

Council Agenda



6.00 pm Thursday, 13 May 2021
Sports Hall, Dolphin Centre,
Horsemarket, Darlington, DL1 5RP

Meeting Cancelled

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 25 March 2021
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.
8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 3 - 4)
 - (b) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 5 - 10)
 - (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 11 - 14)
 - (d) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 15 - 18)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 19 - 24)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 25 - 32)

- (g) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; and (Pages 33 - 36)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio. (Pages 37 - 40)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 41 - 42)
 - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 43 - 46)
 - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 47 - 48)
 - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 49 - 52)
 - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 53 - 54)
10. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 5 May 2021

Town Hall
Darlington.

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 – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 2021

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Council's Continued Response to COVID19

1. As lockdown eases, the Council's focus has shifted in terms of its overall response from the previous focus on containing the spread of the virus; through locally supporting Track and Trace and Testing, to a shared focus of facilitating a safe opening of the economy, together with continued efforts to suppress the spread of the virus.
2. Great efforts have been made by our teams to support businesses, whilst at the same time, ensuring guidance is applied by a mixture of support, engagement and where needed enforcement. Support such as road closures to facilitate outdoor hospitality is much appreciated by our businesses.
3. Work continues however on testing and keeping track of new cases, and we will be watching carefully to understand the impact of the relaxation of lockdown in the coming weeks.
4. Once again can I put on record my sincere thanks to all the workforce who have kept services operating, whilst at the same time, responding to the vast and many demands of the pandemic.

Strategic Transport

5. A national bus strategy for England was published in March "Bus Back Better". The strategy is ambitious and linked to long-term funding. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), local authorities and bus operators are currently working through the implications. The priority is to deliver bus service improvements across Tees Valley by building on the existing partnerships. I will provide more information as this work progresses.
6. The Department for Transport announced a new Capability Fund in March focused on active travel. The 2021/22 allocation to the TVCA is £1,362,012 of revenue funding, but the Spending Review later this year is expected to provide a multi-year settlement through to 2024/25. The funding will deliver a programme of activity to facilitate and encourage walking and cycling for everyday journeys across the Tees Valley. It will be delivered alongside the ambitious improvements in cycling and walking infrastructure being funded through the TVCA's Transport Programme.

Climate Change

7. The strategy and funds mentioned above will continue investment and behaviour change programmes to influence moves to sustainable travel choices.

8. The Cross-Party Climate Change Working Group has met twice under the Chairmanship of Cllr Snedker. The next meeting is on 14th June. The Working Group continues to support the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer in developing the climate change action plan and has suggested the development of Medium-Term Carbon Plan to sit alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan.
9. The Working Group is particularly keen to ensure that a wider engagement plan on climate change, potentially through task and finish groups, is developed. Positive engagement with the public is increasingly important as public interest is rising with the forthcoming COP26 event later this year and the recent commitment from Central Government to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035.

Youth Unemployment

10. The 18-24-year-old claimant count rose from 12.0% (885 young people – figures revised by the Office for National Statistics) in December 2020 to 13.0% (955 young people) in February 2021. This is above the North East average of 10.1% and the Great Britain average of 9.0%, both of which also saw rises. This now puts Darlington as the second highest in the Tees Valley, where claimant counts range from 12.5% to 14.5%.
11. Young people continue to be supported by a range of employability programmes, including the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and now Routes to Work, which has had its remit extended to support those 16-29 year olds who are no longer eligible for YEI (European funding rules mean that a young person can only access the YEI programme once).

Towns Fund

12. The Towns Fund Investment Plan continues to progress. Works to improve the environment of both Buckton's Yard and Clark's Yard have commenced with new doors and general improvements finalised. New planters and benches will be supplied in the forthcoming weeks. The installation of free public Wi-Fi has been completed and new lighting has been installed to light up the Pease Statue, Town Hall Clock and St. Cuthbert's Church. New benches together with up lighting will be installed over the next few weeks.
13. The business cases for the remaining 9 interventions are being completed and will be submitted to government for funding over the forthcoming months. As part of the Towns Fund, the Council received £575,000 to part fund the acquisition of the Northern Echo building which will host the Adult Skills Hub.

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

COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED 13 MAY 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 Borough Council COVID Pandemic Prevention and Compliance Group

2. Since the initial outbreak was reported in March 2020, members of the group have dealt with 3953 reported incidents, completed 1244 checks, provided guidance on 4817 occasions and taken enforcement action in 396 cases (majority of enforcement relates to police issue of fixed penalty notices for breach of COVID restrictions).
3. The Prevention and Compliance Group are now primarily focused on the government roadmap to promote and support a safe and productive economic recovery.

Civic Enforcement Service

Back Lanes Project

4. The Civic Enforcement team continue to evaluate the success of the Back Lanes Project, with evidence indicating that complaints have reduced in targeted streets. 57 streets have now been issued with Section 46 legal notices, which focus on the responsibilities of householders for the management of waste.
5. Action is taken on failure to adhere to the notice in the form of Community Protection Notice warnings. Although a number of Community Protection Notices have been issued, there has generally been good compliance with the Section 46 notices issued.

Trading Standards

6. Trading Standards is participating in the national 'Tick Box: Keep it Real. Keep it Legal' project, which aims to implement a code of practice across the self-storage industry. The code aims to:
 - (a) Prevent the storage of counterfeit and other illicit goods at self-storage facilities.
 - (b) Reduce the appeal of self-storage facilities to criminals.
 - (c) Increase engagement between the industry, Trading Standards and other law enforcement agencies.

7. Trading Standards is in the process of contacting self-storage businesses in Darlington to take the project forward.

Private Sector Housing

8. A funding proposal for the Local Authority Delivery (LAD2) was submitted in March 2021. The proposed scheme aims to deliver energy efficiency upgrades to support 95 properties, with funding of up to £10,000 of measures to low income and low energy efficiency rated homes. The primary purpose of the LAD scheme is to raise the energy efficiency rating of low income and low Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rated homes (those with E, F or G).
9. Funding will be shared across all tenures and housing providers with properties in the Private Sector, those rented and owner occupied. The delivery plan for the programme will commence following a contract being entered into with our delivery partner.
10. Marketing engagement will commence as soon as possible after the contract is completed, with a campaign to promote and communicate the project to relevant households being targeted where there are known low EPC ratings and high levels of fuel poverty. This marketing activity will continue with targeted campaigns throughout the duration of the project.
11. The project is due to have all installations complete by 31 December 2021.

Community Resilience

Darlington Open Water Safety Group

12. The multi-agency working group, chaired by the Head of Community Safety, commenced fortnightly meetings in March 2021. Considerable progress has been achieved including an assessment of existing control measures at Broken Scar which was completed on 22nd March 2021. This resulted in temporary signage being erected at Broken Scar Picnic Site and at four key locations along the river prior to the school holiday period.
13. An assessment of other key areas was completed by the Community Resilience Officer on 26th March 2021. These locations were identified following analysis of data focussing on water safety incidents within the last 5 years (data provided by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service). Suggested remedial actions have been provided to the working group for further action.
14. The work around water safety is further supported by table-top exercises, press / media campaigns, involvement of education, targeted patrols at vulnerable locations and the development of a Water Safety Strategy.

Road Safety Scheme for Schools

15. Large vinyl advice / warning banners and 50 junior road safety packs have now been received. The DBC Road Safety Officer has been in contact with the schools involved in the pilot to gauge their views on implementing the scheme, with four schools requesting they receive delivery of the banners immediately to enable them to display these at their school gates. Most schools have asked that the scheme

launch be delayed until September (in the next school year) due to current workload and COVID restrictions preventing effective 'patrols' being carried out by teachers and pupils.

Darlington Association on Disability (DAD)

16. DAD have agreed to their logo being included on the Hidden Disabilities customer service brief distributed to Darlington businesses in April / May 2021. This brief and an associated 'test of knowledge' quiz has been developed by the Community Resilience Officer and Town Centre Partnership and Events Manager as part of the Purple Flag initiative during which DBC highlighted the lack of criteria for town centres to comply with in relation to disability. Some promotional items will also be provided to the shops and DBC is focussing on yellow flowers this year, where possible, in its displays (the Hidden Disabilities' logo is a sunflower).

PREVENT

17. A CONTEST (Counter-Terrorism) Silver Board was held on 24 March 2021. The new Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) which highlights potential threat, risk and mitigation in our communities was agreed at the meeting. The actions and associated plans will be monitored and reviewed by DBC Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee.
18. The initial meeting of the DBC Counter Terrorism Champions was held on 17 March 2021. There are currently eight champions who will meet on a quarterly basis and following a recent suggestion it is intended to extend the group to include designated safeguarding leads from Darlington secondary schools.
19. The National Prevent Referral Form will be adopted by Darlington (and Durham) in mid-May at the request of the Special Branch Prevent Team. The Community Resilience Officer is currently working with the DBC 'front door' to ensure this implementation is successful.

This form will enable professionals to submit referrals using a standard template in preparation for the referral system moving to an online portal system in the future.

