



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 31 March 2022

Central Hall, Dolphin Centre, 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 Meetings of this Council held on 1 February 2022 and 17 February 2022. (Pages 5 - 18)
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.
8. Cabinet Reports.
  - (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 19 - 22)

- (b) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 23 - 28)
  - (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 29 - 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)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 57 - 58)
  - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 59 - 62)
  - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 63 - 66)
  - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 67 - 68)
  - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 69 - 74)
10. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



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

**Wednesday, 23 March 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](mailto:paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk) or Telephone 01325 405805.

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## COUNCIL

Tuesday, 1 February 2022

**PRESENT** – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Holroyd, Johnson, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Willis.

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Baldwin, Boddy, Haszeldine, Heslop, L Hughes, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Lister, Paley and Wright.

### 47 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Submitted** – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 25 November 2021.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 25 November 2021, be approved as a correct record.

### 48 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### 49 **SEALING.**

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

### 50 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**Death of Former Mayor and Councillor Jim Ruck** – The Mayor reported on the death of Former Mayor and Councillor Jim RUCK, who had recently passed away, and in doing so referred to Former Councillor Ruck's years of service.

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

**New Year's Honours** – The Mayor reported that Susan Thorpe, Senior Delivery Lead, Regional Delivery Directorate, Department for Education, was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) for services to education.

The Mayor also informed Members that Andrew Naylor, Fisheries Enforcement Officer, Environment Agency, became a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (B.E.M.) for Services to Fisheries Protection.

**RESOLVED** - That the congratulations of the Council be conveyed to those who had received Awards.

**Holocaust Memorial Day 2022** – The Mayor acknowledged Holocaust Memorial Day, which had taken place on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022, and marked the 77th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Mayor advised Members that this important anniversary had been commemorated in Darlington at memorial service at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, which had been organised by the Celebrating Communities group.

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

**52 COUNCIL REPORTS.**

**(1) COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2022/23**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to determine the Council's tax base for 2022/23.

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

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2022/23 be approved.

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

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

**53 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.

#### **54 MID-YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2021/22**

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

The submitted report stated that the mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council borrowing, required Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, relating to capital spending and borrowing. It was reported that the Prudential Indicators were set in three statutory annual reports to Council, and the submitted report followed the Council's approval in February 2021 of the 2021/22 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.

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

The submitted report also outlined revisions to the Prudential Indicators in terms of a reduction to Operational Boundary to £174.081M, and a reduction to the Authorised Limit to £237.156M to allow for any additional cashflow requirement. It was noted that investments included £30M in property funds, which were expected to increase the Council's net return on investments by around £0.700M in future years.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the revised Prudential Indicators and limits in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 of the submitted report be approved.

(b) That the underspend in the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) of £0.243m, shown in Table 11, be noted.

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

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

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

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

#### **55 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.

**56 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** – That Councillor Mrs. Culley replace Councillor Mills as Councillor Brian Jones' named substitute on the Police and Crime Panel.



## COUNCIL

Thursday, 17 February 2022

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

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Boddy, Heslop, Lister and Paley.

**ABSENT** – Councillors Baldwin.

### 57 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Councillor Crumbie declared a pecuniary interest in Minute 59 below, as a homeowner in the Whinfield Ward.

**NOTE:** The Assistant Director – Law and Governance advised that a dispensation under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 had been granted in relation to the consideration of the Local Plan as a matter of public interest, and as a matter about which all Members needed to be able to express a view and make decisions.

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

#### (1) **THE PUBLIC;**

There were four questions, with notice, from Members of the Public, who each 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.

### 59 **ADOPTION OF DARLINGTON BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking the approval of the changes recommended during the examination process of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 2016 – 2036 (Darlington Local Plan).

The submitted report stated that an up-to-date Local Plan was essential to meet the development needs of the Borough, and to enable the Council to shape and maintain control of development. The submitted report outlined that the Local Plan was a framework for growth and aimed to ensure that Darlington became an even more sustainable location in which people increasingly chose to live, work and visit. It was highlighted that in addition to delivering the economic strategy, the Local Plan also identified provision for new housing and infrastructure to meet the needs of the current and future population.

The submitted report highlighted that the Local Plan provided the Council with the required spatial guidance and direction to contribute to, and enable, the structured development of the Borough, whilst mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting and enhancing the environment, heritage, and green infrastructure.

The independent inspector's report was appended to the submitted report, and identified that the Local Plan (subject to recommended Main Modifications) was sound, legally compliant and capable of adoption.

The submitted report also highlighted the statutory procedures for the adoption of the Local Plan, outlining that there would be a six-week period following adoption when it could be challenged in the High Court under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

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

**Against the Motion** – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Cossins, Crumbie, Curry, Harker, Haszeldine, Holroyd, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, A. J. Scott, Snedker and Wallis (20)

**Abstentions** – Councillor Bell (1)

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the conclusions of the Report on the Examination of the Darlington Local Plan received from the Planning Inspectorate (as appended at Appendix 1 of the submitted report) which recommended that, subject to modifications, the Local Plan can be adopted, be agreed.

(b) That the Darlington Local Plan (including all modifications detailed in Appendices 1 and 2) attached at Appendix 3 and Policies Map at Appendix 4 be adopted (including modifications detailed in Appendix 5), be agreed.

(c) That the Core Strategy (2010) policies and saved Local Plan (1997, alterations 2001) policies will be superseded upon the adoption of the Darlington Local Plan, be agreed.

(d) That it be noted that there is a six-week High Court challenge period should any aggrieved party wish to challenge how the plan has been prepared.

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

## **60 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN INVESTING IN AND DELIVERING SUCCESS FOR DARLINGTON**

The Chief Officers Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek approval for a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26, including setting a budget and Council Tax increase for 2022/23, and also the approval of a 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme.

The submitted report stated that, whilst 2020/21 was undoubtedly the year of Covid, 2021/22 will be remembered as the year we started to live and adapt to the difficulties and opportunities it created. It was reported that the pandemic fundamentally impacted on the priorities of, and the way in which, the Council conducted its business, and that the financial pressure on the public sector as a whole and the Council more specifically have been significant over the last couple of years. This was on the back of a decade of significant financial challenge following the economic downturn and the reductions in public sector spending.

The submitted report stated that the Council had received its Local Government Finance Settlement on 16 December 2021, and which confirmed a one year settlement and a number of funding streams announced in the Autumn Statement including the £1.5bn additional funding stream which had been split between a specific grant for Social Care and an un-ringfenced Services Grant which was only guaranteed for 2022/23 whilst a review of Local Government funding takes place. It was reported that the MTFP was based on a one year funding basis, and therefore the 2022/23 Budget and MTFP had an eye to future years, but did not seek to presume what the future would look like. The proposed MTFP aimed to ensure that the Council could continue to provide vital services in response to Covid should it be required, and importantly continue to provide the core offer level of services to the residents of Darlington regardless of Covid.

It was reported that a healthy level of reserves had been maintained for medium term stability and this was now a crucial component of the budget strategy which would allow time for the key ambition of economic growth to take effect.

The submitted report stated that the core offer remained challenging with some significant pressures arising, however through tight financial management, innovative financial investments and increased income from economic growth successes, the Council was still in a position to deliver the agreed balanced plan, finance the MTFP to 2025/26 whilst retaining usable balances of £1.523m.

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

‘Delete the recommendation contained in paragraph 12 (a) (i) and replace with :-

12 (a) (i) Council Tax increase of 1% which is solely the Adult Social Care Precept to help fund social care for 2022/23.’

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

meeting and there appeared:-

**For the Amendment** – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Cossins, Crumbie, Curry, Harker, Haszeldine, L. Hughes, Layton, Lucas, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, A. J. Scott and Wallis (16)

**Against the Amendment** – Councillors Allen, Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Willis and Wright (28)

**Abstentions** – Councillor Holroyd (1)

The Amendment was Lost.

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

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

**Against the Motion** – (0)

**Abstentions** – Councillor Haszeldine (1)

Motion Carried.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the Revenue MTFP as set out in Appendix 6 and the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 7, including the following, be approved:

- (i) Council Tax increase of 1.99% plus a 1% Adult Social Care Precept to help fund social care for 2022/23.
  - (ii) The Schedule of Charges as set out in Appendix 3.
  - (iii) Mainstreaming the ongoing services provided by the futures fund into the budget from 2025/26 onwards as set out in paragraph 71.
- (b) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Revenue Budget for 2022/23 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval be approved.
- (c) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Capital Budget for 2022/23 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval, be approved.

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

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

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

(d) To ensure investment in our assets is maintained.

## **61 DARLINGTON CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Council's Capital Strategy for 2022/23.

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

**RESOLVED** – That the Capital Strategy for 2022/23 – 2025/26, as appended at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved.

**REASONS** - (a) To provide a framework for capital investments.

(b) To ensure the Council adopts the Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2017.

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

## **62 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - MTFP 2022-23 TO 2025-26**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to proposals for the revenue budget, capital programme, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2022/23, in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan to 2025/26, and the 30 year Investment Plan, following consultation with Council tenants.

The submitted report stated that the Council was the largest provider of social housing in the borough, providing 5,275 homes to local residents, and outlined the ambitious programme to build new Council houses in Darlington. It was reported that the new build Council housing programme was funded through capital receipts from right to buy sales, grant funding from Homes England and through estimated borrowing of £15m.

The submitted report set out the key decisions for the HRA for 2022-23, which included proposed revenue expenditure of £25.448m, and a proposed capital programme of £32.98m.

It was stated that Councils had the discretion to increase rents each year by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%, which means for 2022-23 Members had the option to increase rents by up to 4.1%. Consideration was given to a 4.1% increase, a 2% increase, and a zero

increase, and taking into account the current economic pressures facing tenants and balancing this with the need to deliver the Council's ambitious capital and energy efficiency programmes, it was determined that an increase of 2% was to be recommended, or an average of £1.64 each week. It was also recommended to increase service charges by an appropriate inflationary amount.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That an average weekly rent increase of 2% for 2022-23 be implemented, giving an average social rent of £75.01 and affordable rent of £92.06.

(b) That garage rents and service charges are increased as shown in Table 1 of the submitted report.

(c) That the Revenue budget, as appended at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved.

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

(e) That the capital programme, as appended at Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved and released.

(f) That the Group Director of Operations be given delegated powers to proceed with new build schemes using the funding, as identified at paragraphs 23-25 of the submitted report.

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

## **63 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2022/23**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Council adopt the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2022/23 to 2024/25 relating to capital expenditure and Treasury Management activity, a policy statement relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision, and the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23.

The submitted report outlined the Council's Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 – 2024/25, and set out the expected treasury operations for this period. It was stated that the report fulfilled key legislative and guidance requirements.

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

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the Prudential Indicators and limits for 2022/23 to 2024/25, as summarised in Tables 1 of the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement (paragraphs 33 – 37 of the submitted report) be approved.

(c) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25, as summarised in paragraphs 41 to 69 of the submitted report, be approved.

(d) That the Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23, as contained in paragraphs 70 to 107 of the submitted report, be approved.

**REASONS - (a)** In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) guidance on investments.

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

(c) To approve a framework for officers to work within when making investment decisions.

#### **64 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2022/23**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to setting this Council's Council Tax for 2022/2023, which was required to be set before 11th March 2022.

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

**For the Motion** – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Bell, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Holroyd, L. Hughes, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Preston, Renton, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Willis and Wright. (43)

**Against the Motion** – None (0)

**Abstentions** – None (0)

**NOTE:** At the time that the vote was taken Councillors Haszeldine and Wallis had left the meeting.

Motion Carried.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for 2022/23 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act and relevant regulations:-

- |      |   |              |
|------|---|--------------|
| (i)  | the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils, which is its expenditure | £237,456,767 |
| (ii) | the aggregate of the amounts which the Council  |              |

|        |   |              |
|--------|---|--------------|
|        | estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act, which is its income   | £178,923,000 |
| (iii)  | the amount by which (i) exceeds (ii) calculated by the Council for the year in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement   | £58,533,767  |
| (iv)   | The amount at item 5(iii) above, divided by the council tax base in paragraph 13 below, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts)   | £1,698.38    |
| (v)    | the aggregate of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as in the attached <b>Appendix 1</b>   | £190,767     |
| (vi)   | the amount at 5(iv) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 5(v) above by the amount at paragraph 13 below, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept relates | £1,692.84    |
| (vii)  | That the basic council tax for 2022/23 calculated for dwellings in those areas that have parish precepts be as set out in <b>Appendix 1</b> , column 5  |              |
| (viii) | That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in <b>Appendix 2</b> as the amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings   |              |

(b) It be noted that for the year 2022/23 The Office of the Durham Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner has stated the following amounts in the precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown :-

|                  | A      | B      | C      | D      | E      | F      | G      | H      |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                  | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    |
| Police Authority | 160.16 | 186.85 | 213.55 | 240.24 | 293.63 | 347.01 | 400.40 | 480.48 |

(c) It be noted that for the year 2022/23 County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has stated the following amounts in the precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown: -

|                | A     | B     | C     | D      | E      | F      | G      | H      |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                | £ p   | £ p   | £ p   | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    | £ p    |
| Fire Authority | 73.12 | 85.31 | 97.50 | 109.69 | 134.06 | 158.44 | 182.82 | 219.38 |



- (d) The Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act hereby sets the amounts set out in **Appendix 3** as the amounts of council tax for 2022/23 for each of the categories of dwellings.

**REASON** - The recommendations are supported to set the Council Tax for the Council's area in accordance with statutory requirements.

## **65 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting approval of the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2022/2023 in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

The submitted report stated that the Localism Act 2011 required the Council to agree a written Pay Policy on an annual basis and publish specific information relating to the Council's highest and lowest paid employees.

**RESOLVED** – That the proposed Pay Policy 2022/23, as detailed at Appendix A of the submitted report, be approved, and arrangements be made to publish the Policy on the Council's intranet for public access.

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

## **66 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS 2023/24 - 2027/28**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the procurement routes for the appointment of the Council's External Auditors for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, and to request approval for the opting in of the national scheme.

The submitted report stated that the Council had previously opted into the 'appointing person' national auditor appointment arrangements established by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the period covering the accounts for 2018/19 to 2022/23, and that the PSAA was now undertaking procurement for the next accounting period covering the audits for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The submitted report outlined several reasons why the sector-wide procurement conducted by PSAA would produce better outcomes and would be less burdensome for the Council than a procurement undertaken locally, highlighted the deadlines to opt into the scheme, and reported on the recommendation made by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2022.

**RESOLVED** - That Darlington accepts the PSAA invitation to opt into the national scheme for the appointment of external auditors for the 5 years from 1 April 2023.

**REASON** - To ensure the Council has an appointed external auditor from 2023/24 onwards procured through the most efficient route.

## 67 DARLINGTON RAIL HERITAGE QUARTER

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Council release funding to enable the delivery of Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter (DRHQ).

The submitted report stated that the DRHQ is a major project that would invest in our rail heritage ahead of the bicentennial anniversary in 2025, to create a national visitor destination in Darlington. It was reported that heritage and cultural regeneration were now recognised as key ingredients in economic growth and that the DRHQ would complement the economic growth ambition of the Borough.

The submitted report provided an update on the background and strategic case for the project, the project objectives, what is included in the project, an update on approvals, leases, and acquisitions to deliver the project, and the delivery timetable and financial strategy. Members were advised that the project was now at a position for Council to consider the approvals required for the delivery of the project.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That £0.54m funded from grants and contributions from external bodies be approved and released.

(b) That £2.2m from the Indigenous Growth Fund be approved and released, and that the use of £4.6m from the Towns Fund be noted.

(c) That £5.11m of capital funding that will be financed through prudential borrowing from within the existing MTFP resources allocated for the Head of Steam be approved and released.

(d) That £1.6m of capital funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) & £0.3m from the Arts Council England (ACE), subject to successful applications, be approved and released. In the unlikely event that the bids are not successful then agree to underwrite the £1.9m of funding.

(e) That a further £1m, if the current project costs cannot be reduced further by value engineering, be released and underwritten.

**REASONS** - (a) To enable DRHQ to move forward to delivery, ensuring it is completed in time for the 2025 celebrations of 200 years of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

(b) DRHQ has strong links to the Council vision contributing to the economic growth of the town, and Northgate in particular, and will be a key venue for 2025 celebrations, which will put Darlington and the wider region on the world map being a place to be truly proud of, demonstrating the Council's commitment to valuing our heritage and culture.

**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW**

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**Council's Continued Response to COVID-19**

1. The Prime Minister announced the revoking of the legislation which was introduced in 2020 and provided the regulations and restrictions that were used to manage the pandemic and keep the public safe for the past 2 years. From 1 April all the regulations and restrictions will be removed with the with a new national "Living with COVID-19 plan" now introduced which sets out the principles that will now be used to inform the ongoing response to threat and impact of COVID-19.
2. This doesn't mean that COVID-19 has disappeared but instead we are now in a new phase of the pandemic where COVID-19 will now regarded in a similar way to other infectious respiratory diseases such as flu. As a local authority, Darlington Borough Council, will continue to support the NHS and UK Health Security Agency to maintain resilience through surveillance and the ongoing provision of the vaccination programme, particularly to those who are most vulnerable. As individuals we all need to continue to do our bit to help in managing the pandemic, be it through encouraging safer behaviours, such as hand washing, and practicing good respiratory hygiene, getting vaccinated when invited to do so and supporting others we know to get vaccinated.

**Strategic Transport**

3. The pandemic has changed travel behaviour and the recovery is varied across sectors. However, there is no doubt that bus patronage has been impacted and we will all need to work to encourage bus users back onto our bus services to ensure they remain sustainable.
4. The establishment of a Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership is a step towards addressing the challenges that the bus industry face and we will work with the Bus Operators and the Combined Authority, as the Transport Authority, to aide and promote that recovery.
5. The Government has announced that it will provide a further £150m to support bus services between April and October 2022. The funding will assist bus operators in running services as they develop new, effective, financially sustainable networks after the pandemic.
6. The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement will provide significant investment over the next 5 years to deliver projects across the Tees Valley that will improve our sustainable transport network and contribute to our climate change action plan. All the funding will be focussed on bus, rail, walking, cycling and other sustainable initiatives.

### **Darlington Station Improvement Project**

7. The Council and partners took another step forward in preparations for delivery of this project. The compulsory purchase order was confirmed, which secures the land for the project. However, we continue to recognise the impact on those people it affects, and we continue to work and support those people affected to secure acquisition by agreement and facilitate the acquisition of alternative properties.
8. The development work to deliver the project continue to be progressed with work being scheduled to commence later this year.

### **Darlington Railway Heritage Launch**

9. Thursday 3 March represented a real milestone for Darlington with the launch of the £35m Rail Heritage Quarter. The project will create one of the most exciting Heritage Visitor Attractions in the North of England and play a central role in regenerating the Northgate neighbourhood that it sits in. The unique collection of railway buildings will be restored and animated to tell the story of how the Stockton and Darlington Railway changed the world.

### **Great British Rail Headquarters**

10. Earlier this month the Council submitted its Expression of Interest for Darlington to be to be considered as the national headquarters for Great British Railways. The headquarters will be home primarily for corporate functions and needs to be in place by the time Great British Railways is established in the coming year. This national competition aims to identify a location outside of London with a rich railway heritage and strong links to the national network. The Expression of Interest is the first step in a four-stage selection process which should be concluded by summer 2022.

### **Cummins**

11. I had a very informative visit to Cummins, accompanied by Councillor Dulston and Ian Williams, when we were given a tour of their facilities, and in particular the development of Hydrogen engines for business and trucks. The announcement of the £14 million investment is good news and we will continue to work closely with them during the development of the site. This new facility which covers 738 m<sup>2</sup> will mean Cummins can develop and test a wide range of power technologies, including engines to operate on green hydrogen, renewable natural gas, or sustainable diesel. Its installation and testing capability will also extend to hydrogen fuel cell and battery electric powertrains. Ground preparation has already commenced, and it is anticipated the first phase to open for operations by May 2023.

### **Citizenship ceremonies**

12. It has been a pleasure to be able to attend the Citizenship Ceremonies again now the rules have relaxed, attending the ceremonies on 18 February and 18 March, and a great opportunity to welcome people from all over the world to our community.

### **Student Loans Company visit**

13. I was very impressed at a visit to the Student Loans Company in February, seeing their facilities and the opportunities available. This was followed up with an invite to meet in the Town Hall to meet with councillors and key officers to develop relationships and look at opportunities and support for care leavers and a new schools' outreach proposal. They are one of our biggest employers and it's important that we work together to support local people find secure employment opportunities.

### **Ukrainian Refugee Sponsorship**

14. We will do everything we can to help in the sponsorship between residents and refugees and await further information from government about the process and local authorities funding support.

### **High Sheriff Awards**

15. I attended, along with Councillor Dulston, the High Sheriff Awards held in Usha Historic House, a wonderful location. The awards were given predominantly to young people, which was a great tribute to those involved, particularly during COVID.

### **Climate Change**

16. The Cross Party Climate Change Working Group met for the first time in 2022, in February. Amongst the discussions, the group considered the importance of including adaptation alongside carbon reduction measures and has requested a demonstration of a system to record the impacts of severe weather events.
17. The climate change fund was established to help deliver on our climate emergency declaration and Portfolio Holders are to look at their services to see which additional projects this fund would be appropriate for.

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

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO**

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

**Community Safety**

**Safer Streets Programme**

2. Work is ongoing with regards to the three Safer Streets programmes. The majority of Safer Streets 1 is now complete; Safer Streets 2, all the additional cameras have been installed. The Safer Streets 3 project is also progressing which has a focus on violence and intimidation against women and girls in public places. A multi-agency group is progressing the areas of work covering education, engagement, marketing environmental improvements and multi-agency response team.
3. Further Home Office funds have been secured to open a multi-agency hub to support the violence against women and girls' agenda and for other community groups to have access to. Premises have been identified in Skinnergate and DBC Estates are progressing this.

**Civic Enforcement Service**

**Environmental Crime**

4. The back lanes project continues to extend into new streets: Wolsingham Terrace, Craig/Vine Street, Lansdowne Street and Eldon Street. Pilot areas have been a success and have largely remained clean and free of bins.
5. A case of prolific fly tipping was heard in court on 15 February 2022. The accused pleaded guilty to all three offences put forward. The Service is seeking a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) to which the accused contests and therefore sentencing and the CBO application will be heard on 17 May 2022. Publicity and media will take place following sentencing.

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

6. Civic Enforcement are working closely with businesses, CCTV and police in relation to recent increases in ASB in Darlington Town Centre, particularly around the Dolphin Centre and Cornmill Centre. Several young persons have been identified and interviewed, with a total of 5 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements, 3 warnings and one final warning issued, along with Banning Notices. Referrals for preventative work with the Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service have been completed and a good level of engagement noted.

7. A review of the Public Space Protection Order is underway, with a view of taking a report to Cabinet in June 2022.
8. File preparation is underway to apply to the Courts for a premises closure order for a residential address. Alongside this, an injunction application will be made following a successful closure, to prevent the occupant moving into another property within the ward area.

### **Trading Standards**

9. Trading Standards has seen an uptake in intellectual property (counterfeit) crime within and outside the Borough, particularly sales online and through the use of online marketplaces. Through effective partnership working and intelligence sharing, Trading Standards is able to monitor this activity and undertake enforcement action against the most prolific illegal traders as required.
10. Trading Standards continues to benefit from the relatively high profile the service has within our community. There has been an increase in the number of direct reports of illegal trading via the online reporting form on the DBC Trading Standards page, as well as receiving a good flow of requests for service from traders seeking legal compliance advice. Whilst it is important that consumers and traders make use of the Citizens Advice Consumer Service helpline, so that important intelligence is captured nationally, it is reassuring to note that Trading Standards' partnership with the local community is strong.

### **Private Sector Housing**

#### **Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)**

11. As part of the project to improve the Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, Private Sector Housing have identified approximately 100 non-compliant properties across Darlington. Many landlords have taken action to comply with the regulations and where landlords have failed to engage, compliance notices have been served. The main aspect of this project is to contact and engage non-compliant residential landlords to ensure compliance with the regulations.

#### **Energy Awareness sessions**

12. Private Sector Housing are currently working with Northern PowerGrid and the Green Doctor Team to deliver 32 energy awareness sessions at various hubs around Darlington to be held between March and May. These sessions will advise residents in relation to how they can reduce their energy bills, make their homes warmer by being more energy efficient, maximise their income and potentially access grants and other support following the rise in energy costs in April 2022.



## **Community Resilience**

### **Darlington Open Water Safety Group**

13. The Community Resilience Officer has commenced drafting a water safety policy for the group to consider. Input will be sought from DBC departments and external partners.
14. Zurich (DBC insurers) have been tasked to conduct a review of the Council's water safety policies/procedures. This will assist in identifying any potential gaps and implement best practice learnt from previous reviews. It is anticipated the review will take place towards the end of April 2022.

## **Community Cohesion**

15. The first meeting of a Community Safety Partnership Cohesion Group was held on 11 February 2022. The group is required to implement actions contained within the current Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-2026: Priority 4 Building Strong and Cohesive Communities.

## **PREVENT / CONTEST**

16. The Publicly Accessible Locations (PALs) pilot will begin on 1 April 2022 ahead of future legislative requirements. The pilot will enable us and other authorities across the North East prepare and assess public locations for the risks associated with the potential for terrorist activity. In preparation for this, two workshop sessions were held in March. The Council has the support of Graham Wakeman, Counter-Terrorism Security Advisor, for the duration of the pilot.

## **Licensing**

### **Pavement Cafes**

17. The Business and Planning Act legislation, which allows a streamlined process for Pavement Café licences has been extended until September 2022, however, a recent government circulation indicated they would like to see this legislation be made permanent. 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. On 8 March 2022, Licensing presented a draft of the reviewed Pavement Café Policy to the Licensing Committee, which was approved for public consultation. The consultation will remain open until 1 May 2022.

## **Taxis**

18. COVID-19 restrictions have led to 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. There are early indications that drivers are returning to the trade, however, it will take some time to recover from the loss of over 100 licensed drivers from the period preceding COVID-19 restrictions.

19. The trade sought an increase in taxi fares due to the financial pressures they are under and the Licensing Committee approved this increase, which will see the average fare for a 2 mile day time journey rise from £5.80 to £6.30. The fare increase was subject to a statutory public notice in a local paper for 14 days, with no objections received. Therefore, the increase will take effect in April 2022, following the recalibration of taxi metres and a new table of fares printed for each vehicle.
20. Licensing are aware of the problem with availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles. Whilst there are many reasons for this, we continue to work with all stakeholders to improve the situation wherever possible. It will require legislative changes to mandate that all vehicles are wheelchair accessible. The newly published 'Levelling Up White Paper' has created an opportunity for this to be discussed widely, as it seeks to introduce taxi licensing into our regional transport plan.
21. A new online automated taxi licensing application system is in the final testing stages before hopefully going live in April/May 2022. Delays in the system have been beyond the control of the Council, but when introduced it will make the process faster and more efficient without compromising public safety.

#### **Caravan Sites**

22. New regulations came into effect in 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 in conjunction with Private Sector Housing, are currently assessing these applications following consultation with key partners. A register of fit and proper persons will be made available on the Council's website, as required by the regulations.

#### **New HMRC Requirements**

23. From 4 April 2022 any person applying for, or renewing, a taxi driver licence, taxi operator licence or a scrap metal licence, will be required to prove they are registered to pay tax with the HMRC. This requires a code generated by them and an application cannot be processed without that verification. All affected licence holders have been sent letters and an information campaign has been developed with the communications team.

**Crime and Disorder**

24.

| Darlington | Pre-COVID<br>01.04.2019-<br>31.01.2020 | 01.04.2021-<br>31.01.2022 | % Increase/decrease |
|------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Crime      | 10654                                  | 9186                      | -14%                |
| Incidents  | 27470                                  | 25264                     | -8%                 |
| ASB        | 3118                                   | 2763                      | -11%                |

25.

| DARLINGTON<br>TOWN CENTRE | Pre-COVID<br>01.04.2019-<br>31.01.2020 | 01.04.2021-<br>31.01.2022 | % Increase/decrease |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Crime                     | 1670                                   | 1176                      | -29%                |
| Incidents                 | 2696                                   | 2118                      | -28%                |
| ASB                       | 440                                    | 239                       | -45%                |

**Councillor Jonathan Dulston  
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Operational Services**

2. Adult Social Care teams remain incredibly busy with referrals through the Adult Contact team this is not unusual for this time of the year when demand can be higher due to winter pressures such as sickness and covid however this is being managed.
3. We are using the Workforce recruitment and retention fund to support additional hours and agency cover.
4. There is some absence due to Covid infections within the ASC teams but low numbers, and majority of staff continue to work from home if well whilst isolating.
5. County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust ( Darlington Memorial Hospital ) maintain bed availability with no delays (due to adult social care) in discharges of people returning home.
6. Referrals for people requiring reablement support following discharge from hospital remain constant but this is managed through daily multi-disciplinary meetings to discuss and agree each person's discharge pathway.
7. The CCG commissioned rehab beds at Ventress will cease being utilised by end of March and replaced with Rydal Care.

**Workforce Challenges**

8. There has been a number of vacancies within the Adult Contact Team. However, a recruitment campaign is underway and a communication strategy to develop a greater awareness of adult social care services.
9. The Government have launched "**Made with Care**", a new social care recruitment campaign in England to encourage many more people to pursue careers in social care. It's estimated there will be almost half-a-million extra job opportunities in adult social care by 2035 and more than 105,000 vacancies to be filled. This is set to run until April 2022 and will be utilised to support the local campaign.

10. There is a double page spread in the March edition of One Darlington. This will focus on the Adult Contact Team ( the team where all referrals for adult social care are made). It will include information on:
  - (a) The team – what do they do, who are they here for, how do people get in touch
  - (b) Case study
  - (c) Testimonials – quotes from team member(s) / service user(s)
  - (d) Photos
  - (e) Signpost re recruitment

### **Commissioning and Contracts**

11. Contracts and Commissioning staff continue to support the residential care homes to ensure that they are fully compliant with the current Covid 19 Regulations. Care homes have been supported to ensure that all care staff who were able to self-certify in respect of non-uptake of the Covid 19 vaccine, had a formal Covid 19 Exemption Pass in place by the 24 December 2021 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 vaccine. As of 13 February, 88% of all residents in care homes had received the booster vaccine. 64% of all care home staff had also received the booster vaccine with further work being planned by Darlington’s Primary Care Network.
12. A change to the Government’s intention for all care workers to be fully vaccinated as a condition of their employment has meant that staff in domiciliary care, supported living and extra care are no longer required to have had both doses of the Covid vaccine.
13. The Government recently allocated a further £626,465 to the Council through the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (Round 2). This in addition to the initial allocation in Round 1 of £339, 335. A total of £965,800 has now been allocated to the Council with funds that must be spent on eligible activity up to 31 March 2022. 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 Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (Rounds 1 and 2) are paid in instalments in November 2021 through to February 2022.
14. The funds received from the Government have been targeted towards the domiciliary care and care home sectors by the Council. These sectors continue to experience staff capacity issues due to Covid infections staff absences and recruitment and retention including supporting contingency arrangements in the domiciliary care sector. The funds will continue to support these sectors to facilitate timely discharge from hospitals and support local people with care needs in the community.
15. Central Government has confirmed additional funding to support the delivery of accommodation-based support duties arising from the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) for 2022/23. The Council will receive £222, 980 to support a number accommodation schemes and support services which aim to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This funding will ensure that services in Darlington are sustained in the longer term.

## **Climate Change**

16. We continue to promote awareness of climate change within the teams. The theme of the month is to recycle household waste.

## **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership**

17. Statutory Safeguarding Partners met in January and were updated on the work of the sub-groups which continue to meet virtually and drive forward the work of the partnership. Adult safeguarding data for the 2nd quarter period of 2021/22 provided partners with assurance that there were no real exceptions or problems being highlighted and discussed the benefit of having trend data over several years to help understand where there are any continuing or emerging trends.

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

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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

**School Admission Arrangements**

2. Cabinet have approved the Local Authority's admission arrangements for the three maintained primary schools in Darlington for 4 for the 2023/24 academic year: and the administration of in-year applications thereafter.

**Early Intervention and Front Door**

3. There has been an increase in referrals to social care and domestic violence and family dysfunction are identified as particular areas of concern in the majority of the concerns for children. The issues that families are facing are often complex and a RAG rating system has been implemented; this helps identify the level of risk and the urgency of response required. This system allows for a rationale as to why a concern requires the time response that it has been allocated and allows the team to prioritise referrals to social care swiftly and without delay.
4. The Weekly Referral Meeting attended by senior leaders continues to provide oversight of referrals and in light of the increase it is important to understand the appropriateness of decision making. At present senior leaders are satisfied that the right service is being provided to children and their families. The Weekly Referral Meeting has seen the first of our external partners join us in February, this has proven to be successful with all feeling there is lots to learn from one another and the opportunity strengthens relationships.
5. The Children's Initial Advice Team is now fully staffed with permanent employees, the team is stable and settled.

**Building Stronger Families Service**

6. The team are leading on early help assessments, and supporting those led by external partners through health and education, with relational practice being at the core of the support offer. A high number of family network meetings are being facilitated within family homes and the children's centres, enabling families to draw on and build on existing strengths to devise their own restorative family plans. The service is opening up with more targeted groups following the pandemic, and these include the Inspire Program to support those who have experienced domestic abuse, with a waiting list for this popular rolling program. There is also a constant demand for the Reducing Parental Conflict Program, for those parents who are experiencing conflict without domestic abuse, and this is a factor in a high number of early help assessments being delivered. Young people are attending weekly for self-esteem and confidence work through the Being Me and I am Me

group, and this is successful in helping them make better life choices and decisions, and Theraplay has now started again, which is for all children and parent's with attachment difficulties, but especially well suited to children with Autism and ADHD, where attachment related interaction is difficult.

7. McNay Street are working closely with Corporation Road School to support the start of a community hub for the Northgate area, with the aim of supporting those hard to reach families in the area, promoting service and resource awareness, and ensuring accessibility for all.

### **Young People's Engagement and Justice Service**

8. The service continues to be very busy with various groups and activities. The Victim Support Group consists of 4 vulnerable young people between the ages of 9 and 15; in the main they are being supported following harm by way of sexual abuse. The group are about to commence the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Other activities have included a session at the climbing wall, a hike, geo-caching, an educational visit to Beamish, Christmas card making and outdoor cooking using the burners. These activities have helped create a strong bond within the group which in turn will prepare them for the teamwork required for the Award going forward. The aim of establishing the group is to enable the young people to support each other on their journey of recovery.
9. Work is underway on the development of the Community Resolution offer and a pilot will commence in early March, data will be received from the Police on a monthly basis detailing those young people who have been issued with a community resolution in that period. The service will make contact with these young people to offer support, for those young people who are already open to services, contact will be made with the lead professional to offer advice/guidance and consultation on potential intervention that the service themselves may wish to consider to address the behaviour.
10. Once again used bicycles donated to the service by Durham Constabulary, DBC staff and members of the public have been delivered to families across the borough. These bikes have been worked on by young people involved with the service resulting in bicycles being brought back to an as-new standard. A total of 11 bicycles were delivered to 8 families; any surplus bicycles will be offered to local primary schools.
11. The Anti-Social Behaviour pathway has received 8 referrals from the Civic Enforcement Team and as a result of this a 7 week programme has been devised.

### **Safeguarding Assessment and Looked After Through Care**

#### **Corporate Parenting Panel**

12. The Panel met for a formal meeting on 15 February 2022. There were discussions about:
  - (a) Performance data for Looked After children and Care Leavers
  - (b) Update on the care Leavers Covenant
  - (c) Update on activities care leavers have been involved with since Christmas

- (d) The Mockingbird Project – a new fostering initiative for Darlington
- (e) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People and the establishment of a steering group to drive good practice

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

13. At the end of January 2022 there were:

- (a) 281 children being supported through a child in need plan, which is a reduction from 331 at year end 2020/21.
- (b) 89 children were subject to child protection plans, which is a slight increase from 87 at year end 2020/21.
- (c) 268 children in care, 3 of whom are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; this 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 Service and Lifestages Disabled Children’s Team**

- 14. At the end of January 2022 there were 53 mainstream foster carers and 21 fully approved connected foster carers. There were also 7 temporary approved connected foster carers and a further 3 carers where children were not in placement. A total of 10 connected foster carer assessment were ongoing. There were 2 prospective mainstream foster carers in Stage 1 of the assessment process, and 6 in Stage 2. On 11 January 2022, 64 children and young people were placed with mainstream foster carers and 41 children and young people were placed with connected carers (this includes fully approved and temporary approved connected foster carers).
- 15. Young people are supported to consider “Staying Put” with their previous foster carers when they reach adulthood, and at the end of January 2022, 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.
- 16. 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. A digital marketing officer has recently been appointed and will be supporting Fostering and Supported Lodgings with their marketing work. There are plans to commission some photographs and videos to promote the service, and work is ongoing to have a advertising campaign in April on local buses and at bus stops. Other advertising screens in the town are also being considered.
- 17. On 11 February 2022, there were 7 young people cared for across the three residential children’s homes, which is an increase. 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 84 per cent.

18. At the end of January 2022, 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**

19. Firthmoor Primary School was inspected by Ofsted on 8 and 9 December 2021 and continues to be judged a "Good" school. Inspectors recognised the strong sense of community at Firthmoor Primary. Pupils love the school and feel proud to be part of it and staff are ambitious for all pupils and pupils achieve well as a result.
20. The Schools Forum met on 8 March. The Forum was given an update on the current year budget. The Forum also noted the high needs budget and the early years hourly rates for 2022/23.

### **Youth Unemployment**

21. The 18–24-year-old claimant count continues to fall and in January 2022 stood at 8.0 per cent (580 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 8.0 per cent remains above the North-East average of 6.2 per cent and the Great Britain average of 5.1 per cent, both of which have also seen improvements since March 2021. Darlington has the second lowest youth claimant rate in the Tees Valley, where claimant counts range from 7.2 per cent (Redcar and Cleveland) to 9.6 per cent (Hartlepool).
23. Darlington Borough Council YEI is the most successful of all the consortium of Tees Valley providers, and had achieved:
  - 960 – Total number of starts onto programme
  - 884 – Positive Outcomes (education or job, 74 per cent into job)
24. In Q4 2021, the number of positive outcomes was 87, and in the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 months of Q1 2022 it is 100, 97 per cent are into jobs. This has been possible by engaging with employers to deliver bespoke pre-employment training and guaranteeing interviews for participants; a lot have been for Kickstart opportunities. One employer YEI exclusively worked with, Click Digital Solutions, have employed 70 young people from Darlington in the last 6 months. Other employers YEI are working with include EE and Jacobs on long term recruitment programmes.

### **Children's Commissioning and Contracts**

25. Darlington have been proactively involved in a number of regional commissioning and procurement exercises, including the provision of children's advocacy services effective

from 1 April 2022 and the provision of Independent Foster Agency care which is due to go out to procurement imminently with a new contract commencing 1 July 2022.

### **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP)**

26. Statutory Safeguarding Partners met in January and were updated on the work of the sub-groups which continue to meet virtually and drive forward the work of the partnership. Child safeguarding data for the 2nd quarter period of 2021/22 provided partners with assurance that there were no real exceptions or problems being highlighted and discussed the benefit of having trend data over several years to help understand where there are any continuing or emerging trends. Partners agreed, whilst the data provided a snapshot of that particular quarter period, it did not provide an overview of the whole system and have requested the Quality Assurance and Performance Group ensure all future reporting provides trend data and assurance that safeguarding systems and processes are working.

### **Climate Change**

27. We continue to promote awareness of climate change within the teams. The theme of the month is to recycle household waste.

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

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

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

**Planning and Development Management**

2. The Planning Enforcement/Compliance Service currently has 87 planning enforcement cases under investigation and 81 cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of September.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 1271 applications have been received of which 44 are categorised as major. 926 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.
4. Final negotiations have now concluded regarding the applications at the Railway Quarter with Historic England and other interest groups. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent has now been granted
5. 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 number of applications already in the system which were awaiting the approval of the Local Plan. The Local Plan is now approved. Whilst it is anticipated that this will result in a significant number of applications for housing, all major developers have been contacted to explain that it is incumbent on them to clarify that their schemes comply with the requirements of the Local Plan before any decisions are taken.
6. Notices under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act [untidy land and buildings] have been served on a property in Skinnergate and Northgate House.

**Local Plan**

7. As Members will be aware, following receipt of a favourable report from the independent planning inspector, the Council adopted the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 on 17 February 2022. The plan now carries full weight in the consideration of planning applications and replaces the 'saved' policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997 (updated 2001) and the Darlington Core Strategy (2011).
8. All newly adopted plans are subject to a 6-week challenge period (until 1 April 2022) where an application can be made to the High Court to challenge any procedural deficiencies in the plan but does not enable challenge of specific proposals.
9. Work has commenced on the preparation of a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to accompany the Local Plan including Design Codes for Faverdale and

Skerningham Garden Villages, an updated Design of New Development SPD and an updated Planning Obligations SPD.

### **Climate Change**

10. Milestones for the coming financial year are almost all in place and these are what will be reported against in July and January. We have been slightly delayed by the Christmas and New Year break.
11. Our Climate Change Officer has also, sadly, decided that the role is not for her so has left. As she was still within her probationary period, HR has given us permission to go back to the second-choice candidate interviewed last year. We have made an offer and are waiting on references.
12. The feasibility study report on two potential district heat networks has been finalised. We are examining the findings of that report and will make recommendations to Council in due course.

### **Environmental Health**

13. The Environmental Health Section has responded to 1239 requests for service in Quarter 3 2021/2022. The main categories of these requests are:
  - (a) Food - 116
  - (b) Licensing - 81
  - (c) Noise -149
  - (d) Planning Enquiries - 91
  - (e) Refuse - 82
  - (f) Pest - 199
  - (g) Personal Searches - 326
14. Officers have recently taken legal action against a sandwich shop in relation to food hygiene offences. The business was visited as part of a routine inspection programme and was prosecuted due to the conditions found and the aggregating fact that the owner has a poor history of compliance.

**Business owner: Mr Jeffrey Savage**

**Business: Salt and Pepper**

**Address: 32 Larchfield Street, DL3 7DH**

15. The defendant pleaded guilty to the following charges and was fined £120 per offence, i.e. a total of £360. He was also ordered to pay a £36 victim surcharge and £475 towards DBC's costs.
  - (a) The premises was not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter I Para 1, contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety & Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
  - (b) Equipment in the premises was not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter V Para1(a) contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety &



### Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

- (c) The defendant failed to implement a food safety system based on the principles of hazard analysis as required by Regulation (EC) 852/2004, Article 5 paragraph 1, contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
16. Officers in Environmental Health recently were involved in a drinking water safety incident. Filter backwash water had entered the end water supply at the Broken Scar Treatment Works operated by Northumbrian Water in Darlington due a presumptive failure of a backwash water pump and non-return valve at around 20:30 on the evening of 31/01/22 and continued for a period of around 25 minutes.
17. This led to a volume of around 2 million litres of potentially contaminated water (within a volume of around 17 million litres) entering the final water outlet well.
18. Analysis showed 31,000 Darlington properties were affected by this incident. Environmental Health and UKHPA (Public Health) were informed immediately, and an Incident Management Team was formed. A Boil Water Notice (BWN) was issued (belatedly by NWL) and meetings were held over three days to ensure enough samples were taken to be satisfied that the BWN could be lifted. Results indicated that no contamination occurred as a result of the incident and that BWN was issued as a precaution. Officers helped to identify vulnerable businesses and advised commercial premises on compliance with the BWN.

### **Business Investment**

19. Since the beginning of the year, the Council has been administering further covid-related grant support schemes for local businesses. Almost £1m grant funding has been distributed to businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors, as well as other businesses impacted by the Omicron variant. In addition to specific omicron support grants, the Council have also provided a range of enterprise and investment grants and support to those business impacted by extended restrictions in 2021. The total value of Covid-19 financial support grants awarded to Darlington businesses between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and January 2022 is £45,077,565.
20. In February, the Government launched a competition to determine a new HQ location for the Great British Railway, a new public body to integrate the railways and deliver passenger-focused travel with simpler, modern fares and reliable services. Darlington has submitted a proposal based not only on the town's railway heritage, but coupled with the inventiveness and innovative characteristics, as well as the high levels of connectivity – both physical and virtual. The winning bid will be selected in Summer 2022.
21. The number of business enquiries received continues to rise, as business confidence returns following the lifting of all covid restrictions. The main areas of interest are land availability and town centre retail/leisure space.

### **Darlington Towns Fund**

22. A business case has been completed for each of the nine Towns Fund intervention projects and business case summaries were submitted to Government following agreement by the

Towns Board. Three of the summary documents were submitted in July 2021, agreed and initial funding released. The remaining six were submitted at the end of November 2021. Agreement to these has been received from government and approval given for release of 2021/22 funding.

23. The Northern Echo building has now been acquired by DBC and the Adult Skills project is progressing into design, led by our appointed architect. The T Levels project at Darlington College is progressing into procurement of the main contractor.

#### **Town Centre Developments**

24. Preparatory works continues for Phase 2 for the redevelopment of the Indoor Market. Plans for the development of new toilets, entrance area, new coffee shop and vaults bar have been finalised and tendering has commenced. It is anticipated that work should commence in May 2022.
25. Skinnergate residential development is progressing. The development team has now been finalised with some outstanding detailed work for the listed building being the remaining piece of work to be completed. Once this heritage pre condition has been satisfactorily completed work to demolish the existing buildings will commence in June 2022.

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

**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Public Health**

**Overview**

2. The legislation which introduced the raft of different regulations and measures that were applied to manage the pandemic for the past 2 years now being revoked means that COVID-19 will now be managed in a similar way to other infectious diseases such as flu.
3. Restrictions such as the legal duty to self-isolate for those who test positive for coronavirus and their close contacts is no longer in place, contact tracing of positive cases and the universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing programme for the public has now been withdrawn.
4. Restrictions in schools, colleges and workplaces have been removed and measures in health and social care are being reviewed and revised.
5. COVID-19 will remain part of daily life but will now be managed through applying the principles of the National Living With COVID-19 plan. This includes maximising vaccine uptake particularly in those most vulnerable to the disease, encouraging safer behaviours including continuing hand and respiratory hygiene and staying at home if they become ill and the deployment of new treatments provided by the NHS.
6. The Council will continue to play a key role in the implementation of the plan locally including encouraging safer behaviours, supporting vulnerable people, and managing any local outbreak of COVID-19 using existing health protection frameworks.
7. The Council will continue to work with partners including UKHSA, the LRF and the NHS in planning for contingencies such as any resurgence COVID-19 or new variants to provide a proportionate local response.

**Hospital activity**

8. The latest hospital data shows that local hospital bed occupancy and admissions for patients with COVID-19 has been reducing since my last report. There are fewer patients in hospital with COVID 19 in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and fewer patients in ICU. Between 7 February 2022 and 13 February 2022, 92 went into hospital with coronavirus. This shows a decrease of -33.3% compared to the previous 7 days.

9. The numbers of COVID inpatients has continued to reduce from its peak in January with 78 patients in hospital across County Durham and Darlington on 21 February, a 20% reduction compared with the previous week.

### **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 in well uses and connected spaces such as at Firtmoor Community Centre.
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 85.5% of all eligible having had a first dose, 80.4% 2nd dose and 64% having booster. This corresponds to 227,369 doses of vaccine being given in Darlington since January 2021 which includes 63,315 booster doses given since September 2021.
14. The uptake of those of school age (12-15 years) who are eligible continues to improve with 61.8 per cent having received their first vaccination since the programme commenced in the autumn school term. This compares to the uptake nationally of 55.8 per cent since the programme was opened to them this summer. The programme for the provision of second doses for this group that commenced in the terms after Christmas shows good uptake with 24.5 percent of all those eligible now having received their second dose.
15. Following the recommendations from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisations the Government has announced a non-urgent offer of vaccination to all healthy 5- to 11-year-olds of 2 doses of vaccine in the coming months. This will not displace the delivery of other non-COVID-19 childhood vaccinations, such as MMR and HPV vaccinations which have been affected by the pandemic.

### **Community Testing & Community Collect**

16. As of early January 2022, the Council had directly issued 13,141 click and collect kits with a total of 130,396 individual tests being provided across all sites in the borough.
17. Our click and collect community testing service has been available from all the sites in the borough right up to the official end of the programme. This ensured that Darlington residents had access to testing to help keep them and their families safe during the worst phases of the pandemic. Darlington was one of the first local authorities in the country to roll out mass community testing and I am proud that Darlington Borough Council played its part in protecting our communities.

## **Health and Well Being Board**

18. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 17 March 2022. The main discussion items included an update on the Community Transformation Tees Valley and an update from Tees Valley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group on the Integrated Care System.
19. Other issues considered at the meeting included the Primary Care Network Living Well Service and an update from the UK Health Security Agency.

## **Housing Services**

20. We have welcomed our first two families under the Afghanistan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP) in January and February. As Members will recall, we have made a pledge to resettle four families in Darlington and we are currently waiting for an appropriate family match for the remaining two properties we have offered.
21. Once families arrive in Darlington, they receive a comprehensive integration support package as they start their lives in the UK, led by our specialist Housing Refugee Support Officers. Darlington's partnership working has already achieved fantastic results with the newly arrived families. All adults and children are accessing health services, education and employment routes. They are all very capable and motivated, have expressed their wishes to integrate into our community and have praised Darlington for their support.
22. Following the reopening of our sheltered, extra care and good neighbour schemes following the Covid-19 pandemic, our Lifeline staff have recently undertaken a number of engagement sessions with tenants. These sessions have taken place at Havelock Street, Rockwell House, Tennyson Gardens, Linden Court, Bank Top and Park Place.
23. A range of issues and suggestions for service improvements were discussed including:
  - (a) A request for funding for communal tablet PCs at Havelock Street.
  - (b) A tenant survey to be arranged around the scooter store at Rockwell House, following some issues raised by the tenants.
  - (c) A request for funding for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations at Tennyson Gardens.
  - (d) A request for a wider range of activities in the communal area at Linden Court and refurbishment of the outside benches.
  - (e) Discussions around nuisance parking, littering, dog fouling and other reports of anti-social behaviour. Litter picks have been arranged and an increase in Police patrols has had a positive impact.
24. Tenant engagement at all of our schemes is an important part of the decision-making process that forms the basis of our Customer Engagement Strategy in improving the health and well-being of our tenants.

25. Our Housing Services team continue to fully support residents to pay their rent and sustain their tenancies through income maximisation and, when appropriate, enforcement action. Since April 2021 over £21.5 million has been collected towards rent and arrears with weekly collection rates over 96%. In addition, tenants have been awarded over £93,000 in Northumbrian Water Social Housing Tariff grants in 2021-22 through support offered by Tenancy Sustainment Officers.

### **New Build**

26. Our new Council house building programme continues to go from strength to strength and as with all our previous new build schemes, our new Council homes continue to be very popular with residents and are in high demand, with properties built to a high quality and specification. I recently undertook a visit to our newest council properties at Lancaster Close. New tenants have started to move in this month, with the remaining 32 properties on this site due for completion by May.
27. Construction work has also starting on the Sherbourne Close (phase 2) site. This site will provide 14 additional and much needed new homes, including 8 apartments, 5 houses and one larger property for Children's Services.
28. I am also pleased to confirm that, following a successful bid for funding, Homes England has confirmed that they will be contributing £585,000 towards this project. Construction is due to be completed in early 2023.

### **Climate Change**

29. I am pleased to report that our Housing Services team has been successful in bidding for £290,000 of funding from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This additional money will be used to fund a full package of measures to improve the energy efficiency of 23 Council properties, including:
  - (a) New external wall and cavity wall insulation.
  - (b) New loft insulation.
  - (c) New double glazed windows.
  - (d) Solar PV panels.
30. The 23 properties identified as benefitting from these measures will be those that can achieve the largest carbon reductions and the biggest reductions in tenant's energy bills.

### **Dolphin Centre**

31. The event programme continues to recover following Covid welcoming new events such as the International Dance Teachers Association Dance Competition which attracted 200 young dancers and 300 spectators from all over the North East in early February.
32. February was incredibly busy in all business areas including family favourites featured within February Half Term such as swimming, bowling and soft play. The bowling alley has been very well attended and despite opening into the new financial year with restrictions, it is hitting business plan targets and contributing to increased footfall in catering services.

33. Gym membership has increased by 50 % since the Dolphin Centre re-opened with the total members reported in February being 1,550.
34. The team are currently planning the Dolphin Centre's 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations for November with a programme of events and activities starting in summer.

#### **Holiday Activity Fund**

35. The plan of sessions for the Holiday Activity Fund programmes in 2022 are being finalised. The first sessions will take place during the February half-term week and take up is already good. Over 40 programmes are being planned throughout the year, aiming to engage with 3,000 children aged 5-16 years old who are entitled to free school meals.

#### **Tackling Inequalities Funding (Sport England)**

36. Three applications have so far been submitted for the above funding from Skerne Park Community Association (£9,400), Red Balloons Mental Health Support (£9,530) and Darlington Table Tennis Academy (£650). Talks are ongoing with Downs Syndrome North-East to support them in submitting an application.

#### **Sheltered Housing Project**

37. The Move More team have started delivering sessions to the sheltered housing schemes, outside at first and now inside as restrictions have lifted. The programme has engaged 108 residents from the sheltered housing schemes within the town. The gentle activity sessions are offered to all residents and there are 13 sessions set-up weekly. The majority of the residents are aged 60 years plus. The activity sessions had 1,199 attendances in 2021.



**Councillor Kevin Nicholson**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing**

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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

**Highway Maintenance Programme**

2. Cabinet have approved a capital investment of £2.175million in addition to the revenue funding allocated through the MTFP in 2022/23 to improve the condition of our highway network. Where possible, recycling methods will be used. These methods have prevented 4000 tonnes of road material from Darlington going to landfill in the last three years.
3. Highway maintenance schemes are ongoing with footway works at Clifton Road and resurfacing at A167 Croft Road and A68 Rotary Way, with a further resurfacing scheme due to start at Lingfield Way. This is in addition to footway schemes recently completed at Greenhill Road, Heighington and The Wayside, Hurworth.

**Highway Improvement Schemes**

**Woodland Road LCWIP**

4. Work on the first phase of the walking and cycling route linking West Park to the town centre via Cockerton continues 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).
5. A Public Inquiry is being held to consider objections to the proposed changes to Duke Street. The outcome of the inquiry will determine the final scheme.

**A68 Transport Improvement**

6. The A68 is one of the busiest roads in Darlington and the corridor from the motorway to the town centre is recognised as one that has numerous transport issues. A series of proposals look to tackle congestion, make public transport more reliable and make it safer and more attractive to cycle and walk.
7. The proposals developed include new larger roundabouts to replace existing mini roundabouts, whilst improving pedestrian and cycling provision. The scheme does require some land and one Council property, which we are fully aware of the sensitivities around, and we are working with the resident and those other residents directly impacted.

8. The scheme does have significant benefits and would reduce journey times along the corridor in the peak hours by approx. five minutes. It is designed to accommodate the additional traffic from proposed housing developments to the north and west improving the infrastructure for the town as we seek to secure more economic growth for the Borough.
9. A public consultation which included events at Cockerton Club has now closed. Officers are analysing all of the points raised and examining options. Ward councillors and residents will be kept updated on the next stages in the considerations of these schemes.
10. Cabinet have approved a programme of transport and road safety projects for 2022/23. This includes £227m over the next five years from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement which will deliver projects across the Tees Valley to improve our sustainable transport network.
11. The transport programme comprises schemes to address road safety, network and speed management, parking and sustainable travel. This includes the introduction of 25 electric vehicle charging points in our car parks over the coming year. In addition, 20mph schemes for the Hurworth and Mount Pleasant Primary Schools will be constructed and design of 20mph schemes for the Primary Schools of Reid Street, St. Bede's Catholic and St. Augustine's Catholic and the Federation of Abbey Schools will take place.

### **Head of Steam**

12. In February I am pleased to say both Cabinet and Council approved funding for Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter, a £35m scheme. The development will transform the DRHQ into a major visitor attraction by 2024 so that it can be a central part of the bicentenary events of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) in 2025. Essential improvements will be undertaken to a number of significantly historic buildings on the site, linking them together to create a cluster of attractions including the Skerne Bridge, the oldest working railway bridge in the world. Digital and technological investment will bring history to life and there will be a new immersive ride experience only seen at theme parks. The DRHQ will have a café and shop, themed play area, show field, a new live engineering building, temporary exhibition space, archive and extended car parking, all of which attract all generations to visit for years to come.

