



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Tuesday, 1 February 2022

Sports Hall, Dolphin Centre, Horsemarket, Darlington, DL1 5RP.

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 25 November 2021 (Pages 5 - 12)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
 - (a) The Public;
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
 - (c) Members to the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham and Darlington.
7. Council Reports.
 - (a) Council Tax Calculation of Tax Base 2022/23 – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 13 - 20)

8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 21 - 26)
 - (b) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 27 - 30)
 - (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 31 - 32)
 - (d) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 33 - 38)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 39 - 42)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 43 - 48)
 - (g) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; and (Pages 49 - 52)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio. (Pages 53 - 56)
 - (i) Mid-Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management 2021/22 – Report of the Group Director of Operations
(Pages 57 - 72)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
 - (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 73 - 76)
 - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 77 - 82)
 - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 83 - 86)
 - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 87 - 88)
 - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 89 - 90)
10. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Monday, 24 January 2022
Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

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

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

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 25 November 2021

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Durham, Harker, Heslop, Holroyd, L Hughes, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, M Nicholson, Preston, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Willis and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Baldwin, Dulston, Haszeldine, Johnson, Layton, Lister, Newall, K Nicholson, Paley, Renton, A J Scott and Wallis.

33 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Mayor advised Members that the order of business would be varied to enable the reports entitled 'Council Tax Support Scheme 2022-23' and 'Eastbourne Sports Complex – Release of Capital' to be considered at Item 8 as Cabinet recommendations to Council.

34 MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 30 September 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 30 September 2021, be approved as a correct record.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

36 SEALING.

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

37 ANNOUNCEMENTS.

United Nations Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – The Mayor informed Members that it was United Nations Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which marked the start of sixteen days of activism. The Mayor advised that the Darlington Soroptimists supported the campaign each year, had distributed an orange ribbon and further information to each Member, and encouraged each Member to support the campaign by wearing their orange ribbon throughout the sixteen days of activism.

Troy Williamson, British Super Welterweight Champion – The Mayor advised Members that Troy Williamson, who was born and raised in Darlington, had won the British Super Welterweight title in boxing, after defeating Ted Cheeseman in Liverpool on 9 October 2021. The Mayor congratulated Mr. Williamson on behalf of the Council on his achievement.

Ian Williams, Chief Executive – The Mayor reported that the Chief Executive was absent from the meeting after recently undergoing knee replacement surgery, and was currently recuperating at home. The Mayor advised that the Group Director of Operations was representing the Chief Executive at the meeting, and extended the best wishes of the Council to the Chief Executive for a return to good health and mobility.

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

(1) THE PUBLIC;

There was one question, with notice, from a Member of the Public, who received an answer thereon.

(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;

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

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

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

39 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) which invited Members to given consideration to the adoption of a revised Code of Conduct based on the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct in place of the current Members Code of Conduct.

The submitted report outlined details of the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct and provided some analysis against the current Code of Conduct of this Council. A revised Code of Conduct for Members had been produced based on the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct, including some minor local modifications, and this had been attached at Appendix 1.

It was reported that the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct had been considered by the Audit Committee on 29 September 2021, and that Member Briefing Sessions had been held on 1 and 3 November 2021. Members were also advised that a session for Parish Council Members had been held on 2 November 2021.

RESOLVED - (a) That the information presented on the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct be noted.

(b) That the adoption of the revised Code of Conduct for Members, as set out at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved and to take effect on 1 January 2022.

(c) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Constitution to replace the current Code of Conduct for Members with the Code adopted as referenced in paragraph (b), above.

(d) That it be noted that all Members will need to review their register of interests and consider whether any amendments are needed to their register of interests as a result of the revised Code of Conduct for Members coming into force.

(e) That it be noted that following adoption by the Borough Council, Parish Councils in the Darlington area will also be invited to adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Members.

REASONS - (a) The adoption of an updated and revised Code of Conduct for Members, with modernised language and explanatory text, will assist the public and members to better understand the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

(b) To align the Council's Code of Conduct for Members to the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

(c) To help in promoting the good conduct of Members in the Council and the Parish Councils.

(d) To ensure that the Constitution is up to date.

(2) GAMBLING ACT POLICY

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the approval of the final draft of the Council's Statement of Principles to the Gambling Act 2005 (Gambling Policy), which is due to take effect from 1 January 2022.

The submitted report stated that the Gambling Act required the Council Gambling Policy to be updated on a three-year cycle, and that a revised draft of the Gambling Policy had been produced taking into account legislation changes introduced since the last policy was adopted. It was stated that the final draft had been consulted upon with key stakeholders, and also made publicly available for comment. The final draft, which took into consideration the comments received, was attached at Appendix 1, with a summary of changes included in the new policy outlined at Appendix 2.

The submitted report highlighted that the final draft had received endorsement from the Licensing Committee at its meeting of 2 November 2021.

RESOLVED – That the revised Gambling Policy be approved, and that it becomes effective from 1 January 2022.

REASONS - (a) To ensure standards are maintained to protect the public, in particular children and vulnerable adults.

(b) To provide an enforcement framework that takes into account guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

40 CABINET REPORTS.

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

41 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND OUTTURN PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide important information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash-flow. The submitted report also sought approval of the Prudential Indicators results for 2020/2021, in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The submitted report outlined the circumstances with regard to treasury management for 2020/2021, and stated that it was an unprecedented year with regard to treasury management due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It was reported that the cost of borrowing remained low throughout 2020/21, and that due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was anticipated that the cost of shorter term borrowing would remain low for a number of years in the future.

The submitted report stated that the Council had complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements during 2020/2021, and that the need for borrowing was only increased for capital purposes.

The submitted report stated that at 31st March 2021, the Council's external debt was £161.531m, which was £20.130m less than the previous year. It was stated that this reduction related to not re-borrowing for matured debt due to an increase in the level of monies received by the Council. It was reported that the average interest rate for borrowing increased from 2.60% in 2019/20 to 2.76% in 2020/21, and that investments totalled £59.399m at 31st March 2021, in comparison to £56.799m at 31st March 2020, earning interest of 0.60% on short term cash investments, and 2.33% on Property Fund units net of cost.

It was reported that financing costs had been reduced during the year and a saving of £0.265m had been achieved from the original MTFP due to reduced interest on debt.

RESOLVED – (a) That the outturn 2020/21 Prudential Indicators within the submitted report, and those in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2020/21, be noted.

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

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

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

42 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022-23

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

The submitted report stated that Councils are required to set a CTS scheme each year, and as part of that exercise they must consider whether any changes should be made to any existing scheme, and, where changes are made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should apply to anyone affected by those changes. The submitted report outlined the details of the proposed CTS scheme for 2022/23.

RESOLVED - That the CTS scheme for 2022-23, as appended to the submitted report, be approved, and in doing so:-

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

REASONS - (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2022-23 by 11 March 2022.

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

43 EASTBOURNE SPORTS COMPLEX - RELEASE OF CAPITAL

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the release of £1.610M of Council funding for the refurbishment and development of outdoor facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

The submitted report stated that Eastbourne Sports Complex had opened in 1999, had operated successfully for the past 22 years and continued to be the Council's key outdoor sports facilities that contributed to the Council's vision and outcomes. It was reported that the site provided a range of facilities and a number of athletic and football clubs used the site on a weekly basis, as well as a range of partners, schools and casual use, which generated approximately 170,000 visits a year.

The submitted report highlighted a number of issues and opportunities for Members to consider in relation to Eastbourne Sports Complex, namely that the athletics track was now at the end of its lifecycle and that it was becoming uneconomical to continue with temporary repairs; that the Football Foundation had given an in principal offer of up to £700K towards the provision of an additional Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Eastbourne; and that access and egress from the site via Bourne Avenue caused an overspill of traffic into the surrounding estate when the Complex operated at capacity.

The submitted report stated that Cabinet had considered options presented to address the issues and take advantage of the opportunities at their meeting on 9 November 2021, and that Cabinet recommended that Option 4 be progressed.

RESOLVED – That £1.610M of Council funding for the scheme, which will be financed through prudential borrowing and Capital receipts, be approved and released.

REASONS - (a) To ensure that the Council continues to provide an appropriate competition standard athletics facility in the town.

(b) In line with the Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy provide an additional AGP at Eastbourne working in partnership with the Football Foundation.

(c) Eastbourne Sports Complex contributes to the Council Vision and Portfolio priorities as the Council's main outdoor sporting hub. The investment modernises facilities and will support the transformation of services and improve the facilities available for residents of the Borough.

44 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

The Scrutiny Committee Chairs each submitted a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken by their relevant Scrutiny Committee during the last cycle of Committee meetings, and responded to any questions thereon.

45 NOTICE OF MOTION

(1) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SNEDKER, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MCCOLLOM

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

Climate Emergency

In light of the increased need for comprehensive and urgent action to avert the worst consequences of the global heating, I propose that this council updates the terms of its Climate Emergency Declaration, agreed by Council at its meeting held on 18 July 2019, by renaming paragraphs g) and h) to h) and i) and inserting the following additional paragraph g) as follows :-

g) Acknowledge the impact of decisions made by Darlington Borough Council on the emissions across the whole Borough of Darlington, measure the carbon impact of decisions taken by the Council on the emissions across the whole Borough, monitor and declare the carbon emissions of the whole Borough of Darlington.

For clarity, if carried, the Council Motion will therefore read:

- a) Declare a 'Climate Emergency';

- b) Sign up to a science-based carbon reduction target that is consistent with achieving the Paris Agreement of no more than 1.5°C global temperature increase;
- c) Work with nurseries, schools and colleges to include age appropriate learning about climate change while calling for the national curriculum to be reformed to include "the ecological crisis as an educational priority";
- d) Work to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2050 and call on central government to provide funding and powers to make this possible;
- e) Work with other organisations and governments within the UK and internationally to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;
- f) Work with partners to run a conversation with residents, Trade Unions, public sector organisations, businesses and the third sector on developing a plan with the actions and milestones required to reach this target;
- g) Acknowledge the impact of decisions made by Darlington Borough Council on the emissions across the whole Borough of Darlington, measure the carbon impact of decisions taken by the Council on the emissions across the whole Borough, monitor and declare the carbon emissions of the whole Borough;
- h) Set up a cross-party working group to develop an action plan and milestones to achieve carbon neutral status;
- i) Report the progress to Full Council every 6 months.

The Motion was Lost.

(2) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR HARKER, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR HOLROYD

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

Climate Emergency

This Council recalls the Climate Emergency resolution that was agreed by Council at its meeting held on 18 July 2019.

This Council resolves to make the following change to that resolution:

delete paragraph d) and replace it with the following :-

d) Work to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2030 and call on central government to provide funding and powers to make this possible.

The Motion was Lost.

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

Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2021/22.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillor Renton replace the Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

COUNCIL
01 FEBRUARY 2022

COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2022/23

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Scott Durham,
Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Elizabeth Davison,
Group Director of Operations**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To determine the Council's tax base for 2022/23.

Summary

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

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2022/23 be approved.
 - (b) The tax base for the Council and the individual tax base for the parishes as set out at Appendix 2 be approved.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported to comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2022/23 to be set by Council in February 2022.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Council Tax regulations.
- (ii) Council Tax database.

Peter Carrick - Extension 5401

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

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The tax base is the total number of domestic properties in the Borough, calculated as a weighted average 'Band D equivalents'. The amount of Council Tax payable for properties in each of the 8 valuation bands A to H is statutorily determined as proportions of Band D. The tax base is adjusted for discounts, exemptions and estimated changes over the coming year. An estimate of the collection rate is also applied. The tax base represents the amount of revenue that it is estimated will be raised by each £1 of band D Council Tax. It is, therefore, an important part of setting the Council Tax.
6. The Council Tax base is, for the purpose of calculating a billing authority's and a major precepting authority's Council Tax, the taxable capacity of an area or part of an area. The amounts are calculated for each financial year and represent the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for reductions and discounts and adjusted to take account of the authority's collection rate.
7. The regulations changed the formula for calculating the Council Tax base so as to take account of any reductions which will be made under the local Council Tax reduction scheme or increases for local premiums for empty or long-term empty dwellings.
8. Under the previous Council Tax benefit system, billing authorities received payment to cover 100% of the cost of Council Tax benefit paid. The Council Tax base was therefore unaffected by changes in Council Tax benefit granted because the billing authority did not forego any Council Tax income from dwellings in receipt of Council Tax benefit.
9. However, under the local Council Tax support scheme, the Council Tax base is affected by whether a dwelling is in receipt of a Council Tax reduction awarded under the scheme, as the authority is foregoing Council Tax income from these dwellings.
10. Local Council Tax support reductions need to be reflected in the calculation of the Council Tax base, in order to calculate the correct amount of Band D Council Tax for the billing or major precepting authority area. If the Council Tax base did not reduce, authorities would set their Council Tax bills based on an incorrect level of taxable capacity. The outcome being that dwellings where an occupier was eligible to receive a reduction under the local authority's Council Tax reduction scheme would not be required to pay the full amount of Council Tax and the authority would not therefore be able to collect the correct amount of Council Tax to meet its Council Tax requirement, with a deficit being created on the collection fund.
11. Similarly, the tax base is increased by the premium generated through the empty and long term empty homes scheme whereby the consequent increase in the Council Tax base is used to lower Council Tax bills.
12. The actual calculation of the tax base is prescribed in the above regulations and has several components. Calculations must be made of the 'relevant amount' for the year, for each of the 8 valuation bands as shown in the Council's Valuation List submitted by the Listing Officer (HM Revenue and Customs) on 30 November 2021 and the Band A(-)

category introduced with effect from 1 April 2000 to provide relief to disabled persons residing in Band A properties. The relevant amount for each band represents the number of chargeable dwellings, as adjusted for exemptions, disabled reductions, discounts and also estimated changes up to 31 March 2023. The final total for each band has to be converted to the equivalent number of Band D dwellings.