20. No Tension Monitoring Reports have been received during the period of this report.

Home Office Safer Streets Fund

21. Launched in Darlington on 7 September 2020, the qualifying criteria was expanded due to fewer than average burglaries as a result of COVID-19 and now includes residential burglaries backdated to 1 June 2020:
 - (a) There has been a total of 16 residential burglaries in Darlington (6 of these are backdated).
 - (b) A total of 416 homes have been visited by Police Community Support officers.
 - (c) 110 homes have accepted the offer of safer streets interventions.
 - (d) 66 properties have been completed, 18 properties are currently having work undertaken and 26 other properties are awaiting target-hardening measures.

22. In anticipation of surplus funds, a meeting was held with local councillors, police and local authority officers to determine additional preventative measures that could be introduced in the targeted area during the short-term. Measures agreed included removal of graffiti, provision of skips, defensive toppings, trellis and defensive planting, CCTV, crime prevention packs (locks, lights, alarms etc.), internal CCTV wi-fi surveillance and replacement gates.
23. Following support from the Home Office, these measures are now being rolled-out in the Northgate and North Road areas of Darlington.

Licensing

Pavement Cafes

24. In line with the requirements of the emergency Business and Planning Act 2020, allowing the hospitality trade to maximise the use of outside space, Darlington's Licensing Committee have approved a streamlined response for pavement café applications to reduce the processing time. This will allow those businesses with outside space to re-open, whilst complying with COVID-19 regulations. Licensing have been working with partners to maximise the space available for premises to trade whilst maintaining public safety. A letter providing information and links to guidance has been produced and published to assist the licensed trade during this transition period.

Taxis

25. The taxi trade has been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 restrictions and Licensing have been assisting our business team to identify and verify taxi drivers who are able to take advantage of the Additional Restriction Grant (ARG) scheme. This has been widely publicised within the trade and those eligible drivers are entitled to claim a grant of £500 as a one-off payment for self-employment support. At the time of reporting, of the 418 drivers who are able to make a claim, 199 have taken advantage of the scheme.

Dog Breeding

26. Licensing currently have two active investigations on-going into unlicensed dog breeding activities, both of which are linked to cross border organised crime. An individual currently under investigation appealed the decision of Licensing not to grant a dog breeders licence, however, the appeal judge upheld the decision and dismissed this appeal. This person was given no right of further appeal unless there is a point of law and to date no further appeal has been made.

Online Taxi Applications

27. Testing of the new online taxi licensing application system identified some issues that were subsequently found to be with the supplier. These are currently being rectified before the system is to be adopted. As a result of this, there has been some slippage in the project. The 'Enterprise' electronic workflow monitor - developed to manage all licensing applications with greater speed and efficiency - has been working well during the testing phase and will hopefully be delivered

within our spring timeline.

Crime and Disorder

28. There has been a 19 per cent reduction in the number of reported crimes in Darlington during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 2410 crimes. The only crimes showing an increase are Arson (5 crimes) and Rape (2 crimes). All other categories of crime are showing a significant decrease.
29. There has been a 1 per cent decrease in the number of reported anti-social behaviour incidents in Darlington during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 40 incidents. Incidents showing an increase are Alcohol related ASB (44 incidents).
30. There has been a 58 per cent reduction in the number of reported crimes in Darlington Town Centre during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This equates to a decrease of 1107 crimes. The only crime showing an increase is Burglary (4 crimes).
31. There has been a 59 per cent reduction 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 312 incidents.

Climate Change

32. The delivery of the LAD2 programme supports the aims of the Authority's Climate Change Action Plan of improving energy efficiency, decarbonising heat and will help to reduce the carbon footprint of the Borough.

**Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

This page is intentionally left blank

**COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 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. In-house Day Opportunities**

We have continued to offer day opportunity experience to adults with a Learning Disability throughout the recent lockdown period. Place based activities have been open since September 2020 with staff adapting extremely well to safe systems of working, including the introduction of support bubbles to ensure attendees are able to remain safe and healthy. Some attendees have not been able to return due to their status of being extremely clinically vulnerable. However, provider staff and colleagues, such as Public Health who have been meeting on a regular basis throughout are working towards scaling up the offer to return to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible.

3. Direct Payment

The Direct Payments procedure and pathway has been reviewed and revised. It continues to enable staff to guide individuals and their families through the process and ensure it is fully considered as an appropriate choice for self-directed support. Darlington continues to be a regional leader in Direct Payment use. A training programme for staff has been developed, which includes presentations for all teams as well as a Podcast, which practitioners can refer to in their daily work. The training programme was developed with Workforce Development and other stakeholders including, Operational Services, Commissioning, the Direct Payment Support Service and DAD.

4. Carers

Operational services are continuing to work closely with carers, to ensure their needs are recognised and addressed. Age UK reopened Bradbury House on 12 April 2021 and arranged appointments for people to visit to look around and sample their meals at home menu. This is an ongoing invitation. Social workers have been contacting individuals and their carers to inform them that THE Service has reopened. Working age adults' services for carers at Mind and DAD Independent Living Hub are still operational. Social workers have been maintaining contact with Carers to ensure support is in place. They have also shared information and National Guidance, when published on Carers' eligibility for the Covid vaccine and have signposted carers to the Carers Services in Darlington.

Commissioning and Contracts

5. There is an improving local Covid position which reflects the positive national trend. As we move into recovery, monitoring calls with providers have now moved to weekly basis with additional calls being made more frequently if a care home experiences an outbreak. Additional support also continues to be provided into care homes from the CCG Infection Control Team as appropriate. Infection rates are now decreasing which again reflects the reduction in community transmission rates, the impact of the testing programme and the infection control support that the Council has provided. There is currently one care home that has been classified as having an outbreak and this situation is being supported by Public Health colleagues. This represents a significant reduction from the five care homes that were experiencing outbreaks on the 28 February 2021.
6. As of 31 March 2021, 100 per cent of adult social care home residents have been vaccinated. In addition, 95 per cent of all priority areas 1 to 5 including social care eligible staff have received their first doses of the vaccine. This includes staff working in older people and working age adults residential and community-based services such as care homes, domiciliary care, Extra Care, private sheltered housing, and Direct Payment Personal Assistants. Over the next few weeks, the second dose vaccination programme is being implemented. The Commissioning and Contracts Service continue to work with Public Health and Primary Care Network colleagues to ensure that staff and residents receive the second dose of the vaccine in accordance with the national implementation programme. This second dosage programme is ongoing and on 5 May a reported 92% of older persons' care home residents have received a 2nd dose and 73% of staff in all priority areas have also received both doses.
7. Darlington's testing programme has been further strengthened with the introduction of the regular testing programme in Day Services. There is also an additional offer of Rapid Lateral Flow Tests to support visits in and out of Extra Care and Supported Living provision. This will allow access to more visitors and it is an important part of recovery phase during the staged easing of the current lockdown period.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

8. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners invited the Chairs of the sub groups to provide an overview of how the groups are working. The chairs highlighted the effectiveness of the critical operational meetings commenced in response to COVID and are proposing an operational group continues to meet moving forward. A proposal of roles of the groups and governance framework is to be drawn up for presentation at a future meeting.
9. Ryan Haig, Senior Safeguarding Leader for Department for Work and Pensions for Durham, Darlington and Tees Valley joined the Learning and Development sub group to introduce himself and the role he undertakes for DWP. The DWP has recently created a central team to focus on strategically supporting their most vulnerable customers. Partners around the table recognised the value in linking in with Ryan for information to inform Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Adult Strategy Meetings.

Climate Change

10. The service continues to promote the completion of the Climate Change Academy 10 module for all current staff and new-starters to encourage awareness.
11. The Council's electric car leasing scheme continues to be promoted and positively received by staff.

Councillor Rachel Mills
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

This page is intentionally left blank

**COUNCIL
13 MAY 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 Board has not convened since the last meeting. The next Health and Wellbeing Board will take place in June 2021.

Early Intervention and Front Door

3. Children's Information and Advice Team received 426 contacts in January and 479 contacts in February. The numbers are broadly consistent with those seen in previous months and appears more stable than during earlier periods in the pandemic when numbers of contacts were less consistent. There were 32 referrals to social care in January and 40 in February, which is a reduction on the previous year and consistent with the new front door methodology of increasing contacts but reducing referrals through a conversational style of practice. Trends at the front door show a slight decrease in contacts relating to adult mental health but an increase in contacts relating to family dysfunction and domestic abuse.
4. Early Help Services have continued to offer a dynamic response within the pandemic, with a combination of face to face and virtual visits and interventions. There were 55 Early Help Episodes commenced in January and 32 in February. Success and satisfaction rates continue to be positive with 74 per cent of families in January and February reporting positive changes because of Early Help support. All families in February engaged with the Early help offer which is very positive.
5. The Troubled Families Programme has been renamed to the **Supporting Families Programme** to better reflect service delivery. For 2020/21 Darlington achieved 100 per cent payment by results with 156 families able to demonstrate significant and sustained progress.

Safeguarding Assessment and Looked After Through Care:**Corporate Parenting Panel**

6. The Panel has not met since the 16 February 2021. The Panel held on this date was reported in the previous portfolio report. The next scheduled Panel is 20 April 2021.

Child Protection, Looked After and Care Leaver statistics.

