aid recovery and to encourage people back to the High Street. This report seeks approval for the funding necessary to cover this extended parking offer.
9. In January 2021 parking charges would revert to pre-offer levels unless there is any further support received from Government or any other sources. The ongoing position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) would also be kept under review with reports back to Cabinet as required.
10. The report to Cabinet in October 2019 identified the potential to increase the number of on-street parking bays in the Imperial Quarter and Duke Street area. Whilst, still in the work programme that was not progressed as a result of COVID-19 and other priorities. This will remain in the Council's Local Transport Plan work programme. Abbots Yard car park has been refurbished to provide an improved quality car park with spaces and aisles that are more accessible and user friendly. The car park provides 61 parking bays, 22 accessible parking bays.

## Recommendations

11. It is recommended that Council approve the following parking offers:

- (a) £392,883 additional funding to extend the parking offers outlined in Appendix 1 until the end of December 2020 to be funded from General fund Reserves
- (b) The long stay parking offer in East Street car park be retained permanently

## Reasons

12. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To approve the amendment to charges.
- (b) To support the recovery of the town centre.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

## Background Papers

Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report June 2018  
 Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report October 2019  
 Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report September 2020

Dave Winstanley: Extension 6618  
 LC

S17 Crime and Disorder	Whilst anti-social behaviour and crime does on occasions take place in car parks, there is no impact on crime and disorder as a result of this report.
Health and Wellbeing	Users of car parking facilities will be encouraged to pay by contactless methods and follow public health hygiene guidance in terms of hand cleansing following use of any machines.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There may be an impact on carbon emissions as a result of encouraging more car journeys into the town centre.
Diversity	An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the offer introduced in June 2018 and this has been updated to consider the proposals in the report. Equality and diversity will be considered in the development of the parking proposals outlined in this report in the design stages.
Wards Affected	Car parks are located in Park East and Northgate, however residents from across the Borough and beyond will utilise them.
Groups Affected	No group is affected any differently to any other.
Budget and Policy Framework	The extension of the parking offers will have a financial impact on the MTFP
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The proposals contained in this report have an impact on the Perfectly Placed element of the strategy; encouraging more people to utilise the town centre for business, retail, social and leisure.

Efficiency	There is no impact on the Council's Efficiency agenda as a result of this report.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

13. In October 2019 Cabinet agreed a series of Town Centre Parking initiatives that included:
- (a) Free on Sunday, introduced from 1 November 2019 in all Council operated pay and display car parks, Feethams Multi-storey car park and on-street pay and display parking bays.
  - (b) The parking offer introduced in June 2018 be continued:
    - (i) two hours free car parking in specific car parks located outside of the ring road,
    - (ii) East Street car park having an offer of all day parking for £2.00.
  - (c) Plans to be developed that can be consulted on to increase the amount of parking spaces available in Duke Street and the Imperial Quarter areas.
  - (d) Abbots Yard Car Park Refurbishment.
14. It was agreed that these measures would continue until 1 May 2020 and be reviewed ahead of that date to:
- (a) Determine their impact;
  - (b) Consider them in conjunction with the emerging Town Centre Strategy as it is developed.
  - (c) Have regard for the Council's overall financial position.
15. A COVID-19 related decision was taken in March 2020 to cease all parking charges and financial provision has been made to cover this decision until the end of September 2020.
16. When the initiatives were introduced it was clear that these would need to have regard for the Council's overall financial position. This has clearly changed dramatically as a result of COVID-19. This report provides an update on the initiatives introduced.
17. The impact of the offers has been assessed and more detail is included at **Appendix 2**. In summary:
- (a) The parking offers introduced have resulted in a slight increase in monthly tickets being issued of around 2000-3000 per month, which is positive for the

town centre.

- (b) A pattern of displacement has been identified, with on street parking decreasing in usage significantly and the locations with free offers increasing, which will have changed footfall patterns in these areas.
  - (c) The free offer in outer ring road has had an impact on long-stay car parking capacity and as such an impact on business operations for staff and business who rely on long stay parking and the ability to use their vehicles during the day.
  - (d) The Feethams MSCP has seen slight increases in usage until the free on Sunday offer was introduced.
  - (e) The East Street Long Stay offer has proved popular, possibly associated with the capacity issues associated with the free offer short stay offer in long stay car parks identified above.
18. The impact of COVID-19 will have an impact on the town centre and therefore a corresponding impact on assumptions on parking income with the MTFP. The temporary position of free parking in all areas during and post COVID Lockdown means it is difficult to understand the parking patterns over recent months as tickets are not issued and data has not been collected. Therefore, it is difficult to predict what levels parking demand will return as the recovery from COVID-19 continues.
19. There are multiple issues arising from COVID-19 that will impact on parking patterns and behaviour that will need to be reviewed and assessed as recovery continues.
- (a) Walking and cycling has been promoted and encouraged and people are being more active.
  - (b) Public transport usage has seen a significant decline and for periods of lockdown and recovery the use of public transport was actively discouraged except for absolute essential journeys. Capacity on buses is still at reduced levels and occupancy levels are much lower than pre-COVID-19, at the time of writing the report circa 30-35%.
  - (c) Driving was encouraged as lockdown started to be lifted as a means of travelling and social distancing from others. At the start of lockdown traffic levels reduced to around 70 to 80% of normal levels and at the time of writing this report had returned to around 10% below.
  - (d) Shopping patterns have changed with more on-line shopping and less frequent shopping patterns, with people limiting exposure to risk. It is early in the recovery phase to understand this in any detail with more town centre businesses opening and town centre activity commencing, which may see some people to revert to patterns, but there will be a new normal that has yet to form.
  - (e) Home working has been and remains a necessity given social distancing requirements. This will have reduced the demand on long stay parking and

some town centre activity for those businesses that are town centre located.

- (f) Future lockdowns need to be considered in terms of any parking initiatives.
- (g) As the recovery phase continues the lack of parking control will have an impact as there are already anecdotal reports that prime parking spaces are being taken up by commuters and town centre workers occupying the spaces all day.

This could have an increasingly negative impact on town centre visits as more workers return taking free spaces without time control. This could result in demand issues in terms of visitors being forced to park further from the town centre and choosing not to visit.