13. The relevant amounts for the individual bands are then totalled and the estimated collection rate for the year is applied. The collection rate is based on the proportion of the amount payable into the Collection Fund for the year, including appropriate adjustments for benefits and any transitional relief, which the Council believes will ultimately be collected. The resulting figure, plus any contributions in lieu from the Ministry of Defence in respect of forces accommodation, is the Council's tax base for its area for the year concerned.
14. The estimates and calculations outlined above in respect of the tax base for 2022/23 are shown in Appendix 1. Members will see that the calculations produce a total Band D equivalent of 34,780.6 (line 17) which, when combined with an estimated collection rate of 99.0% and contributions in lieu, results in an overall tax base figure of 34,464.5 which is a 2.94% increase on 2021/22.
15. Similar calculations also need to be made in respect of the parishes and in particular the same estimated collection rate must be applied as that used for the whole of the Council's area. The tax base calculations for each parish are as shown in Appendix 2.

Outcome of Consultation

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

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2022/23

	Band	A (-)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	Dwellings per Valuation List	0	23,106	10,896	7,526	5,603	3,328	1,318	636	55	52,468
2	Disabled Band Relief	0	(50)	(48)	(41)	(42)	(35)	(12)	(9)	(14)	(251)
3	Disabled Band Relief (Chargeable)	50	48	41	42	35	12	9	14	0	251
4	Disabled Band Relief (Adjusted)	50	(2)	(7)	1	(7)	(23)	(3)	5	(14)	0
5	Exemptions	0	(672)	(167)	(130)	(65)	(32)	(15)	(8)	(1)	(1,090)
6	Single discount (25%)	(25)	(11,023)	(4,081)	(2,407)	(1,311)	(606)	(209)	(74)	(3)	(19,739)
7	Double discount (50%)	(2)	(26)	(11)	(15)	(15)	(12)	(5)	(19)	(8)	(113)
8	Equated discounts	(7.25)	(2,768.75)	(1,025.75)	(609.25)	(335.25)	(157.5)	(54.75)	(28)	(4.75)	(4,991.25)
9	Empty Homes Premium (100%)	0	62	14	19	2	2	0	0	0	99
10	Empty Homes Premium (200%)	0	15	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	22
11	Empty Homes Premium (300%)	0	10	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	17
12	Chargeable Dwellings	42.75	19,785.25	9,726.25	6,814.75	5,203.75	3,120.50	1,245.25	605.00	37.25	46,580.75
13	Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	(16.58)	(4,660.44)	(984.49)	(323.28)	(115.46)	(38.55)	(13.12)	(3.67)	(0)	(6,155.69)
14	Chargeable Dwellings after CTRS	26.17	15,124.81	8,741.76	6,491.37	5,088.29	3,081.95	1,232.13	601.33	37.25	40,425.06
15	Estimated Changes					402					402
16	Band D Multiplier	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
17	Band D Equivalent (Relevant Amount)	14.5	10,083.2	6,799.1	5,770.1	5,490.3	3,766.8	1,779.7	1,002.2	74.5	34,780.6
18	Estimated Collection Rate										99.0%
19	Contributions in Lieu					31.7					31.7
20	Council Tax Base										34,464.5

ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2022/23 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

	Each column shows the totals for each Council Tax band A to H. The TOTAL column is the total for the whole Council. The Band A(-) column is the total in Band A where a disabled band relief applies.
Lines	
Line 1	The number of dwellings in each Council Tax band as per the Valuation List, as at 30/11/2021.
Line 2	The number of dwellings in each band where a disabled band relief applies
Line 3	The number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied
Line 4	The net number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied (Line 3 - Line 2)
Line 5	The number of dwellings in each band that are exempt from Council Tax (where an exemption applies), to be deducted from the total number of dwellings
Line 6	The number of dwellings in each band where a single (25%) discount applies
Line 7	The number of dwellings in each band where a double (50%) discount applies
Line 8	The adjustment for each band where a discount applies (Line 6 x 25%) + (Line 7 x 50%)
Line 9	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of two years and which attract a 100% Premium.
Line 10	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of five years and which attract a 200% Premium.
Line 11	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of ten years and which attract a 300% Premium
Line 12	The equivalent number of chargeable dwellings before the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 13	The equivalent number of properties in receipt of council tax benefit in each band
Line 14	The equivalent number of properties after the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 15	The estimated number of additional band D equivalent dwellings that will be included in the tax base during 2022/23
Line 16	The band D multiplier that is applied to the number of chargeable dwellings in each band (this multiplier is prescribed in law)
Line 17	The adjusted number of chargeable dwellings in each band after applying the multiplier (Line 14 + Line 15) x Line 16
Line 18	The estimated percentage collection rate
Line 19	The estimated number of band D equivalent dwellings for contributions in lieu. (Armed Forces Accommodation)
Line 20	The Council Tax Base for 2022/23 (Line 17 x Line 18) + Line 19

PARISH COUNCILS – ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2022/23

Parish	Current Parish Tax Base (1)	Adjusted Band D Equivalent 22/23 (2)	Collection Rate	Parish Tax Base
Bishopton	170.7	181.6	99.0%	179.8
Heighington	1,034.6	1,122.6	99.0%	1,111.4
High Coniscliffe	108.1	112.2	99.0%	111.1
Hurworth	1,306.6	1,414.9	99.0%	1,400.8
Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	301.9	332.7	99.0%	329.4
Middleton St. George	1,955.3	2,038.5	99.0%	2,018.1
Neasham	247.5	248.5	99.0%	246.0
Piercebridge	63.4	63.7	99.0%	63.1
Sadberge	292.6	300.9	99.0%	297.9
Whessoe	535.6	538.2	99.0%	532.8

PARISH COUNCILS ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2022/23 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Columns	
Current Parish Tax Base (1)	The current Council Tax base for each Parish, using the methodology set out in Appendix 1, for 2021/22
Adjusted Band D Equivalent 21/22 (2)	The calculated Council Tax base for each Parish, using the same methodology set out in Appendix 1, and after the estimated changes for 2022/23 have been applied
Collection Rate	The estimated percentage collection rate
Parish Tax Base	The Council Tax Base for 2022/23 for each Parish

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Council's Continued Response to COVID19

1. Darlington, like the rest of the North East and the UK, is now feeling the impact of the Omicron variant, and we are now seeing new cases rising quickly in our communities. The uptake of COVID vaccinations has been identified as the key action to help reduce the impact of Omicron through reducing the spread of the virus and the severity of disease in those who do catch it. The authority also continues to support the NHS in its efforts in rolling out the vaccination programme in Darlington, including the booster which is essential to help reduce the impact of Omicron, with more community pharmacies and the Primary Care Network now offering appointments for a booster to their patients as well as the NHS Vaccination Centre at Darlington Arena continuing to offer appointments. Testing remains a vital part of the response to the pandemic and the authority continues to offer Lateral Flow Testing through the community collect programme which is available from different venues across the borough. With the impact of Omicron, the situation continues to develop and change rapidly. The authority continues to work with all partners to coordinate and support the response in Darlington.
2. As with the other industries and sectors, the Council is facing pressures in terms of the ongoing provision of services whilst also supporting the response to the pandemic. The increased number of Covid cases and requirements of self-isolation is an ongoing challenge but staff have shown incredible resilience, flexibility, and ingenuity to ensure services continue to be provided.

Strategic Transport

3. The Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Local Authorities are developing a comprehensive programme of investment in Transport. The City Region Sustainable Transport programme is a 5-year investment programme across the Tees Valley. The details are being finalised with the Department for Transport for the £310m programme of schemes that will see investment in sustainable transport. Bus operators continue to face a challenging recovery from Covid. Feedback is awaited from Government on a Bus Service Improvement Plan that will help support recovery and respond to the government policy direction to improve bus services for all.
4. I continue to work with the Tees Valley Mayor to inform the rail industry as they develop plans for future services across the Country. Meetings are planned with the industry this year to press the case for Darlington and the Tees Valley. National Highways are developing plans for their next investment period and I am engaging at a high level with National Highways, to outline the case for Darlington Northern Link Road and investment in the Strategic Road Network across the Tees Valley.

Darlington Station Improvement Project

5. The Council continues to try and secure the properties required to deliver the project by agreement with the compulsory purchase process running in parallel. A public enquiry was held in January 2022 and we await the outcome from the Planning Inspectorate. The development work to deliver the project and all the approvals necessary continue to be progressed in parallel with work being scheduled to commence later this year.

Darlington Towns Fund

Background

6. The Darlington Council, Town Investment Plan was submitted to Government at the end July 2020. This was well received and resulted in an agreed Heads of Terms allocation of £22.3M in October 2020.
7. In addition to this, application was made in 2020 for £1M Forward Funding, which was successfully received by the Council in October 2020.
8. The Darlington Towns Board is in place and meets on a regular basis, alongside this there are three sub-groups, each with a focus on a key subject matter within the investment plan.

Forward Funding

9. Yards Phase 1:
 - (a) Works to improve the environment of both Buckton's Yard and Clark's Yard has been progressing throughout 2021 and are nearing completion, with new timber conservation doors, well stocked planters, colourful new benches, lighting, improved shopfronts with professional signwriting and general improvements undertaken.
 - (b) The project has enabled preparation for further works in these Yards, including new shopfronts, accessway improvements from High Row and a green wall in Buckton's Yard. These items are now part of the main Towns Fund Skinnergate and the Yards project, which covers the wider intervention area.
10. Town Centre lighting enhancements:
 - (a) Projects have been designed and completed to provide enhanced lighting of the external of St Cuthbert's Church, the Joseph Pease statue, and the Market Hall Clock Tower. The clock tower is able to have colour variations within the installed lighting. A further lighting enhancement scheme is planned to link with the Central Library refurbishment works
11. Town Centre Wi-Fi:
 - (a) Free publicly accessible Wi-Fi has been installed throughout the town centre and along Victoria Road up to the entrance of the railway station.

12. Acquisition of Northgate property linking with the wider Towns Fund interventions within Northgate.

Town Investment Plan

13. The strategic approach adopted within the Investment Plan focuses on three key areas within Darlington:

- (a) North Road Gateway – *four projects*:

- (i) Railway Heritage Quarter
- (ii) Northgate House and North Road
- (iii) Linear Park/Skerne Valley
- (iv) Edward Pease House

- (b) Victoria Road Gateway – *two projects*:

- (i) Bank Top (Darlington Station)
- (ii) Victoria Road

- (c) Town Centre – *three projects*:

- (i) T Levels (College)
- (ii) Adult Skills
- (iii) Skinnergate and the Yards

14. A business case has now been completed for each of the nine intervention projects and agreement made by the Town Board to progress with submission of business case summaries to government. Three of the summary documents were submitted in July 2021 and the remaining six in November 2021.
15. Subject to review and agreement of the summary documents by government, the funding allocated within the Heads of Terms will be released on an annual basis, in line with an agreed financial profile.

Funding

16. Allocation total £23.3M:
£1M Forward Funding
£22.3M Towns Fund

17. Out of this £23.3M allocated, the Council has received capital to date of:

- (a) £1,000,000 Forward Funding (Yards; Wi-Fi; Lighting).
- (b) £1,065,000 for Adult Skills project.
- (c) £1,470,000 for T Levels project.
- (d) £1,372,000 for the Skinnergate and the Yards project.

(e) £948,400 5% advance programme development funding.

18. Further funding is anticipated in 21/22 (March 2022) following agreement of the submitted business cases summaries to government.

Project Progress

19. The funding received has enabled the progression of the projects:

(a) Railway Heritage Quarter:

(i) The main project is progressing alongside our partners in the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

(b) Northgate House and North Road:

(i) A draft masterplan has been completed for the Northgate House/Gladstone Street area.

(ii) A Conservation Area Study and a heritage focused Urban Masterplan has been developed with our partners in Historic England.

(iii) Engagement has commenced and will be accelerated with 2022.

(c) Linear Park/Skerne Valley:

(i) A Conservation Area Study and a heritage focused Urban Masterplan has been developed with our partners in Historic England.

(ii) Engagement has commenced and will be accelerated with 2022.

(d) Edward Pease House:

(i) One of the required properties has been acquired by the Council.

(ii) Historic surveys and reports are underway.

(e) Bank Top (Darlington Station):

(i) The main project is progressing alongside our partners in Tees Valley Combined Authority.

(f) Victoria Road:

(i) Engagement has commenced and will be accelerated with 2022.

(g) T Levels:

(i) Darlington College is identified to deliver T levels from September 2022.