### **Libraries**

13. To allow building works to progress, library services at Darlington's Crown Street Library have relocated to the East Street side of the building where we are offering a limited service comprising of Select and Collect, Limited Browsing, Limited Public PC's, and Limited Study Space. The Centre for Local Studies remains open with a small amount of reference stock available, and the Art Gallery is open for Junior events and activities to take place. Customers can access the building from the East Street original entrance or through the lift entrance on Priestgate. The popular Home Delivery Service is still running and the branch at Cockerton remains open.

### **Hippodrome**

14. The Hippodrome has taken part in the National Lottery's 'Love Your Local Theatre' campaign. The Lottery subsidised over 150,000 tickets at theatres across the UK as a thank you for the £30million players raise each week for good causes. The Hippodrome was allocated £16,000 and when customers bought a ticket for a performance in March, they received another free ticket courtesy of the National Lottery.

### **Creative Darlington**

15. Creative Darlington supported Laura Degnan and Chris Bradburn's film-making work with both the Grass Roots and Community Arts Project in Darlington in February 2022. Middlesbrough-based Chris recently set up a freelance video editing business and is keen to use his business to champion neurodiversity and both Darlington groups will receive copies of their films to celebrate their work.

### **Town Centre Partnership and Events**

16. Darlington's first Light event took place between 1-6 February 2022, working with local businesses, artists and Darlington College to install eight pieces, which were very well received by visitors and encouraged movement around the town centre.
17. The Events Team have been programming a full schedule of events throughout 2022 and this programme will be launched via the One Darlington Magazine.

### **Environmental Services**

18. Renewal emails and letters have been sent to the 9,200 subscribers to the Garden Waste scheme inviting them to renew for 2022. We are also hoping for further new subscribers to the service. All the garden waste collected is composted and reused on farmland.

**Councillor Andy Keir**  
**Local Services Portfolio**

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

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

**Capital Projects and Design Services Management**

2. The Council's capital programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered:
  - (a) Design work is progressing on a number of schemes. The Darlington Station Gateway East and West scheme Compulsory Purchase Order has been confirmed following a Public Inquiry but work is still ongoing to try and acquire land by agreement. The planning application for the Railway Heritage Quarter scheme was approved and the project is mobilising following approval by Council. Site work continues on the Hybrid Innovation Centre on Central Park, Crematorium and new Chapel development. A tender exercise for the demolition of the ex-Sports Direct building on East Street has been undertaken and demolition is expected to start in the coming months.
  - (b) The site options for the Treasury North Campus are being reviewed with the Government Property Agency with an announcement expected on a final location very soon.
  - (c) The implementation of an integrated control point system 'Project in a Box' continues with the new projects to be added to the system. Scrutiny committee have received demonstrations and are providing feedback into the reports produced.
  - (d) There remains a risk of delay costs from Covid-19 and from inflation related effects on construction material prices.

**Elections Bill**

3. The second reading of the Elections Bill, in the House of Lords, took place on 23 February 2022, and it is expected that it will receive Royal Assent, based on the current progress of the Bill, in May 2022. Should the Bill receive Royal Assent at this time, Secondary Legislation is expected to be laid before Parliament in July 2022 with the Statutory Instruments being made for Accessibility, Notional Expenditure, Political Finance and Voter Identification (ID) in November 2022 and Postal Voting Handling Rules and Absent Vote Secrecy Rules in January 2023, with those elements of the Bill, including the First Past the Post Voting System, coming into force for the Local Elections scheduled to be held in May 2023. It is anticipated Voter ID will go live in November 2022.
4. The remaining elements of the Bill, including changes to the postal and proxy voting rules, introduction of an online absent vote system, EU citizen voting and candidacy rights and

changes to the registering of overseas electors, will be introduced from June 2023 onwards, and will be in force for the elections in May 2024. The ineligible EU Nationals who are no longer entitled to be registered as a result of the changes in the Bill will be removed on publication of the revised register in 2023, which may see a reduction in the number of register electors.

### **Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants**

5. This latest Government business grant scheme provides support to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses, in recognition that the impact from the Omicron variant of Covid-19. One-off grants of up to £6,000 have been available to businesses in those sectors.
6. As at the end of February, 224 local businesses have benefitted from this grant scheme with a total of £730,716 awarded by the Council.

### **Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund**

7. The Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund provides support for Business Rate payers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to the impact. Qualifying businesses are those that have been ineligible for existing or previous Business Rate relief aimed at businesses in the retail, hospitality or leisure sectors. Typically, these will be offices and industrial units.
8. As at the end of February, 255 local businesses have benefitted from this Business Rate relief scheme with a total of £1,925,809 awarded by Darlington Borough Council.

### **Test and Trace Support Payments**

9. The Test and Trace Support payment scheme was introduced in September 2020 to support people on low incomes who were required by law to self-isolate because of Covid-19, and who would lose income as a result. One-off payments of £500 were available to support people who qualified under this scheme.
10. As at the end of February, the Council has processed over 5,300 applications for support and made 2,524 awards to local residents, with total payments of £1,262,000.

### **Council Tax Energy Rebate**

11. The government has announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills, worth £6.8 million for Darlington residents.
12. Every household registered for Council Tax in bands A to D and occupying their home on 1 April 2022 will receive a £150 payment. A discretionary scheme worth £233,700 will also be available for households in Council Tax bands E to H. Households in these Council Tax bands receiving Council Tax Support or disability discounts will also receive £150. Other households will receive the rest of the funding, which will be £42 each.
13. Some key messages for Members and residents about the scheme are as follows:

- (a) This is an enormous undertaking to distribute £7 million of payments to over 50,000 households in Darlington. This process will begin in April and is likely to be staggered to make the process manageable for our Revenues and Benefits team.
- (b) Detailed guidance and the latest information will be posted on our website at: <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/council-tax-energy-rebate-2022/> This should be the first place to direct any enquiries about the scheme.
- (c) People who pay their Council Tax by direct debit will receive an automatic payment into their bank account from April, using the same bank account they pay their Council Tax from. These households do not have to do anything.
- (d) People who pay their Council Tax by another method will need to complete an application form to register their bank account details with us. This form will be available on our website from April. Support will be available in the Customer Services Centre and over the telephone for people who are unable to access the internet.
- (e) Please avoid sending individual enquiries about the Council Tax Energy Rebate to the Revenues and Benefits team. This is likely to delay getting payments out to residents. A process will be in place to ensure that everyone receives their payment.

#### **Successful legal action to recover Council Tax debt**

- 14. The Revenues and Benefits service has recently undertaken successful bankruptcy action to recover £10,257 from a local private landlord who owed Council Tax on a number of his properties. Some of these debts dated back to 2015 and despite numerous attempts by officers to collect the outstanding Council Tax, the individual failed to make payment.
- 15. Following legal advice, the Council decided to take bankruptcy action against the individual to recover the debt. This sort of action is seen as a last resort, where all reasonable attempts to recover outstanding Council Tax has failed. The bankruptcy action in this case resulted in the forced sale of 2 empty properties that the debtor owned to recover the outstanding sums, including the full costs incurred by the Council to undertake this action.
- 16. Recovery of this substantial sum underlines the Council's commitment to collect and recover Council Tax from those individuals who have the means to pay their Council Tax but deliberately or wilfully refuse to do so.

#### **Climate Change**

- 17. As part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the Council has been awarded £443,313 through an application with Salix to introduce efficiency measures at the Town Hall and the Hippodrome.
- 18. The measures approved were the replacement of the gas boilers for the hot water supplies to air source heat pumps at both venues, additional solar PV panels and LED lighting upgrade at the Town Hall, improvements to the energy controls for the loading bays and catering equipment at the Hippodrome.

19. All measures have been installed apart from the LED programme which will be completed this month.
20. The principle focus of the scheme was to reduce the gas consumption across all public buildings with some additional electrical improvements permitted which met certain criteria. Our projected savings from these works is a reduction in gas consumption of 963,603 kWhs, a small uplift in electric consumption of 148,864 kWhs, and an approximate annual saving of £20,000.

#### **Customer Services Centre – Digital Briefings**

21. A series of digital briefings have been created and will be available to customers via the digital screens in the Customer Services Centre. The briefings provide customers with a range of information about contacting the Council, our opening times, how to report various issues from fly tipping to potholes, and how to download the Darlington Borough Council app.

#### **Recent Acquisitions**

22. The Council has recently acquired the Garbutt Square car park and Bank Top House, both of which are key to the redevelopment of Bank Top Station. It has also acquired the former Northern Echo building in Priestgate as part of the Towns Fund initiative.

#### **Ukraine**

23. Following the introduction of Government sanctions, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requested all Councils to review and reconsider contracts with Russian and Belarusian owned companies. We do not have any direct contracting relationships with Russian or Belarusian suppliers.
24. The war in Ukraine, the sanctions and the global impacts will lead to increases in the price and the availability of some goods and services. Price increases on goods and services were prior to the war an issue, more recently fuel and energy costs have also risen significantly and will have an impact on the costs. We have been working with NEPO to better understand potential supply chain risks and how we can be as resilient as possible.

**Councillor Scott Durham**  
**Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio**



**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**Covid-19 Response**

2. The Assistant Director - Adult Social Care provided the Committee with a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.
3. It was reported that cases of Covid in Darlington were reducing rapidly, and that the day rate was now 432 cases per 100,000 of the population, which represented a reduction of 38.8% on the previous week. It was noted that testing was also reducing with 868 tests reported on the 19 February 2022, which demonstrated a 10.2% reduction when compared with the previous seven days.
4. We were advised that Covid vaccination uptake continued to improve, with 85.5% of all eligible residents having received a first dose, 80.4% having received a second dose and 64% having received the 'booster'.
5. We heard that there were 92 hospital admissions with coronavirus between 7 February 2022 and 13 February 2022, which showed a decrease of 33.3% when compared with the previous seven days, and that the number of Covid in-patients on 21 February was 78 patients in hospitals across County Durham and Darlington, which represented a 20% reduction compared with 15th February 2022. There was a total of three patients with Covid in ICU across the County Durham and Darlington hospitals.
6. Members were informed that there had been three deaths within 28 days of a positive coronavirus test between 14 February 2022 and 20 February 2022 in Darlington. This demonstrated a decrease of 25.0% when compared to the previous seven days.
7. In terms of Care Homes, 19 were in outbreak status, with six closed to all admissions and nine accepting admissions following a dynamic risk assessment. Four Care Homes were not currently in outbreak. Members were advised that occupancy levels were up to 83.01%, with 108 beds available across settings.
8. It was pleasing to note that the level of infections in the Council's two primary providers (Springfield and Careline) was easing significantly, especially amongst staff.

**Performance Indicators Mid-Year Report 2021-22**

9. We received a report to provide the Committee with performance data against Key Performance Indicators for 2021-22. The performance information provided was in line

with an indicator set and Scrutiny Committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.

10. Twelve indicators are reported to this Committee, ten on a six-monthly basis, and two annually. Of the ten indicators reported on a six-monthly basis, two indicators showed performance better or the same compared to this point last year (ASC019 and ASC046), three indicators showed a performance not as good as that recorded at this time last year (ASC002, ASC003 and ASC045), and will continue to be monitored and managed, two indicators showed a performance that was the same as the same time last year (ASC049 and ASC050), and three indicators were not comparable and are reviewed at a point in time (ASC208, ASC209 and ASC211).
11. Members entered into discussion on the reasons for the increase in the number of residents with no ongoing care needs following reablement, the reasoning behind the three indicators which showed that performance was not as good as that recorded at this time last year, and the capacity to address the anticipated increase in future cases of dementia.
12. We were also interested to learn whether there had been an increase in the number of residents moving into Care Homes, whether residents were more comfortable to return to Care Homes after the public health situation of recent months, and whether it was anticipated that the performance indicators would return to previous expected levels after Covid.

### **Work Programme**

13. 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**

**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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

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

**Work Programme**

2. Members 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; and agreed to carry out a review of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel.
3. On 22 February, 2022 some Members met virtually with a Member of the Darlington Youth Partnership and the Member of the Youth Parliament to discuss projects the Council are working on to try and capture the voice of children and young people from across Darlington.
4. And on 11 February, 2022 the Head of Employment, Education and Skills, Tees Valley Combined Authority attended a joint briefing with Members of this Committee and the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee to discuss the education and skills funding allocation as it relates to our authority and where specifically the spend is being focused.

**Review of the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Accessibility Strategy 2017-2020**

5. We received an update on the review of the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Accessibility Strategy 2017-2020 which sought our views on the Strategy prior to Strategy being presented for approval to Cabinet on 3 May 2022 .
6. The Strategy does not form a part of the Council's Policy Framework however it is a statutory requirement as required by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 for the Local Authority to prepare an Accessibility Strategy in relation to our maintained schools and this review is required every three years, however due to COVID, the review took place in Autumn 2021 and concluded in early 2022.
7. The Strategy sets out how the Local Authority will work with maintained settings to increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can participate in the school curriculum; improve the physical environment of schools; and improve delivery of information to pupils with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.
8. A consultation exercise which took place with parent/carers, maintained settings, stakeholders, the Darlington Parent/Carer Forum and Darlington Association on Disability and there was a consistent message from parent/carers that there was a need to ensure more staff training for equality and diversity and to ensure that information was accessible.

9. We were particularly interested to learn if there was a similar duty on the authority's academies and how we advise academies and were advised that our officers liaise with the academies and offer their expertise.
10. Members also expressed their concerns at recruitment issues for specialist SEND teachers and how that was affecting service delivery and questioned how the strategy will be monitored to comply with the Local Offer.
11. We were pleased to note that the accessibility issues that had been experienced at the beginning of the pandemic were getting back to normal levels with the continued support of the Parent/Carer Forum

### **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2021-22**

12. We considered the findings of the 2021-22 Childcare Sufficiency Review which ensures sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children.
13. Prior to March 2020, Darlington's childcare market was fairly stable and the parental take-up rates of the various entitlements was predictable; and from early June 2020 when providers were again able to admit children other than those whose parents were key workers or vulnerable children, the number of pre-school children attending provision rose and by the end of the Summer 2020 term there were 263 pre-school children in attendance.
14. In comparison, by the end of the Summer 2021 term there were 839 pre-school children in attendance in childcare although this figure had reached a high of 1,413 by the end of May 2021 and the figure in early December 2021 was 1,117.
15. We noted that there were periodic short-term closures within the sector due to the pandemic but these were minimal and by the Autumn 2021 term, 1,696 children were accessing an Early Years Entitlements place compared with 1,587 children accessing a funded place in Autumn 2019; and during this pandemic, support continued to be provided to the childcare sector by various means.
16. Through consultation providers had indicated that recruitment and retention was an issue; and following consultation with the Darlington Parent/Carer Forum in Summer 2021 updated marketing information, signposting parents to sources of information about different types of local, registered, inclusive childcare across the borough could be shared so parents had a better understanding of any issues regarding access to childcare and unmet demand.
17. Providers are facing uncertainty with regard to childcare demand, early years entitlements and parent paid income as families' circumstances change, however it was reported that Indicators showed that there had been sufficient capacity to meet demand throughout this period, however any unmet demand will be continually monitored to ensure that parents are able to access training and work in the coming months and years.
18. We discussed affordability issues and the worrying financial situation for providers; the national retention and recruitment problems and general uncertainty in the settings; and

insufficient funding from other sources to ensure the providers are in a position to meet future demand.

19. We also discussed areas of the borough where they felt that sufficiency was not meeting demand and requested further information be brought to Members at a future date regarding demographical/community data; and that we intend to keep a weather eye on childcare sufficiency as Darlington grows in line with the Local Plan.

**Councillor Paul Crudass**  
**Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

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**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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

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

**Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026**

2. Scrutiny received a report, seeking Members comments on the draft Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026, prior to its consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 March 2022.
3. Members were informed that the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is focused on maximising the social and economic benefits which culture can bring to people across Darlington and the strategy will assist the Council in developing and allocating resources to address priorities.
4. We were provided with details of the proposed vision for the strategy and the five draft priorities within the strategy were outlined. We were informed that action plans have been developed to address each priority and these will be reviewed and updated annually.
5. We discussed the planned celebrations for the bicentenary of the 1825 passenger journey on the Stockton and Darlington Railway and concerns relating to the access to the Rail Heritage Quarter.
6. Members requested that Cabinet be advised of this Scrutiny's view that references to diversity and minority groups be strengthened within the strategy.

**Local Transport Plan**

7. We received a report providing Members with an annual update on highways and transport from a regional and local perspective, outlining delivery, performance and public satisfaction in 2021/22 and outlining the 2022/23 programme, including details of funding; and providing an update on the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan and the Darlington Transport Plan.
8. Details were provided of the capital and revenue investments in transport in Darlington 2021/22 and reference was made to the transport initiatives developed by the Council in partnership with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA). We were also provided with details of the key headlines for the performance data and public satisfaction for 2021/22.
9. Scrutiny were informed that all of the transport funding from the Department for Transport is now awarded to TVCA and this funding is included in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). This would include the funding to deliver Darlington's transport plan.

10. A summary of the anticipated transport capital funding for 2022/23 was outlined and Members also noted additional funding from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and CRSTS would be available for schemes and initiatives in Darlington.
11. Members were informed that the Tees Valley BSIP has been published and work is ongoing to implement an Enhanced Partnership (EP). The BSIP and EP have been structured around a five-point delivery plan and delivery of this plan is dependent on government funding.
12. Darlington's Transport Strategy, Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan and a revised Parking Strategy have been drafted and will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration. We also noted that Darlington's Travel Plan Policy which formed part of the Supplementary Planning Document and was used to set the policy basis for consideration of planning applications, has been revised.
13. Discussion ensued regarding the number of potholes repaired and cycling training provision and following a question by a Member in attendance, the Assistant Director, Highways and Capital Projects confirmed that Officers would work with the Climate Change Cross Party Working group regarding the inclusion of climate change targets in the Local Transport Plan.
14. We raised concern regarding the real-time information provided for customers at bus stops and we were informed that the system that was used was reaching the end of its life, was due to be updated and that real-time information is available on the Arriva app.

#### **Arriva – Operational Issues**

15. Scrutiny welcomed the Commercial Manager, Arriva for a question and answer session regarding operational issues in Darlington, following concerns raised at a previous meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.
16. We questioned the possibility of reimbursement for customers with bus passes and a reduction in ticket prices. The Commercial Director informed Members that Arriva has been in receipt of government funding to cover operational costs, however even with this funding the company has been operating at a loss, in part due to the requirement for the company to be running at 90 per cent or more of pre-COVID-19 mileage levels. We also noted that during the lockdown periods customers were offered partial refund or an extension to their passes.
17. Members entered into a discussion regarding the lack of bus routes in certain areas of the town and the suggestion to incentivise bus travel. We were informed that passenger levels in the North East were at 75 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and as such investment in new routes was a challenge, however potential funding from the Bus Service Improvement Plan could allow investment in new routes.
18. Members questioned the option to run smaller vehicles more frequently, but noted that this would not be financially viable due to fuel and driver costs. We acknowledged that bus scheduling could be adjusted to meet demands in peak periods and we were pleased to note that incentive packages were available to businesses, working in partnership with



Arriva to offer a bus service to the workplace. We also noted that Arriva and Stagecoach are supporting a bid to introduce Hydrogen vehicles in the region.

### **Management of Grass Verges – Final Report**

19. Scrutiny received a report updating Members on the Management of Grass Verges Task and Finish Group and requesting that Members consider and endorse the adoption of a flow chart to address a range of issues associated with grass verges.
20. The Task and Finish Group held an initial meeting on 9 April 2021. A further meeting was held in 12 November 2021 where Members discussed a draft flow chart which would provide a toolkit of options to address a range of issues associated with grass verges.
21. Members of this Scrutiny Committee discussed the effectiveness of the flow chart and we consider the flow chart to be a useful framework to address issues associated with grass verges. This Scrutiny Committee has endorsed the adoption of the flow chart.

### **Work Programme 2021/22**

22. 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.
23. We considered a request from Councillor Jones, for an item on the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis be included in the work programme.
24. Members were informed that there was a national shortage of taxi drivers following the removal of Covid restrictions and an action plan was in place to address the shortage of drivers. We noted that legislative and policy changes would be required to mandate the requirement of wheelchair accessible vehicles and this could have a financial impact on the Council and operators at a time when the focus was on restoring numbers of drivers to address the current pressures and demands on the taxi trade.
25. Scrutiny were also informed that the Council works closely with Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) in an attempt to resolve issues as they arise and in accordance with government recommendations, the Licensing Department publishes an up to date list of all wheelchair accessible vehicles on its website. Members suggested that this list be shared via social media.
26. Members acknowledged the current position regarding taxis in Darlington and welcomed an update at a future meeting.
27. On 4 February I visited the Crown Street Library to see how the teams are progressing with the renovations. Thank you to Alistair who is overseeing the project for the hard hat tour of the site – it was great to see the building up close especially the areas at the top which can only be accessed by scaffolding. Also thanks to the library manager Suzy Hill whose passion for the building is evident and I look forward to hearing and seeing more of the buildings secrets as the layers are peeled back as the renovations continue.

**Councillor Steven Tait**  
**Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee**

**COUNCIL**  
**31 March 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**Climate Change**

2. We received an update from the Head of Highways Asset Management on the work being undertaken within that section to reduce and continue to reduce its carbon footprint by trialling and using alternative methods on its schemes.
3. We were advised that, over the last three years, the total amount of Co2 savings within that area was 147 tonnes, which equates to driving 882,000 miles in a diesel car.
4. Recycling of existing carriageways has proved effective with six schemes within the Borough using this method over the last three years, with a total of 4000 tonnes of material recycled, equating to 230 wagon loads, which would ordinarily have been sent to landfill.
5. Where recycling of road surfaces is not suitable and more traditional methods of working still need to continue, warm asphalts are being used which are made at a much lower temperature. This leads to less gas being required, equating to a typical saving of between eight and ten per cent reduction in carbon emissions. Seven schemes have been completed this year using this method and it will continue into next year's schemes.
6. Tar bound planings have also been stored from the summer maintenance programme for use on a scheme to raise the level of a road, and again, this saved 146 wagon trips with the job being completed earlier than if traditional methods had been used and that a one coat system is being used for footpaths which is also expected to achieve savings

**Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3**

7. We have considered the latest capital resource and commitment position to inform the monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council's capital programme, together with an update on the current status of all construction projects which are currently being managed by the Council.
8. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work which is delivering a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and more critically to Council services and there are currently 46 live projects being managed with an overall projected outturn value of £138.928 million with the majority of the Council's projects running to time, cost and quality expectations. Monitoring is on-going however, given the current pressures on resources in the construction sector nationally.

9. Six projects which were showing variances were highlighted to us and we were provided with an explanation as to the reasons for those variances which were mainly logistical issues.
10. We also discussed the reporting capability of Project in a Box, the new electronic capital project reporting system, and the level of information which could be provided to us to enable us to compare the position from the previous quarters information.