20. All these factors will have a contributory effect on predicted parking income that is built into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). As confidence returns and shops and business re-open, parking levels could return to pre-COVID-19 levels. However, this is uncertain and could be over a long and gradual period.

### **Continuation of Offers**

21. Many local authorities have already reintroduced parking charges or controls, but Members recognise the challenges of the recovery and want to try and support business and the town centre. However, as the recovery continues demand is growing and more spaces are being taken by commuters and long terms parkers. This is contrary to supporting town centre activity and ensuring there are spaces for short stay visits to shops and businesses.
22. In consultation with Members they wish to see a continued offer to support the town centre business on the approach to Christmas. It is therefore proposed that controls are reintroduced across the town with a number of parking offers continued to help support the town centre. More detailed information on the offers is included at Appendix 1, but in summary:
- (a) The principle of charging to park will be reinstated across the town, but there will be a two hour free offer in most Council parking areas.
    - (i) Drivers will be expected to check details of the charges at machines.
    - (ii) In pay and display bays tickets will be issued for the free offer and must be displayed. Drivers will need to pay for time above the initial two hours where available.
    - (iii) In the MSCP there will be two hours free, but drivers will need to pay for time above the initial two hours.
    - (iv) The only exceptions or changes are:
      - a) Market Square - this area is presently limited to a 30 minute max stay. The free for two hours will be introduced to provide consistency across the town centre. The area will be free on Sunday, which applies to all areas.

- b) Park Lane Car Park is a car park linked with rail journeys from the Station and as such no offers are proposed, other than free on Sunday, which applies to all areas.

(b) Parking in all Council parking areas will remain Free on Sunday.

(c) The long stay parking offer in East Street car park be retained permanently.

- 23. The Tees Valley Combined Authority are considering support initiatives for Town Centres later in the year that could include support for parking offers. The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's MTFP is still being assessed and whilst the above measures would cost an additional £392,883 until the end of December 2020, Members consider this necessary to support the town centre recovery and to encourage people back to the High Street. This report seeks approval for the funding necessary to cover this extended parking offer.

#### Imperial Quarter and Duke Street Areas

- 24. The report to Cabinet in October 2019 identified the potential to increase the number of on-street parking bays in this area. Whilst, still in the work programme that was has not progressed as a result of COVID-19 and other priorities. This will remain in the Council's Local Transport Plan work programme but is currently deferred.

#### Abbots Yard Car Park

- 25. Abbots Yard car park has been refurbished with improved drainage, a second pay and display machine and a new surface. The layout has been reviewed to ensure that the spaces and aisles are more accessible and user friendly. The car park provides 61 parking bays, 22 accessible parking bays (in two blocks) and five motorbike parking spaces.

#### **Financial Implications**

- 26. The Council receives income from car parking charges which is used to offset the running costs such as repair and maintenance, business rates and staffing. Although not included as a cost in the budget, there is an apportionment cost of holding the land for the purpose of car parking. This net income provides resources to fund other services provided by the Council and if income is not achieved, it is to the detriment of the Council's overall financial position.
- 27. The impact of the COVID-19 on the Councils MTFP is still being assessed and whilst the above measures would cost an additional £392,883 until the end of December 2020, Members consider this necessary to support the town centre recovery and to encourage people back to the High Street. The additional costs will be funded from General fund reserves.
- 28. The anticipated financial impact is based on reduced patronage for the October to December period of 70% of normal to reflect the impact of COVID-19.
- 29. The reviews of parking areas in the Imperial Quarter and Duke Street will have a cost implication to consider and implement and this would be considered as part of the development of a proposal and the Town Centre Strategy and Local Transport

Plan Programme. However, if additional spaces are created there could potentially be additional parking revenue generated.

### **Legal Implications**

30. The necessary legal notices are being progressed and arrangements being put in place for implementation of these measure subject to approval by Cabinet and Council. These arrangements enable the Council to implement the recommendations swiftly to support the town centre and business recovery.

### **Consultation**

31. The proposals for the Imperial Quarter and Duke Street will be subject to consultation as part of the feasibility and design stages.

### **Equalities considerations**

32. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out for the parking offer introduced in June 2018. The main impacts identified were as a result of the nine long stay car parks being located outside the inner ring road, which means a short/moderate walk into the town centre that some individuals may find more difficult. The particular groups of people with protected characteristics this affects are; Age, Disability, Pregnancy, and Carers. However, as a result of introducing the two hours free parking it is likely that the pressure on the short stay parking within the inner ring road will be reduced, freeing up more spaces for individuals who find the walk difficult to access parking. In addition, on street car parking for Blue Badge Holders is not affected and there is also a car park exclusively for Blue Badge Holders at the Town Hall. This EIA has been reviewed.
33. The demand for car parking has increased as traffic levels and economic activity have increased, and this has an impact on the availability of parking spaces near to shops and businesses. Short stay parking spaces in the town centre are predominantly for people visiting for a short period of time, but without control these are effectively blocked by cars parking for longer period of time or even all day. This reduces the availability of spaces for some people who have difficulties walking a moderate or long distance, in particular those with the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and carers. Reintroducing controls will increase the turnover of spaces, helping to ensure that there is more availability of spaces in the town centre.
34. The numbers of blue badge parking bays in the town centre car parks will remain the same; on street car parking for Blue Badge Holders is not affected, but controls will be reintroduced to create more turnover of spaces and prevent blocking; and there is also a car park exclusively for Blue Badge Holders at the Town Hall.
35. As controls are introduced and tickets are required there will be greater enforcement within the car parks and on-street to ensure that the appropriate payments are made but also that drivers comply with the rules. As demand for parking has increased there has been an increase in drivers parking outside of parking bays and in blue badge parking bays, creating issues in particular for people with disabilities, but also creating obstructions for others such as carers and those who are pregnant/on maternity.

36. An EIA screening exercise was also been undertaken for the proposal to remove car parking charges on Sundays for a trial period. This concluded there is a very low risk of the proposal leading to insufficient car parking spaces to meet demand – including for Blue Badge holders – and therefore people with disabilities and/or older people not being able to park in the town centre as easily, however the likelihood of this is considered to be minimal.
37. Equality and diversity will be considered in the development of the Imperial Quarter and Duke Street area as part of the feasibility and design stages.