- (ii) Detailed design work is now underway.
- (h) Adult Skills:
- (i) The acquisition of the Northern Echo building has progressed and is imminent.
 - (ii) An architect has been procured to progress initial design of the facility.
- (i) Skinnergate and the Yards:
- (i) Public Realm/Highway engagement is underway.
 - (ii) Residential/retail scheme is progressing, with a start on site targeted early 2022.
 - (iii) Continuing on from works completed within the Forward Funding, Yards Phase 1, engagement and design of numerous proposed property enhancements has progressed.

Climate Change

6. In October, the Cross Party Climate Change Working Group visited a housing project in Stockton owned by the Thirteen Group to learn how they have incorporated air source heat pumps into their homes.
7. The December meeting had presentations from consultants delivering the district heat network feasibility study and from officers on our approach to traffic management planning.
8. I have written the first of a new series of blogs for the Sustainable Darlington page of our website. These blogs will enable us to demonstrate what we are doing as well as invite guest bloggers to share their thoughts on sustainability and climate change and encourage local action.

Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE
Leader of the Council Portfolio

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COUNCIL
1 February 2022

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

Safer Streets Programme

2. Work is ongoing with regard to the three Safer Streets programmes. The majority of Safer Streets 1 is now complete; Safer Streets 2, all the additional cameras will be installed by end of March 2022 and the group chaired by Detective Chief Superintendent Adrian Green is progressing the areas of work covering education, engagement, marketing environmental improvements and multi-agency response team. All three programmes will be evaluated.

Civic Enforcement Service

Environmental Crime

3. On 29 October 2021, the back lanes initiative was widened to incorporate Wilson and Chandos Street, where slightly different tactics are being explored. Results from the pilot street of Barron and Wilson are very promising, and feedback from residents has been positive to date. Work continues with landlords in attempt to make results more sustainable for the future.

Anti-Social Behaviour

4. Due to recent increases in youth related nuisance in parts of the Borough, the Civic Enforcement Team have been working closely with the Police and Youth Justice Service to identify the individuals responsible and conducting several interviews with parents. 19 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements have been signed and referrals made to the Youth Justice Service for prevention work to be undertaken. Since the agreements have been signed there has been a significant decrease in incidents.

Trading Standards

5. Trading Standards received several reports that retailers in Darlington are selling disposable nicotine vaping products to children under the age of 18 years. The price, design, and the wide range of flavours of these vapes, combined with widespread publicity on social media, make them particularly attractive to young people. It is illegal for these products to be sold to under 18s.

Trading Standards is working with Darlington Police to collect intelligence, build up a detailed picture of illegal trading and take enforcement action as required.

6. Trading Standards have conducted a series of covert, mystery shopping-style checks on retail premises in Darlington with a view to identifying areas of non-compliance and to seek a swift resolution with the retailer. This 'solving a problem before it's a big problem' approach pays dividends by boosting business confidence, creating and maintaining a level playing field for businesses trading fairly and by raising consumer confidence.

Private Sector Housing

Green Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery Scheme

7. Officers have been exploring approaches to identify eligible households in suitable properties and, where necessary, liaising with landlords who are required to fund at least one third the cost of any improvement. Following a series of targeted mailouts and marketing of the scheme, good progress has been made. Applications have been made from all tenures including those in the Private Rented Sector. Delivery has now commenced to install a range of energy efficiency measures to improve properties energy ratings. The scheme is expected to improve around 100 properties and finish in March 2022.

Community Resilience

Darlington Open Water Safety Group

8. All assessments on open water were completed by 10 December 2021 and reviewed by the Council's Health and Safety team on 16 December. Any action required (including barriers, signage) will now be requested to enable installation to be completed before Easter 2022.

Community Cohesion

9. The Community Resilience Officer delivered a presentation on the Safer Streets 3 project in Darlington on 1 December 2021, as part of the '16 Days of Activism' to mark UN Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls. This was open to professionals and Members from across the Tees Valley area and was well attended.

Licensing

Pavement Cafes

10. The Business and Planning Act legislation, which allows a streamlined process for Pavement Café licences, has been extended until September 2022. Licensing have now issued licences for all those premises that have applied using a light touch approach. Fewer premises have applied this year due to the lifting of Covid regulations and pavement cafes do not form part of the business model for some venues. Licensing have commenced a review the current Pavement Café Policy to reflect changes within the hospitality trade and to incorporate current projects that are ongoing within the town centre. Approval will

be sought from the Licensing Committee for consultation.

Taxis

11. Due to COVID-19 restrictions there has been a decrease in the number of licensed drivers as demand reduced and many have taken other employment opportunities, particularly in home delivery services. This has impacted on taxi operators not being able to meet demand, which has led to complaints by the public to the taxi companies. Licensing is currently working with operators to speed up the application for new drivers and encourage current licensed drivers to return to the trade, whilst adhering to our policy and statutory requirements.
12. On the approach to the busy Christmas period, the Council launched a campaign to run until New Year to raise awareness of the pressures and demands on the taxi trade to ensure people were prepared and planned their night out and journey home. This was linked into tourism and Covid-19 messaging, urging people to enjoy themselves safely. The initiative highlighted measures that residents could take to keep safe on night outs including booking taxis in advance, keeping their phone charged and nominating a designated driver. It was also made clear that waits at town centre taxi ranks were likely to be long. The campaign included a dedicated page on the Enjoy Darlington website, billboard poster sites throughout the town, posters on buses and in pubs and licensed premises and Facebook and Instagram posts and stories. The social media campaign reached almost 30,000 people

Caravan Sites

13. New regulations came into effect in July 2021 requiring holders of caravan site licences to nominate a person who manages the site to be entered on a 'Fit and Proper Person Register.' Darlington currently has 19 licensed sites and the closing date for applications was the 30 September 2021. Licensing, in conjunction with Private Sector Housing, are currently assessing these applications following consultation with key partners before the nominated person is placed on a publicly accessible register. An enforcement plan has been developed for those who fail to comply with the regulations. Failure to comply is referred through the Magistrates Court with the ability to impose an unlimited fine.

Crime and Disorder

14.

Darlington	Pre-COVID 01.04.2019- 30.11.2019	01.04.2021- 30.11.2021	% Increase/decrease
Crime	8568	7380	-14%
Incidents	22287	20464	-8%
ASB	2532	2351	-7%

15.

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	Pre-COVID 01.04.2019- 30.11.2019	01.04.2021- 30.11.2021	% Increase/decrease
Crime	1332	924	-31%
Incidents	2396	1701	-29%
ASB	342	199	-42%

Climate Change

16. In addition to the Local Authority Delivery Scheme there are several energy efficiency schemes currently being delivered by Private Sector Housing Team, including the Warm Home Fund and the Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES), all of which are supporting the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Flood and Water Management Act

17. The Environment Agency have recently carried out works to clear the River Skerne of vegetation and debris to improve the flow of water and reduce the risk of flooding.



Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Stronger Communities Portfolio

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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 some of the areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Services.

Operational Services

2. Adult Social Care are well positioned to respond to the recent government guidance on the new COVID variant following all of the work we have undertaken in developing processes to support safe systems of working. We will continue to monitor the impact of Omicron variant on hospital discharges and will remain observant and responsive to the developing guidance.
3. The Adult Social Care Frameworks Performance (ASCOF) was published at the end of October. Reporting against the 14 indicators across the region Darlington have improved across 5 indicators and maintained a high level of performance against 7 indicators . Of which Darlington is the highest performer in relation 2 indicators e.g. ASC045, number of people with learning disabilities living in their own home and ASCOF 050- number of carers using social care who receive self-directed support. We have seen a small reduction in the performance in 1 indicator i.e. ASC003- 18-64 age group of people placed in residential care.

Workforce Challenges

4. Adult Social Care have been allocated funding from the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (see paragraph 8 of this report), to assist with workforce challenges in relation to the impact of COVID. The funding is being used to target pressures and manage demand at the front door across the winter period. This will help us to support Darlington residents in a timely way whilst ensuring there is sufficient capacity to respond to the peaks in demand during a busy winter period.

COVID

5. Within implementation of Plan B, all teams are supported to work from home where possible. Staff will continue with face to face visits where needed – and are following covid measures appropriately.

Commissioning and Contracts

6. Contracts and Commissioning staff continue to support the residential care homes to ensure that they are fully compliant with the current Covid 19 Regulations. Work has continued to ensure that all care staff who were able to self-certify in respect of non-uptake

of the Covid 19 vaccine, will have a formal covid 19 Exemption Pass in place by the December 24th deadline. In response to the most recent guidance, work is also ongoing to ensure that all care staff and residents in care homes have been offered and taken up the offer of the Covid 19 Booster. As of 16 December, 81% of all residents in care homes had received the booster vaccine. 41% of all care home staff had also received the booster vaccine with further work being planned by Darlington's Primary Care Network.

7. The Government has issued new guidance for care home visiting in response to the Covid 19 Omicron variant outbreak. Every care home can nominate up to 3 visitors for regular visits. Visitors will be asked to make arrangements with care homes in advance of the visit. This will enable care homes to ensure that visitor numbers are compliant with safe visiting practices.
8. The Government recently allocated £339,335.00 to the Council through the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund. This fund is designed to allow local authorities to support measures that generate additional or retain existing adult social care workforce capacity through recruitment and retention activity. This fund will be paid in 2 instalments with the first instalment (60%) paid in November 2021 and the second instalment (40%) will be paid in January 2022. The funds received from the Government have been targeted towards the domiciliary care sector by the council. This sector continues to experience staff capacity issues due to Covid infections staff absences and recruitment and retention challenges with Councils two main providers in contingency arrangements. The funds will continue to support the sector to facilitate timely discharge from hospitals and support local people with care needs in the community. The Government has extended the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund with a further £300M national allocation in the new year.

Climate Change

9. Teams continue to have a focus on climate change in their team meetings, with a monthly theme. This month's theme is recycling waste.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

10. Statutory Safeguarding Partners continue to meet monthly and are updated on the work of the sub-groups which continue to meet virtually and drive forward the work of the partnership.
11. In November the final governance proposals for the partnership were presented to partners which set out the terms of reference and lines of accountability of each of the sub-groups. There will be two strategic groups, the Learning and Development and Quality Assurance and Performance Management Groups with two Operational Groups sitting underneath, one focussing on children and one on adults. The Statutory Partners were happy to accept the proposals and for the sub-group Chairs to make arrangements to move forward. It was acknowledged membership will need to be reviewed to ensure the right people are represented from all partner agencies on each of the groups.

**Councillor Lorraine Tostevin
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults**

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

Care Leaver Covenant

2. Cabinet gave its approval for Darlington Borough Council to sign The Care Leaver Covenant for the benefit of care leavers in Darlington.
3. The Care Leaver Covenant works with organisations across England in all different sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. The Covenant is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Spectra.
4. By signing the Covenant, this will ensure that care leavers in Darlington are given the best opportunities to support them into independence and to achieve their potential and ensure that as Corporate Parents, we continue to be ambitious for our children and young people and offer the highest quality of service, in line with our Care Leavers Local Offer. <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care/leaving-care-and-the-local-offer/our-local-offer-to-care-leavers/>

Health and Wellbeing Board

5. The Board scheduled for 16 December 2021 was postponed to free up time for health colleagues to concentrate on pressing pandemic issues.

Early Intervention and Front Door

6. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) have now been working within the Professor David Thorpe Model for 20 months with the performance and statistics evidencing the success of the model to date. The Weekly Review Meeting continues to work well and allows for senior leaders to oversee all contacts and referrals, this meeting has progressed well, it is highly effective and from January 2022 our external safeguarding partners will be invited to attend and participate at regular intervals.
7. Bespoke training has been devised to roll out training in relation to the Prof Thorpe model, this has been delivered to members of the Weekly Review Meeting, social care teams, new CIAT staff and is to be delivered to multi-agency professionals on 19 January 2022.
8. CIAT are now a fully staffed DBC team therefore the stability and consistency of the team enhances the ability to provide an effective, quality and timely response to our children and families within Darlington.

9. So far in Quarter 3 CIAT has remained busy. There has been a continued high number of contacts where domestic abuse/violence are the abuse category, there has been an increase in physical abuse and adult mental health contacts. There has been an increase in referrals to Building Stronger Families for early intervention and prevention work, there has been a reduction in referrals to social care however this is now increasing as we move into Quarter 4. The number of contacts that have an outcome of advice and guidance/signposting remains relatively high; however, through oversight and exploration in the Weekly Review Meeting it is evident enquiries are effective and the right service has been identified for the family and child/young person at the right time, this being at the centre of decision making and ethos.
10. CIAT have received positive feedback during October from CAFCASS and multi-agency professionals, professionals were particularly impressed that they are able to phone Darlington's Front Door using a designated telephone number and speak directly with a qualified Social Worker rather than complete written referrals. They have complimented the use of the model, prompt response and detailed feedback being received when they have made contact with the service.