### **Revenue Budget Monitoring – Quarter 3**

11. The Council's projected reserves at the end of 2021-21 are £29.773 million, a £4.847 million improvement on the initial 2021-25 MTFP position and we were advised that this improvement in reserves, included a brought forward amount of £2.317 million from 2020/21, £0.196 million of projected departmental overspend, the rebasing exercise of £0.993 million, a £0.729 million increase in corporate resources and net £1.004 million which was required from the CV19 reserve (a total drawn down from the reserve of £1.474 m to fund the departmental CV19 costs and £0.470m to refund the shortfall in government grant for Sales, Fees and Charges in corporate resources).
12. Of the £29.773 million projected reserves, there is a risk reserve balance of £5.350 million and a commitment to use £15.838 million to support years two to four of the current MTFP, which leaves £8.585 million of unallocated reserves.
13. We discussed the stronger than expected recovery of the Council's leisure and culture facilities and the intention to use that additional income to a ring fenced 2025 Rail Heritage Fund to be utilised for the refurbishment of the Loco No. 1 replica and a request from the Group Services for People to carry forward funding to cover the implementation costs of a new Education Case Management System.

### **Work Programme**

14. We constantly review our work programme and adapt to items which we may wish to look at. In doing this, we also look at how we can ensure we are briefed on areas within our remit and we have held a number of sessions with Officers, outside of the formal Scrutiny meetings to do this.
15. As mentioned above, the Council has a new electronic capital reporting system, Project in a Box and we have recently had a session with the providers to see its reporting capabilities, together with sessions on the Commercial Premises Hygiene inspection regime, a briefing on the outcome of the employee survey and an update on the Markets. We have also got a session booked to look at the current position in relation to the Broadband Infrastructure within Darlington.
16. If any issues arise out of these briefings, we would add this to our agreed work programme and undertake further more detailed work.

**Councillor Mike Renton**  
**Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**Primary Care: An update on National Policy Changes 2020/21**

2. We welcomed a presentation from the Commissioning Lead, Primary Care on the Primary Care national policy changes 2020/21.
3. We were informed that the standard operating procedure in response to coronavirus was first published on 19 March 2020 and subsequently withdrawn in July 2021 in line with covid recovery and we noted that during this period Practices remained open with infection prevention control measures in place, as directed by Public Health England, and where clinically necessary, were consulting with patients face to face.
4. Members were provided with details of the key operational changes between March 2020 and March 2021, which included a move to a total triage model by April 2020, facilitation of Easter Bank holiday GP provision, GP support to Care Homes, the reinstatement of services in July 2020 and additional funding to expand capacity in seven priority areas.
5. Members noted the timeline for Phases 1,2 and 3 of the covid vaccination programme and further key operational changes in May 2021 in relation to changes in social distancing legislation and in December 2021 in response to the booster campaign.
6. We raised concern regarding access to GP appointments for residents in Darlington and discussed the importance of patient education to enable patients to access the right service, which may not always be a GP appointment. We noted that there was a range of clinical professionals within practices for patients to access and a GP community pharmacy scheme for minor ailments.

**Community Transformation NHS England: Tees Valley**

7. We also welcomed a presentation from the Programme Manager, Community Transformation Tees Valley, updating Members on the work being undertaken to review the mental health system as part of the Community Transformation NHS England: Tees Valley.
8. The core aims of the community transformation, which was being driven by the NHS England long term plan, were to improve access to integrated primary and community mental health care for those with severe mental health illness, to move to an integrated, holistic, person-centred care model and to co-produce services and care pathways with service users, carers and local communities. We noted that this was a 3 – 5 year programme.

9. We were provided with details of the work undertaken in the Tees Valley between April and September 2021 as part of the information and mapping phase one. We were informed that a TEWV redesign event was held in October 2021 and details were provided of a model, which had been developed with patients and carers. This model identifies the community hub as a key and we were informed that the flow of patients between the different levels within the model would be supported by community care navigators.
10. Members were also provided with details of the work to be undertaken as part of phase 2 and phase 3 and a breakdown of the year 2 funding proposal was outlined. We also noted the eight resilience projects which had been funded non recurrently to support COVID recovery across Darlington. These projects included increasing capacity in counselling for those who had experienced bereavement, social connections and artistic sessions for individuals with low mood or anxiety, befriending services, female and male allotment sessions and social prescribing.
11. Members held a discussion regarding recruitment and retention of staff and the need for recurrent investment in mental health services.

#### **Customer Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2024 Update**

12. Scrutiny received a presentation updating Members on the Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024.
13. We were provided with details of the aims of the strategy and the work undertaken to date for each of the four priorities was outlined. We noted the engagement work being undertaken with tenants to identify how best to communicate building safety information.
14. Members were also provided with details of the effects of Covid-19 on the Council's plans but welcomed the work planned for the next 12 months, including setting up Engagement Champion programme for tenants, improvements to the Council's website, introduction of a new Housing Management Policy and a review of the Anti-social behaviour policy and increased customer surveys to gather feedback from tenants.
15. Members queried engagement activity with those on the housing waiting list and noted that direct engagement would be undertaken as part of the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment.

#### **Performance Indicators – Quarter 2021/22**

16. We received Quarter 2 performance data against key performance indicators for 2021/22.
17. Members were advised that data was available for nine of the twelve Housing and Culture indicators and that of the twenty-four Public Health indicators, eight had new data available at Quarter 2.
18. We noted that of the nine Housing and Culture indicators, six indicators were showing an improved performance compared to the same point in the previous year whilst three indicators showed a performance not as good as that recorded at the same time in the

previous year, and of the eight Public Health indicators, four indicators were showing performance better than the previous year whilst four indicators were showing performance not as good as the previous year.

#### **Quality Accounts – County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT)**

19. Members met with the Trust to give consideration to the Trust's Quality Accounts to enable Members to have a better understanding and knowledge of performance when submitting a final commentary on the Quality Accounts at the end of the Municipal Year.
20. Members noted the progress against the interim improvement objectives for 2021/22, where data was available.
21. Particular discussion ensued regarding work being undertaken to address concerns and complaints relating to wait times in the Emergency Department and we have requested an update on the programme of work that is in place to address Accident and Emergency wait times.

#### **Quality Accounts – Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)**

22. Members met with the Trust to give consideration to the Trust's Quality Accounts to enable Members to have a better understanding and knowledge of performance when submitting a final commentary on the Quality Accounts at the end of the Municipal Year.
23. We received a presentation outlining the progress against the three quality improvement priorities for 2021/22 and performance information in relation to the nine quality metrics.

#### **County Durham and Darlington Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery Services - Re provision of Primrose Lodge, Chester le Street Inpatient Service**

24. Members received a report from the Director of Mental Health and Learning Disability, Durham Tees Valley Partnership and Director of Operations County Durham and Darlington , Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust outlining a proposal to re provide the inpatient rehabilitation and recovery unit from Primrose Lodge, Chester le Street to Shildon with a reduction from 15 to eight beds.
25. Primrose Lodge is a 15-bed stand-alone rehabilitation and recovery unit in Chester le Street, delivering supportive interventions to service users with often complex mental health needs. The service is commissioned for Darlington and County Durham residents.
26. An options appraisal has been undertaken to identify the optimum model for community bed-based rehabilitation services, which identified relocation to Shildon to be the preferred option. Members were informed of issues associated with Primrose Lodge, which was deemed not fit for purpose as a modern mental health facility, requiring significant investment to address environmental limitations and safety risks associated with ligature points on the unit.

27. Members were informed that the Shildon unit would provide eight beds, which was a seven bed reduction based on the current provision, however access to the Willow Ward, a 15 bed high dependency rehabilitation and recovery unit at West Park Hospital, would remain unchanged. Furthermore, this reduction was achievable, based on demand modelling work undertaken as part of the recent investment requirements for the development of the community service expansion.
28. We were informed that a range of engagement activities have been undertaken with stakeholders and an Implementation group has been established, meeting fortnightly to review each patient and monitor progress towards discharge and to ensure a planned and safe transition to the new unit. The group will also oversee and determine the timing of the phased bed reductions.
29. Scrutiny requested that an update be provided at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

### **Integrated Care System**

30. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the Chief Officer, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, updating Members on the development of the Integrated Care System (ICS).
31. We were provided with details of the engagement with local authorities to develop the ICS, the current CCG statutory duties and powers, the existing structures for the eight CCG's in the North East and North Cumbria and the current CCG commissioning spend in the ICS area.
32. Members noted details of the potential distribution of the ICS functions at both a System and Place level and the governance options for place based partnerships. We were also provided with details of the core elements of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) governance arrangements and noted that the membership of the ICB had been proposed to NHS England in December 2021, with 25 voting Members, 13 non-executive and 12 executive, with a commitment to review after one year.
33. Scrutiny were informed of the requirement to establish an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) of which there are four in the North East and North Cumbria ICS and we noted that the ICP would have a key role to play in setting the tone and culture of the system, operating a collective model of accountability, including to local residents.
34. We discussed in particular concern in respect of the scale of the management structure, the importance of engaging with place and engagement opportunities with regional and local scrutiny committees.

### **Digital Health**

35. We also welcomed a presentation from the Chief Information Officer, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, providing Members with an update on Digital Health.



36. We were informed that the Digital Strategy for CDDFT, which had been published in 2016 and extended up to 2022 due to COVID, was approaching the end of its life span. We were provided with the aims and status of the six strategic themes of the strategy.
37. Members noted that gaps in the provision had been identified by a baseline assessment of the Trust's digital maturity which was undertaken in 2021 and were advised that the gaps would be met through the adoption of the electronic patient record and supporting technologies.
38. We were also informed that the Trust has played an active role in the development of the ICS digital strategy and a 'Digital Durham Place' meeting had been established with an intention to duplicate this in Darlington.
39. Details were provided of the work undertaken for digital care in the community. As a response to COVID and to support the Trusts activity recovery programme, the Agile working provision had been extended. Health Call Digital Care Home had been deployed in all of the care homes for older people in Darlington, enabling patients to be seen in the home, reducing unnecessary visits to the hospital, and to ensure outpatient services continued for patients during the pandemic, the Trust adopted a nationally procured solution for Video Consultations, alongside teleconsultations, as an alternative to face-to-face sessions.
40. We noted that the Trust had adopted the Great North Care Record which would be further enhanced with the development of the Public Engagement Platform and details were provided of the next steps for the Trust which included the development of the trust's new Digital Strategy 2022-2027.

### **Crisis Service Changes**

41. We welcomed an update from the Director of Operations, Durham and Darlington, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust on the Crisis and Home Treatment Team.
42. Members were reminded that the Durham and Darlington teams were merged in 2019 following redesign work and relocated to a base in Bishop Auckland.
43. We were advised that the model had been revised with implementation of the revised model and ongoing quality improvement work commencing in July 2021. The revised model consisted of a hub and spoke model, with a central access point at Bishop Auckland Hospital and two locality cells, one based at Lanchester Road Hospital and the other at West Park Hospital.
44. Members were informed of the current challenges, including increased referrals and high staff turnover and sickness and that these challenges had provided an opportunity to review the model and further develop and refine the service.
45. We were also informed that a restructure in the Trust was ongoing which would bring together all crisis services across Durham and Darlington and the Tees Valley. Members welcomed the suggestion of an update on the restructure at a future meeting.

### **Drug and Alcohol Service Contract – We Are With You**

46. We were disappointed that a representative from We Are With You did not attend the meeting to provide an update to the Committee.
47. I have sent a letter to the Executive Director for Services on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee to express our disappointment and to request that a representative attends the next meeting.

#### **Work Programme**

48. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

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