## Proposed Charging Structure October to December 2020 (inclusive)

## APPENDIX 1

## Off Street Car Parks – Town Centre within Inner Ring road

Parking Location	Spaces	Charges Prior to Offers <i>(any offers introduced highlighted in italics)</i>		PROPOSED October to December inclusive		
		Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am – 6pm	Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am – 6pm	
Abbotts Yard	80	1 hour £1 2 hours £2	£1 all day	<b>First 2 hours FREE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE)  <b>£1 for each subsequent hour</b> <b>3 hours £1</b> <b>4 hours £2</b> <b>5 hours £3</b> <b>6 hours £4</b> <b>7 hours £5</b> <b>8 hours £6</b>  <b>No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</b>	<b>No Charge</b>	
Commercial Street East	117	3 hours £3 4 hours £4 5 hours £5	<b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER</b> <i>introduced</i> <b>October 2019</b>			
Commercial Street West	156	6 hours £6 7 hours £7 8 hours £8 9 hours £9 10 hours £10				
Winston Street North	25					
Winston Street South	36					
Town Hall	8					
Feethams MSCP	650					
<b>East Street MSCP has traditionally been under-utilised as a short stay car park. It has been converted to include a low cost long stay parking offer within the town centre.</b>						
East Street	338	£1 per hour £4 per day  <b>£2 per day introduced June 2018.</b>		£1 per day	<b>First 2 hours FREE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE)  <b>£2 per day</b>  <b>No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</b>	<b>No Charge</b>

### Off Street Car Parks – Town Centre outside the inner ring road

Car Park	Spaces	Charges Prior to Offers <i>(any offers introduced highlighted in italics)</i>		PROPOSED October to December inclusive	
		Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am to 6pm	Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am to 6pm
Archer Street	62	£1 per hour -up to 3 hours	£1 per day  <b><i>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER Introduced October 2019</i></b>	<b><i>Continue Offer introduced in June 2018</i></b>	<b><i>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</i></b>
Kendrew Street East	76	More than 3 hours - £4 per day			
Kendrew Street West	85	2 days - £8 3 days - £12			
Park Place East	95	Weekly ticket (up to 7 days) £16			
Park Place West	115	<b><i>First 2 hours Free Introduced June 2018 3 hours £1 £4 per day</i></b>			
Garden Street	72				
Hird Street	14				
St. Hilda's Tannery Yard Parkgate	15	<b><i>Daily and weekly tickets remained the same</i></b>			

### On Street Parking Bays

Parking Location	Charges Prior to Offers <i>(any offers introduced highlighted in italics)</i>		PROPOSED October to December inclusive	
	Mon – Sat 8am – 6pm	Sunday	8am – 6pm	Sunday
Barnard Street Barnard East Back Street Beaumont Street Beaumont Street West Duke Street Gladstone Street Kendrew Street North Lodge Terrace South Arden Street Victoria Road Winston Street	<b>Max Stay 2 hours</b> 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof No return within 1 hour	<b>Max Stay 2 hours</b> 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof No return within 1 hour  <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER Introduced October 2019</b>	<b>First 2 hours</b> <b>NO CHARGE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE)  A max stay of 2 hours exists Free 2 hours and must display a ticket  <b>No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</b>	<b>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</b>
East Row Horsemarket	<b>Max Stay 30 mins</b> 50p for maximum 30 mins or part thereof No return within 1 hour	<b>Max Stay 30 mins</b> 50p for maximum 30 mins or part thereof No return within 1 hour  <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER Introduced October 2019</b>	<b>First 2 hours</b> <b>NO CHARGE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE)  A max stay of 2 hours exists Free 2 hours and must display a ticket  <b>No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</b>  NOTE: this changes the maximum stay from 30 minutes in these bays to 2 hours  <b>No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</b>	<b>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</b>

<p>Grange Road, Town centre Northumberland Street  (Imperial Quarter)</p>	<p><b>Max Stay 3 hours</b> 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof  No return within 1 hour</p>	<p><b>Max Stay 3 hours</b> 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof  No return within 1 hour  <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER</b> <i>Introduced October 2019</i></p>	<p><b>First 2 hours</b> <b>NO CHARGE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE) 2½ hours - 50p 3 hours - £1  A max stay of 3 hours exists 50p for each 30 mins above the or part thereof to a Max of 3 hours total  No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</p>	<p><b>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</b></p>
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	<b>Charges Prior to Offers</b> <i>(any offers introduced highlighted in italics)</i>		<b>PROPOSED</b>	
<b>Parking Location</b>	<b>Mon – Sat</b> <b>9am – 5pm</b>	<b>Sunday</b> <b>(Introduced – Oct 19)</b>	<b>Mon – Sat</b> <b>9am – 5pm</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
<p>East Raby Street Hargreave Terrace Larchfield Street Napier Street Park Place Powlett Street Primrose Street Raby Street Swan Street Victoria Embankment West Powlett Street</p>	<p>Max 2 hours 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof  No return within 1 hour</p>	<p>Max 2 hours 50p for each 30 mins or part thereof  No return within 1 hour  <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER</b> <i>Introduced October 2019</i></p>	<p><b>First 2 hours</b> <b>NO CHARGE</b> (NO CHARGE BUT MUST DISPLAY TICKET FROM MACHINE)  A max stay of 2 hours exists Free 2 hours and must display a ticket  No return for 1 hour on expiry of initial ticket.</p>	<p><b>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</b></p>

### CAR PARKS WITH SPECIFIC PURPOSE AND CHARGING STRUCTURE

Car Park	Spaces	Charges Prior to Offers		June 18 Offer		SEPT 2020	
		Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am to 6pm	Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am to 6pm	Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am to 6pm
Chesnut Street	109	£2 per day  HGVs and coaches free  Weekly ticket (cars only, up to 7 days) £8 per week  HGVs and coaches 6pm-8am every night £4 per night	£1 per day, HGVs and coaches free	<u>First 2 hours NO CHARGE</u>  <u>3 hours £1</u>  £2 per day  HGVs and coaches free  Weekly ticket (cars only, up to 7 days) £8 per week  HGVs and coaches 6pm-8am every night £4 per night	<u>First 2 hours NO CHARGE</u>  £1 per day, HGVs and coaches free   <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER Introduced October 2019</b>	No change to June 2018 offer	<i>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</i>

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#### Park Lane (Station)

Park Lane is predominantly linked to Rail Station usage and as such there are no planned changes associated with this car park.

Car Park	Spaces	Charges Prior to Offers <i>(any offers introduced highlighted in italics)</i>		Proposed Sept 2020	
		Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 9.30am to 5pm	Mon-Sat 8am to 6pm including bank holidays	Sunday 8am – 6pm
Park Lane	108	£5 all day	£1 all day  <b>FREE ON SUNDAY OFFER Introduced October 2019</b>	£5 all day	<i>Continue Free on Sunday Offer introduced October 19</i>

## Assessment of Initiatives

## APPENDIX 2

1. Some assessment has been undertaken on the impact of the initiatives.
2. Parking patterns have changed as a result of the initiatives introduced. Some analysis and anecdotal evidence has been undertaken:
  - a) Free 2 hours in car parks outside the ring road.

The offer was introduced in July 18 and a steady increase in uptake was observed up until Christmas 2018 and since then has remained relatively steady at around 14,000 free tickets issued per month.

The figures in the table below show the average number of tickets issued in these car parks has almost doubled.

	Average monthly Paid Ticket Numbers	Average Monthly Free Ticket Numbers	TOTAL Average monthly Tickets issued
Pre-Offer Aug 17 to May 18	10778	nil	<b>10778</b>
Offer period Aug 18 to Feb 20	6263	13318	<b>19581</b>

The plateau reached at Christmas 2018 of around 14,000 free tickets per month is likely due to the capacity of car parks being reached and ability to find space.

The offer did result in some issues for business and commuters, who use these car parks as long stay parking areas. If business users left a space for a visit it was unlikely that they could find a long stay space on their return. This was a negative impact of the offer especially when trying to encourage town centre business growth. The offer has resulted in a general pressure on long stay parking capacity for business and commuters.

There was also evidence of meter feeding to secure free parking for long periods, which is contrary to the intention of the parking offer to generate turnover of spaces and more visits to the town centre. This has added to the figures reported.

### Impact across the Town

In analysing the impact of the offers across the town the table below shows average monthly ticket numbers over 3 periods:

1. Pre-Offer period
2. Offer Period 1 – where two hours free car parking in specific car parks located outside of the ring road & East Street car park having an offer of all day parking for £2.00 were introduced.
3. Offer Period 2 – As Offer 1 plus free on Sunday in all Council Parking areas

<b>Average monthly tickets</b>	Pre-Offer Aug 17 to May 18	Offer period 1 Aug 18 to Sep 19	Offer Period 2 Oct 19 to Feb 20*	Difference from current offer to pre-offers
On Street Parking	30340	25376	23950	-6390
All Car parks (incl MSCPs)	88483	95714	97643	9160
<b>Total</b>	<b>118823</b>	<b>121090</b>	<b>121593</b>	<b>2770</b>
Feethams MSCP	20685	21056	19071	-1614

\*Free on Sundays introduced

The average number of monthly tickets has shown a slight increase in tickets issued per month (2000-3000), which is positive for the town centre and suggests the offers have assisted support the town centre.

Not surprisingly the tickets in car parks generally have increased, which is expected given the free two-hour offer in the outer ring road car parks. However, it is interesting that Feethams MSCP (with no offers) had a slight increase until the free on Sunday offer was introduced.

The major change has been On-Street parking locations with a significant drop. This change in parking habits and locations will have changed footfall through certain parts of the town and particularly footfall past businesses where on-street parking exists. However, this also suggests there may simply have been a displacement of parking patterns and not the impact of significantly increasing visits into the town centre.

b) East Street £2 all Day

East Street was a relatively under-used car park. The offer was designed to introduce low cost long stay parking in the town centre. Ticket numbers have increased and has provided useful additional long stay parking options and capacity with short stay parking displacing to the car parks with Free 2 hour offers.

<b>Average monthly tickets</b>	Pre-Offer Aug 17 to May 18	Offer period 1 Aug 18 to Sep 19	Offer Period 2 Oct 19 to Feb 20*	Difference fro current offer to pre-offers
East Street	4194	5599	6228	2034

c) Free Sunday – Evidence had not been gathered prior to lockdown in relation to the impact of not charging on Sundays. However, based on previous income levels this represents a potential loss of £80,000 at pre-Covid19 parking occupancy levels.

Ticket numbers in on-street locations showed a further drop of around 1426 tickets per month when the free on Sunday offer was introduced.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that on street spaces were used by longer term parkers either all day or cars remained occupied by town centre residents or people choosing to leave their vehicle overnight following an evening out. This potentially had the impact of reducing the amount of free short stay spaces.

**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Response of Adult Services and Commissioning to COVID-19**

2. The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the response of Adult Services and Strategic Commissioning to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Members heard that Adult Social Care (ASC) had responded proactively to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic since its emergence in early March 2020, that the service had ensured that service users and their families had been supported to remain as safe as possible, and continued to have their care needs met, during a fast moving and complex environment. Members also heard that care providers had received the support needed to enable them to continue to provide care in extremely challenging circumstances.
4. The Committee were reassured to learn that service delivery had been developed, adapted or extended to anticipate and respond to demand, and that ASC had worked closely with key partners including the NHS, police and the voluntary sector to mobilise staff and resources to ensure that core service functions were maintained and individuals safeguarded.
5. Naturally, Members had many questions and sought clarification on both the number of COVID-related deaths in Care Home settings, and the staff absence figures in the Home Care Sector, in comparison with those Home Care staff who had tested positive for COVID-19. Further discussions centred on plans to re-open day services, the allocation and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to care homes, the recruitment and retention of staff in the Care Sector during the pandemic, local testing arrangements in terms of local and regional options, and the testing arrangements in place upon admission to, and discharge from, hospital.
6. Members explored the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the anticipated cost to the local authority.
7. Concerns were raised about potential safeguarding issues, and whilst Members were satisfied to hear that there had been no increase in reported cases of domestic violence during the period outlined within the report, it was worrying to learn that there had been an increase in the severity of abuse within cases. It was also note that there had been a decrease in cases of self-neglect, however as lockdown has eased and home visits increased, it was anticipated that the number of cases would return to expected levels.
8. The Committee were keen to ensure that dignity and emotional well-being were maintained as part of a more qualitative response, and Members concluded

discussion by formally expressing their gratitude to all the staff in the Children and Adults Department, and to those providers and workers within the wider Care Sector.

### **Adult Social Care Transformation Programme**

9. Members received a report providing an update on the progress of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme. The Transformation Programme enables the delivery of modern services which are Care Act compliant, and work in partnership with people to maximise their individual strengths and assets. This is a rolling programme, and the Committee were informed that there are currently 18 projects in progress.
10. We noted that the on-line Financial Assessment tool was now in operation, and had received good feedback, and were pleased to learn that those residents in receipt of a personal budget to facilitate their own care had received additional support and advice throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Members did express concern about a shift to on-line delivery, with Members noting that not all residents had access or the skills to access, on-line systems, however were reassured that face-to-face and telephone options were also still available. Further discussion also ensued on the promotion of on-line facilities.

### **Performance Indicators Quarter 4 2019/20**

11. The Committee received a report providing performance data against Key Performance Indicators for 2019/20 at Quarter 4. It was reported that of the ten indicator reported on at six months, six of the indicators showed performance better than at the same time last year, one indicator showed performance was not as good as at the same time last year, yet this was continuing to be monitored and managed, and that the remaining three indicators were not comparable.
12. We noted that demand for services had fallen during the Covid pandemic and the increased number of Safeguarding Strategy meetings, however were informed that the latter was as a result of greater reporting and awareness, which was positive to hear.

### **Work Programme**

13. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

**Councillor Anne-Marie Curry  
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee**

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24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Work Programme**

2. Members considered and updated the Work Programme 2020/21 developed by this Scrutiny Committee and we agreed that the presentation by the Regional School Commissioner be re-arranged as soon as possible.

**COVID-19 Pandemic**

3. A report was received from the Director of Children and Adults Services updating Members on progress within Children's Services, focussing specifically on the COVID-19 pandemic response.
4. The report advised on how the workforce within Children's Services had adapted to home working immediately following lock down on the 24 March 2020. Staffing levels had remained at normal levels throughout the pandemic and to support understanding of how services were likely to be impacted by the crisis, a workforce capacity tracking tool had been developed.
5. Legislative changes came into force on 24 April 2020 to allow for flexibilities in care planning processes for children in care and adoptive pathways through the Adoption and Children (Corona Virus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, however it was reported that other than introducing virtual methods of working the Local Authority had not implemented any of the amendments and Children's Services remained operational throughout the pandemic.
6. Covid-19 Risk Assessments inclusive of safeguarding and assurance RAG rating were completed for all children open to services from all organisations at the start of lockdown, to identify the most high-risk families and a multi-agency group was established to ensure strategic oversight across all agencies of any vulnerable children.
7. All schools, 100 per cent in Darlington had remained open for vulnerable children and those with key worker parents, compared to the national average of 61 per cent of schools being open; and on 3 July 2020 average attendance at school for children with a social worker was 30 per cent, which compared favorably with the last published Department for Education national attendance estimate for this cohort which was, 18 per cent as of 11 June 2020.
8. It was also reported that in Darlington, normal decision-making processes for SEND continued throughout the COVID-19 period and the Multi-Agency Panel continued to meet virtually fortnightly.

9. Members were pleased to acknowledge that throughout the pandemic there had been a strong multi-agency focus on attendance and congratulated the schools on the work they had undertaken in close collaboration with the local authority. Members did express some concern about the high number of children and young people with Educational Health Care Plans who were not attending school, despite schools being open. Members of this Scrutiny have initiated contact with the Parent/Carer's Forum to pursue this issue further.
10. Members heard direct views from school representatives in attendance at the meeting, on their contact with the local authority throughout the pandemic and were encouraged to hear that there had been good working relationships between the Council and both primary and secondary schools had felt well supported.

### **Service delivery**

11. The Committee noted that the number of referrals had reduced substantially throughout the early stages of lockdown however; since June these numbers had steadily risen to nearer normal levels with 76 children referred during May 2020.
12. Early Help Services continued to respond to all contacts from professionals and members of the public, maintaining a focus of regular contact with families; virtual home visits; and online contacts by use of technology and social media and it was noted that services had been very creative in responding to need throughout lockdown.
13. It was also reported that missing episodes had reduced, and most children had adhered to the lockdown measures with return home interviews carried out through virtual means. Assessments and reviews had also continued throughout lockdown by virtual mediums such as Microsoft Teams, FaceTime and WhatsApp video calls; and where possible, using social distancing and PPE, face to face home visits had taken place for children in need, children subject to child protection plans and children who are in care.
14. Since the beginning of April, 26 Children have been brought into care with 61.54 per cent of those being placed with extended family Members. Contact between children in care and their families has been via virtual methods which had been well received; and there had been minimal movement in placements as a result of Covid-19.
15. Residential Homes have been working as per regulations and standards, with staff maintaining a focus on safeguarding children in their care. Care Leavers have remained in contact with services and received support in various ways during the pandemic.
16. Foster Carers have been flexible to help the service provide placements and have facilitated virtual contacts between children in their care and families. Adoption Tees Valley remained operational and children have continued to move into their adoptive placements.
17. Members acknowledged the work undertaken with children and families by children's practitioners and the schools, and agreed to continue to follow the outcomes for these families in various parent/carer forums.

## **Public Health – Post Covid-19 Priorities**

18. At our meeting on 7 September we received a presentation from Ken Ross, the Public Health Specialist outlining the Government's Obesity Strategy, launched in July 2020. The Strategy recognizes obesity as a significant risk factor for covid-19 and also complements the Darlington Healthy Weight Plan; highlighted how schools were being supported with mental health issues, including the successful trailblazer bid for school based mental health support through transition; the focus on children and young people in years 4-8 from September 2021; and the emotional health and resilience nurse, commissioned from the Harrogate and District Foundation Trust.
19. The presentation also highlighted how the 0-19 service had at the start of lockdown, changed its style of delivery to prioritizing families ensuring the most vulnerable had contact from the service, delivered by various virtual means. The service had received positive feedback from parents and families who had accessed the service during this time.

### **Independent reviewing officer annual report 2019/20**

20. Members considered the Annual Report and the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service in relation to Looked After Children and the performance of the unit, in a range of responsibilities.
21. We also wanted to learn more about how the Reviewing Officers were forging relationships with Members, the reasons for the caseload figure in Darlington remaining in the upper limit of the statutory guidance of 70 and discussed the importance of full participation of children in care in their reviews and contact with the IRO.

### **Performance - Quarter 4 2029/20**

22. Quarter 4 performance January to March 2019/20 highlighted
  - 17.2 per cent of re-referrals were repeated within 12 months, which was better than the target of 18 per cent;
  - 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection Plan and 100 per cent of Children Looked After had been allocated to a qualified social worker;
  - 0.6 per cent of children who had their Child Protection Plan (CPP) ceased, had been subject to a CPP for 2 years or more and continues to remain below the target of 5 per cent;
  - 89.0 per cent of statutory looked after children visits had been completed within the timescale;
  - 94.3 per cent of looked after children who were due a review health check received them within the required timescale;
  - 90.2 per cent of looked after children who were due a review dental check had received them within the required timescale;
  - 28.1 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

23. The areas highlighted for focus were
- rate of looked after children had increased and was currently 120.1 per 10,000 population (270 children), compared to 117.2 per 10,000 population (264) last year.

#### **Designated Officer Annual Report**

24. Members received the Annual Report of the Designated Officer highlighting the progress and performance of the Designated Officer April 2019 to March 2020 and the required actions for April 2020 to March 2021.
25. Members discussed in particular the increase in the number of referrals in this reporting period explained by a high number of allegations from one particular school which accounted for 19 per cent of the total number of allegations, mostly relating to the use of restraint, and the Action Plan that had been put in place with the Safeguarding Officer to address this issue and what contact had been made with the Designated Officer from other authorities.

#### **Learning and Skills Annual Report**

26. We considered the performance of the Learning and Skills Service for the academic year 2019/20. The service continues to perform well with a 'Good' Ofsted grade, whilst supporting some of the most vulnerable adults, young people and families in Darlington.
27. There are a number of challenges to be faced in 2020/21 with the move towards Tees Valley Combined Authority priorities, as part of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget and the challenges faced by Covic-19 with the transition to online learning at the start of lockdown; and the ongoing challenges of apprenticeship funding.

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**COUNCIL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**COVID – 19**

2. Like all other Scrutiny Committees we received an update from Officers on the actions taken within the service areas of our Scrutiny Committee over the previous months in relation to COVID-19, including the financial implications to the Council, the implications on Darlington businesses and the overall economy, how services were operating during the pandemic and the fundamental way in which employees had adopted to new ways of working.
3. At the time of our meeting, the Council had received a £6.231 million grant as part of the Government's £3.2 billion funding provided to support local Council's COVID-19 response, however we were advised that there would still be a shortfall within this financial year.
4. The main areas of pressure are additional expenditure, loss of income, an increase in applications for Council Tax support and Council Tax and non-domestic rates income losses. Some of the figures we were provided with in our report were based on assumptions at that time i.e. that there would be no further income from the Hippodrome during 2020, a graduated return of income in relation to the Dolphin Centre and a return of car parking charges.
5. It was reassuring to note that, in relation to Council Tax and Business Rates collection, despite the challenges faced by residents and businesses, collection levels were only slightly lower than the same period last year with £10.9 million of Council Tax and £3.6 millions of Business Rates collected. There had however been a significant increase in the number of residents applying for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support with the overall total at 11,992 (an increase of 12 per cent), the highest level since May 2016.
6. Local businesses are continuing to be supported both financially and operationally and Officers worked extremely hard to ensure that the business grant funding which had been received was distributed to those businesses eligible as quickly as possible to assist them and, in doing so, I am pleased to report that the Council were in the top ten quickest payers in the Country at one stage during the process.
7. We were also updated on the significant work done by HR during the pandemic, including health and safety, to ensure the safety of staff and members of the public, the reinstatement of the democratic processes of the Council and the work of the legal team, registrars and the complaints and information governance team and we placed on record our thanks to all staff for the way in which they have adapted to the challenges faced and the new way or working.

## **Darlington Borough Council and Microsoft 365**

8. It has been recognised that the Council very quickly managed to mobilise its workforce at the start of the lock down period and I thought it would be useful for our Scrutiny Committee to receive a presentation on the work which had already been taking place by the Authority and Xentrall Shared Services to implement Microsoft 365 which helped us to be able to respond so quickly and keep key services operational.
9. The information architecture plan for Microsoft Office 365, which put in place the building blocks and foundations for 365 was developed by Xentrall Shared Services in 2018 to enable a more modern working solution to be implemented across the Council and its services and had already begun to be rolled out in a very low key and structured way. This work put the Authority in a very strong position to react quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic and the presentation covered the immediate objectives following the outbreak which included, mobilising staff safely and quickly, looking at gaps in business critical users, designing a desk top solution to move desk top machines, working with Chief Officers to keep key services operational and the establishment of a key communications channel via TEAMS, which we are now all familiar with.
10. Further applications with the Office 365 suite will continue to be rolled out to staff with training and support, however, our thanks must be given to the Officers for the work which has been done and which put the Authority in such a strong position.

## **Complaints, Compliments and Comments**

11. We considered the Annual report which was also considered by Cabinet in relation to the number of complaints, compliments and comments which had been received by the Authority during 2019/20.
12. The Council constantly strives to ensure an organisational structure in which complaints and accepted, owned and resolved as quickly as possible and one in which learning from complaints is used to improve services. There is also a statutory requirement for the Council to produce annual reports in respect of representations received under the Adult Social Care, the Children's Social Care and the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures.
13. We were advised that, during 2019/20, 838 complaints had been received, a slight increase from the previous year, 292 compliments had been received, again a slight increase from the previous year and that there had been a reduction in the number of comments which had been received from 240 to 168.
14. It is important for the Authority to analyse the complaints to determine whether there are any concerns in any particular areas and to implement organisational changes were needed, however, it is also important, when looking at the figures, to put the number of complaints into the context of the high number of transactions/interactions with the public.
15. We have asked for contextual information to be included in future reports, together with further graphical comparative information.

## **Review of Complaints Made to the Local Government Ombudsman**

16. We have also considered a report which was considered by Cabinet outlining the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) during the period October 2019 and March 2020.
17. During the period concerned, there were seven cases subject to decision by the LGSCO and one by the HO. Of the seven to the LGSCO two were upheld relating to financial assessments associated with the provision of adult social care services. Action has been taken to remedy the complaints and processes changed to ensure there is not a re-occurrence.

## **Economic Indicators – Impact of COVID19**

18. Following on from our special meeting in July when we received an update on the actions taken following the lock down period, we received a further presentation at our September meeting specifically on the effect of the pandemic on the economic indicators for Darlington.
19. We were advised that although Darlington has continued to perform well on a range of economic indices it was facing some challenges some of which have been growing for some years and some of which have recently emerged as a specific result of COVID 19 and the likely subsequent recession. It is important for the Authority to understand those challenges to enable a shared understanding of the emerging issues to be developed, inform the Council's activities and resources and highlight those areas which require action.
20. The presentation highlighted some of the headline indicators and it was reported that the recovery would be slow with long-lasting effects specifically affecting low paid workers and young people. Early indicators show that unemployment has increased across the age profiles.
21. A Business Impact Survey has been undertaken by the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to determine the extent of the impact on local businesses across the Tees Valley, the results of this will help to shape the region's response and the economic recovery. The key findings of the survey were included in the presentation.
22. As highlighted in paragraph 6 above, local businesses were and continue to be supported, 2,093 businesses have received grants of £10,000 and £25,000, business rates discounts worth £16.6 million have been awarded to 682 local retail, hospitality and leisure businesses providing full exemption for business rates for 2020/21 and a discretionary grant scheme has been implemented.
23. The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services reported that the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy was still to be fully realised but there was an emerging picture of different impacts across the industry sector, occupation and places and that work would continue with colleagues and stakeholders across the Tees Valley to develop a Tees Valley Recovery Plan, setting out how it can form a key part of re-building the UK economy

24. We particularly discussed the skills shortage and the number of employers within the Borough who offered apprenticeships, particularly the higher level apprenticeships which would help deliver against the level 4 qualifications, the need to encourage employers in Darlington to become living wage employers, the validity of the statistics in the TVCA statistics some work being undertaken by the Tees Valley Combined Authority to identify where the skills and training issues are both in the current and future growth prospect so that there is a ready supply of skills and people when needed; and the need to continue to make Darlington a Town where people wanted to live, work and visit.

### **Greater Faverdale (Burtree Garden Village) – Design Code**

25. A Design Code for the Greater Faverdale (Burtree Garden Village) has been developed. If approved, the Design Code will ensure a comprehensive quality code to create developer- led Quality of Place and offer the Council's development management team a clear assessment tool to be used in the planning process which will enable them to evaluate and appraise objectively forthcoming planning applications where design would be a material consideration.
26. The site at Greater Faverdale is a 178 ha mixed use site, which was supported as a Garden Community by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in July 2019.
27. As the report had been deferred from Cabinet at the time of our meeting, we deferred discussion until a time when the final report was ready to be considered.

### **Investment Fund Update**

28. We received an update report on the progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund.
29. Members will be aware that the Investment Fund was established by the Council in November 2016 for the Council to use for innovative investment opportunities beyond the traditional Treasury Management Strategy in order to achieve greater returns given the low returns on investments.
30. The fund has been used to fund ten schemes, two of which have been completed and the funding recycled. Of the £50 million in the fund there is a commitment against of £39.47 million, leaving a balance of £10.53 million uncommitted. We were advised however, that there was a business case being considered by Cabinet in relation to a Neasham Road Joint Venture Scheme which would call on this balance.

**Councillor Scott Durham**  
**Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

**COUNCIL**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Covid Update**

2. At a special meeting of Scrutiny, Members received an update on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on health protection and outbreak management by implementing government policy, and an update on decisions taken with regard to services relevant to this Committee.
3. We were advised of the local response to the pandemic, with strategic management by the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF). We were pleased to note the early local agreement with CDDFT which made available COVID-19 testing for all council employees, with the offer being extended to care home staff, NHS workers and other key workers from the LRF responding organisations.
4. Members also noted that the Department of Health and Social Care Whole Care Home Testing Programme was being implemented, and that testing is also in place for patients being discharged from hospital to care home settings and for those patients being placed in a care home from their own homes.
5. We were concerned to learn of the significant increase in the number of presentations for homelessness, rough sleeping or at risk of being homeless but noted that additional temporary accommodation has been sourced through procuring hotel accommodation and ensuring the Tenancy Management Team increase the number of temporary Council accommodation units. Housing Options has worked with over 300 clients and placed 57 households in temporary accommodation for the period of April and May 2020.
6. Scrutiny also welcomed an update on the Local Outbreak Control Plan, setting out the response of Darlington Borough Council and partners to prevent and control COVID-19.

**Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust Recovery/'Build Back Better' Plan**

7. Members received an update at a special meeting of Scrutiny on the 'Build Back Better' Plan for Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust following the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. We noted the work being undertaken to develop plans for Phase 3 and 4 of the pandemic in line with national requirements. This includes the development of a model to forecast for the expected increase in COVID-19 related demand for services. A Health Impact Assessment, led by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

recovery cell was being finalised and would provide a system-wide picture of the possible impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on the local Darlington community.

9. We discussed the need for increased budgets for mental health services and welcomed the plans for increased resources in schools.