Young People's Engagement and Justice Service

11. Planning for Reparation and Activity sessions has begun, some changes were required however this has been a positive experience for young people and their parents/carers. Community Resolution work is also set to commence once initial planning and identification of the cohort of young people who will be involved in this is finalised. There has been a lot of work carried out with multi-agency partners in relation to the understanding, identifying and responding to Harmful Sexual Behaviour and YPE and JS will inform and help facilitate training sessions for school, as well as contribute to the refreshing of multi-agency protocol around this issue.
12. Darlington's Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) bid has been submitted, the bid is around a 'Supportive Home Theme'.

Safeguarding Assessment and Looked After Through Care

Corporate Parenting Panel

13. The Panel met on 14 December 2021, with young people involved, alongside Members and Officers. The Panel discussed:
 - (a) The health response to the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to children in care.
 - (b) The Ofsted-focused visit to consider Darlington's arrangements for care leavers.
 - (c) The care leaver activities that have taken place during the Festive period which include:
 - (i) A social media campaign for donations of selection boxes, toiletries and token gifts for care leavers.

- (ii) "Santa at the station" – an event for care leavers and their children to visit Santa at the Head of Steam railway museum and refreshments.
- (iii) Christmas Market at Raby Castle – a group of care leavers were supported to visit the festive event at Raby Castle with their Personal Advisors.
- (iv) Deliveries of Salvation Army hampers to all care leavers by their Personal Advisor.
- (v) A trip to the Hippodrome pantomime.
- (vi) A care leavers' Christmas party at the Pennyweight.
- (vii) A small number of care leavers who may have been alone at Christmas have been linked with a project that will be hosting a Christmas dinner on Christmas day for care leavers across Teesside.

Child Protection, Looked After and Care Leaver statistics.

14. At the end of November 2021 there were:

- (a) 284 children being supported through a child in need plan, which is a reduction from 331 at year end 2020/21.
- (b) 90 children subject to child protection plans, a reduction from 87 at year end 2020/21.
- (c) 261 children in care which is a reduction from 272 at year end 2020/21.
- (d) All 148 care leavers between 16 – 25 years have access to a personal advisor for support, advice and guidance.

Fostering Residential and Lifestages

15. At the end of October 2021 there were 55 mainstream foster carers and 22 fully approved connected foster carers. There were also 8 temporary approved connected foster carers and a further 6 carers where children were not in placement. A total of 14 connected foster carer assessment were ongoing. On 10 December 2021, 61 children and young people were placed with mainstream foster carers and 39 children and young people were placed with connected carers (this includes fully approved and temporary approved connected foster carers). At the end of October, there was a total of 4 fostering applications in Stage 1 and 5 applications in Stage 2 of the assessment process.
16. Young people are supported to consider "Staying Put" with their previous foster carers when they reach adulthood, and at the end of October, there were 7 young people with their previous foster carer in a "Staying Put" arrangement. A further 2 young people were with their previous Independent Fostering Agency carers.
17. Work is ongoing to promote the benefits of becoming a foster carer with Darlington Borough Council and there is a Marketing and Recruitment Plan in place to ensure a

sustained focus on this key area. Throughout October, The Fostering Network had a focus on the contribution that foster carers own “Sons and Daughters” make, and this is an important event in the fostering annual calendar. We utilised social media to reinforce the benefits of becoming a foster carer with Darlington Borough Council. The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team supported this national campaign by recognising and thanking all the sons and daughters of our mainstream and fully approved connected foster carers with a gift voucher and thank you card.

18. At the end of October 2021, there were 5 young people cared for across the three residential children’s homes. Harewood Hill Lodge returned to the pre-Covid delivery model, and short breaks are being provided to 26 children and young people. Bed occupancy is at 82 per cent, which has been the case since August.
19. At the end of November 2021, the Disabled Children’s Team were supporting 116 children and young people. Social workers liaise closely with Health and Education colleagues and promote a strength based, restorative approach to working with children and their families. Given concern about an increase in the rates of Covid, the team will make “virtual” or “doorstep” visits if families are isolating.

Education

20. Hummersknott Academy has recently been inspected by Ofsted and graded as a “Good” school. Inspectors recognised the high-quality pastoral care, wealth of personal development opportunities and ambitious curriculum. Polam Hall Academy has also been judged as “Good” in their recent inspection. Inspectors noted the strong sense of community and personal development offered at Polam Hall and high expectations for every child. Gurney Pease Academy was also judged as “Good” in their recent Ofsted inspection. Inspectors highlighted the school’s inclusive and welcoming approach, the high ambition for all pupils and the strength of support for reading.

Youth Unemployment

21. The 18–24-year-old claimant count for November 2021 stands at 8.7 per cent (635 young people), this is down from a peak of 13.8 per cent (1,005 young people) in March 2021 and lower than it was before the start of the pandemic (January 2020 - 8.9 per cent or 650 young people).
22. The Darlington figure of 8.7 per cent remains above the North East average of 6.7 per cent and the Great Britain average of 5.7 per cent, both of which have also seen improvements since March 2021. Darlington has the third highest youth claimant rate in the Tees Valley, after Hartlepool and Stockton, where claimant counts range from 7.5 per cent to 10.5 per cent.
23. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) has now been extended until 31 July 2023 and in Darlington the main providers will continue to be DBC, CAB and Morrison Trust.
24. Youth unemployment has been a persistent problem in Darlington for many years and a multi-agency group was established and chaired by the Chief Executive and has been considering appropriate interventions over the summer of 2021 and Cabinet have now approved up to £70,000 of Contain Outbreak Management Funds/Covid Reserve to fund a

range of interventions to support local young people giving them greater prospects of securing work.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

25. The neurodevelopmental pathway is an improved and sustainable provision which will meet current and emerging needs of children and young people in Darlington who display traits associated with neurodevelopmental conditions. It will be a whole system approach which will be more cost effective and a better use of current resources and has been jointly commissioned by the Tees Valley CCG and Darlington Borough Council.
26. The introduction of the Neurodevelopmental Pathway is a move away from the former diagnosis model to a needs-led model for children and young people with a range of neurodevelopmental issues.
27. The Family Support Hub is delivered from the Hippodrome in Darlington and provides a drop-in facility for parents and carers to meet with professionals and receive advice and support. Darlington Council along with Tees Valley local authorities and Tees Valley CCG have commissioned Daisy Chain to provide the Family Support Model.
28. The contract has been in place from 1 December 2021.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP)

29. Statutory Safeguarding Partners continue to meet monthly and are updated on the work of the sub-groups which continue to meet virtually and drive forward the work of the partnership.
30. In November, the final governance proposals for the partnership were presented to partners which set out the terms of reference and lines of accountability of each of the sub-groups. There will be two strategic groups, the Learning and Development and Quality Assurance and Performance Management Groups with two Operational Groups sitting underneath, one focussing on children and one on adults. The Statutory Partners were happy to accept the proposals and for the sub-group chairs to make arrangements to move forward. It was acknowledged membership will need to be reviewed to ensure the right people are represented from all partner agencies on each of the groups.
31. The Council's website also provides information on the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership working with private, voluntary and public sector and community groups to agree the major issues and opportunities for Darlington and to ensure action is taken.
www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/communities/darlington-partnership/

Climate Change

32. The blended approach is a much more modern and flexible way of working and will build on the success and popularity of home working during the pandemic. The reduction in the need for office space across the town could also lead to some financial benefits and will help us with our climate change commitment as there will be less travel and recycling of equipment which is no longer needed.

33. Childrens' services have continued to reduce their use of paper, through managing increasing numbers of documents and forms in electronic formats and will continue to build on this progress, only using paper where absolutely necessary. The service is also promoting and supporting staff to engage with the Climate change Academy 10 training module, to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to raise their own awareness about the personal impact they can make to climate change. In addition, staff have been made aware and encouraged to access the electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme to contribute to reducing their emissions when completing Council business.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

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

Planning and Development Management

2. The Planning Enforcement/Compliance Service currently has 91 planning enforcement cases under investigation and 79 cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of September.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 1240 applications have been received of which 42 are categorised as major. 900 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.
4. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent has been Granted for works at Bank Top Station for improvement works and a Multi Storey car park. Negotiations are ongoing regarding compulsory purchase of some properties.
5. Final negotiations have now concluded regarding the applications at the Railway Quarter with Historic England and other interest groups.
6. A number of significant planning applications for housing are now anticipated from parties seeking to deliver significant housing numbers in the Borough. In addition, there are a significant number of applications already in the system which are awaiting the approval of the Local Plan, hopefully early this year.

Environmental Health

7. The Air Quality Annual Status Report 2021 has been accepted by Defra with positive appraisal comments commending the Council on the positive measures taken to improve air quality and noting that the report aligned well with national policy.

Local Plan

8. As Members will be aware, the Council consulted on proposed modifications to the Local Plan to ensure the Plan was found sound by the Government appointed Inspector. We received more than 800 representations from more than 200 people/organisations. It has taken some time to process all comments as many were paper comments which had to be processed and redacted.
9. The comments had to be summarised and a response prepared prior to being forwarded to the Inspector. Despite the number of paper copies received officers managed to deal

with the comments and submit to the Inspector prior to Christmas despite the consultation only ending at the end of November.

10. It is hoped that we have the Inspector's draft report sometime in January where we will have two weeks to fact check it and return it to the Inspectorate when they will issue the final report which will be published and will conclude the Examination.
11. A report will then be prepared for Cabinet and hopefully Council to seek approval for the adoption of the Local Plan (subject to the Inspectors report finding the Plan sound).

Climate Change

12. Following Cabinet approval in October, work is ongoing to set the milestones against which we will be reporting. Reports will be presented to full Council in July and January.
13. We have been approached by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to take part in a fully funded heat network zoning pilot project. These are designated geographic areas within which a heat network will be the default heating solution. The pilot project should have minimal impact on our workloads but should result in a report telling us if Darlington is suitable for a heat network zone.

Darlington Towns Fund

14. Works to improve the environment of both Buckton's Yard and Clark's Yard has been progressing throughout 2021. This Phase 1 work is now complete, with new timber conservation doors, well stocked planters, colourful new benches, lighting, improved shopfronts with professional signwriting and general improvements undertaken.
15. This Phase 1 work has enabled preparation for further works in these Yards, including new shopfronts, accessway improvements from High Row and a green wall in Buckton's Yard. These items are now part of the main Towns Fund Skinnergate and the Yards project, which covers the wider intervention area.
16. A business case has been completed for each of the nine Towns Fund intervention projects and agreement made by the Town Board to progress with submission of business case summaries to government. Three of the summary documents were submitted in July 2021 and the remaining six were submitted at the end of November 2021. The latter are currently being reviewed by government.
17. The development of proposals for property enhancements along Skinnergate and further work within the Yards, has commenced. This is alongside the community engagement which is ongoing relating to the public realm/highway in Skinnergate and into Coniscliffe Road.
18. The Adult Skills project within the Northern Echo building continues, an architect has been appointed, and the T Levels project at Darlington College is progressing into detailed design.

Business Investment

19. General Business Enquiries - throughout October and November 2021, the number of enquiries for business development projects across all sectors increased as confidence levels improved, business support events occurred in face-to-face environments and new growth opportunities could be realised.
20. Covid-19 & Business Support - Darlington Borough Council received £631,502 Additional Restrictions Grant top-up allocation in August 2021. The Council have used this funding to support:
 - (a) Those business sectors identified in the latest Government guidance (June 2021) that we were unable to support due to lack of funds at the time.
 - (b) Businesses who have clear growth and investment plans and job creation goals.
21. This fund must be defrayed by 31 March 2022. The latest performance figures for the ARG top-up scheme are (budget: £631,502):
 - (a) Spend to date: £297,467.
 - (b) Committed: £269,000.
 - (c) Unallocated: £65,035.
22. Cleveland Bridge - officers have been working closely with the Administrators and other stakeholders to facilitate the sale of the assets and the retainment of key Cleveland Bridge artifacts for the benefit of the town.

Councillor Alan Marshall
Economy Portfolio

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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. In September the Government produced the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021, which reviewed the country's preparedness for autumn/ winter and contained details about 'Plan A' and 'Plan B'
3. On 8 December the Government confirmed that England would move to Plan B following the rapid spread of the Omicron variant in the UK.
4. Plan B measures introduced:
 - Compulsory face masks in most public indoor venues, other than hospitality
 - NHS Covid Pass to be made mandatory in specific settings, using a negative test or full vaccination via the NHS Covid Pass
 - People were asked to work from home if they can
5. The government will keep the data under review and the regulations are set to expire six weeks after implementation.
6. The self-isolation advice for people with COVID-19 changed on 17 January 2022. It is now possible to end self-isolation after 5 full days if you have 2 negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests taken on consecutive days. The first LFD test should not be taken before the fifth day after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms). The self-isolation period remains 10 full days for those without negative results from 2 LFD tests taken a day apart.

Hospital activity

7. The latest hospital data shows that local hospital bed occupancy and admissions for patients with COVID -19 has been increasing since the new year.
8. There has been an average of 109 patients in hospital with COVID 19 in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and 5 patients in ICU. The rate of emergency admissions due to COVID has risen since the new year.
9. There have been two deaths reported for a Darlington resident within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 result in the last week (29 December – 5 January).

Covid-19 Vaccinations

10. We have continued to support the NHS in its efforts in improving vaccination uptake including the booster vaccine for those eligible. This includes working with the NHS in informing Darlington residents about the vaccine and how they can access it.
11. We have also continued to support the work of the Primary Care Network, Vaccination Centre and our local community pharmacies in their work to provide vaccines in the community.
12. The rollout of the vaccination programme continues at pace with the uptake improving week on week and now with the majority of those eligible in Darlington have now received three vaccinations.
13. Currently 84.9 per cent of all those aged over 12 years in Darlington have now received at least one dose of the vaccine, 78.9 per cent have received two doses and 61.8 per cent of all those who are eligible have received their booster. This corresponds to 223,124 doses of vaccine being given in Darlington since January 2021 which includes 61,127 booster doses given since September 2021.
14. Uptake of the COVID vaccinations in younger people continues to improve with 69.5 per cent of all those aged 18-24 having received two doses of vaccine. This is better when compared to the average for England (61.2 per cent) and the North East (65.3 per cent)
15. The uptake of those of school age (12-15 years) who are eligible continues to improve with 57.4 per cent having received their first vaccination since the programme commenced in the autumn school term. This compares to the uptake nationally of 51 per cent since the programme was opened to them this summer. The programme for the provision of second doses for this group has commenced in the new school term.

Community Testing & Community Collect

16. As of early January 2022, the Council had directly undertaken 32,267 community tests across all our sites in the borough and has issued 10,590 click and collect kits with a total of 86,497 individual tests.
17. Our click and collect community testing service continues to be available from sites in the borough. Our click and collect sites have remained open throughout and while the national supply difficulties have resulted in a knock-on effect for us, we have been able to manage our stock to maintain availability.
18. In addition, orders can be made online for home delivered kits via: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests or collected from community pharmacies.
19. Darlington is part of a Local Tracing Partnership with NHS Test and Trace with local dedicated capacity to follow up hard to reach contacts and cases in Darlington to ensure that they are isolating, and the chain of infection is broken.

Public Health

20. The Healthy Lifestyle survey has been completed for this academic year with 8400 pupils completing the survey across 32 primary and secondary schools in Darlington. This survey, led by Public Health in partnership with Education and individual schools, represents a collection of data about young people's self-reported health and lifestyle related attitudes and behaviours in Darlington. The answers to the questions in the survey reflect emerging areas of interest and the changing environment in which children are growing up.
21. The process consists of an anonymous online survey which asks pupils about their experiences, attitudes, and behaviours across a range of topics related to health and lifestyle. Schools schedule time for pupils to complete the surveys as part of the school day to ensure maximum participation
22. The responses to the questions from the survey are analysed with the results for each school being fed back to each individual school through a Team Around the School (TAS) meeting.
23. The results from all the schools are then collated into a wider report providing an insight into the common themes and issues that are affecting children living in Darlington. This borough wide report is disseminated through a report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and shared widely with partner agencies including the NHS.
24. The results of the HLS help schools target support and interventions to support their pupils make healthy choices and seek appropriate support when required. These results are also used by the authority and other agencies in planning the provision and delivery of services for young people across the Borough.
25. Work on the Childhood Healthy Weight plan continues with a children's home food policy, guidance and workable menus being produced with children's home staff being trained on a young people's nutrition toolkit. Three nursery settings are working towards the Health Early Years Toolkit to achieve the award, with a further 10 childminders hoping to achieve this for their settings.
26. The Darlington School Food Award has been developed in partnership with Learning and Skills as an online training module to support individual schools to achieve school food standards.

Council Tenants' Terms & Conditions

27. As part of vision to transform the Council, I'm delighted that we have recently concluded a consultation on the proposed new Council housing terms and conditions. This is a significant update and has been long overdue.
28. The new terms and conditions are clearer to understand and introduces a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour.

29. The key changes to the agreement will put our communities first, by strengthening our position when dealing with problem tenants and making it easier for us to tackle some of the issues that blight our communities. The overall response to the proposals has been very positive and we have now formally written to all of our tenants to implement the new tenancy agreement.

Housing Services

30. Housing Services are now working in partnership with Energy Angels, providing an energy advice service to all existing Council tenants, including an impartial energy price comparison service. This will run alongside a move in support service, providing a smoother and less stressful move-in experience for all our new Council tenants.
31. Our Housing Options team has worked alongside our Health colleagues, to offer and deliver Covid vaccinations to homeless people in Darlington. The clinic was provided specifically for this client group to deliver all vaccinations including first, second and booster doses. Voluntary organisations including the 700 Club, Humankind and Foundation supported the clinic and encouraged their clients to attend. Those who attended also received food parcels.
32. We recently carried out our annual rough sleeper count of rough sleepers in Darlington and intelligence was gathered from partner organisations throughout the town including, voluntary sector groups, church groups, Health services and the Police.
33. Daily walkabouts were also conducted by the 700 Club who also provide our outreach support to rough sleepers. Although no one was physically found sleeping rough, the intelligence led us to concerns about 2 individuals and this was the final number recorded and returned to the DLUHC.
34. Lifeline Services were awarded the Exceptional Care Award sponsored by Primary Health Care, as part of the Stronger Communities Award 2021. This category recognises teams in Darlington which have provided care in a way that has made a real difference to people's lives. Our Lifeline team has worked continuously throughout the Covid pandemic to provide support to the most vulnerable in the town and I am immensely proud that they have been recognised for this.

Dolphin Centre

35. Funding has been secured for the referral team at the Dolphin Centre to complete a Level 4 Cancer Rehabilitation qualification with the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Cancer Service.
36. The qualification will enable the team to work with people that have recently been diagnosed with cancer and those who are on long surgical waiting lists as a result of the pandemic.
37. The 2021 Christmas events programme was very successful and feedback on the quality of the events has been very positive.

38. The recently refurbished soft play and new bowling alley continue to perform very well against the business plan. The bowling alley welcomed some of the Treasury team along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, for an event late November.

Holiday Activity Fund

39. Following on from the success of the Department for Education funded holiday programme in Easter and Summer, an exciting timetable of activities was planned for children in Darlington (who are eligible for Free School Meals) to access over the festive holiday period.
40. A total of 17 events were arranged throughout December; 6 aimed at engaging secondary aged children and 11 aimed at primary aged children with a total of 715 places available. The activities offered were available at various locations across the town. A hot cooked meal was provided at each event and further support was given to children and families by providing comprehensive activity packs and food bags for children to take home with them.
41. Ongoing work with DFE has secured funding for the next three financial years to deliver the HAF across the Town. £460,000 has been confirmed to deliver activities and provide hot meals for eligible children during School vacation periods for 2022/2023 with future funding to be agreed. It will enable thousands of young people from across the Borough, who receive free school meals, to take part in whole range of enrichment activities in holiday periods as well as enjoying a healthy meal and nutritional education.

Climate Change

42. Housing Services continue to invest and undertake works to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Council homes through works such as new windows, doors and insulation. The aim is for all Council homes to be at least an EPC rating C by 2030 and reduce energy bills for Council tenants.
43. Ongoing works in 2021 have meant that around 500 Council homes have received some form of energy efficiency work such as loft insulation, double glazing, solar panels or lower carbon heating systems such as Air Source Heat Pumps.
44. Further bids for funding to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and Local Authority Delivery (LAD) programmes have been made and decisions are due in the Spring. We plan to use these grants, alongside investment from ourselves to continue to improve the energy efficiency of our homes.
45. As part of the MTFP which is to be consider later this month by Cabinet and Council £2m has been requested to replace the outdated mechanical and electrical installations within the Dolphin Centre. This is the final phase of the replacement programme replacing 40-year-old inefficient plant with update to new efficient plant.



Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

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

Highway Maintenance Programme

2. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (a) Unclassified Greenhill Road, Heighington: Footway Reconstruction (0.320km);
 - (b) Unclassified The Wayside Hurworth: Footway Reconstruction (0.541km).
3. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Unclassified Clifton Road: Footway Reconstruction (0.432km).
4. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) C38 Sadberge Road/Middleton Road: Carriageway Recycling (1.927km);
 - (b) Unclassified Hewitson Road: Carriageway Recycling (0.3km).

Highway Improvement Schemes

5. Woodland Road LCWIP
Construction of the first phase of the walking and cycling route linking West Park to the town centre via Cockerton has started on Woodland Road. The scheme will provide a segregated cycle lane on each side of the road between the junctions with Hollyhurst Road and Outram Street. Consultation has been carried out on the second phase which will continue the route from Hollyhurst Road junction to the roundabout at Woodland Road/B6279 (Staindrop Road).
6. A68 Corridor Improvements
The A68 has been identified as an important improvement corridor and we are looking to tackle congestion, make public transport more reliable and make it safer and more attractive to cycle and walk.
7. We are currently developing plans to improve A68 Cockerton, A68 Woodlands Road and B6280 Staindrop Road roundabout junctions. The existing mini roundabouts are at capacity and larger conventional roundabouts that can accommodate more traffic are proposed to replace them. If implemented they will reduce delays for all traffic including commercial bus services. We intend to carry out consultation on these proposed schemes early in the new year. Work is progressing to make the scheme shovel ready and we will be looking to bid into all funding opportunities to secure the funding needed to deliver the

scheme.

Head of Steam

Events

8. Nearly 1000 children visited 'Santa at the Station' at the Head of Steam Museum in December. It is the first year that Santa visited the museum on three weekends and tickets sold out in record time for all weekends.

Collections

9. The replica Locomotion No 1 left the museum to undergo a feasibility study to identify the scope of work required to restore it to full working order ready for the 2025 celebrations.

Creative Darlington

10. Dover Art Prize 2019 winner, Bethan Maddocks' exhibition 'Making The Cut' was shown in the gallery at Darlington Library from Monday 22 November to Thursday 16 December 2021, with support from Darlington Cultural Volunteers who stewarded the exhibition. The exhibition shared the artist's experiments with hand and machine cutting to present a series of sculptures and explorations in paper, Perspex and metal, including a story tree, which brought together depictions of children's book characters drawn from many decades.

Libraries

Darlington Library Restoration

11. Building renovations have started in earnest at Darlington Library with the first stage of scaffolding work in progress. The library remains open, with disruption to services kept to a minimum during this stage of the works.

Home educated children

12. Work has been undertaken with home educated children, providing a personalised visit to showcase the library stock and online resources, including Britannica Online to help with their studies.

Orange the World

13. Libraries have supported the campaign around ending violence against women and girls by offering orange ribbons and balloons to customers. In addition, a display was set-up with information to help those who may be in a domestic abuse situation and to increase awareness of issues of violence around the world.

Darlington Hippodrome

14. The Hippodrome received confirmation of a successful funding application to the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) Round 3, receiving a further £198,471 to support the Hippodrome

through the November to January period. A total of £1,697,775 has been awarded to the theatre across the three CRF rounds.

15. Darlington Hippodrome's 2021 Pantomime, Cinderella, has been a great success. Gross ticket Sales topped £648,000 with 26,099 Seats sold. Secondary spend sales figures were recording breaking, with bars and stalls selling in excess of £98,000, including: 9,157 ice creams; 8,042 soft drinks; and 2,201 items of merchandise.
16. The 2022 Pantomime, Peter Pan, is now on sale and the curtain goes up on 9 December 2022.

Environmental Services

Grounds Maintenance

17. Grass cutting has now ceased and the team are undertaking their annual prune to shrubs and bushes across the Borough in readiness for the next growing season.

Arboriculture

18. Following Storm Arwen, the Council sustained heavy losses to trees across the Borough. Teams are actively responding to all issues involving fallen/dangerous trees, however, it is estimated that these works may take several months to complete.

Winter Maintenance

19. The 2021/22 winter season is now up and running with teams responding to inclement weather as and when required.

Climate Change

20. Two innovative road surfacing schemes have been completed. By recycling the existing road material at Sadberge Road and Hewitson Road, 2000 tonnes of material which previously would have been sent to landfill has been re-used in the construction. We will continue to use this approach, where appropriate, on future schemes.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

21. The second cremator is now operating and the mercury abatement equipment is installed and will be operating in the next few weeks. Work is progressing well on the new chapel and is scheduled to be completed late spring / early summer.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

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

Climate Change

2. As part of the ongoing development work to the Crematorium and Chapel, the existing three cremators will be replaced by two new cremators. As well as a reduction in number, the new cremators will be more energy efficient leading to a reduction in the carbon footprint of the facility.
3. Officers will soon be meeting with members of the supply chain to review alternative methods of construction and materials for the housing programme. The aim of this is to establish if carbon savings can be made both during the construction of the properties and the whole life by making the properties more energy efficient.

Medium Term Financial Plan

4. Since the draft MTFP was produced the Local Government Finance settlement has been announced which has delivered more government funding than anticipated. This along with any further changes and the outcome of consultation will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 February, before proposing the final MTFP to Council at the special meeting on 17 February.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

5. The Council's capital programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered:
 - (a) Design work is progressing on a number of schemes. The Bank Top Gateway East and West scheme Compulsory Purchase Order proposals are to be reviewed at a Public Inquiry from 18 January 2022, and work is still ongoing to try and acquire land by agreement. The planning application for the Railway Heritage Quarter scheme is currently being determined. Site work continues on the Hybrid Innovation Centre on Central Park, Crematorium and new Chapel development. A tender package for the demolition of the ex-Sports Direct building at East Street will be issued shortly.
 - (b) Business cases continue to be developed to secure additional projects from funding opportunities.
 - (c) The likely site requirements for the Treasury North Campus are being reviewed with the Government Property Agency and is hoped to have a final location decision early

in 2022.