7. At the end of February 2021 there were:

- (a) 348 children being supported through a child in need plan
- (b) 84 children, subject to child protection plans
- (c) 279 children in care. There continues to be significant drive to progress children's permanence plans enabling them to safely leave the care of the local authority.
- (d) 106 relevant, former relevant and qualifying Carer Leavers and 40 eligible Care Leavers aged 16 and 17 years all have access to a Personal Advisor for support, advice and guidance.

Fostering Residential and Lifestages

- 8. There is a continued focus on the recruitment of mainstream foster carers to help meet the needs of looked after children. We have seen an increase in enquiries about mainstream fostering, and we continue to receive support from the Marketing and Communications Team to ensure interesting articles and messages are regularly added to social media. Work is ongoing with robust recruitment campaigns for "Foster Carer Fortnight" this month.
- 9. Placement stability for children remains high due to the continued dedication from both mainstream foster carers and connected kinship carers. Contact for children with their families, has been promoted by carers, which has included face to face contact as well as virtual contact via facetime, telephone etc.
- 10. Foster carers have been offered a covid vaccination, and there has been a high take up rate. For those foster carers who live out of area, work has been ongoing to try and secure a vaccine at the earliest opportunity. Foster carers who work for independent agencies and who live in the Darlington area have been offered vaccinations too.
- 11. The three mainstream residential homes are providing placements to five young people who have largely adhered to covid regulations, with very few missing from placement episodes. Staff work closely with education providers to engage young people with attendance and learning. Regulation 44 monitoring visits have been conducted virtually, but from May 2021, visits will take place face to face, subject to social distancing and other appropriate measures.
- 12. Harewood Hill Lodge has been providing respite to approximately 25 children, with staff groups and children working in "bubbles" as far as possible to minimise the potential for the spread of infection. Parents have provided positive feedback in relation to the service. We propose to return to the pre-pandemic mode of service delivery from May 2021, subject to national guidance.
- 13. Children with a disability continue to be supported through the Disabled Children's Team (Lifestages 0-25 team). Direct home visits are made where possible, but where children or family members have medical vulnerabilities, doorstep or virtual visits are arranged.

Education

14. The full reopening of schools commenced on 8 March 2021. Up to 21 March 2021 local schools undertook over 39,430 lateral flow tests with 71 positive results in staff and pupils. This represents a positivity rate of 0.18 per cent. Secondary school pupils are now expected to be twice weekly at home and report results to schools to record.
15. Face coverings for pupils and staff are now in use in all indoor settings. The government has confirmed that this expectation will be in place until at least 17 March.
16. Attendance at Darlington schools week commencing 25 March was at 89.4 per cent higher than the North East average of 88.5 per cent. Attendance of vulnerable pupils continues to be strong with 81.88 per cent of pupils with a social worker attending week commencing 25 March higher than North East average of 81.4 per cent. 85.2 per cent of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan attended in Darlington week commencing 25 March compared with a North East average of 82.2 per cent.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

17. The Community Short Breaks Framework for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has been reopened via the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) portal enabling new providers to join. An additional provider has been appointed to deliver individualised support to access existing community activities.
18. Officers are meeting with regional colleagues to assess the feasibility and viability of new regional contracts for independent fostering agencies (IFA), independent advocacy for children and young people, independent investigating officers, independent persons, and independent visitors. Updates will be provided as this work progresses.
19. Work has been undertaken in conjunction with Working Age Adults commissioners to review the existing Housing Related Support contracts in preparation for new contracts commencing 1 April 2022. The service reviews have included joint work with operational colleagues to ensure that services are aligned to better meet the needs of children, young people, and families in Darlington.
20. Successful contract negotiations have been undertaken with the provider to extend the Darlington Young Carers contract by an additional two years to ensure that support is available to young carers and young adult carers within Darlington.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

21. In February, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners invited the Chairs of the subgroups to provide an overview of how the groups are working. The chairs highlighted the effectiveness of the critical operational meetings commenced in response to COVID and are proposing an operational group continues to meet moving forward. A proposal of roles of groups and governance framework is to be drawn up for presentation at a future meeting.

22. Ryan Haig, Senior Safeguarding Leader for Department for Work and Pensions for Durham, Darlington and Tees Valley joined the Learning and Development subgroup to introduce himself and the role he undertakes for DWP. The DWP has recently created a central team to focus on strategically supporting their most vulnerable customers. Partners around the table recognised the value in linking in with Ryan for information to inform Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Adult Strategy Meetings. Ryan will be meeting the Statutory Safeguarding Partners in due course.
23. In March, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners were provided with an overview of the evaluation of the thirty-nine-week review of the children's front door. The data shows that there has been a 23 per cent decrease in email contacts which demonstrates partners commitment in embracing the new model and moving towards a more conversational based relational practice. There has been an expected reduction in referrals to children's social care compared to same period 39 weeks before implementation, ensuring the work centres around the need to keep the most vulnerable children safe. The findings of the full year evaluation will be a milestone and will be presented to partners at a future meeting.

Climate Change

24. At the present time Children's Services staff continue to work from home enabling a continued effort to reduce our impact by working to paperless processes, reduced printing, and keeping travel to a minimum.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio

**COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 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.

Supporting the Childhood Health Weight Plan for Darlington

2. Cabinet has approved the commencement of a review of the available planning powers that could be used to support the Council's objectives of achieving the targets in the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington.
3. There are existing powers within the planning system which can be adopted to support health and wellbeing and several local authorities have adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to assist in managing the number of hot food takeaways.
4. In approving this review Cabinet have requested that officers explore the merits of adopting the available planning powers through the development of an evidence-based analysis of good practice elsewhere in the country which will assist in addressing childhood obesity and that in conducting the review, officers consult with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
5. Cabinet have agreed that a report be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting.

Planning, Development Management and Environmental Health

6. Work on the new Development Management Charter is now complete and a report will be brought to Members of the Planning Committee for consideration. The Charter sets out the reasonable expectations of applicants, agents and objectors when they become involved in the planning process. The Charter also references the relevant guidance and policy documents we use to arrive at planning decisions.
7. The section 106 agreement associated with the Lidl supermarket application already granted planning permission at Faverdale has now been signed, to make the permission 'live' and ready to commence.
8. The Planning enforcement/compliance service currently has 77 planning enforcement cases under investigation. 91 Cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of August.
9. Since the beginning of August 2020, 729 applications have been received of which 26 are categorised as major and 703 others. 565 decisions have been made in this period including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated decisions.
10. Significant progress is now being made with regard to the fire damaged building at Skinnergate and the proposed residential/commercial development. Negotiations

have been concluded with Historic England and the appointed architectural agents have been able to move the project forward to planning application stage.

11. Enforcement notices have been served on two gypsy sites which have been appealed against to be heard by hearing. In addition, an enforcement notice has been served on unauthorised activity including the stationing of a caravan near Sadberge. Compliance is nearing completion. Direct action in default is being taken on a property in Montrose Street. The works are being taken under section 215 [untidy land and buildings] and will result in a significant improvement in the street scene and the amenity of residents. An appropriate charge on the property will be made on the property to recover the Council's costs. Work has now commenced.
12. Pre application negotiations are now almost complete with regard to the North Road Railway Station scheme following a briefing with Members.
13. During the Pandemic (up until the end of March) the Environmental Health Department responded to 1496 requests for service relating to Covid-19, the closure of premises and safe working practices and carried out 469 checks which resulted in 80 warnings.
14. In addition to the enforcement reported previously, it has been necessary to:
 - (a) Serve a Prohibition Notice on a gym that was opening to members of the public in contravention of the business closure provisions. This was followed by £3000 in fines by way of Fixed Penalty Notices issued by the Environmental Health and a number of users of the gym have been given Fixed Penalty Notices for £100 each.
 - (b) As the use of the gym continued despite this action officers from Environmental Health supported by the Legal Team and the Police were granted a Closure Order at Darlington Magistrates Court at the end of March.

Darlington Towns Fund

15. 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.
16. The four project areas identified as part of the £1m Forward Funding programme have been unanimously supported by the Town Board and have progressed well. These areas are:
 - (a) The Yards Phase1 (Clark's and Buckton's Yards) – transform and improve public space. This is now being delivered.
 - (b) Town Centre lighting enhancements. St Cuthbert's Church, Clock tower, Pease statue and around planters are now completed.
 - (c) Town Centre Wi-Fi, which is now completed in the central area; and
 - (d) The acquisition of properties along Northgate which contribute to the wider Railway Heritage Quarter project.
17. Officers have facilitated three positive and productive stakeholder meetings where local businesses took the opportunity to pass comments on the proposals. 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.

18. The acquisition of 142/144 Northgate has now been completed and signifies the first step towards the Council's intention of seeking 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.
19. The Heads of Terms for the main Towns Fund programme have been agreed and signed by all parties, including the Secretary of State.
20. An initial engagement meeting has been held with stakeholders along Skinnergate and the Yards, which provided information on proposals to consider both improvements to the public realm and properties within the area as part of the Towns Fund programme.
21. The Adult Learning facility proposed within the Towns Fund has now been fast tracked, with £575,000 secured from government in 2020/21. The proposal is to develop a project which seeks to locate the facility within the Northern Echo building.

Darlington Victorian Indoor Market

22. Work continues to progress on the refurbishment of the Indoor Market. Phase 1 which is the development of hospitality and street food hall, is almost complete and will open in the near future. Phase 2 which includes the refurbishment of retail element of the market hall will commence imminently. Phase 3, the development of the Temperate Garden is progressing to planning application stage.

Business Investment Team Update

23. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new Treasury campus will be established in Darlington. The plans for the Treasury hub were outlined in last year's budget, and after an extensive scoping exercise, Darlington was announced as the preferred location, with 750 civil servants set to relocate from London.
24. Following this news, the Department for International Trade, the Government department responsible for the UK's global business, including post-Brexit trading agreements, announced it will also be relocating as many as 500 workers to Darlington.
25. The creation of the Government's new Northern Economic Campus has been widely welcomed and has generated considerable interest from a range of professional, legal and financial type companies that are now looking to find a base in close proximity to this new facility. Consequently, enquiries for town-centre commercial office space have increased significantly.

Local Restrictions Support Grants

26. The Business Investment Team continue to work with colleagues in the Business Rates team to deliver the range of Covid-19 financial support measures introduced by Government since October 2020. The headline Local Restrictions Support

Grants were initially designed to support businesses suffering reduced demand or forced to close under the ‘tier’ system but were subsequently updated to cover national “lockdown” restrictions too.

27. Darlington Borough Council have administered the various support schemes on behalf of the Government. The table below shows the volume of applications for each of the schemes, together with the total amount of grant money awarded to local business.

	Applications	Approved	Declined	Awaiting Decision	Amount Paid
LRSO Open	364	218	140	6	£192,075.70
LRSO (Closed Addendum) National Lockdown	1,098	870	227	1	£1,336,122
LRSO Tier 3	462	266	196	0	£427,264.43
Christmas Support Payment for Pubs	77	51	26	0	£51,000.00
LRSO Tier 4/National Lockdown	1,257	898	359	0	£4,380,243.37
Closed Business Lockdown Payment	893	893			£4,028,285.71
Additional Restrictions Grant Phase 1 - Lockdown	982	596	365	21	£1,738,868.66
Additional Restrictions Grant – Phase II Recovery	175	175			£737,575.00
TOTAL:	5,308				£12,891,434.87

28. So far, the number and value of Covid-19 business grants awarded via DBC since the start of the pandemic is as follows:

- (a) 735 Small Business Grants - £17,350,000
- (b) 364 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants - £6,520,000
- (c) 105 Discretionary Grants - £1,170,000
- (d) 3,740 Local Restriction Support Grants - £10,414,911
- (e) 1,157 Additional Restrictions Grants - £2,476,444

29. The total value of lockdown grants awarded in Darlington since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 is £37,931,355.

30. As part of the March 2021 Budget, the Government set out a new wave of support measure for the small businesses, including Restart Grants to support local economies as they emerge from the pandemic and lockdown restrictions and commence a path of recovery. The existing range of local restrictions support grants will be superseded by the restart grants (except for Additional Restrictions Grant). The national Restart Grant scheme, which is now open for applications, aims to help businesses to reopen safely. Non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, personal care, gyms, and accommodation businesses can apply for the grant. The awards so far are as follows

Restart Grants	Grants Awarded	Total Value
Strand One: Non-Essential Retail	145	£426,040
Strand Two: Hospitality, Leisure, Accommodation, gym & sport, and personal care	355	£3,170,000
Totals	500	£3,596,040

Local Plan

31. The Local Plan Examination is progressing with the hearing dates expected to begin on Tuesday 25 May. The Hearing programme is available on the Local Plan Examination website at <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan/local-plan-examination/>

Climate Change

32. A technical consultant to carry out the BEIS funded feasibility study into a district heat network has now been procured. The study report is due to be completed by the end of October.
33. Emissions data for 2020/21 is not yet available, but a methodology to estimate work-related home working emissions will be included in the reporting.
34. The draft action plan will be presented to Asset Management Group in May prior to coming before Cabinet.

Councillor Alan Marshall
Economy Portfolio

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED 13 MAY 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. From 8 March, restrictions in England started to lift and the government's four-step roadmap commenced as planned.
3. The roadmap, which has been published on gov.uk since February outlines the four steps for easing restrictions.
4. Step 2 commenced on 12 April which allowed the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres. Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms also reopen.
5. You are able meet up outdoors with friends and family you do not live with, either in a group of up to 6 from any number of households (children of all ages count towards the limit of 6) or in a group of any size from up to two households (each household can include an existing support bubble, if eligible).
6. Schools and other education settings opened to all students again on 8 March for the first time since February.
7. The rate of infection in Darlington has been on a reducing trajectory since the peak at the beginning of January 2021. Rates have reduced across all ages but have reduced particularly quickly in those over 60 years.
8. There has been no reports of any Variants of Concern (VOC) being detected in Darlington with the majority of infections in Darlington being attributed to the most common variant.
9. The latest hospital data shows low levels of hospital bed occupancy with patients with COVID-19 including those in ITU. The numbers of new patients admitted as emergencies with COVID-19 has also continued to show a decrease.

COVID Communications

10. Our 'Keep Darlington on the right track' campaign continues to evolve with adverts running across various social media platforms, helping to engage with a range of audiences. Our response based on the relevant public health data we review weekly. Information has also been advertised in the May edition of the One Darlington magazine.

11. The 'Don't Bring It Home' campaign ran from February to March, across Facebook and Instagram, with a billboard advertisement located near Sainsbury's in Darlington town centre which is still on display. The digital advert gained 17,597 impressions from Darlington residents, which encouraged residents to book regular community tests to keep their families/households safe, particularly if they could not work from home.
12. The 'Teens are not immune to Covid-19' campaign ran in March and April, targeting teens aged 14 and above as well as parents of teens via multiple digital channels and digital radio. The YouTube advert gained 40,045 impressions, Snapchat advert gained 161,535 impressions, Facebook/Instagram advert for teens gained 234,772 impressions and the Facebook/Instagram advert for parents gained 127,541 impressions.

Community Testing

13. Darlington's community testing programme continues to lead the way not only in the North-East, but in the UK. Our efforts are helping to interrupt community transmission of COVID-19 and is helping to protect communities right across Darlington.
14. The local Community Testing programme for Darlington residents who are asymptomatic continues to provide Lateral Flow Tests across the designated sites across the Borough.
15. As of 29 April 2020, the Council had undertaken 29,361 community tests across all our community sites in the borough. 382 individuals testing positive who did not have symptoms. This corresponds to a positivity rate of 1.3 per cent. The percentage of returning visitors is 46.1 per cent.
16. Schools in Darlington have been providing Lateral Flow Testing to all staff in primary and secondary settings but and those pupils and students in year 7 and above. There have been over 38,502 LFTs undertaken in schools since the 8 March.
17. In this period there have been a total of 93 positive tests reported through the school testing programme.
18. There continues to be no evidence of any sustained outbreak of COVID-19 in pupils and students in any school or college in Darlington and almost all cases reported in school have been linked to exposure outside of school.

Community Collect

19. The government has announced a significant expansion of testing in England to support the roadmap for the easing of restrictions. Anyone will be able to access a free rapid lateral flow test for themselves and their families to use twice a week in line with current clinical guidance.
20. Community Collect launched in Darlington on 12 April.

21. This is designed to detect positive cases earlier and allow interventions such as isolation and contact tracing to be implemented more quickly and better break the chain of transmission and prevent outbreaks.
22. The expanded offer of regular testing offer for people without symptoms will complement the existing Community Testing Programme already successfully delivered by the authority and the school based testing programme and includes:-
 - (a) a home ordering service, which allows people to order lateral flow tests online to be delivered to their home
 - (b) a workplace testing programmes, on-site or at home
 - (c) a collection service at existing local test sites
 - (d) a collection service provided through local community pharmacies.
23. Since the launch of click and collect, the total number of kits collected, as of 3 May, is 1,822 (or 12,754 total tests).

COVID-19 Vaccinations

24. The vaccination programme in Darlington continues to progress well with over 60% of the adult population now received their first dose of the vaccine as of the beginning of May 2021. Those in the most vulnerable JCVI groups are now receiving their second doses of vaccine.
25. In Darlington there have 59,041 of the 92,977 residents aged 16 or older who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. There are 96.92 per cent of all those aged 70 or over now having received their first dose of the vaccine and over 9 out of 10 of those aged over 65 living in a care home have also been provided with their first dose of vaccine. There have now been 25,212 residents who have received their second and final dose of vaccine.
26. The authority is working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and other authorities across Tees Valley to produce a Tees wide plan to maximise vaccine coverage and ensure that all those vulnerable and hard to reach communities and individuals who have not yet had their vaccine are supported to enable them to receive one.
27. The Primary Care Network worked with the authorities housing services team, the 700 club, YMCA, First Stop and other partners to provide a successful vaccination session for those who were homeless in Darlington.

Test and Trace

28. Test and Trace allows us to find people who have the virus and those they may have infected. Contact tracing is a critical part of the prevention and control of COVID-19. It works alongside other measures, such as limiting social contact, engaging with communities and groups at high risk of getting COVID-19 and enforcing restrictions.
29. Darlington continues to be a Local Tracing Partnership working with NHS Test and Trace nationally and locally to help reach as many people as possible who have tested positive for coronavirus. Individual cases are initially contacted by NHS Test and Trace and then referred to the Local Authority for action and follow up. Once

identified, we advise them to isolate and support them to complete their self-isolation period therefore breaking the chain of infection.

30. One of the benefits of working together is that we receive information about how people are being exposed to the virus, and this is continuously informing our approaches to containing the virus.

Public Health

31. Working alongside the Town Centre Management team and other teams such as the Dolphin Centre and the Library, a Public Health Campaign will run from May to September to increase physical activity in the town centre. The offer includes a Treasure Hunt for families in May half term to get them walking round the town, using local businesses windows to find the answers. The theme will be the Olympics with some factual messaging around healthy eating. There is potential to work with local artist Liz Million to create the artwork and produce some prizes.
32. We will also be using a nudge theory approach to encourage people to move more. We are looking into amending Wayfinding signage and updating any existing signage for COVID-19 to include health messaging. We are hoping to link up to the Feethams car park team, the Cornmill and Queen Street to explore options and costing.
33. To support this, we have been working with the Move More team to launch the "Start my Move More Journey" web page. This will be included in the Healthy Darlington pages and support the residents of Darlington to find ways to be more active in community settings. We have also worked with the Safe in Tees Valley marketing team, who are based in the Town Hall, to ensure our messaging around cycling and walking is correct. This launched in April.
34. I have been working with Planning and Public Health to look at what wider measures might be available to the authority to further contribute to tackling the rates of obesity, particularly in children and young people in our communities. Cabinet has requested the Darlington Health and Wellbeing Board explores the merits of adopting the available planning powers through the development of an evidence base and the analysis of good practice elsewhere in the country which will assist in addressing childhood obesity.
35. In this period there have been a total of 115 positive lateral flow tests reported through the school testing programme.
36. There continues to be no evidence of any sustained outbreak of COVID-19 in pupils and students in any school or college in Darlington and almost all cases reported in school have been linked to exposure outside of school.

Dolphin Centre

37. On Monday 12 April, the Dolphin Centre opened its doors again to customers. The pool, gym and pavement café reopened in line with government and governing body guidance. The Centre continues to adhere to best practice in its safe systems of work to ensure customers have confidence in exercising and using the facilities. Leisure Services are also now operating South Park Café, which also opened as a

pavement café on 12 April.

38. A number of partners who deliver children's activities have also returned to the Dolphin Centre, including music bugs, street swords and table tennis club. First Class Learning and Stage Coach are due to restart in May.
39. Preparations are underway to open the new bowling alley on the 21 May and extended soft play on 24 May, alongside indoor hospitality. There has been very encouraging interest from residents in particular around the bowling alley.
40. Some members of the Leisure team continue to support community testing and the vaccine call centre during this period until all business areas are recovered in line with the government roadmap.

Holiday Activity Fund

41. Darlington Borough Council was awarded £488,130 to deliver the Holidays Activities and Food Programme. The purpose of the grant is for local authorities to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays 2021/2022 to children in their local authority who receive benefits-related free school meals.
42. Five pilot projects were chosen to be delivered at Firthmoor Community Centre, Red Hall Community Centre, Skerne Park Academy, Hummersknott Academy and Eastbourne Sports Complex for Easter. These venues were chosen due to the high-quality infrastructure already in place and the fact the catering could be offered within the short timescale. Following the delivery of the pilot projects, the project will be rolled out to other community venues for the summer programme.
43. Activities included: Dance, Youth Theatre, Fun Fitness, Games, Tai Chi, First Aid Courses, Reading, Circus Skills and Fun Nutrition Activities. These activities were co-ordinated and managed by Darlington Move More Team, Darlington Arts Team and supported by Darlington School Sports Partnership with 300 young people engaged.
44. The holiday club places will available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year. This covers four weeks in the summer, plus a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays. Local authorities have flexibility about how they spend this grant and deliver this provision to best serve the needs of the children and families in their areas. Following the five pilots more venues will be facilitated in the summer as part of broadening the offer.

England Athletics Facility Fund – Cage Application

45. The Darlington Move More Team have been successful with a £5000 funding award towards improving the cage facility at Eastbourne Sports Complex from England Athletics. This fund will allow the cage to be fully compliant with the UK Athletics TrackMark and competition standard.

Housing Services

Rent Collection

46. Arrears recovery throughout 2020/21 has provided customers with a balance of support and enforcement and it has proven extremely successful with initial figures showing a £134K reduction in arrears owed from year-end 2020/21. Current arrears have reduced to £630K which is back to 2016/17 levels and over £25 million has been collected since April 2020. No court action or evictions have taken place during this year and although the number of tenants claiming Universal Credit has continued to increase, the average arrears for these customers remains at less than five weeks, indicating how this approach has supported customers throughout the year.

Housing Management

47. An Anti-Social Behaviour Closure Order has been obtained for a Council dwelling at Firthmoor following complaints of anti-social behaviour and alleged criminal activity. The Magistrates' Court granted the order after hearing that the tenant had been linked to drug-related activity and anti-social behaviour over several months. The property has now been boarded up and is closed for three months under the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Crime and Policing Act 2014 whereby no one can enter the flat and anyone who breaches this will be arrested. The Council's Tenancy Enforcement Officer and Neighbourhood Police team sought the order after investigating complaints by residents and ward councillors. Since the order was obtained the tenant responsible has given up their rights to the tenancy.
48. As part of our digital inclusion agenda and commitment to strengthen and expand opportunities for tenant engagement, 75 laptops have been distributed to seven junior schools in Darlington using Community Engagement funding. This enhances the schools' ability to provide online learning for children and ensures children who may have fallen behind with coursework have the opportunity for additional study time and can access home learning. In addition to supporting the children with their learning, information has been provided to their parents on how to access Housing Services digital tenancy platform and Learning and Skills courses to provide training and employment opportunities. We are also hoping for parents to join tenant's group meetings on line and have a say in what happens in their local area. This initiative follows on from a digital inclusion project earlier in the year at Skerne Park School whereby £4K of Community Engagement funding was used to match fund some Section 106 funding for a loan scheme for around 45 laptops.

Lifeline Services

49. All the Lifeline team have now had their second COVID vaccination. A roadmap has also been produced which reflects government guidance but is relevant to our type of group living settings. For example, we have worked closely with Move More to restart our exercise classes and non-essential services such as private cleaners and hairdressers.
50. Further successful bidding from the Infection Control funding has seen further purchases of IPADS throughout our good neighbour, sheltered and extra care, enabling more mobile working within the schemes improving social isolation for our tenants. We are continuing to take a proactive approach to climate change.

51. The Lifeline Service continues to be extremely busy. In one typical month recently :

- (a) 9199 phone calls were received
- (b) 618 incidents were attended
- (c) 49 new installations were made
- (d) 11,178 welfare calls were made by Scheme Managers
- (e) 121 activities were delivered
- (f) Response times averaged 10 minutes
- (g) Only 29 clients needed to go to hospital

Housing Options

52. A joint project with our health partners and third sector saw a number of our homeless people being vaccinated. Feethams House staff dedicated a day to seeing some of our most vulnerable clients. With the support of the Housing Options team, the 700 Club, Foundations, Humankind, YMCA and First Stop clients were supported and transported to the venue.

Climate change

53. Having secured £1.25m grant funding under the Green Homes, Local Authority Delivery Scheme and committed £570k matched funding from the Housing Revenue Account, we continue to identify further opportunities for grant funding. Currently we are working up a bid for the next phase of Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which aims to use innovative approaches to retrofitting social housing at scale. We are also working with, independent consultants, Savills to provide expert advice and evaluation of our stock and recommendations towards achieving our zero carbon plan. This will provide valuable insight into our stock and recommended works to achieve energy and carbon efficiencies to support those bidding opportunities

Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

This page is intentionally left blank

**COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 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.

Local Transport Plan

2. Cabinet received an annual update on highways and transport from a regional and local perspective. It included updates on delivery, performance, and public satisfaction in 2020/21.
3. The report also included an update on the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan and the Darlington Transport Plan. Cabinet approved the Darlington Transport Plan framework as the basis for consultation in 2021 to enable residents, businesses and organisations to help shape the transport strategy for Darlington.
4. The report also agreed funding for this year's highway improvement, maintenance, and active travel programmes and agreed recommendations that came from the Communities and Local Services Committee to inform the programme development.

Woodland Road Walking and Cycling Scheme

5. Tees Valley Combined Authority confirmed funding of £1.7m for the construction of the first phase of the Woodland Road Walking and Cycling Scheme which will improve access to the town centre via Outram Street and Duke Street. The temporary 20mph speed limit and one-way street for traffic on Duke Street, introduced last year as part of the social distancing measures, have proven popular and are planned to be incorporated into the scheme. Following consultation amendments have been made where possible and details of the final plans have been circulated to residents and businesses to commence a formal consultation process on the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders. Work on the scheme is scheduled to start in June 2021 and is programmed to last until April 2022.

Rethinking Victoria Road

6. The works on the western section of Victoria Road between St Cuthbert's Way and Clifton Road are substantially complete. Work started on the eastern section at the end of March and is due for completion in June. The final works will include the landscaping elements, resurfacing of the carriageway and the commissioning of the traffic signals.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

7. Highway Maintenance schemes complete:
 - (a) C182 Longfield Road: Footway Reconstruction (0.113km)

8. Highway Maintenance schemes on site:
 - (a) Stanhope Road South/Coniscliffe Road, West Street: Carriageway reconstruction (0.260km)
9. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Carriageway Patching Contract (22 locations)
 - (b) Unc Victoria Embankment: Kerbing/Drainage Works (0.5km)
 - (c) Pendleton Road South/Arkendale Street Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.128km)

Head of Steam

10. The museum prepared for its reopening with a refresh of what is available to do in its grounds including a willow sculpture trail, children's activity area and new picnic area.

Creative Darlington

11. Four railway heritage themed signs were unveiled on a roundabout on Haughton Road on 19 March 2021 as part of an overall redesign programme. The new work celebrates locomotives that have a particular connection with Darlington, Locomotion No 1, Derwent, Prince of Wales and Tornado.

Libraries

12. Darlington Libraries reopened for book borrowing on 12 April 2021 in line with government advice. Free home deliveries continue to be offered to those aged 60 and over.

Darlington Hippodrome

13. On 29 March 2021, Darlington Hippodrome received the news that it had been successful in its round 2 bid to Arts Council England's Cultural Recovery Fund. The theatre will receive £499,304 which will fund overheads, staff salaries, reopening plans and the purchase of equipment for the Classic Cinema in the March to June period.
14. From 12 April 2021, engagement/education activities including Youth Dance and Youth Theatre classes have been taking place in the Hippodrome once again.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

15. The Welcome to Darlington rebranding programme has been scheduled to attract visitors back into Darlington in line with re-opening guidelines. This will encourage visitors to a safe and welcoming town which re-opened on 12 April 2021.
16. Officers in Licensing, Highways and the Town Centre team, along with DAD (Darlington Association on Disability) and the Police, have been working with businesses to facilitate more pavement cafes, enabling the local businesses to offer outdoor socially distanced seating for food and drink in the town centre and across the Borough.

17. The Events calendar has been programmed to fit with Government guidelines beginning with roaming music to add atmosphere and engaging with local musicians to come and perform throughout the summer. Large scale events will take place later in the summer, subject to the lifting of the remaining restrictions.

Environmental Services

Darlington Crematorium Refurbishment – Cost Update

18. Cabinet received a cost update on the Darlington Crematorium refurbishment and new Chapel project and noted that the costs for the project have increased significantly on the original estimate due to the delays in work at the start of the pandemic and the impact of Brexit and COVID-19 on costs and supply of materials.
19. Cabinet have agreed that the project is continued as the additional costs can be met within the existing financial envelope and have agreed to the release of additional capital funding of £1.512m.

West Cemetery Update

20. As part of development for the new Chapel within West Cemetery an ecology survey was carried out which formed part of the planning application and at that time there was no evidence of great crested newts.
21. Subsequently the council received a report from a resident that they had seen great crested newts in the area. Following discussions with the councils ecologist the evidence was felt to be credible and therefore it was necessary to carry out further investigations. DNA samples were taken from ponds within the allotments which has resulted in evidence of great crested newts, which unfortunately has meant that building work for the Chapel has had to stop until a licence is granted from Natural England.
22. An application has been submitted and acknowledged for a district licence and we now need to wait to see if they will be happy to approve the licence on that basis. If so this will allow our Ecologist to start discussion with them with regards to other sites in the area that are deemed suitable for newt habitat, then hopefully we can offset our works against this and continue with their proposed mitigation. At the time of writing the timescale is unknown and therefore the impact on the project is similarly unknown. Whilst the application is being reviewed work can continue on the crematorium, which is progressing well.

Garden Waste Collections

23. Garden waste collections for summer 2021 commenced on 6 April 2021. To date we now have 7,600 subscriptions to the scheme compared to 7,100 last year therefore popularity of the scheme is increasing.

Grounds Maintenance

24. The winter programme for grounds maintenance was successfully completed on schedule (pruning, cutting back shrubs, etc). Commencement of the summer season started on 22 March 2021 with grass cutting operations.

Climate Change

25. This year as part of our highway maintenance programme of works all resurfacing we will be carried out using a warm asphalt mix rather than the traditional hot mix. The benefits are:
- (a) Reduced CO2 emissions associated with asphalt production by around 15%
 - (b) Improved productivity as it takes less time to cool to trafficking temperatures so more can be laid in a single shift
 - (c) Reduced public disruption through earlier re-opening to traffic.
 - (d) Improved conditions for the workforce.
 - (i) Reduced heat and fumes making for a more comfortable working environment
 - (ii) Steam reduced which improves visibility for the workforce and the general public, this is important with limited safe working spaces improving all round visibility.

**Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio**

COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED 13 May 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.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

2. The Council's capital programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered.
 - (a) Design work is progressing on the programme, with a number of schemes recently submitted for planning consideration and more being prepared. A pre-planning consultation exercise for the Railway Heritage Quarter has recently concluded and the majority of comments received were positive towards the proposals. A further pre-planning consultation exercise for the Bank Top Station East and West Gateway scheme will commence in May.
 - (b) Business cases continue to be developed to secure additional projects from funding opportunities.
 - (c) The likely site requirements for the recently announced Treasury North Campus are being reviewed with the TVCA.
 - (d) A programme of demolition works continues across a number of locations to facilitate future regeneration opportunities. The demolition of the former Audio nightclub on Commercial Street is ongoing.
 - (e) The implementation of an integrated control point system 'Project in a Box' continues with the first phase of training to Capital Project Managers now complete.
 - (f) There remains a risk from COVID-19 related effects and possible Brexit implications to ongoing projects. There are some indications that material costs and demand for labour resources are increasing which will be monitored closely as schemes progress to understand the impact.

Cabinet Updates for the Resources portfolio

3. At its meeting on 13 April 2021, Cabinet received a report to release capital funding for repairs in our corporate buildings and advanced design fees to bring forward regeneration projects and prepare sites for development. The report also noted the successful bid to obtain £443,313 from the governments Heat Decarbonisation Scheme which will be utilised to reduce gas consumption and provide some elements of electrical improvements in the Town Hall and Hippodrome.

4. Cabinet also received the annual procurement plan and approved the assessment of strategic and non-strategic procurements in the plan.

Elections

5. Staff have been working long hours on the arrangements for the elections taking place on the 6 May. This has included working over the bank holiday weekend.
6. Postal vote processing/verification has been taking place. To comply with safe working staff have been working in two separate teams in different Committee Rooms, with appropriate social distancing, masks and sanitation measures.
7. At polling stations voters will notice some changes with coronavirus measures evident. Staff will wear face masks and visors. Some smaller polling stations will also have plastic screens in use. Additional signage will give info about coronavirus measures. Floor markers will be used and voters will be advised of queuing arrangements and the need to wear face masks when entering. Spare face masks will be available for voters and also hand sanitisation. Voters will be encouraged to bring their own pencils/pens with them. Additional stocks of sanitised pencils will be available. At busier polling stations, staff will be assisting outside with info for voters and helping safe entry/exit management. Periodic cleaning will take place of contact surfaces throughout the day. Candidates, agents and polling agents will be expected to wear face masks when entering polling stations. We are employing 144 staff at the 49 polling stations. Training was taking place via Teams every day in the final week of April.
8. The count will not be immediately after close of poll, but the following days. The venue is the Dolphin Centre Sports Hall and the arrangements are as follows:

Friday 7 May, 8.30am - verification of ballot boxes/total votes cast per election.
Friday 7 May, 11.30am - Local Government by-election counts
Friday 7 May, 2pm - Tees Valley Mayoral count
Saturday 8 May, 9am – Police and Crime Commissioner count
9. The declaration of results for the by-elections will be in Darlington, but the Tees Valley Mayoral declaration will be in Stockton and the PCC in Durham.
10. Attendance at the count will need to be strictly managed because of coronavirus and safe working numbers and arrangements. Staff will be socially distanced and wearing face masks and visors. All persons entering the Hall will need wear facemasks and comply with coronavirus measures. Hand sanitiser will be available. A one-way system in operation, both to enter and exit the Sports Hall and in the Sports Hall. Floor markers will be used to maintain safe distances. There will be a separate media area will be on the balcony, but the media will not be invited down to the Sports Hall floor.

Virtual Democratic meetings

11. Coronavirus legislation which allowed local authorities to hold virtual meetings rather than traditional 'in person' meetings expires on 6 May. A High Court case decided in late April that earlier local government legislation cannot be used to hold remote meetings.

12. For meetings in May we are therefore reviewing whether meetings need to be held and how they can safely be run. Our plans will include using larger venues to facilitate social distancing such as the Dolphin Centre Sports Hall. Consideration will also need to be given to rescheduling meetings in May where this is possible. We do need to have an Annual Council meeting in May, which will need to be held in person. We will plan this to comply with coronavirus guidance and with a view to minimise health risks.
13. For meetings after May we will need to take account of the state of the pandemic and the relevant public health guidance.