### **Darlington Outbreak Control Plan**

10. We received a further verbal update from the Director of Public Health on the Darlington Outbreak Control Plan. We were concerned to note that there had been an increase in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Darlington, with the majority in the 18 to 30 year age group. We were however pleased to note that there has not been an increase in cases in Darlington care homes and no significant outbreaks in Darlington work places.
11. Darlington's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is being closely monitored via a number of forums at a regional and local level. This includes three regional Local Resilience Forums which meet regularly; Darlington Health Protection Board currently meets fortnightly and closely monitors Darlington's outbreak control plan; and the North East Directors of Public Health Network meets weekly to share cross border information about outbreaks and joint planning.
12. Members did raise concern regarding the potential increase in the number of confirmed cases following the commencement of the new school year but were assured that the Local Authority Public Health team are working closely with all education settings in Darlington and the Public Health Principal receives and scrutinises the NHS Test and Trace data daily.
13. We did highlight concern in respect of the leisure and hospital sector and the need for consistent messages. The importance of Members' roles in sharing messages, providing local intelligence and views was reiterated and Members agreed that it would be beneficial for them to receive regular messages to be cascaded to residents within their wards.

### **Better Care Fund**

14. We received an update on the position of the Better Care Fund for Darlington, including performance against the four metrics and Members noted that the current 2020/21 Better Care Fund is a one year continuation programme with no changes to the national conditions or metrics.
15. We were advised that with regard to the future structure of the programme, planning guidance to inform the development of a Darlington Plan had been delayed due to Covid-19 and to date had not been received. We look forward to receiving further updates in due course.

### **Performance Report – Quarter 4 2019/2020**

16. We received an update on performance against key performance indicators for 2019/20 at Quarter 4.

17. We noted that of the nine Housing and Leisure indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, four were showing performance better than the same period last year, whilst five were showing performance worse than the same period last year.
18. Of the 24 Public Health indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, five had new data available. We gave particular consideration to PBH 041, Waiting time – number of adult alcohol only clients waiting over three weeks to start first intervention, which showed an increase in waiting times. We noted that that this was as a result of an increase in service users accessing treatment due to work undertaken by partner agencies.
19. We did discuss PBH038, Waiting times – number of adult opiate clients waiting over three weeks to start first intervention, and agreed that an update on the new drug and alcohol service be provided at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

### **Annual Report of Healthwatch Darlington 2019/20**

20. Members welcomed a presentation from the Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Darlington on the Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2019/20 and recognised their valuable work.

### **Work Programme 2020/21**

21. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

### **Quality Accounts 2019/20**

22. Scrutiny considered the draft Quality Accounts 2019/20 of Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust at a special meeting on 9 September 2020 and have provided commentary for inclusion in the final Quality Accounts.

**Councillor Ian Bell**  
**Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee**

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## **COUNCIL 24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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### **OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

#### **Communities and Local Services - Covid-19**

2. At a special meeting of Scrutiny, Members received an update on the response of the Council to the COVID-19 pandemic, including decisions taken with regard to the services relevant to this Committee.
3. Details were provided of the services temporarily stood down due to the pandemic and we discussed in particular the decision to not empty street litter and dog bins during the height of the pandemic; noting that that the Council had a duty to protect its staff and as such the service was stood down to enable staff to remain at home.
4. We were pleased to note the work of the Darlington Community Support Hub, which was established to provide support to residents at greatest risk as a result of Covid-19 and that the work of the hub had moved to Adult Social Care following the final weekend of operation on 27 June 2020.

#### **Darlington Markets**

5. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the Assistant Director Economic Growth and Managing Director, Market Asset Management (MAM), updating Members on the progress made to date on the redevelopment of the Indoor Market.
6. Scrutiny were provided with details of the future development of the indoor market including timescales and noted the phases of development with Phase 1 focussing on the Food Hall and Roofing Works; Phase 2 focussing on improvements to the Retail Market; and the development of the Temperate Gardens and Vaults due to commence following Phase 1 and 2.
7. Concern was raised in respect of the loss of traders from the indoor market. We noted that negotiations are taking place with existing traders and that whilst there may be a loss of some traders, in particular non-food traders, the redevelopment would attract new traders. We were pleased to note that MAM had appointed staff to promote the market via social media.
8. We held an in-depth discussion in relation to the relocation of the Outdoor Market, and requested that, in light of the move to the Market Square, figures for footfall and number of traders be provided to Members. We welcomed the development of an Outdoor Market Strategy by MAM which will be shared with Members.

## **Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031**

9. Scrutiny Committee received a report seeking Members' views on the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031, as part of the consultation process prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
10. We considered the Tree and Woodland Strategy and Members requested that, as part of the consultation process, Cabinet give consideration to the addition of impact on quality of life as a factor when considering tree removal, that clarification is sought in respect of the special circumstances that would prevent the replacement of a tree following removal, that clarification is sought as to whether trees removed are replaced by the same number and that consideration is given to the inclusion of hedgerows, including their replacement when removed, in the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031.

## **Contest and Prevent**

11. Scrutiny received a further presentation from the Head of Community Safety, providing an overview of Contest, the UK's strategy for countering terrorism and Prevent, a strategy to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism. Details were also provided of the work being undertaken as part of the Local Delivery Plan.

## **Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 2019/2020**

12. Scrutiny Committee received an update on Quarter 4 performance against key performance indicators for 2019/2020 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee and the Officers present gave an overview of the current position in respect of their individual areas.
13. We scrutinised the 25 indicators reported to this committee, of which 16 were reported on a six-monthly basis and nine annually, with nine indicators showing performance better than at this time last year and two indicators showing performance the same as this time last year. There were nine indicators showing performance not as good than at this time last year and five indicators had no year-end data available.
14. We discussed ENV023 – Number of prosecutions for fly tipping, noting that whilst there were none in 2019/20, there had been an increase in prosecutions since lockdown. We were assured that this was as a result of increased resources, in part due to the new fully manned department now in place and as a result of a reduction in the challenges around competing business demands concerning the town centre, anti-social behaviour, parking enforcement and the control of dogs.
15. Members agreed to give consideration to any additional performance indicators to be reported to this Scrutiny Committee in the future.

## **Work Programme 2020/21**

16. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21 and possible review topics. Members have agreed that additional reports be submitted to future meetings in relation to the Library Services, Northgate Initiative, Back Lanes, Hippodrome, CCTV and Drug and Alcohol Service Contract.

17. We have agreed that the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee will focus on Rail, and I have initiated a Rail 2025 Task and Finish Group to investigate work being undertaken to support the 2025 celebrations. The outcomes of this group will be fed into the next Scrutiny meeting.

**Councillor Mike Renton**  
**Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee**

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