- (d) The implementation of an integrated control point system 'Project in a Box' continues with the new projects to be added to the system.
- (e) There remains a risk of delay costs from Covid-19 related effects and construction material price increases. There are more signs that construction material costs are rising and there are some material shortages, the impact is being monitored.

Parliamentary Boundary Review

- 6. The secondary consultation on the proposed new map of constituencies in England will take place between Tuesday 22 February to Monday 4 April 2022. Feedback on the proposed new constituencies can be made via the Boundary Commission for England consultation website [BCE Consultation Portal \(bcereviews.org.uk\)](https://bcereviews.org.uk), by e-mail or letter or in person during a public hearing.
- 7. Two public hearings are scheduled to be held for the North East region and they will be held in Newcastle on 28 and 29 March 2022 and Middlesbrough on 31 March and 1 April 2022, with Newcastle being the lead authority for the region. During the consultation the Boundary Commission are looking forward to listening to views on how the boundary lines could be improved and on constituency names. Comments are also welcome on the responses received during the first consultation and those responses will be published on the Boundary Commission for England's website during the week commencing 7 February 2022 together with further information on the public hearings.

Register of Electors

- 8. The Annual Canvass, the second under the new Canvass reforms, was completed on time, and the new Register of Electors was published on 1 December 2021. Work will continue during the year to keep the register up to date by locating new electors and encouraging them to register and removing electors who no longer reside at a property.

Member Code of Conduct

- 9. Following the Council decision on 25 November 2021 to adopt a replacement Code of Conduct modelled on the LGA Code of Conduct (effective from 1 January 2022) work has been underway to facilitate this. The Constitution has been updated and relevant webpages. A number of member training sessions have been held on the replacement Code of Conduct and updates to Register of Interest entries have been published on the website. Parish Councils have been contacted and updated and are in the process of considering adopting the replacement Code of Conduct. Training is being arranged for parish council members about the replacement Code of Conduct.

Customer Services and Digital Strategy

- 10. The Customer Services and Digital Strategy for 2021-2024 has now been approved. The strategy sets out our vision for delivering excellent services to our customers and in particular, how more of these will be delivered through digital channels.

11. The strategy also provides a commitment to support those customers to access Council services who, for whatever reason, are unable to use our on-line services and tackle digital exclusion in Darlington.
12. Further work will be undertaken during 2022 to develop a set of clear customer performance standards that will apply across all Council services.

Councillor Scott Durham
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

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**COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022**

MID-YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2021/22

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Scott Durham, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. The mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council's borrowing, requires Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, relating to capital spending and borrowing. Prudential Indicators are set in three statutory annual reports, a forward looking annual treasury management strategy, a backward looking annual treasury management report and this mid-year update. The mid-year update follows Council's approval in February 2021 of the 2021/22 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.
3. The key objectives of the three annual reports are:
 - (a) To ensure the governance of the large amounts of public money under the Council's Treasury Management activities:
 - (i) Complies with legislation
 - (ii) Meets high standards set out in codes of practice
 - (b) To ensure that borrowing is affordable;
 - (c) To report performance of the key activities of borrowing and investments.
4. The key proposed revisions to Prudential Indicators relate to the Operational Boundary will reduce to £174.081m and the Authorised Limit to £237.156m which will allow for any additional cashflow requirement.

5. Investments include £30m in property funds which are expected to increase our net return on investments by around £0.700m in future years.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 are approved.
 - (b) The underspend in the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) of £0.243m shown in Table 11 is noted.

Reasons

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

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22
- (ii) Prudential Indicators & Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22
- (iii) Accounting records
- (iv) The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities

Peter Carrick: Extension 5401

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

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. This mid-year review report meets the regulatory framework requirement of treasury management. It also incorporates the needs of the Prudential Code to ensure monitoring of the capital expenditure plans and the Council's prudential indicators (PIs). The Treasury Strategy and the PIs were previously reported to Council on 18 February 2021.
9. This report concentrates on the revised positions for 2021/22. Future year's indicators will be revised when the impact of the MTFP 2022/23 onwards is known.
10. A summary of the revised headline indicators for 2021/22 is presented in Table 1 below. More detailed explanations of each indicator and any proposed changes are contained in the report. The revised indicators reflect the movement in the Capital MTFP since its approval in February 2021 and the means by which it is financed.

Table 1 Headline Indicators

	2021/22 Original Estimate	2021/22 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure (Tables 2 and 3)	50.953	49.678
Capital Financing Requirement (Table 4)	229.504	225.863
Operational Boundary for External Debt (Table 4)	186.550	174.081
Authorised Limit for External Debt (Table 6)	240.979	237.156
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- General Fund (Table 14)	2.73%	2.34%
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- Housing Revenue Account (HRA)(Table 14)	12.78%	14.86%

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

Key Prudential Indicators

14. This part of the report is structured to update:
 - (a) The Council's capital expenditure plans;
 - (b) How these plans are financed;
 - (c) The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the PI's and the underlying need to borrow;
 - (d) Compliance and limits in place for borrowing activity;
 - (e) Changes to the Annual Investment Strategy;
 - (f) The revised financing costs budget for 2021/22.

Capital Expenditure PI

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

Table 2

Capital Expenditure by Service	2021/22 Original Estimate	2021/22 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	22.395	27.036
HRA	20.449	13.183
Total Estimated Capital Expenditure	42.844	40.219
Loans to Joint Ventures	8.109	9.459
Total	50.953	49.678

16. The changes to the 2021/22 capital expenditure estimates have been notified to Cabinet as part of the Capital Budget monitoring process (Quarterly Project Position Statement Report).
17. The current capital programme that has not already been financed now stands at £176.136m but this includes a number of schemes that will be spent over a number of years not just in 2021/22. A reduction of £126.458m has been allowed for schemes which are known will be finalised in future years, but it is likely that other schemes will also slip into future years.

Impact of Capital Expenditure Plans

Changes to the financing of the Capital Programme

18. Table 3 draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans shown above, highlighting the original elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element (Borrowing Need) increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). Borrowing need has reduced for 2021/22 due to schemes that have been estimated to have slipped into future years. This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Table 3

Capital Expenditure	2021/22 Original Estimate	2021/22 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	22.395	27.036
HRA	20.449	13.183
Loans to Joint Ventures	8.109	9.459
Total Capital expenditure	50.953	49.678
Financed By:		
Capital Receipts - Housing	0.303	0.303
Capital Receipts –General Fund	1.150	0.586
Capital grants	12.171	21.294
JV Repayments	7.627	7.727
HRA Revenue Contributions	6.761	12.835
HRA Investment Fund	4.982	0.000
Self-Financing - GF	0.250	0.000
Total Financing	33.244	42.745
Borrowing Need	17.709	6.933

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

19. Table 4 shows the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), which is the underlying external need to borrow for capital purposes. It shows the expected actual debt position over the period. This is called the Operational Boundary. The reduction in Borrowing Need (Table 3) is around £10.8m and currently actual borrowing for the Council is £156.465m. The reduction is due to the Housing programme being delayed due to Covid 19. It is proposed to set an actual borrowing figure of £164.849m this will accommodate the additional borrowing need and any debt requirements for cash flow purposes. Other Long term liabilities (the PFI scheme) will be added to give the revised operational boundary for 2021/22.

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

	2021/22 Original Estimate	2021/22 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Prudential Indicator- Capital Financing Requirement		
Opening CFR- Post Audit of Accounts	218.318	220.685
CFR General Fund	129.802	135.801
CFR General Fund PFI/Leasing IFRS	9.232	9.232
CFR – Housing	77.189	67.709
CFR – Loans to Joint Ventures	13.281	13.121
Total Closing CFR	229.504	225.863
Net Movement in CFR	11.186	5.178
Borrowing	177.318	164.849
Other long-Term Liabilities	9.232	9.232
Total Debt 31 March- Operational Boundary	186.550	174.081

Limits to Borrowing Activity

20. The first key control over the treasury activity is a PI to ensure that over the medium term gross borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2021/22 and the next two financial years. As shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5

	2021/22 Original Estimate £m	2021/22 Revised Estimate £m	2022/23 Revised Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Gross borrowing	190.599	164.849	179.849	194.849
Plus Other Long Term Liabilities	9.232	9.232	8.117	7.011
Total Gross Borrowing	199.831	174.081	187.966	201.860
CFR* (year-end position)	229.504	225.863	243.522	256.931

* includes on balance sheet PFI schemes and finance leases

21. The Group Director of Operations reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current and future years in complying with this PI.
22. A further PI controls the overall level of borrowing, this is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which while not desirable, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. The Authorised Limit is currently set 5% above the Capital Financing Requirement to allow for any additional cashflow needs, the revised figure for 2021/22 has been raised by 5% of the new CFR total.

Whilst it is not expected that borrowing would be at these levels this would allow additional borrowing to take place should market conditions change suddenly and swift action was required. This is a Statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

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

Table 6

Authorised Limit for External Debt	2021/22 Original		2021/22 Revised	
	Indicator	£m	Indicator	£m
Capital Financing Requirement		229.504		225.863
Additional headroom to Capital Financing Requirement		11.475		11.293
Total Authorised Limit for External Debt		240.979		237.156

Interest Rate Forecasts Provided by Link Asset Services (as at 10 August 2021)

Table 7

	Bank Rate	PWLB rates for borrowing purposes*			
		5 year	10 year	25 year	50 year
	%	%	%	%	%
2021/22					
Sept 2021	0.10	1.20	1.60	1.90	1.70
Dec 2021	0.10	1.20	1.60	2.00	1.80
March 2022	0.10	1.20	1.70	2.10	1.90
2022/23					
June 2022	0.10	1.30	1.70	2.20	2.00
Sept 2022	0.10	1.30	1.80	2.30	2.10
Dec 2022	0.10	1.30	1.80	2.30	2.10
March 2023	0.10	1.40	1.90	2.30	2.10
2023/24					
June 2023	0.25	1.40	1.90	2.40	2.20
Sept 2023	0.25	1.40	1.90	2.40	2.20
Dec 2023	0.25	1.50	2.00	2.40	2.20
March 2024	0.50	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.30

*PWLB rates above are for certainty rates (which are provided for those authorities that have disclosed their borrowing/capital plans to the government. Darlington Borough Council will be able to access these certainty rates which are 0.2% below PWLB's normal borrowing rates.

24. The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and to economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March 2020 to cut Bank Rate to 0.10%, it left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings, although some forecasters had suggested that a cut into negative territory could have happened prior to more recent months when strong recovery started kicking in. However, the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee in February 2021 made it clear that commercial banks could not implement negative rates within six months; by that time the

economy would be expected to be recovering strongly and so there would be no requirement for negative rates. As shown in the forecast table above, one increase in Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25% has now been included in quarter 1 of 2023/24 and another increase to 0.50% in quarter 4 of 23/24, as an indication that the Bank of England will be starting monetary tightening during this year.

25. As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates, (gilts plus 80bps), above shows, there is likely to be an unwinding of the currently depressed levels of PWLB rates and a steady rise over the forecast period, with some degree of uplift due to rising treasury yields in the US.
26. There is likely to be **exceptional volatility and unpredictability in respect of gilt yields and PWLB rates** due to various factors: -
 - (a) Would the MPC act to counter increasing gilt yields if they rise beyond a yet unspecified level?
 - (b) How strong will inflationary pressures turn out to be in both the US and the UK and so impact treasury and gilt yields?
 - (c) How will central banks implement their new average or sustainable level inflation monetary policies?
 - (d) Will exceptional volatility be focused on the short or long-end of the yield curve, or both?
 - (e) How strongly will changes in gilt yields be correlated to changes in US treasury yields?
27. The forecasts are also predicated on an assumption that there is no break-up of the Eurozone or EU within our forecasting period, despite the major challenges that are looming up, and that there are no major ructions in international relations, especially between the US and China / North Korea and Iran, which have a major impact on international trade and world GDP growth.
28. The downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:
 - (a) **Mutations** of the virus render current vaccines ineffective, and tweaked vaccines to combat these mutations are delayed, resulting in further national lockdowns or severe regional restrictions.
 - (b) **MPC** acts too quickly in unwinding QE or increasing Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.
 - (c) The Government implements an **austerity programme** that suppresses GDP growth.
 - (d) **Labour and material shortages** do not ease over the next few months and further stifle economic recovery.
 - (e) The lockdowns cause major long-term **scarring of the economy**.