Revenue and Benefits team

14. The Revenues and Benefits team have continued to prioritise the work to deliver a range of Covid-19 financial support measures to businesses introduced by the Government over the last year with over £42m paid out to date. The team have worked hard to ensure the new wave of support including the Restart Grants are administered as quickly as possible with over 650 awards already granted.
15. The collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has continued during the Covid-19 pandemic and residents have been supported with applications for Council Tax Support and other benefits.
16. For 2020-21, over £61 million of Council Tax has been collected, including £1.2 million of arrears. The in-year collection of Council Tax was 95.8 per cent and this was achieved despite courts being closed preventing the Council from taking any enforcement action. In addition, £8.8 million of Council Tax Support was awarded to residents on low income as well as £1.2 million of Council Tax Hardship payments.
17. Over £17 million of Business Rates was also collected with an in-year collection rate of 97.1 per cent. In addition, over £17 million of Business Rates relief was awarded to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with most of these businesses paying no Business Rates in 2020-21.

Climate Change

18. As mentioned above the council has been successful in a bid and received £443,313 from the Governments Heat Decarbonisation Scheme, which will be used to reduce gas consumption and make electrical improvement in the Council's Town Hall and Hippodrome buildings. It is anticipated the total project will save 870,500 kWhs.

Councillor Charles Johnson
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

This page is intentionally left blank

**COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 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 on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care home settings and care providers. Members were pleased to hear that there had been no additional deaths within any care homes during the previous two weeks, and that there had been no further outbreaks during that period either. It was also heartening to hear that visiting was taking place across the board with our provider market, with regular testing of visitors in place.
3. It was also pleasing to learn that 95 per cent of staff within vulnerable services have received their first COVID vaccination, with 88 per cent of staff across the entire cohort having had their initial vaccination. It was also good to hear that nearly all care home residents had received their second Covid vaccination, with the outstanding residents due to be picked up by District Nurses within the following week.
4. The Assistant Director – Commissioning, Performance and Transformation also informed us that the Council had received a third round of infection control funding, of which the majority would be distributed to providers.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

5. The Director of Children and Adult Services provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Adults Social Care Transformation Programme, which is enabling the delivery of modern services which are Care Act compliant and work in partnership with people to maximise their individual strengths and assets.
6. Whilst acknowledging the excellent work undertaken to bring so many projects to completion, concerns were raised about the sustainability of the Care Sector due to the ongoing effect of the pandemic on occupancy rates, and the impact on the ability to manage demand and provide best value. Members were reassured to learn that sustainability support had been provided to those Care Homes that were feeling the greatest impact, however there was an acknowledgement that the market would alter and that the priority would be monitoring what was in place to address identified assessed needs.
7. Members were keen to receive feedback in relation to the Care and Support Needs Assessment, which went live on 15 April 2021.
8. There was some apprehension expressed on behalf of those residents responsible for managing their own personal care budget, but who may have struggled as support was not available from carers due to the pandemic. Members were informed

that support had been provided by D.A.D (Darlington Association on Disability), and through other alternative providers, and adjustments had been made to budgets to reflect any additional cost of support.

Developing Darlington Care Collective

9. Members received a report to provide an overview of the Developing Darlington Care Collective (DDCC), including the aims and objectives of the group, and we heard about the rationale for the DDCC, the drive to 'make every contact count' (MECC), and the work undertaken to link in with existing volunteers and staff across multi-agency partners across the Borough of Darlington, including work done to link closely with the Darlington Partnership and Darlington Cares.
10. We were keen to learn whether training was provided to partners in relation to identifying indications of domestic abuse and fuel poverty, and Members were pleased to hear that this was something those in the DDCC remained conscious of. We were also keen to ensure that services for those with learning disabilities, mental health issues and domiciliary care were incorporated in the DDCC and were reassured that all aspects were included.
11. Members enquired whether social housing providers were involved and were informed that the Council's Housing Team were participating in the collective, however there were certainly opportunities for other organisations and private contractors to be involved too.

Review of Adult Care Services during COVID – Quad of Aims

12. We considered a request received from Councillor Holroyd, supported by Councillor Layton, for an item to review Adult Care Services during Covid-19, and the Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to take this work forward.

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

**COUNCIL
13 MAY 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.

Performance – Quarter 3 (October to December) 2020/21

2. Children's Services Quarter 3 performance October to December 2020 was presented to the April meeting which highlighted the following positives:
 - (a) Children are appropriately safeguarded as Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) (92.5 per cent) were held within 15 working days which remains higher than our statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks.
 - (b) All children with a Child Protection (CP) plan and children in care (CiC) have an allocated social worker with (85.8 per cent) of children receiving a statutory CP visit within 10 working days and (93.4 per cent) of statutory CiC visits being completed within timescale, above the target of 90 per cent.
 - (c) Year to date (YTD) no child has ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for two or more years and we continue to perform below our target of 5 per cent.
 - (d) We have low numbers of Children in Care (CiC) who have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months (6.7 per cent) which is an improvement on the internal target, national, regional averages (10 per cent) and statistical neighbour (9.9 per cent), however it still equates to 19 children in care experiencing 3 or more moves.
 - (e) We are below our target of 30 per cent for Care Leavers not in employment, education or training (NEET) and (98.0 per cent) were in suitable accommodation.
3. The areas identified for improved focus were:
 - (a) An emphasis on the quality of referrals has improved practice in screening and triaging the information but this has led to a drop in performance of which shows YTD (77.7 per cent) completed within 1 working day.
 - (b) We continue to monitor an increase in re-referrals YTD (19.7 per cent) repeated within 12 months, to ensure a range of different presenting factors and no practice issues on closure of the preceding referral.
 - (c) A continued focus on the quality of the children and family assessments has resulted in a slight decrease in the timeliness of assessments (85.2 per cent), being completed. Any assessment that exceeds the timescale is scrutinised by

the team manager to ensure that there is no drift and delay in care planning for the child

- (d) We have recently seen a slight increase in the percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection plan for a second or subsequent time within two years of the previous plan ending (8.3 per cent) above the (6 per cent) target
 - (e) Work continues to safely reduce the number of children becoming looked after; 284 by the end of December 2020
 - (f) As a result of dental surgery closures during lockdown, (29.5 per cent) of children in care, that were due a dental check assessment, have had one completed
4. Members discussed in particular the percentage of referrals completed within one working day and the rise in those taking over 3 working days and questioned what procedures were in place to expedite this and also had concerns at the percentage of re-referrals that are received within 12 months of a previous referral and were assured that officers were undertaking a 'deep dive' to look at this further.
 5. Regarding the number of children and families assessments completed Members questioned if there were any emerging themes; and if officers were expecting any change in the number of Child Protection Plans coming out of lockdown and if they had any thoughts as to why this authority was below regional neighbours on this indicator.
 6. Members noted that the number of children in care with three or more separate placements over the past 12 months had reduced however felt this still required constant monitoring.
 7. We also acknowledged the work that had been undertaken to ensure that the number of initial health assessments completed within 20 working days was 100 per cent however questioned what the authority intended to do to encourage the number of children in care having an annual dental check.
 8. Members also requested further information to be provided on the number of agency social workers the authority employed and the approximate ratio of Looked after children placed from outside the authority in Darlington.

Effects of the Pandemic on Children and Young People – Review Group

9. At the meeting on 13 April, 2021, Members gave consideration to the findings and recommendations of the Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee in January to examine the current picture; identify good practice and if there were any gaps in service.
10. Councillor Crudass presented additional comments and recommendations to be considered and included in the report. In line with governance arrangements, Members were not in a position to make amendments and therefore agreed the report be referred back to the Review Group for further discussion.

11. A Special meeting was held on 22 April 2021 when the final report was further considered by Members and the recommendations contained therein were approved and the report forwarded onto Cabinet for its consideration.

Work Programme

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

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED 13 MAY 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.

Indoor and Outdoor Market

2. Members welcomed an update from the Assistant Director Economic Growth and Managing Director, Market Asset Management (MAM), on the progress made to date on the redevelopment of the Indoor Market and an update on plans for the Outdoor Market.
3. Scrutiny were provided with details of the work undertaken to date as part of phase one of the redevelopment, noting that the roofing works have almost been completed. We were informed of slight delays due to the identification of asbestos on site.
4. We were provided with details of phase two of the development which was due to commence in May and were informed that as part of phase two traders will be assisted in applying for grants to refurbish their own stalls.
5. Discussion ensued in respect of the outdoor market and Members were assured that an outdoor market strategy detailing how stalls would be attracted to Darlington was in development and will be shared with Members. Scrutiny have requested details of occupancy levels to gauge the success of both the indoor market and outdoor market.
6. We raised concern in respect of the contract terms and conditions for potential street food traders, in particular the turnover rent. Members were assured that the street food traders would not be charged flat rent or service charge and would instead be charged a variable turnover rent and a mutual break clause would be included in the contract should a trader wish to leave. We also noted that the charges were in line with other food markets in the country.

Darlington Libraries

7. Members welcomed a PowerPoint presentation from the Library Manager on Darlington Libraries.
8. We were provided with details of the services provided by Darlington and Cockerton Library and were reminded of the refurbishment plans for Darlington Library, which will commence in May.
9. Members were informed that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the work on the digital offer available to residents, with online membership implemented at the beginning of the pandemic. We were pleased to note that 870 new members have

signed up since March 2020 and that there has been a large increase in digital borrowing, from 24,426 issues in 2019-2020 to 58,489 issues in 2020-2021.

10. Details were provided of the Library app which allows library members to self-manage their accounts and is helping to facilitate borrowing safely during the pandemic and we noted that the library home delivery service is delivering books to 280 households every month with the help of Darlington Support.
11. A number of proposed changes to the performance indicators were outlined. Members have agreed to the changes to the performance indicators for the library service.

Darlington Hippodrome

12. We also received a PowerPoint Presentation from the Head of Culture and Programming and Development Director on Darlington Hippodrome.
13. The presentation covered the key changes to the theatre as a result of the restoration and refurbishment process, all of which have enabled the theatre to attract larger productions and a wider audience, increased the offer of function spaces and conference facilities and increased levels of creative learning and engagement.
14. We noted the financial support available to the Hippodrome during the COVID-19 pandemic with donations received from ticketholders, financial support provided by the furlough scheme and successful bids of £1M and £500k made to the Art Council cultural recovery fund, which is being used to offset loss of ticket sale, sustain the theatre and retain jobs.
15. We were provided with details of the online offer that was available to customers during the period of closure between March and September 2020 and welcomed the plans for a hybrid offer of online streamed events, live theatre, cinema offer and West End live encore screenings going forward
16. Members welcomed the measures that have been put in place to support the safe return of customers and noted the anticipated ticket sales which are expected to be at 75 per cent of normal ticket sales by March 2022.

Work Programme 2020/21

17. 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.

Councillor Mike Renton
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

**COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED
13 MAY 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.

Performance Indicators Quarter 3 – 2020/21

2. The Scrutiny Committee considered the Quarter 3 position in relation to performance against the key performance indicators for those areas within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.
3. As Members are aware, the indicators are measured against targets and are compared to previous years, however, we did note that this has been a very different year in view of the Covid 19 pandemic and that whilst the Council's response to the pandemic has been extremely positive, there has been an impact on some services.
4. It is pleasing to note that performance in relation to sickness absence within the Authority is showing an improvement against the same period last year, with 75 per cent of absence relating to long-term absence which is being closely managed. Stress does still remain the highest absence reason and equates to 46 per cent of all absences, with 26 per cent of this deemed to be work related. We were advised that Officers are increasing efforts in terms of stress risk assessment awareness and absence management relating to stress and are continuing to raise awareness of mental health via the Mental Health for Managers programme. The introduction of 14 Mental Health first aiders alongside the Mental Health Mentors launched last year has provided invaluable support to employees particularly through this pandemic and very positive feedback has been received.
5. In relation to the current position of staff working from home wherever possible, HR Officers are currently analysing the Working from Home Survey which has been undertaken, however, indications are showing that approximately 80 per cent of employees are comfortable working from home and there is no evidence to suggest that this is having a negative impact on the stress related absence.
6. We also had a discussion on the performance indicators in relation to the employment rate, the average annual income of Darlington residents and Darlington employees and the influences which could affect the outcome of these indicators, which we have asked for further information on.
7. Planning indicators are showing a drop in performance in determining both major and minor applications and we were advised that as the authority did not receive many major applications, any delay would have a detrimental impact on the indicator and that, in relation to the minor applications, this was due to resource issues in the current circumstances and we were re-assured that this would improve going forward.

Re-opening of Town Centre Businesses

8. We received a verbal update and presentation from the Assistant Director Economic Growth and the Head of Culture on the work currently being undertaken to support the re-opening of Town Centre businesses once restrictions began to be lifted.
9. At the date of our meeting, there was still some uncertainty around the actual dates for the lifting of some restrictions, however, we were informed of the work which was on-going in preparation of the expectation that hospitality, non-essential retail and other businesses would be able to open from 12 April 2021 and that support was being given around that and ensuring that businesses were equipped to open in a safe manner.

Covid - 19 Business Support Grants

10. Information was provided to us on the current position in relation to the various Government funded support grants which had been allocated to local authorities to enable them to support those local businesses which had been adversely affected by the Covid-19 restrictions, together with a number of other business support measures which were announced in the March 2021 Budget.
11. Some of the original schemes have now closed, however, of the six support schemes which were operating, £11,272,736.81 has been awarded to date to Darlington businesses.
12. On the date of our meeting, a new scheme of support had been launched, which included £5 billion in National Restart Grants to support local economies as they emerged from the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. The Restart grants, supersede the existing wide range of grants with the exception of the Additional Restrictions Grant, and offer those businesses which have been forced to close during lockdown, one off financial support with grants of up to £6,000 for non-essential retail and up to £18,000 for hospitality, leisure, personal care and accommodation businesses. This grant is however, only available to those businesses which received support under the National Local Restriction Support Grant Schemes.

Towns Fund – Update

13. We received a verbal update on the progress, to date, in relation to the use of the £1 million of accelerated funding as part of the Towns Fund – Forward Funding and we were advised that the four project areas identified as part of that funding programme were progressing well.
14. It is pleasing to note that the Authority has been successful in receiving additional grant funding of £70,000 which will go into the fund to assist in its delivery and that the Adult Learning facility proposed within the Towns Fund has now been fast tracked, with £575,000 secured from government in 2020/21. The proposal is to develop a project which seeks to locate the facility within the Northern Echo building.

Broadband Infrastructure in Darlington

15. Information was provided on the current position in relation to Broadband Infrastructure and roll out across the Town. The infrastructure roll out and upgrades to gigabit enabled speeds on fibre to premises are taking place via three different routes, namely commercial roll out; publicly funded and the current Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme.
16. As Members are aware, some areas of the Town and rural areas are not currently well serviced by Broadband and we were advised of what was currently available to communities and to the commitment to ensure that any new build did have access to gigabit enabled broadband. We were also updated on work which was being undertaken with partners and providers and to the challenges which are faced with the infrastructure having a mix of private and public sector providers.

Councillor Scott Durham
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL – MEETING CANCELLED 13 MAY 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.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts 2020/21 and 2021/22

2. Members received a PowerPoint presentation from the Director of Quality Governance and Head of Planning and Business Development, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust providing an update on the progress made on the Quality Account improvement metrics and priorities for 2020/21 and outlining the proposed quality improvement priorities for 2021/22.
3. Members were advised that the four quality improvement priorities for 2020/21 were supported by 40 actions, of which ten were completed, 26 were not complete and four were no longer relevant. We noted the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of these priorities.
4. Details were provided of the Quality Metrics as of Quarter 3 2020/21, of which there was data available for nine of the ten quality metrics. It was reported that three of the quality metrics were reporting Green whilst six were reporting Red and all six of the Red metrics were showing an improvement when compared to 2019/20.
5. Members held an in depth discussion on the quality metrics and have requested the inclusion of comparative data in future reports to enable Members to understand the performance of Durham and Darlington against the Trust and against NHS Trusts countrywide.
6. We have also requested further information in relation to Quality Metric 7 'Percentage of patients who reported their overall experience as excellent or good', and also for the CAMHS inpatient facilities and waiting times for Darlington CAMHS service.
7. We were advised of the proposed quality improvement priorities for 2021/22 which were Care Planning; Feeling Safe; and Compassionate Care and the detailed planning actions for each priority were outlined. We also noted that the suite of Quality Metrics were under review and that these would be aligned more closely to the improvement priorities.

Covid-19 in Darlington

8. 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).

9. We were provided with updated figures for the four tests that must be met for England to progress through the stages of the Governments road map out of lockdown and noted that infection rates would be monitored closely as progression through the stages of the road map continued.
10. Particular discussion ensued on self-isolation. Members were pleased to note the intentions for in depth work on self-isolation with a focus on support available to residents and that Darlington were part of a local tracing partnership with NHS track and trace.

Customer Engagement Strategy 2021/24

11. We gave our consideration to the draft Customer Engagement Strategy 2021/24 which sets out the process for how the Council will involve and empower its tenants, including how the engagement activities will be monitored and reported.
12. We were provided with details of the four specific themes of the Customer Engagement Strategy, Providing the right information, Listening to our tenants, Making decisions with our tenants and Maximising scrutiny and accountability and were pleased to note that an annual Engagement Plan would support specific actions within the strategy with regular updates to the Tenant's Board and to this Scrutiny Committee.
13. We have requested that this Scrutiny Committee receives six monthly progress reports on the Customer Engagement Strategy 2021/24.

Joint Autism Review Group

14. Scrutiny received a report presenting the outcome and findings of the Joint Autism Review Group, established to examine the autism provision within Darlington Borough Council, and this Scrutiny Committee considered the most appropriate way to progress the key themes identified by the joint review group.
15. The Committee agreed with the recommendations of the review group, that a cross party autism working group be established to progress the key themes of training and awareness, support, diagnosis and employment. We also gave consideration to the membership, frequency and reporting arrangements and a number of recommendations were made to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 4 May 2021.

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.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee