

Council Agenda



**6.00 pm Thursday, 28 January 2021
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) by 6.00 pm on Wednesday, 27 January 2021.

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 26 November 2020 (Pages 5 - 12)
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) Council Tax Calculation of Tax Base 2021/22 – Report of the Managing Director (Pages 13 - 20)
8. Cabinet Reports.

- (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 21 - 22)
- (b) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 23 - 30)
- (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 31 - 34)
- (d) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 35 - 40)
- (e) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 41 - 44)
- (f) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 45 - 50)
- (g) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; and (Pages 51 - 54)
- (h) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio. (Pages 55 - 58)
- (i) Revision to the Council's Senior Management Structure –
Report of the Managing Director
(Pages 59 - 70)
- (j) Mid Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Monitoring Report
2020/21 –
Report of the Managing Director
(Pages 71 - 86)

9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-

- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 87 - 90)
- (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 91 - 94)
- (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 95 - 96)
- (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 97 - 100)
- (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 101 - 102)

10. Notice of Motion

- (a) To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor L. Hughes, and seconded by Councillor C. L. B. Hughes –

That this council notes:

- This April the Government plan to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending of the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March 2020 as part of his pandemic response package.
- The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not

adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.

- Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and it's lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.
- The increase in benefits have had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing and utilities.
- The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.

That this Council resolves to:

- Write to the Chancellor, Rushi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.
- Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.

11. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 20 January 2021

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, Howell, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright

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

COUNCIL

Thursday, 26 November 2020

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors L Hughes and Lister

ABSENT – Councillors Baldwin and Haszeldine

30 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 24 September 2020.

RESOLVED – (a) That the attendance be amended to reflect that Councillor Paul Howell had been in attendance at the meeting.

(b) That, pursuant to the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 24 September 2020, be approved as a correct record.

31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

32 **SEALING.**

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

33 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Mayor informed Members that Penny Spring had taken over as the Director of Public Health, and welcomed Penny to her first meeting of the Council.

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

(1) **THE PUBLIC;**

There were five questions, with notice, from Members of the Public, who each received an answer thereon.

(**Note:** The questions, with notice, were asked by The Mayor on behalf of the Members of the Public, in accordance within Paragraph 27 of the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol).

(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;

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

35 REVIEW OF POLICIES AND CONDITIONS RELATING TO HACKNEY CARRIAGES, PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES AND THEIR DRIVERS AND OPERATORS

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek approval for the final draft of the Council's revised policy document in respect of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles, their drivers and operators, which was due to take effect from 1 January 2021.

The submitted report presented the Council's draft Taxi Licensing Policy, which reflected legislative changes relating to licensing, for approval, following public consultation. The submitted report also noted that the draft Policy included the latest government and professional body guidelines, along with new statutory standards, and that the draft Policy has been supported by the General Licensing Committee at its meeting held on the 10 November 2020.

RESOLVED – That the revised Taxi Licensing Policy be approved, and applied to all licences with effect from 1 January 2021.

REASONS – (a) The introduction and reinforcing of these measures ensures the protection of the general public, in particular children and vulnerable adults.

(b) To provide an enforcement framework that takes account of legislative changes and amendments, whilst providing encouragement and support to the taxi trade in the Borough.

36 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. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolio thereon.

37 THE COUNCIL PLAN 2020-2023

The Chief Officers Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek approval for the Council Plan 2020-2023.

The submitted report set out a proposed vision for the Council and key actions that the Council intended to take to achieve that vision. The submitted report stated that, following delays due to Coronavirus, the proposed Council Plan did not get presented as intended to Council for approval earlier in the year, and that an updated version of the plan had subsequently been agreed by Cabinet on 10 November 2020.

RESOLVED - That the Council Plan 2020-2023 be approved.

REASON – To seek approval of the Council Plan.

38 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCHEME APPROVAL 2021-2022

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that the Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme be approved.

The submitted report stated that Councils are required to set a CTS scheme each year, and as part of that exercise they must consider whether any changes should be made to any existing scheme, and, where changes are made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should apply to anyone affected by those changes. The submitted report outlined the details of the proposed CTS scheme for 2021/22.

RESOLVED - That the CTS scheme for 2021-22, as appended to the submitted report, be approved, and in doing so:-

- (i) Continue providing up to 100% CTS for care leavers under the age of 25, and
- (ii) Continue providing up to 80% CTS for all other working age people.

REASONS - (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2021-22 by 11 March 2021.

(b) The CTS schemes since 2013 have all been implemented successfully without any major challenges.

(c) The continued application of a reduced entitlement for working aged people is still appropriate, given the current financial position of the Council.

39 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL AND OUTTURN PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2019/20

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide important information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash-flow. The submitted report also sought approval of the Prudential Indicators results for 2019/2020, in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The submitted report outlined the circumstances with regard to treasury management for 2019/2020. It was reported that due to low returns on cash investments new ways to improve investment returns continued to be sought. The submitted report stated that the cost of borrowing remained low throughout 2019/20, and that it was anticipated that the cost of shorter term borrowing would remain low for a number of years in the future.

The submitted report stated that the Council had complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements, and that the need for borrowing was only increased for capital purposes.

The submitted report stated that at 31st March 2020, the Council's external debt was £181.661m, which was £2.500m more than the previous year. It was reported that the

average interest rate for borrowing was down to 2.72%, from 3.22% in 2018/19, and that investments totalled £56.799m at 31st March 2020, in comparison to £55.849m at 31st March 2019, earning interest of 0.75% on short term cash investments, and 2.23% on Property Fund units net of cost.

It was reported that financing costs had been reduced during the year and a saving of £0.268m had been achieved from the original MTFP.

RESOLVED – (a) That the outturn 2019/20 Prudential Indicators within the submitted report, and those in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2019/20, be noted.

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

(b) To inform members of the Performance of the Treasury Management function.

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

40 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

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

41 NOTICE OF MOTION

(1) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR HARKER, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MRS. H. SCOTT

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

‘The group More In Common Darlington (MCID) were inspired by Jo Cox, the MP for Batley and Spen, who became a victim of hate when she was murdered in 2016. Like Jo Cox, MCID believes that people have more in common than anything that might divide them. The group's aim is to find ways of reducing animosity towards people from different nations and faiths, towards women, the LGBTI community, those with disabilities, the homeless and others.

As part of Hate Crime Awareness Week MCID created a United Darlington Charter. It asks us to make a declaration to afford everyone who lives, or works, or visits Darlington to equal respect, status, trust, hospitality, friendship, and kindness.

This Council therefore resolves and agrees to:

a) Commend the work done by More In Common Darlington and The Jo Cox Foundation;

b) Adopt the United Darlington Charter.’

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

For the Motion – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, Howell, C. L. B. Hughes, Johnson, Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright. (45)

Against the Motion – None.

The Motion was Carried.

**(2) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR WALLIS, AND
SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR SNEDKER**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Wallis, and seconded by Councillor Snedker:

‘Council resolves:

To ask Cabinet to consider a report at its meeting on 12th January 2021 which will prevent vehicular highway access between the proposed Skerningham development and the existing highway network between the A167 at its junction with the A1150 to the west, and the river Skerne to the east.

This report to specifically give consideration to preventing access from the Skerningham development onto Whitebridge Drive, Beaully Drive, Sparrowhall Drive, Whinbush Way (including any potential access between Caithness Way and Galloway) and Barmpton Lane, and to maintain the integrity of Green Lane from its junction with Whinfield Road to its junction with Glebe Road.”

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

For the Motion – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, Howell, C. L. B. Hughes, Johnson, Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright. (45)

Against the Motion – None.

The Motion was Carried.

(3) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PALEY, AND

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR HOLROYD

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Paley, and seconded by Councillor Holroyd:

‘Council resolves:

To ask Cabinet at its meeting on 12th January 2021 to consider a report which will protect Springfield Park on its current boundaries from any future development, including highways work. This report will include consideration of creating a Deed of Dedication for the park.’

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

For the Motion – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumby, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, Howell, C. L. B. Hughes, Johnson, Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright. (45)

Against the Motion – None.

The Motion was Carried.

(4) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SNEDKER, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR HOLROYD

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

‘This Council notes that:

On 18 July 2019 an amended Climate Emergency motion was passed.

One of the resolutions (h) contained in the motion, as amended, was to “Set up a cross-party working group to develop an action plan and milestones to achieve carbon neutral status.”

Our view is that the working group was systematically undermined and its terms of reference changed, without explanation, contrary to the motion, including that it should limit itself to monitoring progress only and should only meet quarterly or twice a year and recently stood down altogether.

At this time, the action plan referred to in the motion is still not ready for implementation and there are no milestones in place.

The motion that was passed required this council to undertake various actions (including but not limited to):

- Set up a cross party working group.
- To develop an action plan and milestones.
- To achieve carbon neutral status.

At this time, these actions remain undone.

This Council resolves to:

Ask Cabinet to bring forward a plan at its meeting on 12 January 2021 to reinstate the cross-party working group.

That this plan include terms of reference that provide confidence to any members serving on the working group that they will be allowed to work towards meeting the resolutions contained in the Climate Emergency motion.'

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

For the Motion – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, C. L. B. Hughes, Layton, Lee, Lucas, McCollom, Newall, M. Nicholson, Paley, Preston, A. J. Scott, Snedker, Tostevin and Wallis. (25)

Against the Motion – Councillors Bartch, Bell, Clarke, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Howell, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Tait and Wright. (20)

The Motion was Carried.

42 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 Kevin Nicholson be appointed to the vacancy on the Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group's Primary Care Commissioning Committee;

(b) That Councillor Linda Hughes be removed from the membership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; and

(c) That Councillor Cyndi Hughes be removed from the membership of the Planning Applications Committee.

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COUNCIL
28 JANUARY 2021

ITEM NO.

COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2021/22

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Charles Johnson
Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To determine the Council's tax base for 2021/22.

Summary

2. In accordance with Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the Council has to decide its tax base by 31 January in the year preceding that for which the tax base applies. This has then to be notified to any precepting authorities and is used in the calculation and setting of the Council Tax. The relevant tax base calculations are shown in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2021/22 be approved.
 - (b) The tax base for the Council and the individual tax base for the parishes as set out at Appendix 2 be approved.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported to comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2021/22 to be set by Council in February 2021.

Paul Wildsmith
Managing Director

Background Papers
Council Tax regulations
Council Tax database

Peter Carrick - Extension 5401

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	There are no health and well being issues
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no carbon impact or climate change implications
Diversity	There are no diversity issues
Wards Affected	The proposals affect all wards
Groups Affected	The proposals affect everyone liable for Council Tax
Budget and Policy Framework	The report does not represent a change to the Budget or Policy framework
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report has no implications for the Sustainable Community Strategy
Efficiency	The reports does not have any efficiency implications
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

5. The tax base is the total number of domestic properties in the Borough, calculated as a weighted average 'Band D equivalents'. The amount of Council Tax payable for properties in each of the 8 valuation bands A to H is statutorily determined as proportions of Band D. The tax base is adjusted for discounts, exemptions and estimated changes over the coming year. An estimate of the collection rate is also applied. The tax base represents the amount of revenue that it is estimated will be raised by each £1 of band D Council Tax. It is, therefore, an important part of setting the Council Tax.
6. The council tax base is, for the purpose of calculating a billing authority's and a major precepting authority's council tax, the taxable capacity of an area or part of an area. The amounts are calculated for each financial year and represent the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for reductions and discounts and adjusted to take account of the authority's collection rate.
7. The regulations changed the formula for calculating the council tax base so as to take account of any reductions which will be made under the local council tax reduction scheme or increases for local premiums for empty or long-term empty dwellings.
8. Under the previous council tax benefit system, billing authorities received payment to cover 100% of the cost of council tax benefit paid. The council tax base was therefore unaffected by changes in council tax benefit granted because the billing authority did not forego any council tax income from dwellings in receipt of council tax benefit.
9. However, under the local council tax support scheme, the council tax base is affected by whether a dwelling is in receipt of a council tax reduction awarded under the scheme, as the authority is foregoing council tax income from these dwellings.
10. Local council tax support reductions need to be reflected in the calculation of the council tax base, in order to calculate the correct amount of Band D council tax for the billing or major precepting authority area. If the council tax base did not reduce, authorities would set their council tax bills based on an incorrect level of taxable capacity. The outcome being that dwellings where an occupier was eligible to receive a reduction under the local authority's council tax reduction scheme would not be required to pay the full amount of council tax and the authority would not therefore be able to collect the correct amount of council tax to meet its council tax requirement, with a deficit being created on the collection fund.
11. Similarly the tax base is increased by the premium generated through the empty and long term empty homes scheme whereby the consequent increase in the council tax base is used to lower council tax bills.
12. The actual calculation of the tax base is prescribed in the above regulations and has several components. Calculations must be made of the 'relevant amount' for the year, for each of the 8 valuation bands as shown in the Council's Valuation List submitted by the Listing Officer (HM Revenue and Customs) on 30 November 2020

and the Band A(-) category introduced with effect from 1 April 2000 to provide relief to disabled persons residing in Band A properties. The relevant amount for each band represents the number of chargeable dwellings, as adjusted for exemptions, disabled reductions, discounts and also estimated changes up to 31 March 2022. The final total for each band has to be converted to the equivalent number of Band D dwellings.

13. The relevant amounts for the individual bands are then totalled and the estimated collection rate for the year is applied. The collection rate is based on the proportion of the amount payable into the Collection Fund for the year, including appropriate adjustments for benefits and any transitional relief, which the Council believes will ultimately be collected. The resulting figure, plus any contributions in lieu from the Ministry of Defence in respect of forces accommodation, is the Council's tax base for its area for the year concerned.
14. The estimates and calculations outlined above in respect of the tax base for 2021/22 are shown in Appendix 1. Members will see that the calculations produce a total Band D equivalent of 33,764.0 (line 17) which, when combined with an estimated collection rate of 99.0% and contributions in lieu, results in an overall tax base figure of 33,479.6 which is a 0.45% increase on 2020/21.
15. Similar calculations also need to be made in respect of the parishes and in particular the same estimated collection rate must be applied as that used for the whole of the Council's area. The tax base calculations for each parish are as shown in Appendix 2.

Outcome of Consultation

16. This is a technical report, which follows a prescribed format. There has been no consultation in compiling this report.

APPENDIX 1

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2021/22

	Band	A (-)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	Dwellings per Valuation List		22,813	10,772	7,413	5,525	3,187	1,279	588	54	51,631
2	Disabled Band Relief		(50)	(47)	(42)	(37)	(31)	(11)	(9)	(14)	(241)
3	Disabled Band Relief (Chargeable)	50	47	42	37	31	11	9	14		241
4	Disabled Band Relief (Adjusted)	50	(3)	(5)	(5)	(6)	(20)	(2)	5	(14)	0
5	Exemptions	0	(534)	(164)	(143)	(79)	(34)	(18)	(8)	(1)	(981)
6	Single discount (25%)	(23)	(10,806)	(3,903)	(2,348)	(1,262)	(597)	(197)	(75)	(2)	(19,213)
7	Double discount (50%)	(2)	(28)	(11)	(14)	(16)	(13)	(5)	(20)	(8)	(117)
8	Equated discounts	(6.75)	(2,715.5)	(981.25)	(594)	(323.5)	(155.75)	(51.75)	(28.75)	(4.5)	(4,861.75)
9	Empty Homes Premium (100%)	0	96	23	14	1	3	4	1	0	142
10	Empty Homes Premium (200%)	0	21	7	4	2	3	0	0	1	38
11	Empty Homes Premium (300%)	0	16	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	22
12	Chargeable Dwellings	43.25	19,746.50	9,667.75	6,696.00	5,127.50	2,986.25	1,211.25	557.25	36.50	46,072.25
13	Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	(15.55)	(4,906.26)	(1,031.23)	(352.28)	(130.95)	(44.41)	(14.02)	(7.97)	(0)	(6,502.68)
14	Chargeable Dwellings after CTRS	27.70	14,840.24	8,636.52	6,343.72	4,996.55	2,941.84	1,197.23	549.28	36.50	39,569.57
15	Estimated Changes					189					189
16	Band D Multiplier	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
17	Band D Equivalent (Relevant Amount)	15.39	9,893.49	6,717.30	5,638.86	5,185.55	3,595.58	1,729.34	915.46	73.00	33,763.96
18	Estimated Collection Rate										99.0%
19	Contributions in Lieu					53.3					53.3
20	Council Tax Base										33,479.6

APPENDIX 1

ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2021/22 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

	Each column shows the totals for each Council Tax band A to H. The TOTAL column is the total for the whole Council. The Band A(-) column is the total in Band A where a disabled band relief applies.
Lines	
Line 1	The number of dwellings in each Council Tax band as per the Valuation List, as at 30/11/2020.
Line 2	The number of dwellings in each band where a disabled band relief applies
Line 3	The number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied
Line 4	The net number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied (Line 3 - Line 2)
Line 5	The number of dwellings in each band that are exempt from Council Tax (where an exemption applies), to be deducted from the total number of dwellings
Line 6	The number of dwellings in each band where a single (25%) discount applies
Line 7	The number of dwellings in each band where a double (50%) discount applies
Line 8	The adjustment for each band where a discount applies (Line 6 x 25%) + (Line 7 x 50%)
Line 9	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of two years and which attract a 100% Premium.
Line 10	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of five years and which attract a 200% Premium.
Line 11	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of ten years and which attract a 300% Premium
Line 12	The equivalent number of chargeable dwellings before the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 13	The equivalent number of properties in receipt of council tax benefit (working age only) in each band
Line 14	The equivalent number of properties after the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 15	The estimated number of additional band D equivalent dwellings that will be included in the tax base during 2021/22
Line 16	The band D multiplier that is applied to the number of chargeable dwellings in each band (this multiplier is prescribed in law)
Line 17	The adjusted number of chargeable dwellings in each band after applying the multiplier (Line 14 + Line 15) x Line 16
Line 18	The estimated percentage collection rate
Line 19	The estimated number of band D equivalent dwellings for contributions in lieu. (Armed Forces Accommodation)
Line 20	The Council Tax Base for 2021/22 (Line 17 x Line 18) + Line 19

APPENDIX 2**PARISH COUNCILS – ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2021/22**

Parish	Current Parish Tax Base (1)	Adjusted Band D Equivalent 21/22 (2)	Collection Rate	Parish Tax Base
Bishopton	172.9	172.4	99.0%	170.7
Heighington	956.7	1,045.0	99.0%	1,034.6
High Coniscliffe	110.1	109.2	99.0%	108.1
Hurworth	1,273.0	1,319.8	99.0%	1,306.6
Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	308.1	304.8	99.0%	301.9
Middleton St. George	1,876.1	1,975.1	99.0%	1,955.3
Neasham	245.1	250.0	99.0%	247.5
Piercebridge	64.8	64.1	99.0%	63.4
Sadberge	282.4	295.5	99.0%	292.6
Whesoe	540.3	541.0	99.0%	535.6

PARISH COUNCILS ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2021/22 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Columns	
Current Parish Tax Base (1)	The current Council Tax base for each Parish, using the methodology set out in Appendix 1, for 2020/21
Adjusted Band D Equivalent 21/22 (2)	The calculated Council Tax base for each Parish, using the same methodology set out in Appendix 1, and after the estimated changes for 2021/22 have been applied
Collection Rate	The estimated percentage collection rate
Parish Tax Base	The Council Tax Base for 2021/22 for each Parish

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COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Council's Continued Response to COVID19

1. The Council was the first in the North East to set up community testing at the Dolphin Centre which opened on 14 December and operated for 10 days up to 23 December. The test centre was set up within a week and I would like to thank all staff for their incredible hard work and dedication to achieve this, and then for our staff to take on new roles at the test centre to deliver the testing programme is a mark of the great team we have here in Darlington.
2. The Dolphin testing centre re opened on the 2 January with a further five sites opening on the 11 January at:-
 - (a) Red Hall Community Centre
 - (b) Middleton St George Community Centre
 - (c) Firthmoor and District Community Centre
 - (d) Heighington Village Hall
 - (e) Head of Steam
3. Initially all sites were due to close on the 13 February however due to the lockdown the Government has extended the programme until the end of March 2021 which we have applied for. The testing is available to all residents and while we are in lockdown we are encouraging those people who are providing essential services and allowed to work at the moment to take a regular test to protect their family and colleagues. As at 17 January, a total of 8823 tests had been completed with 113 returning a positive result, giving a positivity rate of 1.3%.
4. The Primary Care Trust (PCN) is responsible for the roll out of vaccines in the initial stages to the two top priority groups. The first vaccines were received week beginning 4 January 2021. The vaccination of all Care Homes residents, over 80-year olds and health and care workers has commenced. The Council has worked closely with the PCN to ensure Feethams House is ready to receive residents for vaccination at the local vaccine hub. Darlington Cares has recruited volunteers to drive patients to and from the site and to act as stewards escorting people in and out of the building. Darlington Arena has been identified and agreed as a mass vaccination site. It is anticipated that this will open for vaccines in February.

Strategic Transport

5. As portfolio Member for Transport in the Tees Valley Combined Authority I chaired the Tees Valley Transport Committee.
6. As outlined in my previous report to Council there is a programme of investment being developed with significant investment planned across all modes of transport

to better connect the Tees Valley and support the economy and local jobs. The integrated transport programme set out in the TVCA Investment Plan is £256.7m between now and 2028/29. Furthermore, in the recent Spending Review Government announced a further £4.2 billion of investment for local transport split across eight city regions, one of which being the Tees Valley. This level of investment will enable ambitious projects and ambitions for transport to be taken forward.

7. As we have moved into lockdown there is a reduction in demand for public transport. Rail and bus providers are considering the levels of services required. However, transport for key workers at the right times will remain a priority. New Timetables have now been published.
8. Attended Rail North Committee on 12 January and Transport for the North Board meeting on 14 January.

Towns Fund

9. The delivery of the £1m Forward Funding element of the Town Fund has commenced. Several stakeholder events with businesses within the Yards area have been held. These meetings have been extremely positive with businesses sharing their views on the proposed improvements. Work will commence in early February.
10. The tender exercises for the improved lighting and the installation of free WIFI have been concluded and this work will also commence in February.
11. As part of our commitment to enhance our railway heritage good progress has been made in identifying and acquiring of historically important buildings along Northgate.
12. The business cases for the next phase of the Town Fund are being finalised which will be shared with Government for comment and agreement over the next few months. Heads of Terms have now been signed off by the Secretary of State.
13. Regretfully we did not receive funding for the High Street Fund, and we are seeking clarification on the decision.

Climate Change Working Group

14. A meeting of the Climate Change Working Group was held on 18 January 2021 when the Draft Action Plan was discussed. An update of the work was presented to Cabinet on 12 January 2021.

Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE
Leader of the Council Portfolio

COUNCIL 28 January 2021

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

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

Community Safety

Darlington Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Action Plan 2021-2026

2. The priorities for 2021-2026 have been identified as:

- (a) Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable People
- (b) Promoting Safer Places
- (c) Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse
- (d) Building Strong and Cohesive Communities

Civic Enforcement Service

Responsible Dog Ownership Project

3. The group are looking at ways to involve members of the public and other professionals. Key achievements for the group include:
 - (a) in December, a vet became a member of the group and will attend meetings;
 - (b) feedback/comments from a recent press article in relation to the work undertaken by the dog warden was extremely positive;
 - (c) focusing on increasing the messages/information available for the public on our dog warden web pages, including seasonal messages etc.;
 - (d) two dog waste bag dispensers in two trial locations in the Denes and Merrybent layby; and
 - (e) focussing on dog fouling, with a noted increase in complaints in the winter months.

Eastbourne Road - Closure Order

4. Preparation for a Closure Order was underway in November for 20 Eastbourne Road due to serious complaints of drug use, offensive behaviour from visitors and threat of arson. The case was resolved without the need to attend Court due to the tenant surrendering their tenancy.

CCTV

Deployable CCTV

5. Six cameras continue to be deployed in various locations around the Borough in order to tackle issues such as environmental crime and anti-social behaviour.
6. An overt dome camera has recently been deployed to John Boulevard Way. The camera was installed in late November due to six reports of fly tipping since August. Since deployment (five weeks ago), there have been no incidents to date.

Back Lanes Project

7. Darlington Borough Council Community Safety have recruited an Environmental Crime Coordinator to deliver the Back Lanes Project, with the successful candidate commencing the role early in 2021.
8. All available legislation is being utilised and the first vehicle seizure suspected to be involved in fly tipping took place recently. The owners are given 15 days to provide all relevant documentation, with a penalty of non-compliance leading to the vehicle being crushed. Full press coverage of this will follow.

Private Sector Housing

9. The team are currently dealing with over 100 requests for service. Over the winter period, the Private Sector Housing team will deal with over 300 cases of housing disrepair, these cases range from drainage requests to general advice covering all housing tenures, including Houses in Multiple Occupation. Assistance is also given to landlords in complying with their legal duties, this has recently included landlords who have been unable to carry out gas safety certificates or complete electrical condition reports in preparation for the changes in legislation in March 2021 due to COVID restrictions.
10. Typically at this time of the year, Private Sector Housing will deal with 30 boiler breakdowns and will arrange for works in default to be carried out where landlords are unable or unwilling to carry out the works.
11. Over the winter, the team also deal with an increase in condensation and mould growth complaints where we will assist occupiers in reducing their fuel costs and increasing the energy efficiency of the property.

Climate Change

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

12. On 27 November 2020, Private Sector Housing supported Fuel Poverty Awareness Day. Information has been updated online on the various energy efficiency projects and grants available for residents.

Warm Homes Fund

13. Partners have recently identified the potential to provide seven areas across Darlington with a gas supply as part of infill programmes. The Warm Homes Fund

would then be able to provide gas central heating to those eligible under the scheme. Promotion to eligible properties commenced in January 2021.

Green Homes Grant - The Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme

14. £500 million in funding is being provided to local authorities by the Government between September 2020 and March 2022, to improve the energy efficiency of low-income households. A bid has been submitted for Phase 1b delivery of this funding. This bid, if successful, will increase the capital spend to Council-owned properties on energy efficiency improvements but will also enable resources for administrative assistance to improve data quality and support potential energy efficiency projects for all housing tenures across Darlington.
15. A bid has also been submitted for phase 2 of this scheme, which will be allocated through Local Energy Hubs for regional delivery. This phase will operate between June 2021 until March 2022. This will help reduce fuel poverty and support the installation of low carbon heating.

Trading Standards

Investigations

16. An investigation was undertaken by Trading Standards following the seizure of 2,200 cigarettes and 8.9 kg of hand rolling tobacco from a shed on a farm. On 29 October 2020, a Shildon man pleaded guilty at Peterlee Magistrates Court to illegal tobacco offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994 and the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015. He was sentenced to a conditional discharge for twelve months and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £806.66 plus a victim surcharge of £21.00.
17. A Darlington man pleaded guilty at Peterlee Magistrates Court on 29 October 2020 to an offence under the Fraud Act 2006 and to two offences of publishing images which he knew were infringing copies of copyright works under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.
18. This followed an investigation by Trading Standards into the fraudulent and infringing use of a wedding photograph and a photograph of the Darlington 10km run, where copyright is held by others. He was sentenced to two £50.00 fines for each of the three offences, £572.28 costs and a victim surcharge of £32.00.

Illegal Trading Awareness

19. Trading Standards is aware of the significant harm that can be caused by online fraudsters who con shoppers into buying fake, non-existent and often unsafe toys, especially around Christmas time. In a press release issued on 25 November 2020, Trading Standards urged shoppers to beware of these festive fakes and to get to know their rights when shopping online. Local residents were asked to report their concerns about illegal trading - whether online or from a shop - in fake or potentially dangerous toys.

Be A Smart Shopper

20. In a new initiative, Trading Standards had a feature in the November edition of the One Darlington magazine on how to 'Be a Smart Shopper' with the aim of helping residents to understand their consumer rights in relation to obtaining a refund. Another feature is planned which will cover legal rights on the delivery of goods.

Avian Influenza ('Bird Flu') Outbreaks

21. In response to the recent outbreaks, Trading Standards issued an alert via social media to advise bird keepers (whether they run a large commercial farm, keep a few hens in the back garden or rear game birds) of the need to maintain the highest standards of biosecurity and to be vigilant for any signs of the disease in their birds. Keepers were offered advice on simple measures they should take to protect their birds.

No Rogue Trader Zones

22. Two new 'No Rogue Trader Zones' have been created in Darlington by Trading Standards, working in partnership with Durham Constabulary, in a bid to tackle nuisance door-to-door traders and cold callers.
23. These zones add to the existing zones in Darlington which cover High Coniscliffe, Fryer Crescent, Barnes Road, Barnes Close, Kew Rise, Mowden Hall Drive, Conyers Avenue, Conyers Grove and Chester Grove.
24. The aim of the zones is to encourage and empower residents to say 'no' to cold callers and prevent them from returning. Residents, who were overwhelmingly in favour of the scheme when surveyed, received an information pack about the zones. Street signs have been put up around the edges of the zones to alert traders that they are about to enter a 'No Rogue Trader Zone'.

Community Resilience

Water Safety

25. The Community Resilience Officer is coordinating a working group to ensure the Council and other partners (Police, Fire and Rescue, etc.) have appropriate measures in place to prevent open water incidents happening and to respond effectively to those that do. The first meeting took place in January 2021.

Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Group (County Lines)

26. All nominated persons have now been sent an e-mail invite to the online 'county lines awareness' training which they can then complete at a time convenient for them.
27. The County Lines Locality Review is now scheduled for 10 February 2021. Requests to attend have gone out to all organisations who may be able to contribute to this review – education, health, enforcement, etc.

28. The Community Resilience Officer is developing a training package for Council staff (Academy 10 and hard copy). Expected completion date – end of February 2021.

Community Engagement

29. The Community Resilience Officer is maintaining contact with Arcus (LGBTQ+), Darlington Association on Disability and the UNITY group via e-mails/telephone calls and information from Police Community Cohesion officers.

Unity Group

30. Phillippa Scafton (a member of More in Common Darlington, LGBT forum and a Stonewall employee) has been appointed as the new chair, with Councillor Sajna Ali as the new deputy chair. The Police are now represented by Chief Insp. Vicky Martin. It was proposed that attempts should be made to set up a Unity youth group, as there is no direct representation from young people on the current Unity group. It is hoped that utilising Teams/Zoom-type technology may attract more young people to engage.

LGBT Forum

31. The Community Resilience Officer is working with South Park Bowls Club to organise an 'inclusivity event' in May. The Bowls Committee is very keen on encouraging new members and is trying to open the sport up beyond the stereotype of older, white men.
32. As the site is Council-owned, they are linking with the Community Resilience Officer through the forum to progress plans.

PREVENT

33. Channel Duty guidance was updated on 2 November 2020. A meeting was held with partners in November to establish how this impacts on the CONTEST Silver Board and the Council's Channel Panel.
34. A CONTEST Silver Board sub-group has been formed to look at training across both Darlington and County Durham. This should ensure consistency across what is one police force area and also reduce any duplication of resources.
35. It has been agreed that the current procedure for making a Prevent referral should be ended and replaced with the National Prevent Referral Form, which should be completed and sent directly to the Durham Police Prevent team. This change is scheduled to happen in March 2021, so appropriate meetings with Children and Adult Services, and others, are now being arranged to ensure a smooth transition.
36. A counter-terrorism local champions event focused on Channel referrals of people with Autism was held online 4 Dec 2020 with DBC champions attending. Total attendance across Darlington and Durham areas was approximately 40.
37. No Tension Monitoring reports received since last report.

Home Office Safer Streets Fund

38. Launched in Darlington on 7 September 2020, the Safer Streets Fund supports target-hardening and crime prevention measures in the Northgate and the North Road area of Darlington. The qualifying criteria has been expanded due to fewer than average burglaries as a result of COVID-19 and now includes residential burglaries backdated to 1 June 2020.
39. The following recent actions have been undertaken:
- (a) 275 properties visited by beat team PCSOs
 - (b) 166 have accepted the offer of safer streets interventions.
 - (c) 26 properties have been completed and 27 properties are currently having work undertaken.
 - (d) All other properties are in the process of being contacted (voicemail or letter left at property) or are yet to be contacted.

Licensing

Taxi Policy

40. The revised Taxi Policy received approval by Full Council on the 26 November 2020 for implementation on the 1 January 2021 in line with statutory requirements. This policy was generally well received by the trade since some requirements in relation to vehicles have been relaxed without compromising safety as a result of improvements in technology over the years. Importantly, all vehicles will comply with Euro 6 engine standards by April 2023 to help reduce emissions.
41. Driver standards will be enhanced with the incorporation into the policy of new statutory standards produced by the Department for Transport to protect children and vulnerable adults.

Licensing Act Policy

42. Darlington's Licensing Act Policy was due to be reviewed by January 2021, however, concerns were expressed nationally that with the closure of many licensed premises it was impossible to have a meaningful consultation with the hospitality trade.
43. In October, the Licensing Committee agreed to delay implementing a new policy until April 2021 where it is hoped there will be a clearer picture of what the future may hold, however, following a further lockdown period and the introduction of a tier system, the target date of April now seems unrealistic and a further extension will be sought from the Licensing Committee. This will be in line with recently received government guidance from the Policing Minister, Kit Malthouse, as a result of this nationally recognised issue.

COVID-19 Intelligence Sharing

44. The Council's Licensing department hold intelligence sharing meetings with Police, Environmental Health, and Public Health in relation to licensing issues concerning COVID-19, which facilitates identification of problem premises enabling early interventions to take place. These meetings along with regular meetings with the North East Strategic Licensing Group (NESLG) enables the sharing of best practice to take place and allows a coordinated approach in response to changes to regulations/guidance.

IDOX Online Taxi Licensing System

45. Installation of a new on-line taxi licensing system from IDOX, has commenced and it is hoped this will be fully functional by Spring 2021. In addition to this, an electronic workflow monitor (Enterprise) will be introduced to manage all licensing applications with greater efficiency.
46. Testing of both systems is currently ongoing, though additional work has been required to incorporate the new taxi policy changes and to new driver standards required by the Department of Transport.

Animal and Unlicensed Dog Breeding

47. Animal welfare related issues are becoming more prevalent following the introduction of new animal welfare regulations, particularly involving the unlicensed selling of puppies due to their high value. Licensing have been working closely with partner agencies to ensure compliance with these regulations and are part of a regional forum to share best practice.
48. Unlicensed dog breeding is a cross organisational and cross border issue often linked to organised crime. Licensing now have access to a new national intelligence database administered by Trading Standards, which is being used very effectively.
49. Officers are also now liaising much more closely with Environmental Health to ensure noise complaints of dogs barking are not linked to illegal dog breeding. Joint visits have taken place where this is suspected, along with appropriate disruption activities.

Crime and Disorder

50. There has been a 16 per cent decrease in the number of reported crimes in Darlington during the period 1 April to 30 November 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 1,351 crimes. The only crime showing an increase is Arson (this equates to 14 crimes). All other categories of crime are showing a significant decrease.
51. There has been an eight per cent increase in the number of reported anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents in Darlington during the period 1 April to 30 November 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20.
52. This equates to an increase of 198 incidents. Incidents showing an increase include: Alcohol related ASB and Drugs related ASB. However, if COVID-19

related anti-social behaviour incidents are removed, there would be a six per cent increase in incidents. This equates to an increase of 158 incidents.

53. There has been a 55 per cent decrease in the number of reported crimes in Darlington Town Centre during the period 1 April to 30 November 2020 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 732 crimes. All crimes are showing a significant decrease.
54. There has been a 55 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 187 incidents. If COVID-19 related anti-social behaviour incidents are removed, there would be no change in the figures, due to there being only 3 COVID-19 related incidents.

Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Stronger Communities Portfolio

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Adult Services since the last meeting of Council. The following are the main areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Services.

Operational Services

2. Our Day Opportunity services for Adults with a Learning Disability continues to remain open during the Level 3 restrictions, providing an important service to attendees and respite for carers. The staff continue to deploy safe system of work practices and the use of PPE. Attendees and their carers were offered the opportunity for some of the services to remain opened longer during the festive holidays, however the overwhelming consensus was a preference to remain with the usual arrangements.
3. Operational services continue to facilitate safe hospital discharges in a timely manner. The discharge to assess model has been implemented, incorporating the Home first approach as we recognise that people wish to return home from hospital but receive appropriate support through their recovery. The reablement team are able to visit an individual at home on the day of discharge and complete both a functional assessment and also provide care. This is working well with positive feedback received.
4. Plans to address winter pressures have been put in place. Colleagues in the council and across the wider health and social care continue to work together closely to ensure there is a coordinated response to supporting the system to manage the winter months. Plans are being finalised for a number of designated beds to be available to support individuals who are discharged from hospital, whilst COVID positive. Operational and commissioning colleagues will work closely with colleagues from health and the care home sector to create a clear pathway to ensure the process runs smoothly and effectively.
5. The Social Work Apprenticeships have provided a further opportunity this year for a Community Assessment Officer, working in Adults, to undertake professional training to become a qualified Social Worker. This is only the second year of the programme and Darlington has had a practitioner on each intake. This highlights how Darlington value the importance of investing in staff development.

Commissioning and Contracts

6. South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust are administering the first wave of the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine at the James Cook Hospital University Hospital. This first wave also includes Care Staff in large Older Persons Care Homes of 50 or more registered beds. 496 staff from these larger Darlington based

homes have received the vaccine (as at 18 December). The vaccination programme will be undertaken across staff from the smaller care homes in the New Year. The second wave of the vaccine will be administered by Darlington's Primary Care Network and local GPS who anticipate receiving their first supply in early January. It is expected that following approval by the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products regulatory Agency) a further local community-based vaccination programme led by the Primary Care Network will be delivered directly to the residents in care home settings. Alongside Darlington's mass community testing programme, Care Homes are also administering the COVID 19 lateral flow testing of visitors in care homes. This programme is specifically for visitor testing, including visiting professionals.

7. Making Space, who provide ongoing care and support for people living in Extra Care and via the Rapid Response Service, have been nominated for 2 awards – the Great British Care Awards 'Care Team' award' and the Northern Echo 'Carer of the Year' award. Both services have continued to provide high quality support throughout the pandemic, including ensuring that no one was admitted to hospital unnecessarily and that people were discharged without delay with an emergency care package in place. They also provided support when family carers were no longer able to provide care, especially when some carers had to shield for their own protection.
8. Officers have been working in partnership with Affinity Works to further develop the Tees adult social care Data Hub. This Data Hub now includes data on Population and Prevalence, Delayed transfers of care and Provider Quality and Capacity. The Hub will bring a number of benefits for both Commissioners and Operational Teams, as it provides a platform for collaborative purchasing, resource sharing, price standardisation and increased leverage and 'shared benefits' with major providers. Other benefits of the Hub are that it will support the Quality management of Social care support and will also reduce the time spent by officers in responding to FOI requests, by making the information readily available for requesters to gather themselves. Following the implementation of the Tees Adult Social Care Data Hub, Affinity Works and officers have developed the key information and data required in a Market Position Statement (MPS) into an online format.
9. The Market Position Statement, is a requirement of The Care Act and is a means to understand and shape the current market and future demand for adult care and support. The document acts as a starting point for discussions between the Council and providers and potential providers of services to ensure that we can collectively meet need.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

10. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners (SSP) continue to meet monthly. In October, Partners welcomed James Stroyan, Interim Director of Children and Adult Services to his first meeting in his new role as partner with statutory responsibility for safeguarding.
11. Partners were updated on work that continues through the sub groups and were provided with an update from the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Groups which were established to oversee the most vulnerable. The groups continue to monitor the vulnerable children list and discussions are taking place to obtain an understanding of vulnerable adults. The group has discussed the clinically

vulnerable and the initial shielded list which the local authority monitored which will be shared more widely to obtain assurance that the most vulnerable are being seen, work on this is progressing.

Councillor Rachel Mills
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

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COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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 Wellbeing Board

2. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 17 December 2020. The main discussion item was an update on the COVID-19 Local Outbreak.
3. Representatives from County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust provided an update to the Board on behalf of County Durham and Darlington Local A&E Delivery Board (LADB) on the System's Winter Plan for 2020/21.

Early Intervention and Front Door

4. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) received the anticipated number of Contacts relating to children, during the last quarter, relative to the schools reopening from September, all organisations increasingly working directly with children and therefore more readily visible.
5. An independent evaluation of the performance of the CIAT continues and activity at the Front Door is scheduled for review early January and will build upon the findings gained at the 13 week and 26-week independent reviews.
6. Early Help (EH) Services have seen an increase in families accessing the service, with improved performance in the timeliness of assessments completed, following a successful change in practice from August 2020, where, following progression of a referral, the EH team conduct a same day visit to a family to consider their support needs.
7. Service delivery has continued to involve a combination of services delivered directly face to face, and online. Most popular advice sought is about children's development, school readiness and regular video sessions around play and positive interaction.
8. Where communication with some children has proven challenging, continued use of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app is in place to better support this. The service continues to explore the use of different technologies, such as MOMO and innovative approaches, to engage children, identify and minimise risks to them, ensuring they are safeguarding during the pandemic.
9. The Early Help Service have continued to develop integrating services and approaches 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, identify need, and a working group

are developing digital resources, toolbox for families, and promotional websites to support children's emotional well-being.

10. Children with a disability 0-4yrs are signposted from birth, where appropriate to Early Help Services, who work closely with the Inclusion team and Health visiting services in offering parental support and transition into early years provision. All children referred have access to early years provision. Family Information Services' website provides information to parents on all early years' provision and will discuss parental choice to ensure they receive the provision acceptable for their child.
11. The 4Kids project was formally launched at an event on the 9th December 2020. Aimed at reducing domestic abuse episodes and the need to become looked after, for children aged 6 – 8 years, the programme will build on existing services for the reduction of domestic abuse episodes. This is a joint initiative between PCVC, Durham Constabulary and Darlington Borough Council. The launch event welcomed keynote speaker Honor Rhodes from Tavistock Relationships, focussing on the importance of the child, seeing the world through their eyes and the impact that the lack of parent/carer actions can have on them.

Safeguarding Assessment and Looked After Through Care:

Corporate Parenting Panel

12. The Panel met on 14 December 2020, with young people involved, alongside Members and Officers. The Panel received and discussed:
 - (a) The Annual Report of the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team;
 - (b) A verbal report and information regarding the creative Life Story Work model for Children in Care;
 - (c) Information regarding creative Merry Maker boxes for Children in Care that had been gifted by Blue Cabin;
 - (d) The national Personal Advisor of the year Award which has been won by Faye Marsh, a Personal Advisor within Darlington Children's Services.

Child Protection, Looked After and Care Leaver statistics.

13. At the end of November 2020 there were:
 - (a) 312 children being supported through a child in need plan;
 - (b) 88 children, subject to child protection plans – this number can radically fluctuate as demonstrated by a decrease when compared with 103 at the end of quarter 2 for 2020/21;
 - (c) 287 children in care – this number has decreased since the end of quarter 2 for 2020/21 (302). There continues to be significant drive to progress children's permanence plans enabling them to safely leave the care of the local authority;

- (d) 134 Care Leavers between 18-25 years, all of whom have access to a personal advisor for support, advice and guidance.

Fostering, Residential and Lifestages

- 14. There is a continued focus on the recruitment of mainstream foster carers to help meet the needs of looked after children. Over recent weeks we have seen an increase in enquiries about mainstream fostering which is very positive.
- 15. Foster carers have consistently cared for children, with support from their supervising social workers and placement stability with both mainstream foster carers and connected kinship carers has been very good during Covid. Foster carers with capacity have, where possible, provided placements to enable sibling groups to remain together.
- 16. The three mainstream residential homes are providing placements to 5 young people who have in the main adhered to covid regulations, with very few missing from placement episodes.
- 17. Harewood Hill Lodge has been providing respite to approximately 24 children since summer 2020, with staff groups and children working in “bubbles” as far as possible to minimise the potential for the spread of infection.
- 18. The Disabled Children's Team (Lifestages 0-25 team) continue to support children and their families. Direct home visits are made where possible, but where families have medical vulnerabilities, some doorstep or virtual visits still continue.

Education

- 19. The Schools Forum met on 12 January and were presented with updates regarding the 2020/21 budget and high needs expenditure. The Forum was also presented with the school budget share calculations for 2021/22.
- 20. Northwood Primary School has become the first school in Darlington to be awarded Elklan Communication Friendly School Status. Northwood Primary School hosts the Local Authority's “Resource Base” for children with speech, language and communication difficulties. Children from across Darlington who have profound needs attend the school for specialist support. The school is now working with Darlington Borough Council's education department to offer communication training to other schools in the area.
- 21. Darlington College has signed up to help deliver the Teesworks Skills Academy to ensure local people have the right skills to fill the jobs being created on site. The Teesworks Skills Academy will be led by the Education Training Collective (Etc), which includes Stockton Riverside and Redcar and Cleveland Colleges. These will be joined by Darlington, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool FE Colleges and Teesside University and the Learning Curve Group to help deliver the academy.
- 22. Haughton Academy have successfully secured funding from TVCA to lead a project around ‘Closing the Vocabulary Gap in Science’. The project will support professional development for both primary and secondary teachers. It will upskill them in language acquisition and develop a common strategy to teach vocabulary across year groups, subjects, and schools. The project aims to improve transition

readiness, better equipping pupils for curriculum demands as they move into KS3.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

23. Darlington Borough Council are part of the Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Groups joint commission for the provision of a Family Support Service for Children and Young People with a Neurodevelopmental need in the Tees Valley. This support service will form a component part of the move towards a "needs led" neurodevelopment pathway for ASD and ADHD. It is expected that a provider will be appointed to deliver the service in the new year, with the service becoming operational effective from 1st June 2021, as part of the service provision there will be a designated Darlington base for local families to access drop in support sessions.
24. £13,230 of Section 106 funding has been secured for a digital inclusion project in Skerne Park. The project will be a combination of a lending scheme, whereby local residents can borrow a device for a set period of time, and a donation initiative, whereby donated used devices are refurbished and redistributed to households in need. The model will include training and support on how to use devices, including keeping safe online, supported by local Learning and Skills services, as well as support with affordable data access. Community assets, including a new The Bread and Butter Thing hub, will also be utilised to ensure effective targeting of digitally excluded residents. Officers are currently finalising proposals and it is hoped the scheme will start to be operational by Spring.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

25. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners (SSP) continue to meet monthly. In October, Partners welcomed James Stroyan, Interim Director of Children and Adult Services to his first meeting in his new role as partner with statutory responsibility for safeguarding.
26. Partners were provided with a presentation from Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust on their new proposed safeguarding transformation model. The trust has undertaken a review of current processes across all their seven contractual areas to determine school nursing involvement in safeguarding. The proposed model will ensure a school nurse is present at strategy discussions and a decision made on which health partner may be more appropriate to attend child protection meetings, such as GP, CAMHS, or Physiotherapist. Partners agreed there was a lot to consider and requested the model is presented to other forums to update wider partners.
27. Partners were updated on work that continues through the subgroups and were provided with an update from the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Groups which were established to oversee the most vulnerable. The groups continue to monitor the vulnerable children list and discussions are taking place to obtain an understanding of vulnerable adults. The group has discussed the clinically vulnerable and the initial shielded list which the local authority monitored which will be shared more widely to obtain assurance that the most vulnerable are being seen, work on this is progressing.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio

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**COUNCIL
28 JANUARY 2021**

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

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

Future High Street Fund Bid

2. Unfortunately, the Council's Future High Street Fund was unsuccessful. Fundamentally the project submitted did not meet the MHCLG and Treasury Green Book threshold for value for money (VFM) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR). Whilst we passed the gateways for assessment, it was felt that the wider land value uplift of 5 per cent on residential properties and 2.5 per cent for commercial properties used to assess our BCR was over optimistic and too sensitive to change. The BCR required was 2.0 and whilst our clarification assessment of the BCR submitted was 2.03, Government's applied sensitivity testing and this reduced the final BCR below 2.0. The difficulty we had during our assessment was to increase the BCR to the anticipated threshold we needed to evidence that the project would increase the surrounding land values. While this is disappointing, we have been successful on a number of bids recently and will reflect on this when we commence bids for the forthcoming Levelling Up Fund. Typically, around one third of FHSF bids nationally failed.

Darlington Towns Fund

3. The aims and purpose of the Towns Fund is to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth.
4. The four project areas identified as part of the £1m Forward Funding programme have been unanimously supported by the Town Board and the necessary procurement, tender and engagement exercise have commenced. These areas are :
 - (a) The Yards Phase1 (Clark's and Buckton's Yards) – transform and improve public space;
 - (b) Town Centre lighting enhancements;
 - (c) Town Centre Wi-Fi; and
 - (d) the acquisition of properties along Northgate which contribute to the wider Railway Heritage Quarter project.
5. Officers have facilitated two positive and productive stakeholder meetings where local businesses took the opportunity to pass comments on the proposed designs. Improvement works include, enhanced public realm and seating areas, new doors, windows, guttering and downpipes, new lighting and new paintwork and artwork which will encourage people to visit the ever growing number of independent shops and allow people to dwell for a time in these attractive historic yards. It is anticipated that the works in the yards will commence in the next few weeks and will be completed by the end of March.

6. Terms for the acquisition of 142/144 Northgate have been agreed and signifies the first step towards the Council's intention of trying to acquire the remaining units which make up the whole of the former Edward Pease residence. Discussions regarding the acquisition of further premises on Northgate are continuing.

Darlington Indoor Market

7. Work commenced on the repairs and refurbishment to the market hall roof in November 2020. It is anticipated that the work will take approximately two months. During this period the development of the Food and Beverage hall will commence with an anticipated opening in April this year of this exciting new addition to Darlington's evening and night-time offer.

Local Plan

8. The Local Plan has now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination. An Inspector has been appointed and the hearings are due to start the week commencing 26 April 2021.

Climate Change

9. A progress report on actions delivered and work in progress was presented to Cabinet in January 2021 with work continuing on the development of the Action Plan. Further reports will be presented to all Members and through the Climate Change Members Group.

Planning, Development Management and Environmental Health

10. Work on the new Development Management Charter is now complete and a report will be brought to Members of the Planning Committee for consideration.
11. The design code for the Burtree Garden Village has been discussed at Economy and Resources Scrutiny and will be tabled at a forthcoming Planning Committee in the hope to be adopted as a helpful guide in the design of any future developments.
12. Since the beginning of August, we have received 390 applications which can be broken down into 11 major and 379 others. We have made 315 decisions in this period which include Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated decisions.
13. The Planning enforcement/compliance service is operating as normal, including site visits, seeking to resolve planning disputes and breaches. There are currently 54 planning enforcement cases under investigation. 82 cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of August.
14. Enforcement notices have been served on two gypsy sites and direct action in default is being taken on a property in Montrose Street.
15. During the Pandemic (up until the end of November) the Environmental Health Department responded to 1200 requests for service relating to Covid-19, the closure of premises and safe working practices and carried out 359 checks which resulted in 51 warnings.

16. In addition to the enforcement reported previously, it has been necessary to:

- (a) serve a Prohibition Notice on a national carpet retailer who refused to close in contravention of the business closure provisions despite being non-essential retail. The company tried to argue that they were a Builders Merchant which would have allowed them to remain open, however officers refused to accept this argument and this action was mirrored by other Local Authorities nationally.
- (b) serve a Prohibition Notice on a gym that was opening to members of the public in contravention of the business closure provisions. This premises also received £7000 in fines by way of Fixed Penalty Notices issued by the Police.

Business Investment Team Update

17. As well as supporting the on-going business development enquiries, the Business Investment team have focussed on the following.

Local Restrictions Support Grants

18. The Government has provided funding for local authorities to support local businesses adversely affected by the Covid-19 restrictions. Support is in the form of grants to individual businesses. The business support schemes are as follows:

- (a) Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) - running from 14 October to 4 November 2020.
- (b) Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) - running from 5 November to 2 December 2020.
- (c) Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) – Tier 3 restrictions – running from 2 December to 30 December 2020.
- (d) Additional Restrictions Scheme.
- (e) Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs.
- (f) Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) – Tier 4 restrictions – running from 31 December 2020 and Closed Business Lockdown Payments running from 5 January 2021.

19. The Business Investment Team are administering the LSRG (Open) and the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme. Business Rates team are administering the LSRG “closed” schemes.

20. Latest information on the LRSG Schemes – status at close of play on 14 January 2021:

	Applications	Approved	Declined	Other	Amount Paid
LRSG Open	328	187	121	20	£164,382.06
National Lockdown	958	778	173	7	£1,162,420.00
LRSG Tier 3	345	235	108	2	£369,254.43
Christmas Support Payment	60	39	21	0	£39,000.00
LSRG Tier 4/National Lockdown	765	400	132	233	£1,746,000.00
Closed Business Lockdown Payment					£976,188.36
Additional Restrictions Grant	297	91	137	69	£307,740.69
TOTAL:	2753				£4,764,985.54

Kickstart Performance

21. Kickstart performance cumulative figures have been received from TVCA as shown in the table below.

Darlington Borough Council Kickstart Performance		
	Local Authority Number of Businesses	Potential number of Placements
October 2020	19	53
January 2021	27	93

Councillor Alan Marshall
Economy Portfolio

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Overview

2. Following the Prime Ministers announcement on 4 January, a national lockdown for England came into effect on 7 January 2021.
3. Our 'Keep Darlington on the right track' campaign, which includes posters, adverts and the promotion of key local public health messages continued. The Council have been reinforcing the national 'Hands, Face, Space' messages to the public through different channels, in different settings and languages across the borough.
4. The numbers of new infections from COVID-19 in Darlington started to rise from just before Christmas and this rise continued into the month of January. This has contributed to high rates similar to the last peak seen in October 2020. The number of patients in hospital with a positive COVID-19 test has also risen over the same period, including those requiring mechanical ventilation. The County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust continue to work to manage this demand on services.
5. As of the 13 January, the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust have cared for 1,573 COVID patients who have subsequently then been discharged from hospital and were caring for 196 patients with COVID.

Community Testing

6. I was delighted that Darlington Borough Council was the first local authority in the region to launch a Community Testing programme. Our first site was operational on 14 December 2020.
7. The programme utilises Lateral Flow testing technology to enable rapid results to be provided to residents who have received a test within a period of hours rather than days. These tests are provided to those without symptoms and are designed to identify anyone who may be infectious with COVID-19 but not aware of it.
8. These tests contribute to preventing further spread of the infection within our communities by informing these asymptomatic individuals more quickly, allowing them to self-isolate and stop onward transmission.
9. Our programme of Community Testing was extended with a further five community sites established to make this offer of testing more accessible beyond the town centre from 11 January.

10. Sites include Firthmoor Community Centre, Head of Steam Railway Museum, Heighington Village Hall, Middleton St George Community Centre and Red Hall Community Centre. Residents and critical workers can book slots at these sites or at the Dolphin Centre if they want to be tested.
11. As of 19 January 2020, the Council had undertaken 9,267 community tests across all our sites in the borough. I would urge all Members, particularly those with an outreach site in or adjacent to their wards to do everything they can to help drive uptake of appointments across all sites.
12. A wide-ranging marketing campaign is underway to encourage people to book a test. This includes billboards and lamppost banners in all wards, as well as a walk-through video showing what people can expect when they go for their test. This was also advertised in the One Darlington magazine.
13. The Council has also shared its experience in setting up and delivering community testing using Lateral Flow Tests with partners including other local authorities and is supporting local schools in developing their own testing programmes.
14. There is a detailed piece of work to review the uptake and attendance at the Community Testing sites. This will analyse any differences or gaps in uptake between different communities or groups in Darlington.
15. The government has also recognised Darlington as having the 'Gold Standard' in testing capacity and capability.

COVID Vaccination Programme

16. The NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme is progressing in Darlington with a number of different streams of vaccination underway to deliver the vaccination programme in line with government guidance.
17. The Primary Care Network (PCN) Darlington are responsible for the initial vaccine roll out.
18. Our teams have been working around the clock with the NHS, PCN and Local Resilience Forum to set up sites and has been operationally supporting the Primary Care Network. Our Council teams have also been supporting with volunteers and parking arrangements at the Feethams vaccination centre.
19. Different NHS organisations including County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust and Darlington Primary Care Network are all working to provide these different streams of vaccination. These are targeting those who are most vulnerable and aim to reduce illness and prevent deaths.
20. There are programmes for NHS frontline staff, staff working in care homes, social care staff, residents living in care homes and those who are over 80 years. The Council is providing direct support to the NHS to ensure that the vaccination programme is rolled out efficiently and those in need are able to receive their vaccination in a timely manner.

21. Across County Durham, the Primary Care Networks had delivered nearly 29,000 vaccines, by Sunday 10 January, in the community to people over 80. All Darlington care home residents have now been given a first dose of the vaccine.
22. County Durham and Darlington Foundation have delivered over 7,000 vaccinations to date for employee and partner organisations including Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust.
23. The Council have offered the Primary Care Network any support that may be necessary to help speed up the process or to relieve the burden on them in these challenging times.
24. There is more information regarding the local vaccination programme available on the Tees Valley CCG website here: www.teesvalleyccg.nhs.uk/covid-19-vaccinations-frequently-asked-questions/

COVID lateral flow tests

25. The Council have continued to utilise the lateral flow tests, which we are calling the DPH tests, to avoid any confusion with our community testing. They are supplied in the following way:-
 - Darlington PCN received 3000 test kits for their staff before Christmas.
 - The 700 club has received 150 kits before Christmas. These are being used for their staff and tenants
 - YMCA is waiting to access training with view of being able to provide LFTs for their staff and tenants
26. The plan to roll out this to other voluntary agencies has been impacted by the success of the Community Testing. The community testing has proved to be easily accessible and does not require staff training and the responsibility of having to undertake and log test results.
27. The remaining DPH testing kits are being held in reserve to be used to provide an outreach option with any identified marginalised communities to provide them with access to testing through community advocates or other local and trusted groups or bodies.

Darlington Health Protection Board

28. The Darlington Health Protection Board monitors the delivery of the Darlington Local Outbreak Control Plan. The Board continues to meet weekly and reviews and shares data and intelligence from a range of different settings.
29. The main elements of the plan remain unchanged as they were set by the government. This includes the purpose of the outbreak control plan, the governance and the seven themes. The Outbreak Response Group and the Health Protection Board are working effectively in line with their terms of reference. A formal review of the plan is currently taking place.

Health and Wellbeing Board

30. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 17 December 2020. The main discussion item was an update on the COVID-19 local outbreak and the vaccination plan for Darlington.
31. Representatives from County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust provided an update to the Board on behalf of County Durham and Darlington Local A&E Delivery Board (LADB) on the System's Winter Plan for 2020/21.

Public Health

32. The Darlington Suicide Prevention Group have developed a 'crisis card'. This sets out in A4 and A3 formats how to contact a range of services that support both adults and children. The card can be used as a poster and can also be used on social media. The card has been circulated to Members, partners across various sectors and is being discussed as a potential discharge tool for the acute trusts to use so that people are aware of where they can get help if required.
33. The Public Health team have also worked hard and launched a new targeted C-card scheme for young people aged between 13 -24. The new scheme enables young people to access free condoms from schools, colleges, Council staff who carry a caseload and pharmacies. This is a preventative measure to reduce the risk of teenage pregnancy and the spread of STI's. This new scheme is a pilot and view be reviewed at the end of March 2021.
34. Several other organisations have expressed an interest in being added to the card and further work will take place in the spring to look at a second card. This may be based on a different range of services. Recent work by Healthwatch Youthwatch has highlighted that young people prefer text services sometimes so this will be discussed with providers and be included where possible on future cards.

Housing Income

35. Throughout this year our arrears recovery processes have evolved into a more balanced approach of support and enforcement. As a result, current tenant rent arrears have reduced compared to last year and are below national averages with most recent figures standing at 2.9 per cent compared to a national average of 3.69 per cent and over £17.2 million of rent having been collected since April 2020.
36. These figures demonstrate how this supportive approach to all tenants has been very successful throughout a very difficult time. We have ensured that customers have felt supported throughout to contact the Income Team when they have run into financial difficulties and the team has offered flexible approaches to repayment plans.

Housing Options

37. The national Annual Rough Sleeper count was held on the night of 18 November and it was recorded that the Local Authority had two rough sleepers. The two identified are known to often sofa surf and are aware of the services we have available, but we are unaware of their permanent accommodation at this time. As a Council we continue to take positive steps to ensure rough sleepers receive

appropriate support by encouraging the public to contact us through Street Link if they are concerned about anyone, being proactive in carrying out regular outreach and street inspections and working with our partners through the Rough Sleeper Action Group and Preventing Begging Meetings. Members of these include Community Safety, Commissioned Services, the Police, Third sector and the Housing Options Team.

38. For 2021/22 we have received notification that we will receive a Homelessness Prevention Grant of £197,129 which is a ring fenced grant to be used to prevent and relieve homelessness. This replaces the previous Flexible Support Grant and is a significant increase from the funding received in the current year of £111K. I am also pleased to announce that we have been successful in our application for the cold weather fund. We have secured £6,400 to enable us to support and accommodate vulnerable people at risk of sleeping rough throughout the winter period.
39. This will also enable us to access more permanent housing solutions for the homeless cohort and protect those at risk during Covid and the winter period. Housing Options are continuing to deliver the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative, to prevent rough sleeping and to place people regardless of priority need.
40. Once an individual has been placed in temporary accommodation, they are allocated a Housing Options Officer and given support and advice to move on to longer term accommodation. Due to the pressures of Covid-19 placing extra demand on homeless accommodation in Darlington, the Team are sometimes having to accommodate clients out of area. However, as part of the recent 'Next Steps' funding bid, we were successful in being allocated some funding to help support the individuals placed out of area. The 700 Club have been allocated this funding and are delivering a worker for each person placed out of area to provide personalised support to meet their needs.

Climate Change and Environmental Improvements

41. We are taking a proactive approach to climate change and have set aside £1m of Housing Revenue Account funding to put us in a strong position to bid for any future government grants which may require match funding. A bid has been submitted as part of round 1 of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD 1) for energy efficiency improvements, such as, thermal efficient UPVC windows and improved insulation works. A decision is due very shortly on this.
42. In addition, the Tees Valley Combined Authority has placed a regional bid on our behalf to receive further funding under the LAD 2 programme for all five local authority areas. This will include development funds to support data quality improvements as well as physical improvements to our Council housing stock

Lifeline Services

43. Our Extra Care and Sheltered Housing Schemes have once again been very busy over the festive season providing a range of Covid safe activities to enable our vulnerable elderly tenants to experience some festive cheer, supporting their health and wellbeing and acknowledging the ongoing challenges of social isolation and loneliness. Activities have included:-

- (a) Creative Darlington funding 10 performances by a professional Brass and Drum 5-piece band outside our schemes
 - (b) Various fund-raising activities for a range of charities
 - (c) Christmas goodie bags for residents
 - (d) Christmas quizzes and buffets
 - (e) Carol concert with local children
44. Lifeline Services now have iPads in use in all our schemes enabling them to better manage digital interaction and provide more activities. These will also help us improve our overall service delivery going forward.

The Dolphin Centre

45. The Dolphin Centre continued to operate in line with government and national governing body guidance and a best practice approach to all safe systems of work. On Wednesday 2 December 2020, the Centre reopened again following the national lockdown that was implemented on 4 November 2020.
46. During this period, Dolphin Centre staff were redeployed to essential roles including Street Scene and School Meals and also provided support for the Kings Church Foodbank. Some of the team did remain on site to support the operations of the building whilst construction work on the bowling alley continued. Work still continues on the bowling, soft play and mechanical and electrical project, which is due to complete early January and open in February 2021.
47. Darlington was placed into Tier 3 which effects some of the activities and services on offer. The pool programme reopened with lane swimming, club swimming and family sessions but wet and dry classes were not permitted to restart. The gym opened its doors again to members and casual users who were delighted to be back exercising. Catering services were required to close other than a takeaway service that has been made available from 16 Horsemarket with a limited offer.
48. During December, the Dolphin Centre was nominated to become a mass test site for community testing. This involved a very quick turnaround of the main sports hall to accommodate 24 testing booths. The Bull Wynd entrance was used and this area of the building has been zoned off to accommodate the site and prevent the crossover of footfall with customers using the Dolphin Centre facilities. A large proportion of Dolphin Centre and Hippodrome staff have been redeployed into roles within the test site.
49. As Darlington moved into Tier 4 and then national lockdown, the Dolphin Centre and Sports Complex has remained closed following the Christmas break. However, the Community Testing programme is still operating and provision of town centre public toilets.

Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

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

Stockton and Darlington Railway Walking and Cycling Route

2. The Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone was established in 2018 to help rejuvenate and maximise the value of the assets along the historic railway in the build up to its bicentenary in 2025.
3. A key long-term project across the partners of the route is the development of a 26 mile walking and cycling route along the alignment of the Stockton and Darlington Railway from Witton Park in Durham to Stockton via Darlington, linking heritage assets along its length including key tourism destinations.
4. Cabinet approved the proposed alignment of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Walking and Cycling route and agreed work commence to create the Public Rights of Way. The work to design sections, secure land and funding opportunities to deliver the project is now progressing. The project will progress with partners developing a joint branding strategy so that the route can be waymarked consistently.

Town Centre Car Parking

5. Cabinet received an update on the Town Centre Car Parking charges and has approved to continue a range of parking offers for a further two years until December 2022, supported by funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
6. The Council has funded a variety of Town Centre Parking initiatives to support the Town Centre Economy since June 2018 and the latest offers continue that support with them coming into effect in January 2021.

Tree and Woodland Strategy

7. Cabinet received an update on the consultation for the Draft Tree and Woodland Strategy, noting the outcome of the consultation and approving the proposed amendments in respect of Street Trees, Trees in Woodland, Trees in Parks and Open Spaces and Tree Planting.
8. Cabinet has agreed to approved and adopt the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021/2031 in order to provide a framework for the management and maintenance of trees and woodland within the Borough of Darlington.

Highway Schemes

9. The majority of the maintenance schemes are now complete with two footway schemes due to start in the New Year. The team are now focussing on the development of next year's programme.
10. Four schemes have been deferred to the next financial year due to the impacts of social distancing measures and the delays caused at the start of the year due to the initial lockdown, these include: Stanhope Road, Victoria Embankment, A68 West Auckland Road and C38 Sadberge Road.
11. Consultation has commenced on the A68 Woodlands Road and Duke Street Cycling and Walking scheme in partnership with the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
12. Northern Powergrid provided a briefing to Members on their investment plans for the Infrastructure in Darlington. This £9m investment over 2 years will upgrade and replace a power network that dates back to the 1950's. This investment will bring resilience and capacity to Darlington's power supply and support the move to electric vehicles in the future. The works will be undertaken in phases with a communications plan in place for residents, business and members for the various phases.

Head of Steam

13. The Museum continues to engage with visitors on social media with a range of factual information and arts and crafts. Online outreach work has been completed with 45 children in schools, including one school new to the Museum. The Museum continues to work with partners in the Tees Valley to develop resources to inspire and support literacy development, and is initiating a pilot of resources with schools who have high Pupil Premium numbers.
14. Activity packs for people with Dementia have been developed and distributed. In addition, monthly packs which use different museum objects as inspiration have been sent out in print and digitally to colleagues in sheltered housing, Dementia Friendly Darlington, Age UK and Alzheimer's Society.

Creative Darlington

15. Five Darlington artists were commissioned to create and share original artwork celebrating Darlington, as part of the 'Darlington Wonders' programme. A public call out for original works celebrating the wonderful aspects of Darlington followed. 23 individual members of the public produced 51 new pieces of art which were shared on a Darlington Wonders webpage, and some of which were later exhibited in the window galleries of Cornerstone Arts. As of December 2020, the page had a reach of over 10,279 visitors and an additional 1,030 unique engagements from members of the community.
16. Creative Darlington and Darlington for Culture have supported five podcasts by guest DJ's, co-ordinated by The Workhouse Sessions, sharing their music and experiences of how a DJ's work has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first three podcasts reached 986 people in Darlington, 725 in

Middlesbrough and 292 people in Stockton, 142 people in Hartlepool.

Libraries

Christmas

17. The libraries gifted books to children during the run up to Christmas. Books and learning resources were gifted to reception pupils at Redhall school and to looked after children via Darlington's Virtual School. We also prepared bags of books, resources and small toys for the Kings Centre to disseminate via their networks of food banks.
18. The libraries hosted online festive story times for young children and prepared Christmas bags full of stories to borrow alongside a craft and gift to keep. A Christmas window competition took place encouraging children to view the display from outside of the library and to find the one character who is in every window scene. An online 'Christmas Story Hunt' from storyteller, John Kirk, also took place which included the tale of Cinderella.

Digital Borrowing

19. Borrowing of the Libraries' digital stock continues to increase as more people take advantage of our new app. By the end of October, digital book loans exceeded last year's totals by 32 per cent. When comparing April – October 2019 to 2020 there is a 145 per cent increase in items borrowed online, including eBooks, eAudio and magazines.

Northern Children's Book Festival (NCBF)

20. Two fantastic authors were streamed into classrooms in eight of Darlington's schools as part of the Northern Children's Book Festival. NCBF takes place annually and usually authors, storytellers and illustrators visit schools, but this year we were able to bring them into the classroom via Zoom. Feedback from pupils and teaching staff was very positive, with children feeling inspired to write their own stories afterwards.

Darlington Hippodrome

21. During periods where the Theatre must remain closed to the public, regular educational classes for under 18s (Youth Theatre and Youth Dance) have taken place in the Theatre with strict safe working practices adhered to, risk assessments carried out and a robust communication plan in place. In addition, a regular space continues to be provided to Darlington College's Performing Arts course two days per week.

Hippodrome Online

22. The Theatre has shifted focus to online engagement again following November restrictions. To complement the online adult dance classes and quizzes, a partnership has been forged with Fane Productions to offer audiences an array of live streamed events. These include 'A Night In' with various celebrities and public figures including Dawn French, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and many others. Also on

offer is 'An Afternoon of Christmas Storytelling', with Michael Morpurgo and access to the Pantomime, 'Jack & The Beanstalk', produced by Peter Duncan.

Environmental Services

Garden Waste Collection Service

23. The Garden Waste Collection Service concluded a successful second year of operation. Despite initial delays due to the commencement of lockdown, subscriptions to the service increased significantly from 4,800 in 2019 to 7,160 in 2020.
24. The service ceased seasonal operations on 14 December with a total of 1,648 tonnes collected. The material collected provided a compost for agricultural fertiliser and soil production, utilised by local farmers and soil producers.

Waste Services

25. Throughout the pandemic to date, Refuse Collection crews have seen an increase in waste generated by residents, however, have collected all waste within allocated resources.
26. Following planning undertaken by Waste Services teams to prepare for the additional refuse and recycling generated by residents during the Christmas period, all waste placed out for collection was removed by Monday 4 January, with services returning to normal operations thereafter.

Street Cleansing

27. A dedicated crew for the provision of fly tip removal and back lane clearances is currently in place until June 2021. This service has seen a significant reduction in the time taken to remove fly tips compared to previous years. It is hoped that this service can continue beyond June 2021.

**Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio**

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

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

The Medium Term Financial Plan

2. Cabinet approved the Medium Term Financial Plan for consultation in December and I am pleased to report we have been able to produce a balanced four year plan. The Plan will return to Cabinet on the 9 February following consultation and then onto Council on 18 February.

COVID funding

3. Since my last update the government has announced further support for the Council in 2021/22 and this will be built into the Medium Term Financial plan. There has also been a commitment to fund 75% of the 2020/21 deficits on the collection fund which holds council tax and business rate income. Whilst we are still in uncertain times in regards to the impacts of Covid-19, it is anticipated the total funding received along with the Sales Fees and Charges recompense scheme will fully cover the projected COVID costs this financial year.

Business Grants

4. You will be aware that earlier in 2020 over £25 million of grants were paid to support 2,200 local businesses in response to the initial lockdown, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then a number of further support measures for business have been announced which cover the Tiering and Lockdown periods and the Revenue and Benefits team along with Business Investment team colleagues have been working hard to administer the new round of grants announced to get the funding out to businesses as quickly as possible. Details have been provided in the Economy portfolio report but in summary a further £4.8m has been paid out in the last month.

Test and Trace Support Payments

5. From 28 September 2020, grants have been available to local residents who are required to self-isolate by the NHS and who will lose income as a result. I can report that since the scheme started, 203 awards have been made to Darlington residents totalling £101,500.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

6. The Council's capital programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered.
 - (a) On-site surveys on larger schemes which were previously affected by Covid-19 are now underway, and desktop work has been able to continue with minimal impact.
 - (b) Design work is progressing on the programme, with a number of schemes recently submitted for planning consideration and more being prepared.
 - (c) Business cases continue to be developed to secure additional projects from funding opportunities.
 - (d) A programme of demolition works is underway across a number of locations to facilitate future regeneration opportunities.
 - (e) There remains a risk of delay costs from Covid-19 related effects and possible Brexit implications to ongoing projects.

Property Asset Management

7. Acquisitions in advance of the Darlington Station Improvement Scheme and the Darlington Station Gateway Compulsory Purchase Order have been made as follows:-
 - (a) Profix Fabrications, Garbutt Square
 - (b) Hogans Public House, Victoria Road
 - (c) Exhaust-a-Fix Bank Top Garage, Neasham Road
8. Acquisition of the 48-sheet advertising hoarding site at Feethams Roundabout, Victoria Road, Darlington which is approximately 26.30 sqm (283 sq.ft).

Furlough

9. The Government's Furlough scheme has been extended until April 2021. The Council will continue to use the flexible furlough scheme which allows employees to work some hours where possible and this has been invaluable in regard to flexibility when setting up and running the COVID testing sites.

Member Meetings

10. All of the Council member meetings are continuing to function virtually and this looks likely to continue for some time given the new coronavirus strain. The legislation which enabled virtual meetings expires in May, but it seems probable that this will be extended.

Annual Canvass (Electoral Registration) 2020

11. The Annual Canvass, the first under the new Canvass reforms, was completed on time, and the new Electoral Register was published on 1 December 2020.

Elections

12. Members will be aware of speculation about whether because of coronavirus, elections should proceed on 6 May 2021. Preparatory work is none the less continuing for the elections (the Tees Valley Mayoral, Police and Crime Commissioner and two by-elections – the Redhall and Lingfield Ward vacancy and potentially Hummersknott).
13. The impacts of coronavirus are being planned for with polling stations and staffing levels being reviewed from the perspective of keeping people safe. We are encouraging postal voting to reduce attendance at polling stations and to ensure that people are aware of other ways of voting.

Councillor Charles Johnson
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

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**COUNCIL
28 JANUARY 2021**

REVISION TO THE COUNCIL'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Heather Scott, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To propose a new Senior Management Structure for the Council and to recommend appointments to three posts.

Summary

2. The report presents a new senior structure which has been developed with input from Cabinet that better aligns to the Council's priorities, it also realigns services to ensure delivery of priorities. The proposal creates a post of Chief Executive which has the lead for Economic Growth as well as being the Head of Paid Service; the report recommends Ian Williams be appointed to the post.
3. The proposal includes the creation of a Group Director for Operations; to which it is recommended that Elizabeth Davison is appointed. It also creates a Group Director of Services post which is recommended to be advertised internally.
4. The posts of Managing Director and Assistant Director of Housing and Building Services are deleted, following the current postholders retirements, and a number of services are realigned to new groups as a result.
5. A new post of Assistant Director (Housing and Revenues) is created by merging the existing Head of Housing and Revenues post with the relevant responsibilities previously held by the Assistant Director (Housing and Building Services). Anthony Sandys, the existing Head of Housing and Revenues is to be appointed to this post.
6. The proposal can be accommodated within the existing budgets.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The Senior Management Structure as set out in **Appendix A** is approved with an implementation date of 1 June 2021.

- (b) Members note the views of the Human Resources Committee.
- (c) The appointment of Ian Williams as Chief Executive is approved
- (d) The appointment of Elizabeth Davison as Group Director of Operations is approved.
- (e) The appointment of Anthony Sandys as Assistant Director (Housing and Revenues) is approved.
- (f) The Assistant Director Law and Governance is delegated to make any consequential changes to the Constitution that are needed.

Reasons

- 8. The recommendations are supported to amend the structure and to make key internal appointments.

Paul Wildsmith
Managing Director

Background Papers

12 January 2021 Cabinet Report- Revision of the Council's Senior Management Structure

Paul Wildsmith : Extension 5828
TAB

S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impact as a result of this report
Health and Wellbeing	No direct impact as a result of this report
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impact as a result of this report
Diversity	No direct impact as a result of this report
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	The recommendations can be accommodated within the existing MTFP
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	No direct impact as a result of this report
Efficiency	The structure aims to increase efficiency
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The report does not impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

9. The Council's existing Senior Management Structure was approved by Council in January 2018. Recently the Managing Director and the Assistant Director of Housing and Building Services have announced their retirements in the spring of 2021. The opportunity has been taken to work with Cabinet to review the structure, in light of these retirements, and Cabinet's priorities for the future.
10. The existing structure is set out at **Appendix B** and Members will see this structure is based around three groups:-
 - (a) Resources – Led by the Managing Director.
 - (b) Children & Adults – Led by the Director.
 - (c) Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services – Led by the Director.
11. The structure was established following the deletion of the stand-alone Chief Executive post with the Head of Paid Service role being added to the Director of Resources role, leading to the creation of the Managing Director role.
12. Senior Statutory roles within the structure are allocated as below :-
 - (a) Head of Paid Service – Managing Director
 - (b) Monitoring Officer – Assistant Director Law & Governance
 - (c) Chief Financial Officer – Assistant Director (Resources)
 - (d) Statutory Director of Children Services and statutory Director of Adults Services – Director of Children and Adults Services
 - (e) Director of Public Health
13. The previous restructure reduced Senior Management costs by circa £200,000 per annum, in addition to previous senior management savings of £2.2m per annum. The review of the existing structure has not therefore sought to deliver major savings as such reductions would undermine the ability to deliver the Council's ambitions, however, the proposals make a saving compared to the existing MTFP. The restructure has therefore concentrated on strengthening priority areas and improving service alignment.
14. The Council's recently agreed Council Plan – Delivering Success for Darlington - highlights economic growth as the Council's top priority, and one of the Council's biggest challenges in the medium term, will be the efficient use of resources, to ensure a balanced Medium-Term Financial Plan. These two aspects are addressed in the proposed restructure.
15. In terms of service alignment there is an issue to be addressed in the restructure, currently Local Taxation, Benefits and Customer Services sit within the Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services department rather than the Resources Group which is the logical place for them. In the current structure strategic supervision is provided by the Managing Director in his role as Director of Resources. The restructure addresses this structural anomaly.

16. In terms of priority areas, over the coming years, transport, delivery of capital projects and the consistent delivery of good quality neighbourhood services will be key, and therefore these services are given prominence within the proposed structure.
17. Set out in the next section of the report is the proposed structure which addresses the issues raised above.

Proposed Structure

18. The structure has been developed with Cabinet input and given economic growth is the Council's key priority they feel the most senior role in the Council should lead the economic growth agenda, ensuring they have the Council's priority service under their direct control and the postholder should be very experienced in the field of economic growth. It is therefore proposed that the Managing Director role as currently structured is deleted and replaced with the role of Chief Executive, who will be Head of Paid Service and also have responsibility for line management of the Economic Growth function. This approach will enable the postholder to take a strategic lead on economic growth ensuring the Council's top priority permeates throughout the Council and its partners.
19. The retirement of the Managing Director removes the Director of Resources role and given the Council's priority of maximising the use of resources and managing finance effectively; it is proposed that a new post of Group Director of Operations be created to oversee the current resources function.
20. With regard to realigning services, the following services will be transferred to the Operations Group :-
 - (a) Local Taxation
 - (b) Benefits
 - (c) Customer Services
21. In addition to the above, due to the way services are currently configured and managed, the Housing Service will also transfer given the same Head of Service manages Housing and the "resources" services. Housing is a good fit with other services in the Operations Group given its need for sound financial planning and resource management.
22. The services transferred to the Group Director of Operations represent a significant element of the Assistant Director of Housing and Building Services portfolio and it is proposed that this post is deleted to provide funding for other new posts. As a result of the deletion of the post, it is proposed that the Building Services division transfers to the Assistant Director Transport and Capital Projects, this represents a good alignment of services and reflects that there is already much crossover and co-ordination done between the service areas in the existing structure.
23. The final major proposed change is that given the move of economic growth from the Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services department, the group be renamed the Services Group and it be headed up by a Group Director. This new Group Director role will give focused strategic leadership to the vast majority of public facing services that help create the environment to support our top priority of economic growth.

24. It is also proposed that the Children and Adults department is renamed the People's Group to better reflect the breadth of services contained in the group.
25. The revised structure is set out at Appendix A.

Human Resource Implications

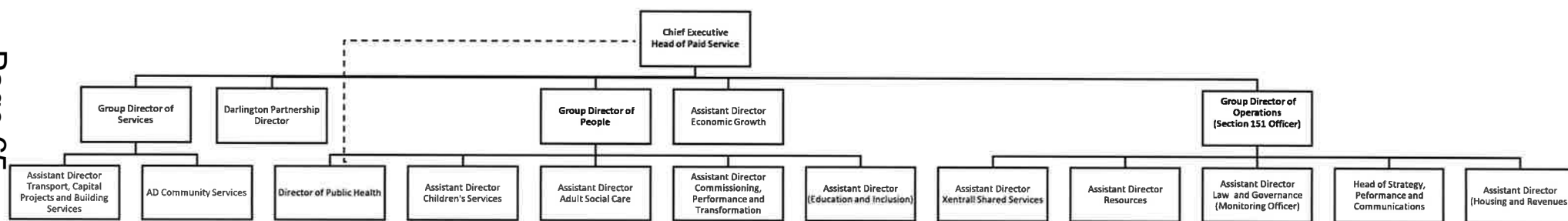
26. It is proposed that Ian Williams, current Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be appointed to the role of Chief Executive for reasons explained below, but also in recognition that the Chief Executive will have the strategic lead for Economic Growth for the Council, which represents a major part of his current role. In 2014, given the Council's financial position, Ian was appointed to the Director role specifically focused on Economic Growth via a stringent recruitment process. Following a management restructure in 2018, Ian then became responsible for Neighbourhood Services, however economic growth remained the overriding priority.
27. The appointment is recommended given his vast and regionally recognised experience in the field of economic growth, together with his leadership skills demonstrated during his time at Darlington. Ian has also gained much experience of the wider Council through his involvement in the Council's senior management and by acting as a de facto Deputy to the Managing Director. He has led many priority schemes and initiatives for the Council, and his appointment to the role would ensure continuity of leadership following the Managing Director's retirement.
28. It is proposed that Elizabeth Davison is appointed to the Group Director of Operations post. This new role encompasses all her existing remit, including the statutory role of Chief Financial Officer, for which you must be a fully qualified accountant. In her current role, Elizabeth is also a member of the Chief Officers Executive and works closely with the Managing Director and other two Directors to lead the management of the organisation. Whilst Revenues and Benefits is not currently under her remit, Elizabeth has had direct responsibility for strategic financial management covering these areas.
29. Elizabeth has vast experience in the resources field gathered over many years leading the Council's Finance, HR and Health and Safety services along with a number of further back office and corporate functions. In terms of the wider resource functions and that of Housing, she has had considerable exposure to these areas giving her knowledge and experience to confidently take on the role. Due to the breadth and responsibility of the Group Director role and the requirement for a Deputy Section 151 officer, Elizabeth's current Service Director of Resources post will be replaced with an Assistant Director of Resources post yet to be evaluated, but anticipated on grade AD1 with responsibility for Finance, HR and Health and Safety
30. The deletion of the role of Assistant Director (Housing and Building) and the splitting of the role means the existing Head of Housing and Revenues will be subsuming the Assistant Director responsibilities into his Head of Service role. An evaluation of the amended role recommends that the post should be designated Assistant Director (Housing and Revenues) paid on the grade AD2. The existing Head of Housing and Revenues Anthony Sandys will be slotted into this post as it

represents a very substantial element of his current role.

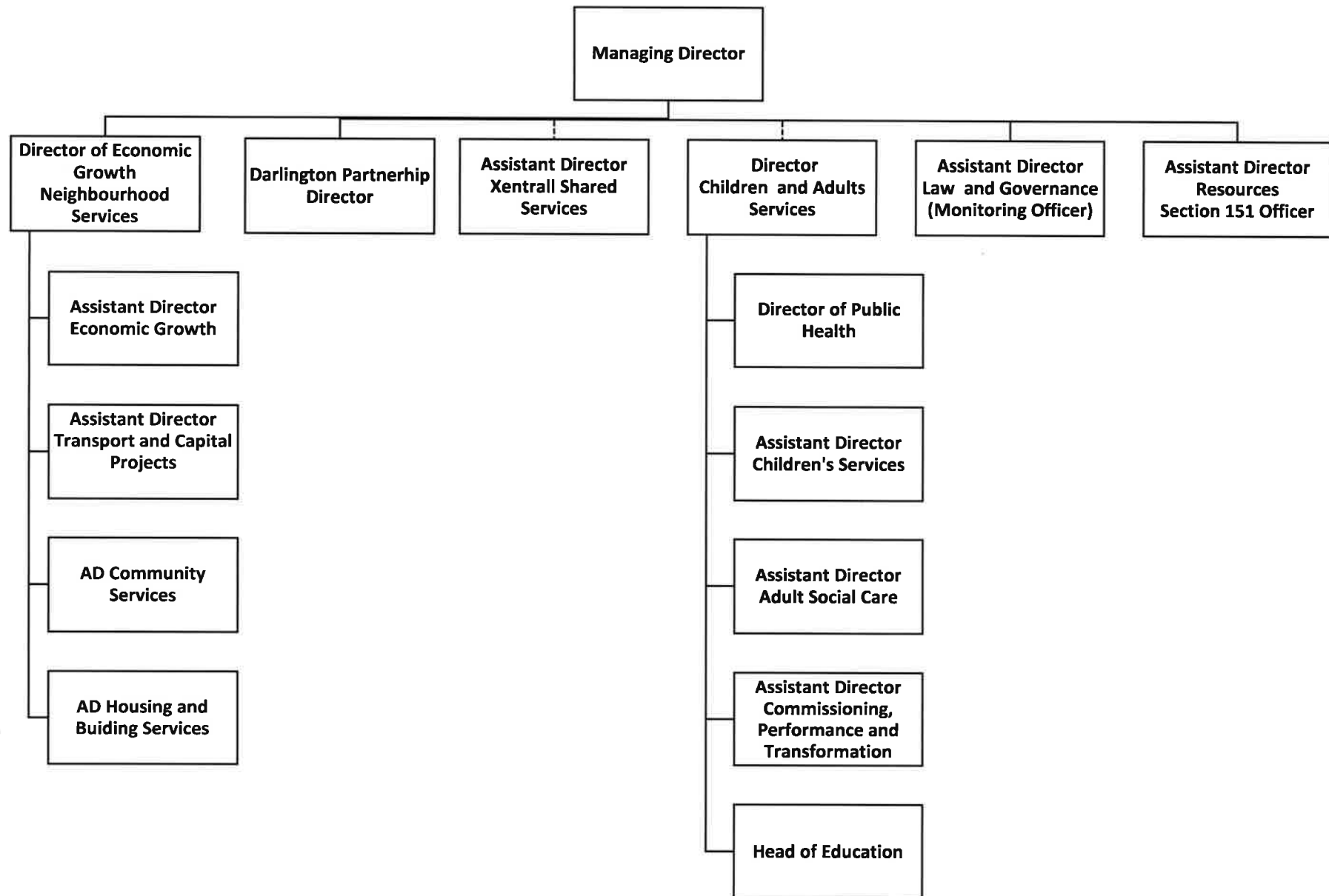
31. With regard to the role of Group Director of Services, it is recommended that this is advertised internally as it is felt there are strong internal candidates for the role. Should the internal recruitment process not be successful, then an external process could follow.
32. The People's group is unchanged by this restructure but as part of this proposal is to designate the Head of Education and Inclusion post to that of Assistant Director (Education and Inclusion). There is no change in salary of this post, which is covered by the Soulbury pay scales but it removes an anomaly from the structure.
33. The pay scales for the Director and Assistant Director posts are unchanged and the role of Chief Executive is set at £149,000.
34. The Assistant Director Law and Governance is the Council's statutory monitoring officer, and given the important of governance and legal advice for council decision making, whilst the Assistant Director will report to the Director of Operations for management purposes, he will also sit on the Chief Officers Executive to enable him to discharge his duties more effectively.
35. The proposals set out in this report have been consulted upon with the Chief Officers Executive and the Chief Officers Board and they are supportive of the proposal.
36. The Human Resources Committee met on 15 January 2021 to interview Ian Williams for the post of Chief Executive and Elizabeth Davison for the post of Group Director of Operations and they recommended the appointment of both officers, attached at **Appendix C and D** are the minutes of the meetings.

Financial Implications

37. The proposals contained within this report can be accommodated within existing budgets and represent a saving compared to the existing MTFP.



EXISTING STRUCTURE



HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

15 January 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Baldwin, Curry, Dulston, Durham, Harker, L. Hughes, Marshall, McEwan, H Scott. (9)

HRC1. CHAIR – RESOLVED – That Councillor H Scott be appointed Chair of this Committee for this meeting only.

HRC2. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC – RESOLVED - That, pursuant to Sections 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the ensuing item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in exclusion paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

HRC3. HEAD OF PAID SERVICE/CHIEF EXECUTIVE – APPOINTMENT (EXCLUSION NO. 1) – The Committee met to consider the appointment of Ian Williams to the post of Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive.

The Committee had previously received a briefing from the Managing Director outlining the proposed Senior Management change which had been developed with the input from Cabinet and which included the creation of a post of Chief Executive which had the lead for Economic Growth as well as being the Council's Head of Paid Service.

As part of the restructure, it had been proposed that the current Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be appointed to the post and the Committee received advice from the Human Resources Manager on the process and procedure.

Ian Williams was invited to the meeting to discuss the proposed new structure with Members; how he envisaged it working and how he could fulfil the role of Chief Executive

After Ian Williams left the meeting, the Chair then asked Members of the Committee for their views and a discussion followed.

A proposal to recommend to Council that Ian Williams be appointed to the post of Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive was then put to the vote and the decision taken by a show of hands.

RESOLVED – That, subject to Council approving the revised Senior Management Structure at its meeting on 28 January 2021, it be recommended to Council that Ian Williams be appointed to the post of Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive.

The decision was unanimous.

SIGNED ... 

DATED15.1.2021.....

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HUMAN RESOURCES CHIEF OFFICERS APPOINTMENT PANEL

15 January 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Curry, Dulston, Durham, Harker, L. Hughes, Marshall, McEwan, H Scott. (8)

HRCOAP1. CHAIR – RESOLVED – That Councillor H Scott be appointed Chair of this Committee for this meeting only.

HRCOAP2. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC – RESOLVED - That, pursuant to Sections 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the ensuing item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in exclusion paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

HRCOAP3. GROUP DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS – APPOINTMENT (EXCLUSION NO. 1) – The Committee met to consider the appointment of Elizabeth Davison to the post of Group Director of Operations.

The Committee had previously received a briefing from the Managing Director outlining the proposed Senior Management change which had been developed with the input from Cabinet and which included the creation of a post of Group Director of Operations.

As part of the restructure, it had been proposed that the current Assistant Director Resources be appointed to the post and the Committee received advice from the Human Resources Manager on the process and procedure.

Elizabeth Davison was invited to the meeting to discuss the proposed new structure with Members; how she envisaged it working and how she could fulfil the role of Group Director of Operations.

After Elizabeth Davison left the meeting, the Chair then asked Members of the Committee for their views and a discussion followed.

A proposal that Elizabeth Davison be appointed to the post of Group Director of Operations was then put to the vote and the decision taken by a show of hands.

RESOLVED – That, subject to Council approving the revised Senior Management Structure at its meeting on 28 January 2021, Elizabeth Davison be appointed to the post of Group Director of Operations.

The decision was unanimous.

SIGNED 

DATED 15 January 2021

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COUNCIL
28 JANUARY 2021

MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

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

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks approval of the revised Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and provides a half-yearly review of the Council's borrowing and investment activities.

Summary

2. The mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council's borrowing, requires Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, relating to capital spending and borrowing. Prudential Indicators are set in three statutory annual reports, a forward-looking annual treasury management strategy, a backward looking annual treasury management report and this mid-year update. The mid-year update follows Council's approval in February 2020 of the 2020/21 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.
3. The key objectives of the three annual reports are:
 - (a) to ensure the governance of the large amounts of public money under the Council's Treasury Management activities:
 - (i) Complies with legislation;
 - (ii) Meets high standards set out in codes of practice.
 - (b) To ensure that borrowing is affordable;
 - (c) To report performance of the key activities of borrowing and investments.
4. The key proposed revisions to Prudential Indicators relate to the Operational Boundary will reduce to £188.018m and the Authorised Limit to £229.233m to allow for any additional cashflow requirement.
5. Investments now include £30m in property funds which are expected to increase our net return on investments by around £0.500m in future years.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that :

- (a) The revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 11 and 13 to 18 are approved.
- (b) Council note the proposal in para. 32 re the potential of Darlington College accessing the Council's loan facility in accordance with the Capital Strategy.
- (c) The underspend in the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) of £0.110m shown in Table 12 is noted.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;
- (b) To inform Members of the performance of the Treasury Management function;
- (c) To comply with the Local Government Act 2003;
- (d) To enable further improvements to be made in the Council's Treasury Management function.

**Paul Wildsmith
Managing Director**

Background Papers

- (i) Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21
- (ii) Prudential Indicators & Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21
- (iii) Accounting records
- (iv) The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities

Peter Carrick: Extension 5401

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for S17 Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	This report has no implications for the Council's Health and Well Being agenda.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	There are no specific implications for the Council's diversity agenda.
Wards Affected	All Wards.
Groups Affected	All Groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report must be considered by Council.
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision.
Urgent Decision	For the purposes of call in this report is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report has no particular implications for the sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	The report refers to actions taken to reduce costs and manage risks.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report does not impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. This mid-year review report meets the regulatory framework requirement of treasury management. It also incorporates the needs of the Prudential Code to ensure monitoring of the capital expenditure plans and the Council's prudential indicators (PIs). The Treasury Strategy and the PIs were previously reported to Council on 20 February 2020.
9. This report concentrates on the revised positions for 2020/21. Future year's indicators will be revised when the impact of the MTFP 2021/22 onwards is known.
10. A summary of the revised headline indicators for 2020/21 is presented in **Table 1** below. More detailed explanations of each indicator and any proposed changes are contained in the report. The revised indicators reflect the movement in the Capital MTFP since its approval in February 2020 and the means by which it is financed.

Table 1 Headline Indicators

	2020/21 Original Estimate	2020/21 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure (Tables 2 and 3)	45.179	31.798
Capital Financing Requirement (Table 4)	226.040	218.317
Operational Boundary for External Debt (Table 4)	197.118	188.018
Authorised Limit for External Debt (Table 6)	237.342	229.233
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- General Fund (Table 15)	2.85%	2.73%
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- Housing Revenue Account (HRA)(Table 15)	17.48%	12.78%

11. The capital expenditure plans and prudential indicators for capital expenditure are set out initially, as these provide the framework for the subsequent treasury management activity. The actual treasury management activity follows the capital framework and the position against the treasury management indicators is shown at the end.
12. The purpose of the report supports the objective in the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Investment Guidance which state that Members receive and adequately scrutinise the treasury service.
13. The underlying economic environment remains difficult for Councils and concerns over counterparty risk are still around. This background encourages the Council to continue investing over the shorter term and with high quality counterparties, the downside is that investment returns remain low.

Key Prudential Indicators

14. This part of the report is structured to update:

- (a) The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- (b) How these plans are financed;
- (c) The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the PI's and the underlying need to borrow;
- (d) Compliance and limits in place for borrowing activity;
- (e) Changes to the Annual Investment Strategy;
- (f) The revised financing costs budget for 2020/21

Capital Expenditure PI

15. **Table 2** shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the budget.

Table 2

Capital Expenditure by Service	2020/21 Original Estimate	2020/21 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	15.457	20.130
HRA	28.843	14.900
Total Estimated Capital Expenditure	44.300	35.030
Loans to Joint Ventures	0.879	(3.232)
Total	45.179	31.798

16. The changes to the 2020/21 capital expenditure estimates have been notified to Cabinet as part of the Capital Budget monitoring process (Quarterly Project Position Statement Report).

17. The current capital programme that has not already been financed now stands at £159.755m but this includes a number of schemes that will be spent over a number of years not just in 2020/21. A reduction of £127.956m has been allowed for schemes which are known will be finalised in future years, but it is likely that other schemes will also slip into future years.

Impact of Capital Expenditure Plans

Changes to the financing of the Capital Programme

18. **Table 3** draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans shown above, highlighting the original elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element (Borrowing Need) increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by

way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). Borrowing need has increased for 2020/21 due to borrowing not required in previous years for slipped schemes but expected to be needed this year. This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Table 3

Capital Expenditure	2020/21 Original Estimate	2020/21 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	15.457	20.130
HRA	28.843	14.900
Loans to Joint Ventures	0.879	(3.232)
Total Capital expenditure	45.179	31.798
Financed By:		
Capital Receipts - Housing	0.303	0.303
Capital Receipts –General Fund	0.800	0.963
Capital grants	8.757	14.917
HRA Revenue Contributions	10.551	14.597
HRA Investment Fund	8.722	0.000
Self-Financing - GF	0.500	0.250
Total Financing	29.633	31.030
Borrowing Need	15.546	0.768

The Capital Financing Requirement (PI), External Debt (PI) and the Operational Boundary

19. **Table 4** shows the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), which is the underlying external need to borrow for capital purposes. It shows the expected actual debt position over the period. This is called the Operational Boundary. The reduction in Borrowing Need (Table 3) is around £14.8m and currently actual borrowing for the Council is £171.661m. The reduction is due to the Housing programme being delayed due to Covid 19, as well as the Council receiving repayments from the joint ventures of amounts previously loaned. It is proposed to set an actual borrowing figure of £177.660m this will accommodate the additional borrowing need and any debt requirements for cash flow purposes. Other Long term liabilities (the PFI scheme) will be added to give the revised operational boundary for 2020/21.

Prudential Indicator- External Debt/ Operational Boundary**Table 4**

	2020/21 Original Estimate	2020/21 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Prudential Indicator- Capital Financing Requirement		
Opening CFR- Post Audit of Accounts	216.930	219.488
CFR General Fund	124.680	143.024
CFR General Fund PFI/Leasing IFRS	10.358	10.358
CFR – Housing	73.338	68.168
CFR – Loans to Joint Ventures	17.664	(3.232)
Total Closing CFR	226.040	218.317
Net Movement in CFR	9.110	(1.171)
Borrowing	186.760	177.660
Other long Term Liabilities	10.358	10.358
Total Debt 31 March- Operational Boundary	197.118	188.018

Limits to Borrowing Activity

20. The first key control over the treasury activity is a PI to ensure that over the medium term gross borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2019/20 and the next two financial years. As shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5

	2020/21 Original Estimate £m	2020/21 Revised Estimate £m	2021/22 Revised Estimate £m	2022/23 Original Estimate £m
Gross borrowing	186.760	177.660	192.660	207.660
Plus Other Long Term Liabilities	10.358	10.358	9.232	8.117
Total Gross Borrowing	197.118	188.018	201.892	215.777
CFR* (year-end position)	226.040	218.317	240.503	253.402

* includes on balance sheet PFI schemes and finance leases

21. The Assistant Director Resources reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current and future years in complying with this PI.
22. A further PI controls the overall level of borrowing, this is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which while not desirable, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. The Authorised Limit is currently set 5% above the Capital Financing Requirement to allow for any additional cashflow needs, the revised figure for 2020/21 has been raised by 5% of the new CFR total. Whilst it is not expected that borrowing would be at these levels this would allow additional borrowing to take place should market

conditions change suddenly and swift action was required. This is a Statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

23. It is proposed to move the Authorised Limit in **Table 6** in line with the movement in the overall Capital Financing Requirement.

Table 6

Authorised Limit for External Debt	2020/21 Original Indicator £m	2020/21 Revised Indicator £m
Capital Financing Requirement	226.040	218.317
Additional headroom to Capital Financing Requirement	11.302	10.916
Total Authorised Limit for External Debt	237.342	229.233

Interest Rate Forecasts Provided by Link Asset Services

Table 7

	Bank Rate	PWLB rates for borrowing purposes*			
		5 year	10 year	25 year	50 year
	%	%	%	%	%
2020/21					
Dec 2020	0.10	1.90	2.10	2.50	2.30
March 2021	0.10	2.00	2.10	2.50	2.30
2021/22					
June 2021	0.10	2.00	2.10	2.50	2.30
Sept 2021	0.10	2.00	2.10	2.60	2.40
Dec 2021	0.10	2.00	2.20	2.60	2.40
March 2022	0.10	2.00	2.20	2.60	2.40
2022/23					
June 2022	0.10	2.10	2.20	2.70	2.50
Sept 2022	0.10	2.10	2.30	2.70	2.50
Dec 2022	0.10	2.10	2.30	2.70	2.50
March 2023	0.10	2.10	2.30	2.70	2.50

*PWLB rates above are for certainty rates (which are provided for those authorities that have disclosed their borrowing/capital plans to the government. Darlington Borough Council will be able to access these certainty rates which are 0.2% below PWLB's normal borrowing rates, although if it is for Housing purposes through the HRA you can take another 1.00% off the above rates.

24. From the local authority borrowing perspective, HM Treasury imposed **two changes of margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates** in 2019-20 without any prior warning. The first took place on 9th October 2019, adding an additional 1% margin over gilts to all PWLB period rates. That increase was then at least partially reversed for some forms of borrowing on 11th March 2020, but not for mainstream General Fund capital schemes, at the same time as the Government announced in the Budget a programme of increased infrastructure expenditure. It also announced that there would be a consultation with local authorities on possibly further amending these margins; this was to end on 4th June, but that date was

subsequently put back to 31st July. It is clear that the Treasury will no longer allow local authorities to borrow money from the PWLB to purchase commercial property if the aim is solely to generate an income stream (assets for yield).

25. It is possible that the non-HRA Certainty Rate will be subject to revision downwards after the conclusion of the PWLB consultation; however, the timing of such a change is currently an unknown, although it would be likely to be within the current financial year.
26. As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates (table 7), shows, there is likely to be little upward movement in PWLB rates over the next two years as it will take economies, including the UK, a prolonged period to recover all the momentum they have lost in the sharp recession caused during the coronavirus shut down period. Inflation is also likely to be very low during this period and could even turn negative in some major western economies during 2020/21.
27. The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably relatively even but is subject to major uncertainty due to the virus.
28. There is relatively little UK domestic risk of increases or decreases in Bank Rate and significant changes in shorter term PWLB rates. The Bank of England has effectively ruled out the use of negative interest rates in the near term and increases in Bank Rate are likely to be some years away given the underlying economic expectations. However, it is always possible that safe haven flows, due to unexpected domestic developments and those in other major economies, could impact gilt yields, (and so PWLB rates), in the UK.
29. The downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:
 - (a) **UK** - second nationwide wave of virus infections requiring a national lockdown;
 - (b) **UK / EU trade negotiations** - if it were to cause significant economic disruption and a fresh major downturn in the rate of growth.
 - (c) **UK - Bank of England** takes action too quickly, or too far, over the next three years to raise Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.
 - (d) A resurgence of the **Eurozone sovereign debt crisis**. The ECB has taken monetary policy action to support the bonds of EU states, with the positive impact most likely for “weaker” countries. In addition, the EU recently agreed a €750bn fiscal support package. These actions will help shield weaker economic regions for the next year or so. However, in the case of Italy, the cost of the virus crisis has added to its already huge debt mountain and its slow economic growth will leave it vulnerable to markets returning to taking the view that its level of debt is unsupportable. There remains a sharp divide between northern EU countries favouring low debt to GDP and annual balanced budgets and southern countries who want to see jointly issued Eurobonds to finance economic recovery. This divide could undermine the unity of the EU in time to come.

- (e) Weak capitalisation of some **European banks**, which could be undermined further depending on extent of credit losses resultant of the pandemic.
 - (f) **German minority government & general election in 2021.** In the German general election of September 2017, Angela Merkel's CDU party was left in a vulnerable minority position dependent on the fractious support of the SPD party, as a result of the rise in popularity of the anti-immigration AfD party. The CDU has done badly in subsequent state elections but the SPD has done particularly badly. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but she intends to remain as Chancellor until the general election in 2021. This then leaves a major question mark over who will be the major guiding hand and driver of EU unity when she steps down.
 - (g) **Other minority EU governments.** Austria, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland and Belgium also have vulnerable minority governments dependent on coalitions which could prove fragile.
 - (h) **Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary** now form a strongly anti-immigration bloc within the EU. There has also been rising anti-immigration sentiment in Germany and France.
 - (i) **Geopolitical risks**, for example in China, Iran or North Korea, but also in Europe and other Middle Eastern countries, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.
 - (j) **US - the Presidential election in 2020:** this could have repercussions for the US economy and SINO-US trade relations
30. The upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilts and PWLB rates are:
- (a) UK - stronger than currently expected recovery in UK economy.
 - (b) Post-Brexit - if an agreement was reached that removed the majority of threats of economic disruption between the EU and the UK.
 - (c) The Bank of England is too slow in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to build up too strongly within the UK economy, which then necessitates a later rapid series of increases in Bank Rate faster than we currently expect.

Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 and Annual Investment Strategy Update

31. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2020/21 was approved by this Council on 20 February 2020.
32. There are no policy changes to the TMSS, although the Council's Capital Strategy includes a section on 'Loans to External Bodies or Organisations' and has been approached about the possibility of Darlington College utilising this facility. The facility is based on the loans being for activities that are aligned to, and support Council service objectives and/or corporate priorities. The loan if and when required would be subject to due diligence and would need to be agreed through Cabinet /Council but as Audit Committee has a Governance role it was thought prudent to highlight the possibility of it through this report as it is a Treasury Management matter. If and when

agreed the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit will need to be amended to accommodate any increase in the CFR.

33. The details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

Debt Activity during 2020/21

34. The expected net borrowing need is set out in **Table 8**

Table 8

	2020/21 Original Estimate £m	2020/21 Revised Estimate £m
CFR (year-end position) from Table 4	226.040	218.317
<u>Less</u> other long term liabilities PFI and finance leases	10.358	10.358
Net adjusted CFR (net year end position)	215.682	207.959
Expected Borrowing	186.760	175.600
(Under)/ Over borrowing	(28.922)	(32.359)
Expected Net movement in CFR	9.110	(1.171)
Net financing need for the year from table 3	15.546	0.768
Less MRP General Fund	0.000	0.000
Less MRP Housing	0.629	0.799
Less MRP relating to finance leases including PFI	1.140	1.140
Movement in CFR (Net Borrowing Need)	13.777	(1.171)

35. The following new borrowing has been taken to date.

Table 9

Date Taken	Term	Amount £m	Interest Rate	Purpose	Lender
22/05/2020	1 year	2	0.90	Property Funds	Other Local Authority
22/05/2020	1 year	3	0.90	Property Funds	Other Local Authority
01/09/2020	2 years	5	0.90	General	Other Local Authority

36. The amount borrowed by the Council now stands at £171.661m, this excludes any additional cashflow loans which may be required.
37. There will still be an element of under-borrowing by the Council at the end of March 2021.

Debt Rescheduling

38. Debt rescheduling opportunities have been very limited in the current economic climate given the consequent structure of interest rates and following the increase in the margin added to gilt yields which has impacted PWLB new borrowing rates since October 2010. No debt rescheduling has therefore been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21

Investment Portfolio

39. In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of Capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite. It is a very difficult investment market in terms of earning the level of interest rates commonly seen in previous years as rates are very low and in line with the current 0.10% Bank Rate. The continuing potential for a re-emergence of a Eurozone sovereign debt crisis together with other risks which could impact on the creditworthiness of banks prompts a low risk strategy. Given this risk environment investment returns are likely to remain low.

Treasury Management Activity from 1 April 2020 to 15 October 2020

40. Current investment position – The Council held £67.499m of investments at 15/10/2020 and this is made up of the following types of investment.

Table 10

Sector	Country	Up to 1 year
		£m
Banks	UK	8.000
AAA Money Market Funds	Sterling Funds	19.500
Other Local Authorities	UK	10.000
Property Funds - CCLA	UK	10.000
Hermes		10.000
Lothbury	UK	9.999
Total		67.499

Short Term Cashflow Investments

41. Cash balances are invested on a daily basis to maximise the benefit of temporary surplus funds. These include investments in Money Market Funds, the Government's Debt Management Office and bank short term notice accounts. A total of 41 investments were made in the period 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2019 totalling c£55m these were for short periods of up to 100 days and earned interest of £0.015m on an average balance of £18.048m which equated to an annual average interest rate of 0.16%.

Investment returns measured against the Service Performance Indicators

42. The target for our investment returns is to better or at least match a number of external comparators, this performance indicator is also known as yield benchmarking. As can be seen from Table 11, the short term investment achievements (up to 3 months) are above market expectations.

Table 11

	Cashflow Investments %
Darlington Borough Council - Actual	0.16
External Comparators	
London Interbank Bid Rate 7 day	(0.06)
London Interbank Bid Rate 3 months	0.09
London Interbank Bid Rate 1 year	0.20

Treasury Management Budget

43. There are three main elements within the Treasury Management Budget:-

- (a) Longer term capital investments interest earned – a cash amount of which earns interest and represents the Councils revenue balances, unused capital receipts, reserves and provisions, this will now include Property Funds.
- (b) Cash flow interest earned – since becoming a unitary council in 1997, the authority has consistently had a positive cash flow. Unlike long term capital investments it does not represent any particular sum but it is the consequence of many different influences such as receipt of grants, the relationship between debtors and creditors, cashing of cheques and payments to suppliers.
- (c) Debt serving costs – this is the principal and interest costs on the Council's long term debt to finance the capital programme.

Table 12 - Changes to the Financing Costs Budget 2020/21

	£m	£m
Original Financing Costs Budget 2020/21		0.895
Less reduced Interest payments paid on debt	(0.266)	
Add reduced returns on Property Funds	0.141	
Add increased charges	0.015	
Total adjustments		(0.110)
Revised Treasury Management Budget 2020/21		0.785

44. This statement concludes that the Treasury Management budget is forecast to underspent by £0.110m in 2020/21, these have been reflected in the current MTFP projections.

Risk Benchmarking

45. A regulatory development is the consideration and approval of security and liquidity benchmarks. Yield benchmarks are currently widely used to assess investment performance and these are shown in Table 13. Discrete security and liquidity benchmarks are also requirements of member reporting.
46. The following reports the current position against the benchmarks originally approved.
47. **Security** – The Council's maximum security risk benchmarks for the current portfolio of investments, when compared to historic default tables were set as follows;

0.077% historic risk of default when compared to the whole portfolio

Table 13

Maximum	Benchmark 2020/21	Actual July	Actual September
Year 1	0.077%	0.009%	0.007%

N.B. this excludes Property Funds

48. The counterparties that we use are all high rated therefore our actual risk of default based on ratings attached to counterparties is very low.
49. **Liquidity** – In respect of this area the Council set liquidity facilities/ benchmark to maintain
- (a) Bank overdraft - £0.100M;
 - (b) Liquid short term deposits of a least £3.000M available within a week's notice;
 - (c) Weighted Average Life benchmark is expected to be 0.4 years with a maximum of 1 year.
50. The Assistant Director Resources can report that liquidity arrangements have been adequate for the year to date as shown in Table 14

Table 14

	Benchmark 2020/21	Actual June	Actual September
Weighted Average Life	0.4 – 1 year	0.42 years	0.39 years

51. The figures are for the whole portfolio of cash flow investments deposited with Money Market funds on a call basis (i.e. can be drawn on without notice) as well as call accounts that include a certain amount of notice required to recall the funds.

Treasury Management Indicators

52. **Actual and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream –**

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (financing costs net of interest and investment income) against the net revenue stream. The reduction in % relates to reduced financing costs for General Fund of £0.110m.

Table 15

	2020/21 Original Indicator	2020/21 Revised Indicator
General Fund	2.85%	2.73%
HRA	17.48%	12.78%

Treasury Management Prudential indicators

53. **Upper Limits on Variable Rate Exposure –** This indicator identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates based upon the debt position net of investments.

54. **Upper Limits on Fixed Rate Exposure –** Similar to the previous indicator this cover a maximum limit on fixed interest rates

55. Historically for a number of years this Council has used these percentages; together they give flexibility to the treasury management strategy allowing the Council to take advantage of both fixed and variable rates in its portfolio whilst ensuring that its exposure to variable rates is limited.

Table 16

	2020/21 Original Indicator	2020/21 Revised Indicator
Limits on fixed interest rates	100%	100%
Limits on variable interest rates	40%	40%

56. **Maturity Structures of Borrowing -** These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate loans (those instruments which carry a fixed interest for the duration of the instrument) falling due for refinancing. The higher limits for longer periods reflect the fact that longer maturity periods give more stability to the debt portfolio.

Table 17 - Maturity Structures of Borrowing

	2020/21 Original indicator	2020/21 Actual to Date	2020/21 Revised Indicator
Under 12 months	25%	17%	30%
12 months to 2 years	40%	6%	40%
2 years to 5 years	60%	12%	60%
5 years to 10 years	80%	9%	80%
10 years and above	100%	57%	100%

57. **Total Principal Funds Invested** – These limits are set having regard to the amount of reserves available for longer term investment and show the limits to be placed on investments with final maturities beyond 1 year. This limit allows the authority to invest for longer periods if they give better rates than shorter periods. It also allows some stability in the interest returned to the Authority.

Table 18 - Principal Funds Invested

	2020/21 Original Indicator	2020/21 Revised Indicator
Maximum principal sums invested greater than 1 year	£50m	£30m

Conclusion

58. The prudential indicators have been produced to take account of the Council's borrowing position. The key borrowing indicator (the Operational Boundary) is £188.018m. The Council's return on investments has been good, exceeding both of the targets. Based on the first six months of 2020/21 the Council's borrowing and investments is forecast to underspend by £0.110m on the approved 2020/21 budget.

59. The Council's treasury management activities comply with the required legislation and meet the high standards set out in the relevant codes of practice.

Outcome of Consultation

60. No consultation was undertaken in the production of this report.

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Covid-19 Response

2. We received a verbal update from the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation, on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.
3. The Committee was informed that since 28 September 2020 to 4 January 2021, 219 care home staff had been diagnosed with Covid-19, with 213 care home residents receiving a positive diagnosis. During the same period, it was reported that 45 staff in domiciliary care had been positively diagnosed with Covid-19, and that 18 service users had contracted the virus.
4. We heard that there were currently ten outbreaks of Covid-19 within care home settings, and that the Outbreak Control Team were working closely with the managers of those homes to bring these outbreaks under control.
5. Members were informed that Covid vaccinations were currently being rolled out to larger care homes (those homes with more than 50 beds) by the South Tees Foundation Trust, and that since the start of the vaccination programme, 217 care home staff had received their initial vaccination, with 36 of those staff also receiving their second vaccination. This was across 31 care home settings in Darlington.
6. We were advised that the Primary Care Network had mobilised three teams to roll out vaccinations for all remaining care home staff, and care home residents, and that this would be done as soon as the vaccine was received within the Borough, which was anticipated to be no later than 11 or 12 January 2021.
7. The Committee was keen to learn more about the timescales for the roll out of the Covid vaccination programme, the work of the Outbreak Control Team, Infection Control staff and Care Home staff in terms of outbreaks and the recently received second tranche of Infection Control funding.

Medium Term Financial Plan

8. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet, via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, on the proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22.
9. Our response as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the increase in Council tax of 1.99 per cent plus a 3 per cent Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22, totalling an increase of 4.99 per cent; the proposed schedule of charges; and the continuation of the Futures Fund into 2024/25.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – 2019/2020

10. We received the Annual Report on the work of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership during 2019/2020. The report outlined the Partnership's achievements over the previous year and made an assessment of the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.
11. We were pleased to note the work undertaken by the Partnership in 2019/2020.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 – 2020/21

12. The Committee received a report which provided Members with performance information against key performance indicators for 2020/21 at Quarter 2. The Adults Scrutiny Committee monitor twelve indicators, ten on a six-monthly basis, and two annually. Of the ten indicators reported on a six-monthly basis, four indicators showed performance better or the same compared to this point last year; three indicators showed a performance not as good as that recorded at this time last year, and will continue to be monitored and managed; and three indicators were not comparable and are reviewed at a point in time.
13. Whilst acknowledging that the figure was gradually increasing once again, Members were keen to determine the reasons for the decrease in the number of people who had no on-going care needs following completion of provision of a reablement package (ASC19).
14. Members were also interested in the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the reablement packages available, and what impact 'Long Covid' may have on reablement packages going forward.
15. Discussion also took place on the family engagement and advocacy arrangements in place for those patients hospitalised with Covid-19, and their role in arranging ongoing support to meet patient needs.

Community Equipment Service

16. The Committee was pleased to receive an update on the Community Equipment Service available to residents and were provided with information as to how the service was currently working and plans for future re-procurement.
17. We heard that the contract for the provision of community equipment had been held by Medequip since 2015, following a procurement exercise carried out in 2014 by North East Commissioning Services (NECS), and that during the term of the contract a number of developments had taken place to improve service delivery to residents.
18. Members were pleased to learn of an amnesty on equipment distributed, which has led to the reuse and recycling of equipment. Members were also pleased to hear that a review of buffer stores had taken place, that a Clinical Advisor had been appointed to advise on specialist equipment, and that an Equipment Review Group had been established to ensure that stock held was as cost effective as possible.

Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group

19. The Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group met with Jo Booth, Peer Mentor Co-ordinator, Step Forward Tees Valley, and Leanne Knight, Partnership Manager, Humankind Charity, on 15 December 2020, to learn more of their work, both in Darlington and across the Tees Valley.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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.

Medium Term Financial Plan

2. As with all Scrutiny Committees we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on its proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22.
3. Our response as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the proposed increase in Council tax of 1.99 per cent plus a 3 per cent Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22; the proposed schedule of charges; and the continuation of the Futures Fund into 2024/25.

Darlington Parent Carer Forum Report – Together for Better

4. Carla Scaith, Co-ordinator for Darlington Parent Carer Forum attended the meeting and presented the report of the Darlington Parent Carer Forum – Together for Better, a report on life for families of children with additional needs during lockdown and thereafter; outlined her role alongside a group of parents, who work with education, health and social care as well as other providers to ensure that the service delivered meets the needs of families in our area; and gave us a very honest insight into the failings of services for these families at the beginning of the pandemic..
5. Carla acknowledged the positive participation and engagement in Darlington and all the work that had been undertaken through unprecedented times, however did advise Members that some families did not receive the support that they needed at the beginning of the pandemic by way of risk assessments, when it was revealed that only five families were actually involved in their risk assessment after responses were received to a survey sent out by the Parent Carer Forum in August 2020.
6. It also appeared that children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) who had a school place had received advise not to send their children to school.
7. As Members, service delivery from the schools at the beginning of the process has given us concern and we questioned the reasons for this so that lessons could be learned. Carla confirmed that the issues were raised and actions taken at that time, however the risk assessments had already been completed at that point.
8. Members were also concerned that based on some feedback Carla had received, children with additional needs did not receive adequate support for home learning during the lockdown period, and we are keen to receive further information on this at the 'fact finding' event in January being held to examine the effects and ongoing impact of the pandemic on our children and young people so we can assess any

gaps and ultimately make recommendations and challenge partners to do more if necessary.

9. In response, The Head of Education and Inclusion thanked Carla and her colleagues for their commitment and experience in supporting parents in Darlington and acknowledged that with regard to the risk assessments, it was very disappointing and that guidance was clear that families and children should be integral to that process and that there were lessons that could be learnt from the Parent Carer report.
10. He also gave Members some background on attendance data from the Department for Education as at 10 December 2020 which showed that nationally 80 per cent of children with an EHCP were attending school and 77 per cent were attending Special Schools; compared to Darlington where 89 per cent of children with an EHCP were attending school and in special schools 92 per cent were in attendance.
11. The Head of Education and Inclusion also confirmed that he would follow up the Forum's report with his own audit around risk assessments and re-emphasise the message to schools that children and families are to be involved in the completion of risk assessments.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020/21

12. Members considered the findings of the 2020-21 Childcare Sufficiency Review as part of the Scrutiny annual monitoring to ensure the authority are meeting their duty to ensure sufficient childcare as reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children.
13. Prior to March 2020, Darlington's childcare market was fairly stable and the parental take-up rates of the various entitlements was predictable, however as a result of the pandemic, on 23 March 2020, the government instructed a lockdown and schools and childcare settings were asked to remain open for children of key workers and vulnerable children. It was reported that as a result of much reduced demand, by 24 April, 48 per cent of the private and voluntary settings remained open (including 24 childminders with vacancies) and both nursery schools and nursery units were also open and providers tried to remain open wherever possible. There were 142 pre-school children in attendance.
14. From 1 June, the number of open providers increased and the number of children accessing a place rose with a higher proportion of early years providers remaining open in Darlington than nationally and by 11 June, 93 per cent of private and voluntary providers and 67 per cent of childminders were open in Darlington; and that borough-wide there has been sufficient capacity to meet demand throughout this period; and by 29 September 2020 all providers who had temporarily closed had re-opened and 69 per cent of children were accessing an early year's entitlement place in Autumn 2019.
15. During the pandemic support was provided to the childcare sector and a childcare sufficiency task group was also established. Parental views regarding the childcare sector were sought which showed general parental satisfaction with childcare in the borough and that childcare is of a good quality.

16. Some potential areas of dissatisfaction included the cost and flexibility of childcare and access to childcare for school aged children and young people with disabilities. The uncertainties created by the pandemic, which has made childcare demand more difficult to predict and more targeted research will establish what requirements are not being met from the market for children with disabilities and for parents that require flexibility ie. shift workers.
17. Members discussed in particular the sufficiency of places as we start to recover and the lost capacity from the childcare market as some businesses have ceased to continue to operate during the pandemic and how viable the market will be going forward; the take up of Early Years Funding in 2019 and the reasons for the shortfall and also how the drop in birth rate is likely to impact the future market.
18. A representative of the Skerne Park Community Enterprise Association attended the meeting and raised two questions in relation to provider representation on the Early Years Strategic Group; and Early Years underspend to which the Head of Education and Inclusion responded. The Head of Education and Inclusion agreed to circulate written answers to these questions to all Members of this Scrutiny Committee and to the questioner.

Children and Young People's Plan 2017-22

19. Members received an update on the progress to date against the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2017/22 which covers a five year period and is one of the identified delivery plans within the Sustainable Community Strategy. It identifies what key actions will be taken to deliver the agreed Strategy priority of the best start in life for every child.
20. The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on the outcomes of the children and young people living in Darlington and the Multi Agency Steering Group have considered the findings of the Covid-19 Impact Report and agreed for 2021-22 to continue to focus on child poverty and improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing and also to focus on youth employment.
21. We discussed in particular the impact of the pandemic and the longer term effects on families and what can be done to support them in the future; the Multi Agency Steering Group; and the role of this Scrutiny Committee in monitoring the plan as it moves forward.

Performance – Quarter 2 (July to September 2020)

22. Children's Services Quarter 2 performance July to September 2020 was presented to the January meeting which highlighted the following positives:
 - (a) a positive decrease in the number of missing episodes that young people in care have had when compared to Quarter 2 2019/20 (from 31 episodes to 18);
 - (b) 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection Plan (CP) and 100 per cent of Children Looked After had been allocated to a qualified social worker;

- (c) 91.6 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 workings, which remains higher than statistical neighbours;
- (d) year to date no child has ceased to be subject to a CP who had been subject to the plan for two or more years, and the service continues to positively perform below the target of 5 per cent;
- (e) 89.4 per cent of children received a statutory Child Protection (CP) visit within 10 working days, and is an improvement on the timeliness of visits when compared with the same period last year (78 per cent); and
- (f) 93.2 per cent of statutory children in care visits were completed within timescale; and
- (g) 7.2 per cent of our Children in Care had been placed 20 or more miles away from home as at September 2020 which was below the target.

23. The areas identified for improved focus were:

- (a) 22.4 per cent of re-referrals year to date, were repeated within 12 months, above the target of 18 per cent;
- (b) at the end of September 2020, the percentage of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the previous plan ending was 10.6 per cent;
- (c) the number of Children in Care has increased to 302 by the end of September 2020, however it was reported that delays in children ceasing care have occurred during the pandemic, which had kept the number high; and
- (d) as a result of dental surgery closures during lockdown, 14.9 per cent of Children in Care, that were due a dental check assessment, have had one completed.

Work Programme

24. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year 2020/21, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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.

Medium Term Financial Plan

2. As with all Scrutiny Committees we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on its proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22.
3. Our response as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the proposed increase in Council tax of 1.99 per cent plus a 3 per cent Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22; the proposed schedule of charges; and the continuation of the Futures Fund into 2024/25.

The Northgate Initiative

4. Scrutiny received a report summarising the current position of the Northgate Initiative, a multi-agency programme in the Northgate Ward to deliver a range of interventions in order to improve outcomes for local residents in all areas of wellbeing including economy, education and childhood, health, environment, crime and security, and social relationships.
5. Scrutiny were informed that the initial programme is planned until 2024, and that it would be years for any measurable improvements to take effect. However we were pleased to hear the achievements made to date in particular the reduction in the total number of empty properties in Northgate.
6. We held a discussion in respect of the engagement work with residents and landlords in the Northgate Ward and queried the roll out of the initiative across the borough. Members were pleased to hear that this initiative would help to identify a concept to be implemented in other areas of the town.

Back Lanes and Fly Tipping

7. Scrutiny welcomed an update in respect of the ongoing work with regard to problem back lanes and fly tipping.
8. Members were provided with details of the back lanes and fly tipping project, which included the introduction of a fixed term role within the Civic Enforcement Team to focus on problem back lanes and we were pleased to note the significant improvements in response times to fly tips from October 2019 to October 2020.
9. We held an in depth discussion in relation to the issue of dog fouling and welcomed the increase in signage on street bins and the development of an interactive map of bins in the Borough. We also discussed the use of covert and overt cameras in the

Borough and noted that a review of CCTV was to be undertaken, which would help identify any new technology to improve and develop the system.

Performance Indicators

10. We have received the information on the Quarter 2 performance against those key performance indicators for 2020/21 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee.
11. Members noted that of the 16 indicators which are reported six monthly at quarter two, three are showing performance which is better than the same period last year whilst two indicators are showing performance the same; six indicators are showing performance not as good as the same period last year whilst five indicators have not been reported due to coronavirus restrictions.

Work Programme 2020/21

12. 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 work programme and items can be added as necessary.

School Streets Initiative – Review Group

13. We gave consideration at the Scrutiny Meeting held on 10 December, to a request received from Councillor Mrs Culley that an item in relation to School Streets Initiative be added to our work programme, and the Committee felt that it would be beneficial to establish a Task and Finish group to look at this area.
14. An initial meeting was held on 16 December 2020, with an invitation extended to all Councillors. We received an update in respect of the progress made to date on the School Streets Initiative and noted the outcome of the feasibility study.
15. Members held an in-depth discussion regarding their concerns and views on the issues faced by pedestrians and road users on the roads outside of schools in Darlington.
16. A further meeting of the review group was held on 14 January 2021 where Members identified a number of recommendations to be considered as part of the next stage of the initiative.

Councillor Mike Renton
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL **28 January 2021**

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Business Support Grants

2. Scrutiny received a further update on the Governments various funding schemes to support local businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the local authority administers the schemes on behalf of the Government, the guidance is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
3. Since 5 November 2020, the Government has announced six different support schemes for businesses and the Council's Business Investment Team and Business Rates Team have been working together to administer the schemes and have, since November 2020, processed 1,555 grant applications and have paid 1,133 different grants, totalling £1,587,312. This is in addition to the Business Support Grants processed earlier on in the pandemic and brings the total amount of grant payments processed in Darlington to £26,627,312.
4. The majority of the grant schemes which have been introduced to date are to assist those businesses with business rates liability and, as such, many businesses are not eligible to apply for government support, however, following the most recent national lockdown on 5 January 2021, a number of additional support measures have been announced by the Government which include one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and additional discretionary funds to enable local authorities to support other impacted businesses, however guidance is still awaited on the expectations of those schemes. There are still a number of businesses which, for a number of reasons, are not eligible to receive any financial support at this point in time and it is vital that this is highlighted to Government in order to shape any future funding to support these businesses. We did ask that quantitative information on the numbers and type of businesses affected be provided to our Scrutiny Committee.
5. It is clear that a lot of work is being undertaken by Officers to ensure that businesses are applying for the funding they are entitled to and in supporting and signposting them and we thanked the staff involved for all the work they are doing.

Towns Fund

6. We have received a further update presentation on the proposed use of the Towns Fund – Forward Funding, following accelerated funding of £1 million which has been received from the Government to fund capital projects that are in line with the Towns Fund. As Members will be aware the money must be spent this financial year with the aim of making an immediate impact to support the growth and recovery of Darlington during the pandemic.

7. The presentation covered the individual projects which were included within the overall project, which included improvements to the historic yards, town centre enhanced lighting, town centre WIFI and property acquisition in Northgate and gave an update on the current position and next steps of each of those individual projects.
8. In addition, Scrutiny also received an update on the £22.3 million which has been secured through the Town Deal to fund the Town Investment Plan which aims to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of the town to deliver long term economic and productivity growth. There are nine intervention projects within the offer and detailed project development and business cases are required for each intervention with a Town Deal Summary Document needing to be submitted to the Government within twelve months of agreeing the Heads of Terms. The secured £22.3 million will be allocated once this has been completed and agreed.
9. We discussed the need for effective engagement with stakeholders to take place on the high level proposals for changing the various areas within the Town Centre and the need for fluidity to be in place within the development of the business case.

Greater Faverdale (Burtree/Faverdale Garden Village) – Design Code

10. A Design Code for the Greater Faverdale (Burtree/Faverdale Garden Village) has been developed. 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.
11. 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.
12. We were advised that it was unlikely that any planning applications for the site would be coming forward in the next few months, however the Design Code will be used to help to influence the way this particular development will look. As the site will be developed in tranches, it is important that there is some flexibility within the Design Code which might need to change as a result of Government guidance and direction and through design changes themselves in the future.
13. The document will also be considered by the Planning Committee.

Central Park – Hybrid Business Innovation Centre

14. Scrutiny have been given the opportunity to consider and comment on a draft Cabinet report which outlines the plans to develop the Hybrid Business Innovation Centre (HBIC) at Central Park, including undertaking a range of landscaping and remedial works across the area.
15. We were advised that following the success of Business Central on Central Park, the Council, with the benefit of external funding, was now in a position to create additional business incubation/managed workspace accommodation and serviced plots in readiness for occupation by new companies including Small to Medium Sized Enterprise businesses (SMEs). The HBIC will sit alongside and complement

CPI Biologics and Teesside Universities Horizons building and it is hoped will host a nationally significant pharmaceutical, biologics and life science centre. We were advised that the Business Case was predicated on the fact that the Centre could be occupied as soon as possible and that there was a market need for this type of accommodation.

16. We queried whether there was any proposals to clear and make good the whole area of land at Central Park prior to further development and it was suggested that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the proposals for the overall ambition for the development of the whole area of land which would include this.

Medium Term Financial Plan – 2021/22

17. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet on the proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22.
18. The majority view of our Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the increase in Council tax of 1.99 per cent plus a 3 per cent Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22, and the continuation of the Futures Fund into 2024/25. We also agreed to the proposed schedule of charges, with the exception of the proposal to increase the cost of junior swimming and concessions. In recommending this to Cabinet, we understood the overall effect of the proposed increase would only result in an increase in revenue of about £4,000.
19. The minority view of this Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation will be to support the proposed Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent for the next financial year, plus the three per cent adult social care precept to fund social care for 2021/22, however, in doing so, Cabinet are requested to note that this increase of nearly five per cent is necessary as the Council is underfunded in Adult Social Care and not to apply this levy would have an impact on some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Work Programme

20. In considering our work programme we considered an additional two items which we felt could be added to our work programme.
21. We have previously asked for information on staff well-being and productivity during this current time and we were advised that the bi-annual employee survey which would give a good indications of this was due to be completed and sent to staff at the beginning of February. The survey does cover standard areas in terms of leadership, communication etc however, it also includes additional areas in relation to employees' health and well-being and will be particularly important now given the Covid-19 situation.
22. We have asked if we can have sight of the survey and, once the results have been analysed and considered by the Joint Consultative Committee, we will consider if any specific areas of concern which might be highlighted could be included within our work programme.
23. In relation to youth unemployment, it has been suggested that a joint piece of work be undertaken with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. As a

consequence of Covid-19, there is evidence that young people (up to the age of 24) maybe disproportionally affected by the economic change as they may be in sectors which are more prone to the impact of what is happening.

24. I, as Chair, will arrange a meeting between myself, the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Mayor to see how this can be taken forward.

Councillor Scott Durham
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL 28 JANUARY 2021

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Medium Term Financial Plan

2. As with all Scrutiny Committees we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on its proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22.
3. Our response as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the proposed increase in Council tax of 1.99 per cent plus a 3 per cent Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22; the proposed schedule of charges; and the continuation of the Futures Fund into 2024/25.

Housing Revenue Account

4. Cabinet has agreed to consult on proposals in relation to the revenue budget; rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024/25 and the 30 year Business Plan and we have agreed to support those proposals.
5. We were advised that the proposed average increase to the rent levels for 2021/22 was 1.7 per cent which equated to an average £1.46 increase in weekly rents, with an average social rent of £73.11 and affordable rent of £83.62.
6. We noted that 73% of tenants would have their rent and most services charges covered by benefit payments and that our rent and service charges tended to be much lower than other Social Landlords operating in Darlington.

Covid-19 in Darlington

7. We received a presentation from the Director of Public Health and Public Health Principal updating us on the Covid-19 situation in Darlington (please see [link](#) to presentation).
8. We were provided with details and associated figures for the five measures that were used to assess the Tier levels, and the importance of adhering to the Hands, Face, Space measure in order to control the spread of the virus, was reiterated to Members.
9. Particular discussion ensued on the community testing in Darlington and Members were reminded that the lateral flow tests were to be utilised by anyone that was asymptomatic.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2020/2021

10. We received Quarter 2 performance data against key performance indicators for 2020/21.
11. Members were advised that data was available for nine of the twelve Housing and Culture indicators and that of the twenty-four Public Health indicators, eight had new data available at Quarter 2
12. We noted that of the nine Housing and Culture indicators, one was showing performance better than the same period last year whilst eight indicators were showing performance not as good as the same period last year.

Non Elective Urology Briefing

13. Members also received an update in respect of a change to the non-elective specialist urology provision which was in place from 1 December 2020.
14. We were advised that to support patient access to specialist urology services, patients from Darlington, Bishop Auckland and surrounding areas who require non-elective urology care would be admitted to The James Cook University Hospital and that this would affect three patients a week.
15. Members were supportive of the change to the non-elective specialist urology provision.

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. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

NHS England and NHS Improvement Consultation - Next Steps for Integrated Care Systems (ICS) – Task and Finish Group

17. A task and finish group was held on 6 January 2021 to give Members of this Scrutiny Committee opportunity to input into a formal response to the proposals set out in the document 'Integrated Care: next steps to build strong and effective integrated care systems across England'.
18. The document sets out how NHS organisations, local councils, frontline professionals and others will join forces in an integrated care system (ICS) in every part of England from April 2021.
19. Members of this Scrutiny Committee have formulated a joint response to the proposals and this has been submitted to NHS England.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee

Questions submitted on Notice from Members of the Public for the Ordinary Meeting of the Council – Thursday, 28th January 2021

Question No.	Questioner	Respondent	Question
1	David CLARK	Councillor KEIR	<p>At the last Cabinet meeting Cllr Keir stated on record that the public would get to have their SAY regarding losing part of Springfield park to a roundabout when it comes to planning stage, also it was stated in the same Cabinet meeting the bottom part of the park is not being used, when in fact this is incorrect there is a large horse chestnut conker tree that lots of local children collect conkers from each year this tree is to be removed to make way for the larger roundabout along with the other mature trees.</p> <p>In a DBC FOI request ref DBC 1102-18 it was stated to me that planning permission would NOT be required as I quote: "These works would not require planning permission being works on or adjacent to a highway for the improvements of the highway"</p> <p>So, will there be a planning application to allow the local communities to have a say about losing part of the bottom part of our community parkland to road development when we were pledged there would be a guarantee that Springfield park was safe and untouched from planned road developments, or do we get NO say whatsoever about losing a bottom section of our park including some mature trees?</p>
2	Alan MACNAB	Councillor MARSHALL	<p>The Draft Local Plan June 2018 envisaged that the access road from Skerningham be located on the eastern side of Springfield Park. The ruling group ruled out Springfield Park as an access road and this was confirmed by the Council in February last year when the Local Plan was approved. Councillor Marshall reiterated at Cabinet on the 12th January that the suitability of access roads to Skerningham will only be considered when a planning application for the development is received and examined.</p> <p>The Borough Council, the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the developer jointly made a bid for garden village status for Skerningham which was successful.</p> <p>With such a large development and working with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the developers the access roads surely would have been included in the joint plans for the Garden Village even if Springfield Park was ruled out as an access road, why is it that the developers are</p>

			<p>being left to identify the access roads in a planning application because it is a joint project and why will you not release to the residents in the area the plans for the access roads and the traffic impact assessment for these roads?</p> <p>Secondly, the Garden Village plans propose that Darlington Golf Club be moved to Skerningham Community Wood and for the trees in the wood to be felled to create the golf course.</p> <p>Are you aware there are people buried in the wood, isn't it extremely cruel and grossly insensitive for the graves to be disturbed, will you please stop this gross insensitivity and if you will not do so why?</p>
3	Rachael REID	Councillor JOHNSON	<p>What is Darlington Council's position on holding elections in May 2021, given the need to balance democracy with minimising the transmission of Covid-19? The government has published a letter saying elections are planned to go ahead but are being kept under review, while a report has been published by the LGIU saying most senior council officials favour a postponement.</p> <p>Whether elections are held in May or later, what is Darlington Council's position on campaigning by candidates? The government letter says door to door campaigning and leafletting by candidates is not allowed. What measures would the council be in favour of to ensure the public has the necessary information to make an informed choice?</p>
4	Whinfield Residents Association	Councillor MARSHALL	<p>In the Cabinet meeting of 12th Jan 2021 Cllr Marshall suggests that if a Deed of Dedication were to be pursued for Springfield Park then, should there be some sort of strong desire for community development which would benefit the residents, then the Council would not be able to consider the community use because of the Deed of Dedication.</p> <p>Firstly the WRA would like to ask Cllr Marshall what community development which would benefit the residents does he envisage taking place, given that investment in Springfield Park has, and still is considerably lacking? Indeed we were even refused a park bench on the grounds of cost!</p> <p>Secondly, upon reading the Deed of Dedication, it would appear that no unreasonable community development that would benefit the residents would in fact be refused by Fields in Trust should a Deed of Dedication be in place on Springfield Park. With this in mind, and</p>

			<p>considering the refusal of Cabinet to pursue this, why would Cabinet oppose a Deed of Dedication if it says that it wants to protect the park and only develop it for the benefit of residents?</p> <p>Also... the Local Plan, Skerningham Village, Springfield Park Link Road update briefing highlights the impact that Skerningham Garden Village will have on the local roads within the Whinfield area, excluding the then proposed route through Springfield Park. This indicates that by 2029 there will be an increase in the volume of traffic on Barmpton Lane North of 263.8% equating to an additional 5,437 vehicles per day. Whinbush Way will have an increase of 59.2% equating to an additional 5,097 vehicles per day. Whilst we appreciate that highway law may dictate there is 'in general' no limit to the use of those highways we would ask if Council can actually envisage the impact of what an additional 5,000 plus vehicles a day will do to a community which already has busy roads. Indeed many of our elderly residents already have difficulty crossing Barmpton Lane and Whinbush Way – imagine what an extra 5000+ vehicles a day will do. Our question to Cllr Marshall, and the rest of Council is this, you have a report which shows the potential impact on the roads in Whinfield, hiding behind the fact that you say access is dependent on the planning applications, do you really think, or believe that an increase of over 5,000+ vehicles a day on the routes which have been identified in this report as the key access routes to Skerningham is acceptable to the residents of Whinfield or indeed sustainable?</p> <p>Can Cllr Marshall also confirm who owns the land between Caithness Way and Galloway?</p>
5	Paul HARMAN	Councillor Kevin NICHOLSON	What proportion of Council Housing Stock is currently fitted with solar (PV) panels or other energy reduction measures and how many homes will be retrofitted to higher standards of insulation and energy reduction in the next two years?
6	Alan DOCHERTY	Councillor MARSHALL	Darlington Climate Action Group welcomes the Council's decision to reinstate the Cross Party Climate Group; and hopes it will be productive in helping to achieve the goal of Darlington becoming carbon neutral by 2050. At the Council meeting of November 26th 2020, Cllr Marshall stated that the Council was studying the best practice of other councils. Could you give details on what you've learnt from other leading councils regarding their climate plans and how you plan to apply them in Darlington? Can you also give more detail on what your mandatory climate staff training entails?
7	Judith MURRAY	Councillor MARSHALL	Several months ago BT Openreach commenced installing fibre optic broadband along Barmpton Lane to what the BT engineer called a 'new housing development'. Given that the only

			<p>proposed new housing development anywhere near Barmpton Lane is the Skerningham development one must assume he meant this. I am also aware that it is now mandatory for all new building development to have access to superfast broadband. The lines providing this connectivity run right in front of the dwellings on Barmpton Lane, however, a bypass has been installed so that the residents will not be able to connect to it. So although residents along Barmpton Lane have BT lines they are unable to access this super fast fibre broadband along the BT network and when you consider currently that residents have an average download speed of around 2mb when the national average is around 47mb, this is unacceptable.</p> <p>Why is decent broadband still so much of a lottery? The general misconception that it is just an urban/rural problem is purely a myth. This case has highlighted the lack of BT connectivity to Barmpton Lane a residential street, but I suspect this is a problem in many other parts of our town too where residents are quite frankly being left behind. This digital divide surely should not exist in 2021. To know that fibre broadband via the BT network is bypassing my property and numerous others and is to be installed in a new housing development next door appears grossly unfair. I would therefore like to know when the council is going to take action to ensure that all of it's residents, not just those in new build houses, have access to broadband connectivity which is at least around the national average, so that each and everyone of us can enjoy the benefits that super fibre broadband has to offer?</p>
8	Kate MAMMOLOTTI	Councillor MARSHALL	<p>Firstly I am delighted the Cross Party Climate Group has been reinstated. I would also like to thank Councillor Marshall for his response to my questions from the last meeting.</p> <p>I would like to ask the Council (Councillor MARSHALL):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are specifically the positive steps in addressing climatic and environmental issues the Council has discovered from feedback from other councils so far and does the Council therefore plan to implement these measures into local policy and action and if so, when? 2. I am extremely concerned about the Skerningham Woods proposal for a golf course and housing. How can Council at all justify this proposal given their commitment to carbon reduction levels by 2050 when it is evident this proposal would add to our local carbon print significantly and destroy trees, woodland and local biodiversity which are so extremely valuable to our local

			<p>community in so many ways? I would urge Council to reconsider this proposal as a matter of urgency given that it is flagrantly and seriously counterproductive to their Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>Thank you in advance for responding to my questions of concern.</p>
9.	Roger FITZPATRICK- ODAHAMIER	Councillor MARSHALL	<p>Agenda Item 13 of the report to Cabinet states in para 12 that Fields in Trust will work with the Council to provide protection that takes into account local circumstances and which will have a certain level of flexibility built into it which will allow for certain changes. This does not suggest to me that the council will be restricted or restrained from making reasonable changes and development. Why then did Cabinet agree that an application for Deed of Dedication should not be pursued because it would 'fetter all future considerations of the use of this land in perpetuity, including otherwise reasonable changes and development'? Why also was Cllr Snedker's suggestion of applying for a Deed of Dedication after the roundabout improvements at Thompson Street were completed not given any consideration?</p> <p>Given that Cabinet members have made a commitment to protect Springfield Park, presumably as a park, what reasonable changes and development does it have in mind for the park which would mean that a Deed of Dedication would not be suitable?</p> <p>2) Cllr Marshall along with other councillors has suggested that the full impact of additional traffic from the proposed Skerningham Garden Village will not be considered until the planning applications are submitted by the developers. The council and the TVCA are committed to building a new Link road because it will help to reduce traffic numbers along the A1150, and this has been used to demonstrate the need for the Darlington Link road in their findings. A business case for this new road has been ongoing now for a number of years with no imminent decision forthcoming for the foreseeable future and with the strong possibility that it may never happen. With this in mind if this Link road fails to materialise but the Garden Village gets the go ahead we all know from the studies the council have already undertaken that the car usage figures for both Barmpton Lane and Whinbush Way will run into the thousands by 2029. Not only this but traffic from both these roads would have to at some point meet the A1150 a road which both the Council and the TVCA have already acknowledged in their public reports is a road which is already congested. The Council have already showed empathy and compassion to the residents directly affected by the congestion on the A1150 by saying that a link road is needed, but what will it do if the Darlington Link road fails to materialise before 2029 and the proposed Garden Village gets the go ahead? How will the Council address this issue?</p>