- (f) **UK / EU trade arrangements** – if there was a major impact on trade flows and financial services due to complications or lack of co-operation in sorting out significant remaining issues.
 - (g) A resurgence of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. The ECB has taken monetary policy action to support the bonds of EU states, with the positive impact most likely for “weaker” countries. In addition, the EU agreed a €750bn fiscal support package which has still to be disbursed. These actions will help shield weaker economic regions in the near-term. However, in the case of Italy, the cost of the virus crisis has added to its already huge debt mountain and its slow economic growth will leave it vulnerable to markets returning to taking the view that its level of debt is unsupportable. There remains a sharp divide between northern EU countries favouring low debt to GDP and annual balanced budgets and southern countries who want to see jointly issued Eurobonds to finance economic recovery. This divide could undermine the unity of the EU in time to come.
 - (h) Weak capitalisation of some **European banks**, which could be undermined further depending on the extent of credit losses resulting from the pandemic.
 - (i) **German minority government & general election in September 2021.** In the German general election of September 2017, Angela Merkel’s CDU party was left in a vulnerable minority position dependent on the fractious support of the SPD party, because of the rise in popularity of the anti-immigration AfD party. Subsequently, the CDU has done badly in state elections, but the SPD has done even worse. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but remains as Chancellor until the general election in 2021. Her appointed successor has not attracted wide support from voters and the result of the general election could well lead to some form of coalition government, though there could be a question as to whether the CDU will be part of it which, in turn, could then raise an issue over the tenure of her successor. This then leaves a question mark over who the major guiding hand and driver of EU unity will be.
 - (j) **Other minority EU governments.** Austria, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland and Belgium also have vulnerable minority governments dependent on coalitions which could prove fragile and, therein, impact market confidence/economic prospects and lead to increasing safe-haven flows.
 - (k) **Major stock markets** e.g., in the US, become increasingly judged as being over-valued and susceptible to major price corrections. Central banks become increasingly exposed to the “moral hazard” risks of having to buy shares and corporate bonds to reduce the impact of major financial market selloffs on the general economy.
 - (l) **Geopolitical risks**, for example in China, Iran or North Korea, but also in Europe and other Middle Eastern countries, which could lead to increasing safe-haven flows.
29. The upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilts and PWLB rates are:
- (a) Longer term US **treasury yields** rise strongly and pull UK gilt yields up higher than forecast.

- (b) **Vaccinations** are even more successful than expected and eradicate hesitancy around a full return to normal life, which leads into a stronger than currently expected recovery in UK and/or other major developed economies.
- (c) The **Bank of England is too slow** in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to build up too strongly within the UK economy, which then necessitates a later rapid series of increases in Bank Rate faster than we currently expect.

Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 and Annual Investment Strategy Update

- 30. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2021/22 was approved by this Council on 18 February 2021.
- 31. There are no policy changes to the TMSS.
- 32. The details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

Debt Activity during 2021/22

- 33. The expected net borrowing need is set out in Table 8.

Table 8

	2021/22 Original Estimate £m	2021/22 Revised Estimate £m
CFR (year-end position) from Table 4	229.504	225.863
<u>Less</u> other long term liabilities PFI and finance leases	9.232	9.232
Net adjusted CFR (net year end position)	220.272	216.631
Expected Borrowing	177.318	164.849
(Under)/ Over borrowing	(42.954)	(51.782)
Expected Net movement in CFR	11.186	5.178

- 34. The Council hasn't taken on any new debt in the current year to date.
- 35. The amount borrowed by the Council now stands at £156.465m, this excludes any additional cashflow loans which may be required.
- 36. There will still be an element of under-borrowing by the Council at the end of March 2022.

Debt Rescheduling

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

Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22

Investment Portfolio

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

Treasury Management Activity from 1 April 2021 to 31 August 2021

39. Current investment position – The Council held £75.399m of investments at 31/08/2021 and this is made up of the following types of investment.

Table 9

Sector	Country	Up to 1 year £m
Banks	UK	16.000
AAA Money Market Funds	Sterling Funds	19.400
Other Local Authorities	UK	10.000
Property Funds - CCLA	UK	10.000
Hermes		10.000
Lothbury	UK	9.999
Total		75.399

Short Term Cashflow Investments

40. Cash balances are invested on a daily basis to maximise the benefit of temporary surplus funds. These include investments in Money Market Funds, the Government’s Debt Management Office and bank short term notice accounts. A total of 59 investments were made in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 August 2021 totalling c£162m these were for short periods of up to 100 days and earned interest of £0.012m on an average balance of £37.996m which equated to an annual average interest rate of 0.06%.

Investment returns measured against the Service Performance Indicators

41. The target for our investment returns is to better or at least match a number of external comparators, this performance indicator is also known as yield benchmarking. As can be seen from Table 10, the short term investment achievements (up to 6 months) are above market expectations.

Table 10

	Cashflow Investments %
Darlington Borough Council - Actual	0.06%
External Comparators	
London Interbank Bid Rate 7 day	(0.08%)
London Interbank Bid Rate 1 month	(0.07%)
London Interbank Bid Rate 3 months	(0.05%)
London Interbank Bid Rate 6 months	(0.02%)

Treasury Management Budget

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

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

Table 11 - Changes to the Financing Costs Budget 2021/22

	£m	£m
Original Financing Costs Budget 2021/22		0.823
Less reduced debt costs	(0.018)	
Less increased returns on Property Funds	(0.225)	
Total adjustments		(0.243)
Revised Treasury Management Budget 2021/22		0.580

43. This statement concludes that the Treasury Management budget is forecast to underspent by £0.243m in 2021/22, these have been reflected in the current MTFP projections.

Risk Benchmarking

44. A regulatory development is the consideration and approval of security and liquidity benchmarks. Yield benchmarks are currently widely used to assess investment performance and these are shown in Table 12. Discrete security and liquidity benchmarks are also requirements of member reporting.

45. The following reports the current position against the benchmarks originally approved.

46. **Security** – The Council’s maximum security risk benchmarks for the current portfolio of investments, when compared to historic default tables were set as follows;

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

Table 12

Maximum	Benchmark 2021/22	Actual May	Actual July
Year 1	0.077%	0.012%	0.010%

N.B. this excludes Property Funds

47. The counterparties that we use are all high rated therefore our actual risk of default based on ratings attached to counterparties is very low.

48. **Liquidity** – In respect of this area the Council set liquidity facilities/ benchmark to maintain

- (a) Bank overdraft - £0.100M;
- (b) Liquid short term deposits of a least £3.000M available within a week’s notice;
- (c) Weighted Average Life benchmark is expected to be 0.4 years with a maximum of 1 year.

49. The Group Director of Operations can report that liquidity arrangements have been adequate for the year to date as shown in Table 14.

Table 13

	Benchmark 2021/22	Actual May	Actual July
Weighted Average Life	0.4 – 1 year	0.41 years	0.41 years

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

Treasury Management Indicators

51. **Actual and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream** – This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (financing costs net of interest and investment income) against the net revenue stream. The reduction in % relates to reduced financing costs for General Fund of £0.243m.

Table 14

	2021/22 Original Indicator	2021/22 Revised Indicator
General Fund	2.73%	2.34%
HRA	12.78%	14.86%

Treasury Management Prudential indicators

52. **Upper Limits on Variable Rate Exposure** – This indicator identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates based upon the debt position net of investments.
53. **Upper Limits on Fixed Rate Exposure** – Similar to the previous indicator this cover a maximum limit on fixed interest rates.
54. Historically for a number of years this Council has used these percentages; together they give flexibility to the treasury management strategy allowing the Council to take advantage of both fixed and variable rates in its portfolio whilst ensuring that its exposure to variable rates is limited.

Table 15

	2021/22 Original Indicator	2021/22 Revised Indicator
Limits on fixed interest rates	100%	100%
Limits on variable interest rates	40%	40%

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

Table 16 - Maturity Structures of Borrowing

	2021/22 Original indicator	2021/22 Actual to Date	2021/22 Revised Indicator
Under 12 months	25%	17%	30%
12 months to 2 years	40%	6%	40%
2 years to 5 years	60%	12%	60%
5 years to 10 years	80%	9%	80%
10 years and above	100%	57%	100%

56. **Total Principal Funds Invested** – These limits are set having regard to the amount of reserves available for longer term investment and show the limits to be placed on investments with final maturities beyond 1 year. This limit allows the authority to invest

for longer periods if they give better rates than shorter periods. It also allows some stability in the interest returned to the Authority.

Table 17 - Principal Funds Invested

	2021/22 Original Indicator	2021/22 Revised Indicator
Maximum principal sums invested greater than 1 year	£50m	£50m

Conclusion

- 57. The prudential indicators have been produced to take account of the Council’s borrowing position. The key borrowing indicator (the Operational Boundary) is £174.081m. The Council’s return on investments has been good, exceeding both of the targets. Based on the first six months of 2021/22 the Council’s borrowing and investments is forecast to underspend by £0.243m on the approved 2021/22 budget.
- 58. The Council’s treasury management activities comply with the required legislation and meet the high standards set out in the relevant codes of practice.

Outcome of Consultation

- 59. No consultation was undertaken in the production of this report.

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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. At an informal meeting on 21 December 2021, we received a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers. Members of the Committee were advised of one outbreak at Middleton Hall Care Home, though it was noted that this was being managed well, and that the last positive Covid test had been recorded on 9 December 2021, some twelve days earlier. It was reported that there were no staffing issues in relation to this outbreak.
3. Members were informed that there were no reported cases of Covid in terms of domiciliary care in relation to the Council's two main providers, though staff recruitment was proving to be slow. It was reported that both main providers had placed an embargo on annual leave for the remainder of 2021 to ensure that staffing levels were maintained. It was also pleasing to note that there were no outbreaks across day care settings.
4. We were informed that the visiting guidance for care homes had changed to permit only three named visitors per resident, and that care homes in Darlington were working with families directly to implement this.
5. We also received the latest figures in terms of vaccinations (First Vaccine, Second Vaccine and Booster), both for residents and staff working within care settings. We enquired as to the number of staff who had left roles after choosing not to have the Covid vaccine and entered into discussion on whether the booster would become mandatory for care staff.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

6. We received a report inviting Members of the Committee to give consideration to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26, which provided us with the opportunity to ask any questions relating to the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, and to forward any views or comments relating to the services and finances within the remit of this Committee to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration on 20 January 2022.
7. The Committee received an update from the Group Director of Operations on the finance settlement received subsequent to the report being circulated, and the impact this had on the assumptions made within the draft MTFP. We were informed that the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant announced in the Autumn Statement, and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was slightly higher than initially included within the draft MTFP, however Members were advised that the Services Grant was a one-

off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted. We were advised that Officers would need to give further consideration as to how this was reflected within the draft MTFP, and whether any further assumptions could be drawn going forward. Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. It was reported that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23, over that which had been previously presented.

8. Members entered into discussion on the statutory nature of the majority of Adult Social Care services and the funding allocation and considered what further work the Committee could do to examine this. We sought clarification around the price inflation figure contained within the MTFP for 2025/26, and enquired about the rationale behind the increase in the external purchase of care, and the reasoning for the perceived reduction in funding for long-term physical disability and long-term mental disability.
9. Discussion took place on the potential to harness under-utilized Council assets and build a Council managed Care Home and further Sheltered Accommodation. Members also scrutinised whether the margin of error in relation to National Insurance contributions and the Employee pay award was sufficient. There was a desire from Members to see greater focus on honing services via the transformation agenda to reduce spending and produce greater efficiencies and encourage our partners to do likewise. We also considered whether tackling inequalities could be undertaken at a Council wide level to reduce specific service costs.

Adult Social Care Outcome Framework (ASCOF)

10. The Committee received a report to inform Members on the progress in determining a revised Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), and to provide an overview of Darlington's performance against ASCOF over the past three years. We were informed that the ASCOF was first published in March 2011 and is reviewed annually to update the measures to reflect outcomes for adults and carers.
11. ASCOF measures how well care and support services achieve the outcomes that matter most to people, and that the ASCOF is used both locally and nationally to set priorities for care and support, measure progress and strengthen transparency and accountability. Performance against the ASCOF is published annually by NHS Digital, and that the Department of Health and Social Care also provides an annual report on the national picture. It was pleasing to note that Darlington performs well against the ASCOF measures, and in most cases performs better than the North East average.
12. We highlighted the reduction of support required within the reablement packages, and it was noted that there is a high success rate of people once receiving reablement when leaving hospital not requiring ongoing care and that the low numbers requiring reablement is a positive, as people return home with either their existing packages of care in place, or not requiring care.

13. The high percentage of adults with learning disabilities in employment in Hartlepool Borough Council was also noted, and Members asked if there were any lessons the Council could learn from Hartlepool Borough Council.
14. The Committee were keen to learn more in relation to the number of carers in receipt of direct payments and the different interpretation and approaches undertaken by other authorities to record this. Members were also eager to hear more in relation to the validity and integrity of the user and carer surveys.

Work Programme

15. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

**Councillor Bob Donoghue
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee**

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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.

Work Programme

2. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.
3. We are also in the process of arranging in the new year meetings with young people from the Darlington Youth Partnership and Council of School Council's and the Head of Education, Employment and Skills, Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Performance Indicators

4. Children's Services Quarter 2 (July 2021 to September 2021) performance information was presented to the December meeting which highlighted the following areas of good practice:
 - (a) 10.7 per cent of the children referred during this quarter had been re-referred to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral which was positively below the internal target of 18 per cent;
 - (b) 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan and 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had an allocated social worker;
 - (c) No child had ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for two or more years, and continue to positively perform below the target of five per cent;
 - (d) The number of Children in Care (CiC) was 266 by the end of September 2021, which was a large reduction of 11.9 per cent when compared with the number of children at the end of September 2020 (302) and work continues to safely reduce the number of children coming into care;
 - (e) 92.9 per cent of statutory CiC visits were completed within timescale during Q2 above the target of 90 per cent;

- (f) 9.8 per cent of our Children in Care, as of September 2021, had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months and performance was positively below the internal target of 10 per cent;
 - (g) 69.8 per cent of Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years, in line with the internal target of 68 per cent;
 - (h) 8.3 per cent of Children in Care had been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of September 2021 below the target of 10 per cent;
 - (i) 93.7 per cent of children due a review health assessment year to date had one completed, which was above the target of 90 per cent; and
 - (j) 21.3 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the end of September 2021, which was positively below target of 30 per cent and 100.0 per cent were in suitable accommodation.
5. Areas highlighted for focus were in respect of :
- (a) Social workers completed 87.3 per cent of the C&F assessments within timescale which falls below the target of 90 per cent, although was higher than the 80.4 per cent for the same period last year;
 - (b) 78.8 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences, by the end of Q2;
 - (c) 68.2 per cent of referrals were screened and completed within 1 day by the end of Q2, below the target of 90 per cent and 7.6 per cent of the referrals took over three days to complete;
 - (d) At the end of September 2021, 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 was 9.8 per cent, above the 6 per cent target, however this was a reduction from 14.3 per cent as at the end of Q1 2021/22;
 - (e) 87.1 per cent of children received a statutory CP visit within 10 working days during Q2 below the target of 90 per cent; and
 - (f) 75.7 per cent of children due a dental check assessment year to date had one completed, and although below the target of 90 per cent it was a significant improvement from 55.8 per cent as at the end of Q1 2021/22.
6. We noted the challenges around the recruitment and retention of social workers which was both a regional and national challenge and requested information on what the authority was doing to address the shortfall in social workers; we also asked for clarification on the current position regarding caseloads and were assured that caseloads

were at a safe and manageable level; and noted the increase in missing from care and questioned what was being done to address this.

Update of the Developing Darlington Care Collective

7. Members received an update on progress made with the Developing Darlington Care Collective (DDCC), linking MECC (Making Every Contact Count) brief intervention work and the key achievements through 2021 which focused on collaborative working.
8. The Workforce Development Manager gave a presentation which provided an overview of the progress of the Developing Darlington Care Collective aimed at supporting Children and Adult Services sector and outlined the plans to support all aspects of recruitment, retention, training, progression and destination by the launch the 'Darlington Xtra' microsite and associated platforms that support the implementation of the DDCC and gave Members a brief demonstration of the site and its content.
9. We agreed that the microsite was a fantastic piece of work as a conduit/platform for growing our own and attracting the best to Darlington and will greatly assist the focus of the key priority of workforce for 2022.

Children's Centre Services

10. At the request of Members we received an update on the position in relation to services offered for young parents during and post Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions.
11. The Building Stronger Families Service based at McNay Street Children's Centre offers a high level of support by way of targeted delivery through early help assessments and universal groups focusing on parents' mental health, practical skills, and children's development.
12. Parents to be and new parents are able to attend a range of groups across the town, including a pre and post birth group for teenage parents, with midwives working with teenage parents on hand to conduct antenatal checks and there are also several groups aimed at babies up to 12 months and their parents, focussing on parents' well-being and helping them to promote the development of their babies in all areas.
13. As with other services once the working from home directive came from Government the Centres had to close and all these groups closed however work immediately began to try to get as many of these services online as well as practitioners delivering live and pre-recorded sessions on child development, behaviour management and other related issues.
14. The Centres started to re-open with Covid 19 safe measures in place from July, with the bulk re-opening in September 2021.
15. We discussed with the Service Manager, Building Stronger Families the importance of interaction with children and parents through playgroups and other informal networks and that this connection may have been lost during the pandemic. We also discussed the methods of communication and media plans in place to link in to all these groups to offer support and reach out to those hard to reach families.

Medium Term Financial Plan

16. At a Special Meeting held on 10 January 2022 Members had the opportunity to consider the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26 and to ask any questions relating to the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, and to forward any views or comments relating to the services and finances within the remit of this Committee to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration on 20 January 2022.
17. We were provided with an update on the finance settlement which had been received subsequent to the draft MTFP. We were advised that the Council Tax and Precept levels remained as expected at 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively; that the £1.5B additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement had been split into £822M Services Grant and £636M Social Care Grant and the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was higher than the estimate included within the draft MTFP. We also noted that the Services Grant was a one-off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted.
18. Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. We noted that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23.
19. We discussed in particular the level of unpredictability within Children's Services and the Strengthening Families Programme which was key to the improvement journey and providing high quality services and the challenges faced which were still ongoing from the pandemic; the challenges faced by Children's Services around placement markets; how Adoption Tees Valley funding was calculated and the ongoing work in relation to calculating charges to each of the five Tees Valley authorities; ongoing work to reduce the costs in relation to Inter Agency Fees; and the known pressures and efficiencies in relation to Social Care staffing and the increased demand on public funds and the number of children requiring support.
20. We also asked the Assistant Director of Children's Services, if extra funding could be made available for Children's Services where this would be best allocated and focussed. His response was that the area he would most seek to expand would be the Early Help offer, to create more Early Help practitioner posts and for the service to be larger, more accessible and more visible to local communities, children and families in Darlington.
21. Members agreed that access to Early Help helps families address their issues early and if successful prevents expensive and intrusive statutory interventions at a point in the future, thus being both the right thing to do and a more financially viable way of supporting families; and is at the very heart of the Strengthening Families journey already being undertaken working with families.

22. We therefore agreed that in respond to our consideration of the MTFP, that if additional funding became available, Cabinet be requested to give consideration to increasing the budget allocation for Early Help Services.

Councillor Paul Crudass
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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.

Bank Top Masterplan

2. Scrutiny welcomed a PowerPoint presentation from the Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects updating Members on the Bank Top Masterplan.
3. Members were advised of the project objectives to transform Darlington Train Station into a modern transport hub; to provide more frequent and faster local and national services and futureproof the station for future services; and to support and enhance the wider Darlington Regeneration initiatives.
4. We were provided with details of the key component parts of the project and the key features of Station East, Darlington Station and the Transport Interchange – Victoria Road. We were also informed of the delivery timescales.
5. The presentation provided Members with a number of graphics, including the station entrance, multi-storey car park and interchange. We also noted the details of the latest position of the project.
6. Scrutiny entered into a discussion on the toilet and changing facilities for the new station, the availability of bicycle parking, and following a question on the anticipated impact of timetable changes, we were advised that a net overall increase in footfall was predicted, with faster services and an increased number of trains per hour able to be accommodated, which would assist in futureproofing the station for future services.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2021/2022

7. We have received the information on the Quarter 2 performance against those key performance indicators for 2021/22 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee.
8. Members noted that of the 25 indicators which are reported six monthly at quarter 2, seven are showing performance better than the same period in the previous year; one indicator is showing performance the same; four indicators are showing performance not as good as the same period in the previous year; and five indicators do not have comparative information from last year due to Coronavirus restrictions.
9. We discussed in particular fly tipping and the need for improved monitoring via cameras. Members were assured that whilst there are some resource constraints, a significant amount of work is being done to tackle fly tipping, this includes the use of covert and overt

cameras and the Back Lanes Project. Reference was made to the My Darlington App which can be used by residents to report fly tipping.

Work Programme 2021/22

10. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.
11. A request was received from a Member of Scrutiny that an item on the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis be included in the work programme. It was agreed that a Quad of Aims be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee for Members consideration.

Medium Term Financial Plan

12. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet, via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, on the proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23.
13. We were provided with an update on the finance settlement which had been received subsequent to the draft MTFP. We were advised that the Council Tax and Precept levels remained as expected at 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively; that the £1.5B additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement had been split into £822M Services Grant and £636M Social Care Grant and the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was higher than the estimate included within the draft MTFP. We also noted that the Services Grant was a one-off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted.
14. Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. We noted that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23.
15. We discussed the provision for increasing staffing levels on the ground; the Futures Fund and impacts of this being mainstreamed into the budget from 2025/26 onwards; the anticipated allocation of the additional £1.073M from the settlement; and Members sought clarification in respect of the allocation of the £310M that the Tees Valley Combined Authority had been allocated from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

Stronger Communities Fund

16. The Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder provided Members with an update on the spend to date against the Stronger Communities Fund and we gave consideration to continuation of the pilot scheme into the next financial year.
17. We were informed that the £1K should be spent before the end of the financial year and that any funding not spent by Members may be carried forward to the next financial year however Members individual budget would remain at £1K, should the scheme continue.

18. We provided feedback on the process which included clarity regarding deadlines and timescales and Members acknowledged the Credit Union and Democratic Services for their support with the process.
19. We discussed the possibility of training for Members to identify and access other funding opportunities to help local projects and community groups and were informed by the Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder that discussions were ongoing to identify how the Council could support not only Members but residents to access funding opportunities. Members suggested that an All Member briefing be arranged to help Councillors identify and access support for local communities.
20. Members of this Scrutiny Committee support the continuation of the scheme in the 2022/23 financial year.

Councillor Steven Tait
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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.

Customer Services and Digital Strategy

2. Our views were sought on the draft Customer Services and Digital Strategy for 2021-24, prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
3. The strategy sets out the Council's vision for delivering excellent services for its customers, and, in particular, how more of these services will be delivered through digital channels in future, whilst also recognising the need to continue to support those customers who, for a number of reasons, are unable to use the on-line services.
4. The seven key aims of the strategy were referenced and we will be receiving an update on the expected outcomes at a future meeting of our Scrutiny Committee.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 – 2021/22

5. Performance information against the key performance indicators for quarter 2 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee have been provided.
6. We will be undertaking some further work to look at all the reportable indicators within our remit and agree an indicator set which we feel will provide us with the most relevant data information.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 – 2025/26

7. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet on its proposals contained within the Medium- Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025-26.
8. Following a detailed discussion at our meeting on 6 January, 2022, our comments to Cabinet were as follows :-
 - (i) the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Resources should continue to lobby the Government in relation to the need for increased funding;
 - (ii) Cabinet should provide evidence of the work it is undertaking to plan for the projected budget deficit over the four-year period of the MTFP, including details of what steps and actions might need to be taken; and
 - (iii) a comprehensive communication strategy should be developed to better inform residents of the Borough of the reasons for the proposed increase in Council Tax

and how the funding is being spent to deliver services

A further meeting of our Scrutiny Committee was held on 20 January 2022, where we considered the above and made a couple of further amendments to our proposal. A final response, on behalf of all Scrutiny Committees, as agreed by all Members of our Scrutiny Committee who were present at this meeting, has been submitted to Cabinet.

Work Programme

9. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.
10. We will be receiving briefings to update us on the Markets and the outcomes of the employee survey which has recently been undertaken. If there are any particular issues arising from either of those topics, we will discuss them formally at a future Scrutiny meeting.
11. Arrangements are also in hand for the Tees Valley Combined Authority to brief us and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the funding allocation as it relates to this Council and where spend (adult education up to 28 years) is being focussed.

Councillor Mike Renton
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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.

Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee – 15 December 2021

2. The Health and Housing Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 15 December 2021 was postponed in order to offer immediate support to NHS and local government organisations in light of the latest situation regarding Omicron and other variants.

Medium Term Financial Plan

3. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet, via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, on the proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23.
4. We were provided with an update on the finance settlement which had been received subsequent to the draft MTFP. We were advised that the Council Tax and Precept levels remained as expected at 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively; that the £1.5B additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement had been split into £822M Services Grant and £636M Social Care Grant and the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was higher than the estimate included within the draft MTFP. We also noted that the Services Grant was a one-off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted.
5. Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. We noted that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23.
6. The Group Director of Operations advised Members that the Public Health and Housing Revenue Account were the two main funding streams within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee and that whilst the 2022/23 Public Health Grant allocation had not yet been announced, there was no anticipated reduction. Overall Members were advised that there were no specific pressures for Housing or Public Health in 2022/23.

Housing Revenue Account

7. The Assistant Director Housing and Revenue provided Members with an update on the key decisions within the HRA for 2022-23 which included a proposed revenue expenditure of £25.448M, a proposed Capital Programme of £32.98M and a proposed rent increase. These proposals are subject to consultation with our tenants, which is currently ongoing.

8. In relation to the proposed rent increase, Members noted that Councils had the discretion to inflate rents by CPI plus 1 per cent, which would mean a rent increase of 4.1 per cent for 2022-23.
9. We were informed of a number of options that were considered at the Cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2021, taking into account the current economic pressures faced by tenants and balancing this with the need to deliver the Councils ambitious capital and energy efficiency programmes, and that an increase of 2 per cent was recommended which equated to an average £1.64 increase in weekly rents. We also noted Cabinet recommendation that service charges be increased by an appropriate inflationary amount.
10. Particular discussion ensued regarding the delivery of improvements to external wall insulation and Members were advised that all improvement work would be delivered as part of a programme and the Council were preparing to tender for a stock condition survey which would include insulation.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee