



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 23 March 2023

Central Hall, Dolphin Centre, Horsemarket, Darlington, DL1 5RP

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 26 January 2023, 16 February 2023 and 23 February 2023 (Pages 5 - 20)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
 - (a) The Public;
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
7. Council Reports.
8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 21 - 22)
 - (b) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 23 - 26)

- (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 27 - 28)
 - (d) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 29 - 34)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 35 - 38)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 39 - 42)
 - (g) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 43 - 44)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio. (Pages 45 - 48)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 49 - 52)
 - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 53 - 56)
 - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee (Pages 57 - 58)
 - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 59 - 62)
 - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 63 - 66)
10. Notice of Motion
- (a) To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor McCollom, and seconded by Councillor Ali –

Preamble

- a) Research carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty coalition indicates that two in five babies, children and young people across the North East (38 per cent) were living below the poverty line in 2020/21, after housing costs were taken into account.
- b) The North East has also continued to experience by far the steepest increase in child poverty across the UK in recent years, moving from being just below the national average in 2014/15 to having the highest rate of any nation or region of the country by 2020/21. Overall child poverty rates in the North East have risen by almost half – from 26 per cent to 38 per cent – in the space of those six years; during a time when child poverty fell slightly, by two percentage points, across the country.
- c) Within Darlington it has risen from 25.9 per cent to 39.5 per cent, and increase of 13.6 per cent; and in Sedgefield 23.7 per cent to 39 per cent an increase of 15.3 per cent.

This Council notes with grave concern that Government policy has failed to address the issue of child poverty across the UK, and in particular that child poverty in the North East has risen sharply.

Resolution

Council resolves to write to our two Members for Parliament, Peter Gibson MP and Paul Howell MP:

- a) To highlight and express our concern of the continued and steep rise in child poverty within the Borough of Darlington, and the wider North East,
- b) To request that they call upon the Government to acknowledge that Government policy is failing our children, and
- c) To urge Government to review and amend policy such that the levels of child poverty are reduced.

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



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 15 March 2023

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

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

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

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 26 January 2023

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Cossins, Crumbie, Lister, Lucas, Paley and Preston.

ABSENT – Councillors Baldwin and Mills.

47 MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 24 November 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 24 November 2022, be approved as a correct record.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillors Mrs. D. Jones and Mrs. H. Scott each declared a Non Registerable Interest in Minute 52 (3), below.

49 SEALING.

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

50 ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2023 – The Mayor acknowledged Holocaust Memorial Day, which was due to take place on Friday, 27th January 2023, and would mark the 78th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Mayor informed Members that this important anniversary would be commemorated in Darlington at memorial service at St. Aiden’s Church of England Academy, which had been organised by the Celebrating Communities group.

Refuge – The Mayor advised Members that there were still places available at the Benefits Dinner for the Refuge.

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

(1) THE PUBLIC;

There were no questions, with notice, from Members of the Public.

(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;

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

52 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to determine the Council's tax base for 2023/24.

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 2023/24, be approved.

(b) That the tax base for the Council of 34,814.5 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 2023/24 to be set by Council in February 2023.

(2) CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

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

The submitted report stated that the Appraisal Sub-Group met on 16 December 2022 to consider the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal in accordance with the previously agreed process, and outlined the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group.

RESOLVED - That Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2022/23, and agreed that the Chief Executive will focus on the following key themes for the year ahead, namely :-

- (i) ensuring governance arrangements of all Council activities and the Council's financial position remains positive;
- (ii) preparing for the Quality Care Commission inspection of Adult Social Care;
- (iii) agile working and efficiencies from implementation;
- (iv) implementation of the Integrated Care Board into the organisation; and
- (v) further investigation of partnerships with local voluntary sector organisations.

REASON - To enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

(3) ADMISSION AS HONORARY FREEWOMAN

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) recommending that the service of two Councillors and one former Councillor be recognised, by admitting Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long, as 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington.

The submitted report stated that the Local Government Act 1972 enabled the Council to admit 'persons of distinction' and persons who have 'rendered eminent service' to the Borough as an 'Honorary Freeman' or 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington. It was noted that the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman was the highest civic honour that the Council was able to bestow.

The submitted report stated that a Special Meeting of the Council would need to be convened, whereat two-thirds of Members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs. Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs. Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington' as a fitting way to recognise and honour the service of those individuals.

(b) That a Special Meeting of the Council be convened in February 2023, to enable Members to formally vote (with a two-thirds majority) on a resolution that Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs. Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs. Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.

(c) That the Assistant Director, Law and Governance be authorised to finalise the arrangements for the Special meeting of the Council, the conferment of the award and titles, and an appropriate event to follow on from that meeting.

REASONS - (a) To recognise the long and eminent service of those individuals by the conferment of the title of 'Honorary Freewoman'.

(b) To enable decisions to be made in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

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 MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

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 2022 of the 2022/23 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 £156.699M, and a reduction to the Authorised Limit to £239.879M 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 £0.340M 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 Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) projected outturn, shown in Table 11, be noted.

(c) That the updated Prudential Indicators be approved.

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 CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Council on progress towards the Council's net zero target.

The submitted report advised that a Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer had been appointed in late January 2020, and that the Climate Change Strategy was adopted in July 2020, and that working with lead officers across the Council, an action plan was produced and adopted in October 2021. It was reported that a trajectory of 30% reduction in the Council's emission every five years was agreed at Cabinet in October 2021, with the next

update due to be reported in the July 2023 report to Cabinet and Council.

The submitted report stated that milestones had been developed and were being used by the Climate Change Officer to monitor progress, and that the Climate Change Officer would continue to work with lead officers to develop the milestones for 2023/24. A number of key actions were subsequently outlined within the report.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

REASON – To monitor the progress of the Council in terms of delivering on its own Declaration

56 TOWN CENTRE PARKING OFFER

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update to Members on the town centre car parking offer and sought a budget variation and funding release.

The submitted report outlined that parking offers had been in place in various pay and display locations to support the town centre since June 2018, and that since January 2021 the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) had provided the funding to support parking offers across the Tees Valley for a two-year period. It was noted that in November 2022, Cabinet had agreed to fund an extension of the parking offer from January 2023 until the end of March 2023.

The submitted report stated that the sustainability of the town centre was an immediate priority, and that there was a strong desire that the Council continue to support and encourage use of the town centre. It was reported that on 10 January 2023, Cabinet had agreed a further extension of the parking offer for a further three months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, subject to Council varying the budget and releasing the funding as the further extension of the parking offer exceeded Cabinet's delegated authority to vary the budget.

RESOLVED – That the variation to the budget be approved, and that £387k be released to enable the current parking offer to be extended a further 3 months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, and that parking charges be reintroduced on 1 July 2023.

REASON – To support the ongoing recovery of the town centre.

57 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.

58 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 2022/23.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillor Marshall fill the Conservative vacancies on the Southern ICS/ICP Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee;

(b) That Councillor Marshall replace Councillor Bartch on the Planning Applications Committee.

COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 February 2023

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Bartch, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Holroyd, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Renton, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Willis.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Baldwin, Cossins, Haszeldine, Heslop, Lister, Lucas, Paley, A J Scott and Wright.

ABSENT – Councillors Bell and Preston.

59 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

60 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Deaths in Service – The Mayor advised Members of the Deaths in Service of Chris Brown and Andrew Hedley. The Mayor stated that Chris Brown had worked at the Council as part of the Trading Standards team for around sixteen years providing animal health and welfare services and supporting the rest of the team with their duties.

The Mayor informed Members that Andrew Hedley worked as a Print Production Operator in Xentrall Design and Print, stating that Andrew had joined Xentrall from Darlington Borough Council when it formed in 2008, and that his overall service extended back to 1980.

As a mark of respect, Members stood and observed a short silence in memory of Chris Brown and Andrew Hedley.

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

(1) **THE PUBLIC;**

There were two 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.

62 **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 2023/24 to 2026/27, including setting a budget and Council Tax increase for 2023/24, and also the approval of a 2023/24 to 2026/27 Capital Programme.

The submitted report stated the financial pressures on the Public Sector as a whole, and on the Council, had been significant over the previous couple of years in the aftermath of Covid, which 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, through good leadership, governance and financial management, coupled with value for money service delivery, the Council had risen to the challenge by continuing to provide vital core services to the residents of Darlington, and had invested the resources available to grow the local economy and deliver success for the benefit of all.

It was reported that the Council had received its Local Government Finance Settlement on 19 December 2022, and which confirmed funding allocations for the two years remaining of the spending review with additional grant funding for social care and changes to the Council Tax referendum limits, which had been increased to 3% for Council Tax and 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept. It was stated that future years funding beyond this period had not been confirmed and the consequence of this was that the draft 2023/24 – 2026/27 MTFP had an eye to future years, however did not seek to presume what the future would look like. It aimed to ensure that the Council can set a legal budget in 2023/24 and continue to provide our core offer level of services to the residents of Darlington.

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 given the unprecedented pressures faced in the coming years. The reserves will be utilised to meet the 2023/24 funding gap and allow time for detailed work to be completed on future savings options.

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

‘Strike out

(b) Approve a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Revenue Budget for 2023/24 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval.

And strike out

(c) Approve a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Capital Budget for 2023/24 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval.’

A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – Councillors Boddy, Holroyd and Snedker (3)

Against the Amendment – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Bartch, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass,

Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Marshall, McCollum, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Willis (35)

The Amendment was Lost.

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

‘Reallocate the projected savings from Waste Disposal of £0.118m in each year 23/24, 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 to Street Scene services – to improve the quality of service to residents in cleaning pavements, sweeping streets and clearing drains.’

A named vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:-

For the Amendment – Councillors Boddy, Holroyd and Snedker (3)

Against the Amendment – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Bartch, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Marshall, McCollum, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Willis (35)

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 – Councillors Bartch, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Holroyd, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin and Willis (25)

Against the Motion – The Mayor; Councillors Ali, Boddy, Crumbie, Harker, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson and Wallis (13)

Motion Carried.

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

- (i) A Council Tax increase of 2.99% plus a 2% Adult Social Care Precept to help fund social care for 2023/24.
- (ii) The Schedule of Charges as set out in Appendix 3.

(b) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Revenue Budget for 2023/24 by up to £0.5m without further Council approval be approved.

(c) That a delegation for Cabinet to vary the Capital Budget for 2023/24 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.

63 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to setting this Council's Council Tax for 2023/2024, which was required to be set before 11th March 2023.

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 Bartch, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs. Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Holroyd, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Keir, Laing, Lee, Marshall, Mills, K. Nicholson, Renton, Mrs. H. Scott, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin and Willis (25)

Against the Motion – None (0)

Abstentions – Councillors Ali, Boddy, Crumbie, Harker, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, Layton, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, M. Nicholson, Snedker and Wallis (13)

Motion Carried.

RESOLVED – (a) That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for 2023/24 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.	£251,315,330
(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.	£189,240,000
(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.	£62,075,330
(iv)	The amount at item 5(iii) above, divided by the council	£1,783.03

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).

(v) the aggregate of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as in the attached **Appendix 1**. £198,330

(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. £1,777.33

(vii) That the basic council tax for 2023/24 calculated for dwellings in those areas that have parish precepts be as set out in **Appendix 1**, column 5.

(viii) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in **Appendix 2** as the amount of Council Tax for 2023/24 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

(b) It be noted that for the year 2023/24 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	170.16	198.52	226.88	255.24	311.96	368.68	425.40	510.48

(c) It be noted that for the year 2023/24 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	76.46	89.20	101.95	114.69	140.18	165.66	191.15	229.38

(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 2023/24 for each of the categories of dwellings.

REASON - To set the Council Tax for the Council's area in accordance with statutory requirements.

64 DARLINGTON CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Council's Capital Strategy for 2023/24.

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 2023/24 – 2026/27, 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.

65 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - MTFP 2023-24 TO 2026-27

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 2023/24, in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan to 2026/27, and the 30 year Business Plan, following consultation with Council tenants.

The submitted report stated that the Council was the largest provider of social housing in the borough, providing 5,291 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 £11.7m.

The submitted report set out the key decisions for the HRA for 2023-24, which included proposed revenue expenditure of £26.557m, and a proposed capital programme of £24.585m.

It was stated that Councils had the discretion to increase rents each year by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%, which means for 2023-24 Members had the option to increase rents by up to 11.1%, however the Government had implemented a cap of 7%. Consideration was given to a 5% increase, a 3% increase, and a 2% 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 5% was to be recommended, or an average of £3.69 each week. It was also recommended to increase service charges by an appropriate inflationary amount.

RESOLVED - (a) That an average weekly rent increase of 5% for 2023-24 be implemented giving an average social rent of £78.70 and affordable rent of £88.35.

(b) That garage rents and service charges are increased, as shown in Table 3 of the submitted report.

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

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

(e) That the Capital programme at Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.

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.

66 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Council adopt the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26 relating to capital expenditure and Treasury Management activity, a policy statement relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision, and the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy for 2023/24.

The submitted report outlined the Council's Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 – 2025/26, 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 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 2023/24 to 2025/26, as summarised in Tables 1 and 2 of the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement (paragraphs 36-43 of the submitted report) be approved.

(c) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, as summarised in paragraphs 47 to 73 of the submitted report, be approved.

(d) That the Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24, as contained in paragraphs 74 to 106 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.

67 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting approval of the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2023/2024 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 2023/24, 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.

COUNCIL

Thursday, 23 February 2023

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Tostevin, Wallis, Willis and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Baldwin, Bartch, Crumbie, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Renton and Snedker.

ABSENT – Councillors Bell, Paley, Preston, Sowerby and Tait.

68 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Councillors Mrs. D. Jones and Mrs. H. Scott each declared a Non Registerable Interest in Minute 69, below.

69 **TO CONFER THE TITLE OF HONORARY FREEWOMAN ON COUNCILLOR MRS. HEATHER SCOTT, COUNCILLOR MRS. DORIS JONES AND FORMER COUNCILLOR DOROTHY LONG.**

The Mayor welcomed Members to the meeting, and advised that, on 26 January 2023, this Council had resolved to hold a Special Meeting to bestow the title of Honorary Freewoman of the Borough on Councillors Mrs. Heather Irene Scott O.B.E. and Mrs. Doris Mary Jones B.E.M., and on former-Councillor Dorothy Claire Long.

RESOLVED – (a) That, in pursuance of the power conferred upon the Council by the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Mrs. Heather Irene Scott O.B.E. be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough of Darlington in recognition of her long and eminent service to the Borough of Darlington.

(b) That, in pursuance of the power conferred upon the Council by the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Mrs. Doris Mary Jones B.E.M. be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough of Darlington in recognition of her long and eminent service to the Borough of Darlington.

(c) That, in pursuance of the power conferred upon the Council by the Local Government Act 1972, Dorothy Claire Long be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough of Darlington in recognition of her long and eminent service to the Borough of Darlington.

(Note: Over two thirds of the Members present at the meeting voted in favour of each of the above Motions).

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COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on the Leader's Portfolio since the last meeting of Council. The following are some of the areas of work under the Leader's Portfolio.

Strategic Transport

Tees Flex

2. The demand responsive bus service was first launched with Stagecoach back in 2020 as a three-year pilot. However, just a month after the launch the UK was hit by the Covid pandemic and was placed into a nationwide lockdown. The service was set up with the purpose of connecting people in rural areas to economic centres to enable them to access jobs and services. The pilot will now be extended for eighteen months under the exact same conditions with the operational zones and prices unchanged.

Bus Funding and £2 Maximum Fare Offer

3. The government has announced that it is extending bus recovery funding and the £2 maximum fare offer through to the end of June 2023. TVCA and the local authorities continue to work with bus operators to ensure a sustainable future bus network across the Tees Valley.

Active Travel Fund Tranche 4

4. TVCA has worked alongside all local authorities to bid into tranche 4 of the Active Travel Fund. The Darlington element of the bid relates to linking the Parkgate/Yarm Road City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) active travel project to the redevelopment of Darlington Station.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Funding

5. The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund supports authorities in England to plan and deliver ChargePoint infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. The fund comprises of:
 - (a) capability funding to ensure that authorities have the staff and capability to plan and deliver ChargePoint infrastructure
 - (b) capital funding to support ChargePoint delivery
6. TVCA can now apply for LEVI capability funding and is working with local authorities on a bid. The government will provide more details on the capital funding scheme shortly.

Darlington Station

7. The temporary car park on the cattle market site is progressing well and once completed will allow parking to transfer to this site and works to commence in earnest on the new station in May 2023. Demolitions are also progressing to facilitate the development of the Victoria Road entrance improvements. We will continue to support TVCA, who are the lead on the project with support from Network Rail and LNER, to deliver this major project that is a key building block in TVCA's rail strategy.

Climate Change

8. The Cross-Party Working Group met on 19 December and were pleased to welcome Cllr Willis to the group. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Director of Community Services, who updated the group on the current process for waste management in Darlington.

Darlington Economic Campus (DEC)

9. Work with the Government Property Agency (GPA) and DEC continues with just over 600 positions now in post. At the recent Jobs Fair, the DEC workshop was the most popular event. It proved an excellent opportunity for the civil service to promote the various career opportunities for local people within the economic campus.

Towns Fund

10. The Darlington College T-Levels project has now completed on site and handover to the college has taken place.
11. Development work is progressing across the portfolio of Towns Fund projects, onsite in Skinnergate and the Yards and at the Railway Heritage Quarter. Design continues in relation to commenced for the Adult Skills facility, Northgate and Victoria Road.
12. Engagement continues with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, with further community events to be planned in the future.
13. Facilitated by the Towns Fund, a new Tiny Forest in the Denes is to be planted, with funding secured from the Queens Green Canopy by Earthwatch.



Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Leader of the Council Portfolio

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

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

Climate Change

2. The highway maintenance team have been testing an innovative surfacing solution at Snipe Lane. The trial incorporated pellets made from plastic nappy fibres into the asphalt which was then used to surface the road. Nappies are a major source of waste plastic and can take hundreds of years to break down. The use of the pellets gives more options for end-of-life uses for the plastic in nappies, therefore it makes those products less environmentally damaging.
3. As part of a £2m project to install electric vehicle charging points across the Tees Valley, charge points have now been installed in car parks across Darlington. 50 kW and 22kW charge points have been installed at Abbots Yard with 22 kW charge points installed at Winston Street North, Commercial Street West, Park Place East and West, Kendrew Street and Feethams Multi Storey.
4. The Tees Valley Combined Authority are leading on work to develop a region wide electric vehicle charging strategy which will deliver a consistent approach to providing charging infrastructure, including on street provision.

Highway Maintenance Programme

5. The following Highway Maintenance schemes are ongoing:
 - (a) Lanethorpe Road / Burnside Road (Phase 1): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.340km)
6. The following Highway Maintenance Schemes are now completed:
 - (a) Greenhill Road, Heighington: Footway Refurbishment (0.302km)
 - (b) Pierremont Crescent West Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.117km)
 - (c) Snipe Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.335km)
7. The following Highway Maintenance Schemes are due to start:
 - (a) Shearwater Avenue: Footway Refurbishment (0.054km)
 - (b) Patching Prior to Micro-Asphalt Contract (18 sites)

Highway Improvement Schemes

Woodland Road (Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan - LCWIP)

8. The next phase of delivery is the Duke Street section which started on site on 26 February 2023. Work has been programmed into seven phases of work to minimise disruption to businesses. The work is programmed for ten months.
9. We will work with businesses to both inform them of the progress on the scheme and any works that directly affect access to their property. We will maintain access to businesses throughout the duration of the works.

Local Transport Plan

10. Cabinet approved the Local Transport Plan programme of works for 2023/24. This will see over £3m of Council investment in our transport network over the coming year. Over £2.1m of that funding will be invested in highway maintenance to improve the condition of our road network. £893k will be spent on network management, active and sustainable transport and speed management and road safety programmes. This investment will be complimented by significant investment in Darlington from TVCAs £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Fund that will see investment in Rail, Bus, Walking and Cycling projects.

Arriva

11. Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Council continue to push Arriva to improve operational performance in Darlington. Arriva now has a full complement of drivers to operate the current timetable, and whilst performance improved towards the end of 2022, we continue to monitor the situation and press for more improvements to be delivered.

Head of Steam

12. Throughout January the Head of Steam Museum team worked on emptying the museum of all the equipment, furniture and most importantly the museum's artefact and archive collections. On 31 January the keys to the museum building were handed to the contractor team to enable the redevelopment of the site to commence. The museum team will continue to deliver workshops, events and activities throughout 2023 at different venues throughout the town.

Hippodrome

13. Darlington Hippodrome has been successful in their application for a Changing Places Grant. The £28,000 grant will enable the Hippodrome to re-purpose an existing toilet and changing facility into a larger accessible toilet for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches, and space for carers. The work will be completed in 2024.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

14. Restaurant Week 20 to 26 February 2023, welcomed visitors to Darlington and attracted people to our hospitality venues. The promotional offer worked exceptionally well, and some restaurants extended their offer over a longer period to attract people from across the region to the town. Over 20 venues signed up to offer these fantastic deals, bringing in visitors to Darlington.
15. The 2023 events programme will offer exciting activities, events and animation, including some new cultural dates and engagement opportunities, the team are currently working on programming these various events which for 2023 will include more town-wide animation to encourage footfall to move around the town centre. We have also added a new Sustainability Event to this year's calendar.
16. Celebrations to mark the Coronation of King Charles III will be centred on Darlington's Market Square on Saturday 6 May. The occasion will be broadcast live on a big screen with a programme of entertainment and engagement activities to follow. A garden party style set up will enable our communities to get involved throughout the day.
17. Street parties will be enabled across the Town on Sunday 7 May. The 'Big Help Out' on Monday 8 May will also highlight the positive impact volunteering has on communities across the country.
18. Darlington will be at the centre of the Eurovision Song Contest celebrations in the Tees Valley from 10-13 May, with the Market Square hosting a 'BBC Outside' broadcast for the big occasion. An exciting community engagement programme and series of live broadcasts will happen across the week.

**Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio**

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COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Operational Services

2. Operational services continue to work in close partnership with health colleagues to ensure the flow of safe discharge from hospitals is managed well. There has been a significant rise in demand in relation to supporting safe discharges from hospital and supporting admission avoidance with some weeks seeing double the number of referrals of a similar period last year. We continue to mitigate this through dynamic risk management of cases to ensure people are supported to return home where possible or access to a short breaks stay, before a period of reablement.
3. Waiting lists for assessments and reviews remain a challenge for the service. However, the social care discharge fund has been used to increase capacity and joint approaches are being developed with the voluntary and community sector. For example, Darlington Carers and social prescribers, provided by the Primary Care Network, are working closely with the adult contact team.
4. There has been significant changes within the senior leadership team with a restructure to be implemented from 1st April. The aim of this restructure is to provide a single strategic and operational line of direction for all adult teams by moving away from the concept of two distinct pathways and instead promoting and developing one cohesive social care service for adults, enabling seamless decision making and transfer of cases within the teams.

Communications and Marketing

5. A profile of the Provider Services team will appear in March 2023 edition of One Darlington magazine. ASC teams were represented at the Darlington Jobs Fair on Thursday 9 February, which provided an opportunity to engage with potential newcomers to the industry.
6. Adults recruitment marketing campaign ongoing, with regular social media content advertising current vacancies. There has been a significant drop in vacancies and turnover within last 12 months with drop from 25% to 14%.

Commissioning and Contracts

7. The Phase 1 Adult Social Care Discharge Fund Schemes have been mobilised for 2 months since their approval on 16 December 2022. A total of £856,314 has been allocated to the Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB). These joint schemes are primarily facilitating safe, timely and effective discharge from acute hospital settings including mental health in-patient settings. The focus of the schemes, from a council perspective, has been the purchasing of additional short stay beds in the residential care market and investing in a recruitment and retention schemes within the domiciliary care sector to build capacity and manage the increasing number of discharges from the Darlington Memorial Hospital.
8. The Department of Health and Social Care has allocated a further £11m to North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Darlington's allocation for additional discharge support (Phase 2) is £336,483 to support the additional purchasing of care home beds with effect from 13 January 2023. These funds will again be to support the timely, safe and effective discharge from the hospital acute settings and will be required to re-claim funding based on activity from the NENC ICB.
9. Darlington Borough Council submitted and confirmed its Fair Cost of Care reports by the 1 February 2023 as required by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). This has ensured the Council's compliance with the Government's grant conditions as set out in the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund. The Council will now proceed with submitting to the final Market Sustainability Plan (MSP) by the extended deadline of 27 March 2023. The Council will also be required to publish its Market Sustainability plan by 27 March 2023. The Council is also continuing to engage with local care providers in respect of their cost of care data submissions which will inform the final MSP.

Climate Change

10. The team have undergone some awareness training on the various options available to provide support and guidance to people. This includes the National Energy Action fuel poverty charity: <https://www.nea.org.uk/training/> and the Warm & Safe Homes advice line from NEA: <https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/>

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

11. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners have not met in this period and therefore no update to provide at this time. The next meeting of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group is scheduled to meet on Monday 13 March, the agenda will cover an overview of current activity from Partnership Subgroup Chairs and two thematic discussions on Working with Challenging Families and Communities/Organised Crime Groups and a discussion on Regulatory Inspections and Safeguarding Systems and how agencies can learn from each other.

Councillor Lorraine Tostevin
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

Schools Admissions 2024/25

1. In line with the School Admissions Code 2021, this authority has approved the Local Authority's admission arrangements for the 2024/25 academic year for the three maintained primary schools in Darlington and for the administration of in-year applications thereafter.

Early Intervention and Front Door

2. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door continues to be stable and is performing well. Contacts being received into CIAT are consistently increasing year on year, particularly since the re-modelling of the Front Door in March 2020. This has been positive in terms of outcomes for children and families, ensuring the right service is provided at the right time with no delay. The increase in contacts has inevitably contributed to an increase in referrals to both social care and Building Stronger Families and due to this there remains pressure in terms of workloads and casework across the whole service. In the last three months there has been growth at the Front Door with the 4Kids Service now embedded, alongside the ongoing development the new Early Intervention Worker and Domestic Abuse Worker, these are integral roles in terms of meeting the need in relation to this area of safeguarding.
3. The Missing and Exploited Team that form part of the Front Door continues to develop well and moving into 2023 there is a focus on supporting the service as a whole to work together to 'close the loop' and work in a more effective joined up way, creating opportunities to identify and target 'places and spaces' and 'people and associates' deemed to be unsafe in relation to young people vulnerable to exploitation. A sharp focus on the early identification of gangs forming is also consistently considered within all forums and a focus in terms of analysis of any information sharing and action planning.

Building Stronger Families Service

4. Reducing Parental Conflict and CAPVA, as well as a range of targeted work for older children and drop in sessions for advice are now part of the offer, alongside Early Years groups with a focus on speech and language development and socialisation for children and parents to help with Covid recovery. As part of post Covid recovery Staff have trained in "First Words Together" and this is now being embedded as a Theme throughout targeted and universal groups and can be used 1:1 to promote speech and language.

Young People's Engagement and Justice Service

5. An Intervention Worker is now in post and working closely with the Civic Enforcement Team in strengthening the pathway. This will be enhanced further in the coming months with the commencement of the Ministry of Justice - Turnaround Programme, this will see the introduction of assessment and planning within the pathway, taking a whole family approach to prevention of ASB and Offending.

Safeguarding Assessment and Care Planning including Children with Disabilities

6. 290 children supported through a Child in Need (CiN) plan as at the end of December 2022. This is a slight increase from the position in September 2022 when 275 children were supported through a Child in Need plan. This is in line with the sustained decrease from 305 at year end March 2022. 74.5 per cent of children on CIN plans had been on the plan for less than a year. 95 per cent of children on a CIN plan for over 2 years are Children with Disabilities.
7. 97 children were subject to a Child Protection plan at the end of December 2022. This is a decrease on the 118 children who were subject to Child Protection Plan at the end of September 2022. This is an increase on the 88 of children on a CP plan at the end of December 2021, but not in line with the annual trend year to date. 16.5 per cent of children on a CP plan have been so for over a year, no children have been on a CP plan for over 2 years.
8. Work has been undertaken to reduce the number of CP plans ending prior to 6 months. Our data shows that successful de-escalation to a CIN plan is much more likely at this point.
9. 41 children from 21 families came into care in quarter 3 2022/23 as a result of court proceedings undertaken by the local authority. This is an increase in the number of children from Quarter 2 (33) but a decrease of the number of families (25). This is an increase on the 26 children who came into our care in quarter 3 2021/22. It is not an increase in the number of families, which has remained relatively stable over the last 3 years.
10. The 0-17 Children with Disabilities Team is now fully staffed and supporting children and families at every point of children's social care involvement This is supported by the team being much more closely aligned to the other Safeguarding, Assessment & Care Planning teams. Transition to Adult Social Care processes are working well, overseen by the TASC panel.
11. As of December 2022, the children's Assessment and Care planning teams have been reconfigured and renamed, as part of a pilot of locality working. Children are now allocated to a team based on the area they live (North, South, East, West & Central Darlington). This is in part to support social work teams building links with local communities and schools, while also trying an alternative approach to managing the demands of a very busy duty system. Reports from staff thus far have been broadly positive and a full review of the changes, including the area boundaries, will be undertaken in April. The Children with Disabilities and Family Group Conference teams continue to provide duty workers within their remit.

Looked After and Care Leaver statistics

12. 314 children were looked after by Darlington Borough Council at the end of December 2022, 18 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). This is an increase in the position at year end March 2022 when 273 children were looked after, 3 of whom were UASC. We have been able to find placements for the UASC young people this is becoming increasingly difficult, with several young people placed outside of Darlington. This is impacting on the capacity of the Looked After Through Care team to manage caseloads. In particular it is challenging to find placements for younger UASC young people (under 16s).
13. All 178 care leavers between 16 – 25 years have access to a personal advisor for support, advice, and guidance. The Looked After Through Care Service is in touch with all care leavers. 98.2 per cent of our care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, this was due to 1 young person being in custody, and 78.2 per cent of care leavers were in education, training or employment at the end of October 2022.

Looked After Resources including Fostering, Residential, Keeping Families Together and Family Group Conference

Fostering and Supported Lodgings

14. We have held a launch event on 30 January for Darlington's first "Mockingbird" constellation. Mockingbird formally went live on Monday 14 November – and foster carers within the constellation have met and have an event took place in December 22 and January 23 for children and carers. We are working with the Marketing Team to ensure wide publicity for this new development which we hope will support foster carer retention, and recruitment.
15. We currently have a 26-week course on "Trauma informed Care" taking place, which began in January 2023, for both fostering social workers and foster carers – which will equip the team and a small group of carers with knowledge and skills which we hope will improve relational practice between carers and children – and improve placement stability.

Residential Services

16. Dunrobin Children's Home continues to have three young people in placement, so is at capacity. Eldon Children's Home has two young people in placement; however, one young person is currently in a secure welfare placement and the bed is being held open while planning is ongoing. Gilling Children's home has two young people in placement, and one young person was successfully rehabilitated to the care of a parent. Harewood Hill Lodge, Short Breaks Unit provided care to 26 children in December, which represents 89% capacity, leaving scope for emergency situations should a child and their family require additional support. Harewood Hill Lodge is currently providing 7 beds a month to other local authorities, which generates income.
17. Harewood Hill Lodge was inspected by Ofsted on 22 and 23 November and maintained their grading of Good.
18. Dunrobin has been inspected on 29 and 30 November and has gained the grading of Requires improvement to be Good which is an improvement on the grading of inadequate

from their last inspection. Ofsted have complimented the team on the improvements to the home. The outstanding compliance notices have been addressed and removed from the home.

Education

19. Darlington College was recently inspected by Ofsted and achieved a “Good” judgement. Inspectors recognised the quality of the provision across a wide range of curriculum areas and age ranges, the high expectations set by staff, the extensive partnership work, and the commitment College leaders make to meet the needs of all the communities the college serves.
20. Rydal Academy also achieved a “Good” judgement in a recent Ofsted Inspection. Inspectors recognised that pupils love the school and all staff aim to make the Academy a haven for all who attend, expectations for pupils with SEND are high and work to support pupil’s mental health and well-being is impressive.
21. As part of our ongoing commitment to increasing capacity for SEND in Darlington the council submitted a bid to open a new Special Free School and we are delighted that we have been successful. To complement our existing provision, we have identified the need for a secondary provision for those pupils with a primary need of autism/ASD. The new special free school will provide 48 full time places for pupils aged 11-19 with autism, who would benefit from a specific environment and staff dedicated to a holistic approach. The capital funding for the new school will be provided from the Government’s Free School Programme. As a new build site it is proposed to utilise the opportunity to create a multi-agency hub to develop a centre of excellence to support ASD needs in Darlington. Alongside the Department for Education, we will now be seeking proposals from organisations which are interested in establishing and running the new school

Youth Unemployment

22. The Darlington 18-24 year old claimant count fell from 7.7 per cent (565 young people) in November 2022 to 7.4 per cent (540 young people) in December 2022. This is contrary to the North-East average which remained static at 5.6 per cent, and the national average which rose from 4.6 per cent to 4.7 per cent.
23. The Redcar 18-24 year old claimant rate for December 2022 was 7.2 per cent, closely followed by Darlington at 7.4 per cent, Stockton at 7.5 per cent and Middlesbrough at 7.9 per cent. Hartlepool is an outlier at 10.0 per cent. Only Darlington (-0.3 per cent) and Stockton (-0.1 per cent) saw a month on month fall in numbers, the other three Tees Valley authorities saw claimant numbers rise.

Children’s Commissioning and Contracts

24. During 2023/24 Darlington will be working in alongside with the Children's Cross Regional.
25. Arrangements Group (CCRAG) hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. CCRAG is a partnership of local authorities working together to support the sourcing, contracting, monitoring of children's placements in Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools and Children's Residential Homes. CCRAG currently has 36 Local Authority members (six of

which are North East Local Authorities). The aim of CCRAAG is to:

- (a) Improve overall quality standards and outcomes for children and young people.
- (b) Reduce duplication and share quality assurance activity between member Local Authorities.
- (c) Work with the market to provide quality up to date information on individual services and improve sufficiency.
- (d) Focus on relational commissioning and encouraging effective communication across the partnership.

Climate Change

26. Children's Services Senior Leadership Team continue to have a service champion to Climate Change and our contribution to Climate Change is prevalent on our agenda. Our Assessment and Safeguarding Teams have recently moved to a locality based model of service delivery which it is envisaged will lead to reduced travelling for teams and workers by having them aligned to certain Wards within the town. This is anticipated to lead to a reduction in emissions from more efficient working and travelling arrangements.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio

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COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

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

Environmental Health

2. The Environmental Health Section has responded to 981 requests for service in Q3 2022/2023. The main categories of these requests are:
 - (a) Food – 93
 - (b) Licensing – 103
 - (c) Noise – 130
 - (d) Planning Enquiries – 92
 - (e) Refuse – 51
 - (f) Pest – 163
 - (g) Personal searches – 231
3. Environmental Health has successfully prosecuted two residents for non-compliance with a Community Protection Notice for failing to remove unhygienic waste in a timely and proper manner from the rear yard of their property at Brook Terrace, Darlington. The residents were each fined £220, ordered to pay costs of £408 and a victim surcharge.
4. **Care for Clean Air**

Environmental Health has launched a 'Care for Clean Air' campaign to encourage motorists not to leave their engine idling whilst their vehicle is stationary. Leaving an engine idling whilst parked up concentrates emissions from the engine and can lead to poor localised air quality. Information has been provided to schools as children especially can be more vulnerable and the campaign hopes to encourage parents to switch off their engines whilst waiting for children to finish school.
5. **'Ready to Burn'**

Officers from Environmental Health have been visiting service stations, retail premises and supermarkets to check on compliance with the Domestic Solid Fuels Regulations. These Regulations restrict the sale of certain solid fuels with the aim of improving air quality for example wood sold in smaller quantities must be certified and sold 'Ready to Burn' with below 20% moisture. The 'Ready to Burn' logo must be displayed on the packaging of the product or displayed alongside the specific wood or manufactured solid fuel at the point of sale. Generally, compliance was found to be good at the 37 premises inspected in January 2023.

6. Border Control Post-Teesside International Airport

Officers from Environmental Health have been working with the management team at the airport alongside officers from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and officers from River Tees Port Health to make an application for the airport to be designated as a Border Control Post. The application was successful and designation has been granted from January 2023 and will allow the airport to facilitate the import of certain categories of food and flowers from the rest of the world countries, both EU and Non EU.

Climate Change

7. We are continuing to work with the Event Management Team on the Sustainability Event on 2/3 June. Businesses are engaging and we are looking forward to another excellent event in town.
8. We are working to improve the reporting system so that Members and senior management will be able to see progress on actions. We had hoped to be able to use Power BI but this is not going to be an option in the short term. The new system will be in place for the beginning of the next financial year.
9. We have been working with teams to bring together the adaptation actions we already have in place and what we need to add, to ensure that the council is resilient to the impacts of climate change. We will be presenting the adaptation action plan to Cabinet on 25 April.

Development Management

10. There have been 244 complaint cases recorded since 2022. 207 closed with justification.
11. Since the beginning of August 2020, 3619 applications have been received of which 96 are categorised as major. 3152 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.

Nutrient Neutrality

12. Since the last overview report, progress has been made with colleagues across the Tees Valley to deal with this issue on a catchment area basis. Our Local MPs have also been briefed and have raised the issue at Westminster. Since the last report, further guidance has been issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, supported by a Ministerial Statement, which has clarified the position for all authorities within the catchment area, including Darlington. Essentially for the moment, new development involving overnight stays is paused until early this year, by which time Natural England will hopefully have in place a system for developers to purchase mitigation credits relating to nutrients, which will allow planning permissions for overnight stays including housing to be recommenced. Solutions have however been found on a limited number of sites to ensure that a limited supply of implementable permissions is ongoing and available. Natural England have recently announced there will be a system in place in the coming months to enable developers to purchase credits to offset the impact of nutrients to allow development to recommence.

Town Fund

13. Delivery onsite continues on the Skinnergate and the Yards project, with enhancement to properties and public realm.
14. Construction works have completed on college T-Levels project, with handover delivered and a formal official opening planned in March 2023. In addition the Rail Heritage Quarter project continues, which is part funded by the Town Fund.
15. Works associated with the west of station improvements at the top of Victoria Road are progressing, with the enabling demolition work now commenced.
16. Elsewhere design work continues at the Northern Echo building in relation to the proposed Adult Skills facility.
17. In Northgate and the Garden Street/Weir Street, design and property acquisitions/negotiations are being progressed including the acquisition of number 156 Northgate, which has now entered the design stage, and ongoing acquisition negotiations for Northgate House.
18. The development of the Creative Strategy for Victoria Road is being finalised and will be shared with the local community and other stakeholders. This sets the scene and assists in identifying opportunities and a clear strategy for further enhancements to the street leading up to Bank Top Station. Including improvements to exterior of selected properties. Works to re-establishment the pocket park at the junction with the ring road are ongoing.

Business Investment

19. The Darlington Jobs Fair returned in February with 75 employers showcasing the opportunities they currently have available. Alongside the employers, there were several advice agencies offering support and guidance to those seeking work.
20. On the day itself, almost 1500 jobseekers attended. It was a very busy four hours and every visitor received a copy of the "Darlington Jobs" newspaper. All the remaining newspapers have gone to local Job Centres for distribution, so every copy has been put to good use.
21. We are currently undertaking post-event evaluation to identify any successful outcomes. However, here is a selection of some of the initial feedback from employers:
 - (a) 'One of the best, if not the best Job Fair we attend in the North of England'
 - (b) 'Everything went smoothly for us, and we got some really interesting candidates that hopefully we can progress into employment with us. Also made some good contacts for future partnerships with various education and training organisations that will help our recruitment efforts'.
 - (c) 'What a great day it was yesterday at the dolphin centre, we have received applications by the time we got back to the office so a successful day'

22. One of the stars of the show, on the day itself, was the 'Job Seekers Translation and Support Hub' which was so busy, extra staff had to be drafted in to support it. Demand was so high both from employers and job seekers, we are doing it all again on Thursday 29th June 2023 to tie in with the end of the academic year. 32 employers have already signed up.

Councillor Jamie Bartch
Economy Portfolio

**COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023**

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Public Health

2. Making Every Contact Count remains an important part of the work of the authority to help support our residents consider and make sustainable lifestyle changes through day to day interactions with individuals at all levels. Training is continuing to provide those working directly with our most vulnerable communities are skilled and confident in the use of the tools and techniques of MECC. This will ensure that this becomes the norm for all those who work with local communities in Darlington and the evidence supports that widespread exposure to MECC will result in more and more people making changes to their lifestyle and health seeking behaviours.

Health and Well Being Board

3. The Health and Wellbeing Board last met on 16 March 2023. The main discussion item included an update to the Board on the development of a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) following the Ofsted/CQC Inspection on the provision of Special Educational Needs (SEND) support in Darlington.
4. We also considered the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2021-2022 and received an update from the Integrated Care Board on the 2023/24 Joint Forward Plan.

Housing Services

Housemark

5. Housemark is the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector and allows us to benchmark our performance and costs with other, similar sized social housing providers. A report on our performance for 2021-22 has recently been produced and we have been assessed by Housemark as a “*Good performance, Low cost*” housing provider. Amongst the highlights of the report are the following:
 - (a) Our operational productivity is lower in cost and better in performance than our peers. This is based on overhead costs and front line housing management costs for each property, and our average performance across rent arrears, void loss, staff sickness and staff turnover.

- (b) The number and cost of responsive repairs are low, and places us in the best group, compared to our peers. We completed an average of 2.3 responsive repairs to each property, compared to the average of 3.3 and the cost of each repair was £657, compared to the average of £797. The average number of days to complete repairs was 12.5, below the average of 13.3.
- (c) The number of anti-social behaviour cases was 39.2 for every 1,000 properties, compared to the average of 49.9.
- (d) The percentage of our properties that were vacant was 1.08%, compared to the average of 1.54%.

Mystery Shopping

- 6. Our Tenants Panel has agreed to help us carry out an extensive mystery shopper programme for our Housing and Building Services. This will start in the spring of 2023 and include areas such as responsive repairs, gas servicing and reports of damp and mould. The results will be fed back in our bi-monthly Tenants Panel meetings with any areas for improvement discussed with our teams and action plans implemented.

Homes for Ukraine

- 7. Our Refugee Support team has recently been able to prevent homelessness and the need for emergency accommodation for two households under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Ukrainian guest's existing sponsorship was due to end in February 2023 and work was undertaken beforehand to secure alternative accommodation.
- 8. One of the Ukrainian guests has moved into Council accommodation and work was also undertaken by the team to arrange a furniture package to support her transition to independent living.

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders

- 9. Our Housing Options team has recently been successful in bidding for an extension of funding under the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Funding scheme. A total of £166k has been awarded over 2 years up to March 2025, to support 50 ex-offenders to secure privately rented accommodation in Darlington.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 10. I am pleased to report that our Housing Tenancy Enforcement team continue to take decisive action against those Council tenants causing anti-social behaviour in our communities:
 - (a) An Outright Possession Order has been obtained against a tenant living in a Council property in the Parkside area for poor property conditions and for subjecting his neighbours to various forms of anti-social behaviour.

- (b) A Council tenant in the North Road area has been evicted for alcohol related anti-social behaviour.
- (c) The team has also gained possession of a property in the Skerne Park area for drug related anti-social behaviour and verbal abuse, and the tenants are in the process of vacating the property.

11. These actions confirm our zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour in our Council properties.

Dolphin Centre

12. The Dolphin Centre website has been improved to provide a more modern and welcoming feel. This comes in advance of the new upgrade to online bookings which will see the digital experience for customers greatly improved. The build of the upgrade is currently underway and is expected to be complete in the spring.

13. February half term welcomed many families into the Dolphin Centre with soft play, bowling and bounce extreme an inflatable playground in the sports hall proving very popular. Although the main pool remains temporarily out of action, family swimming in the training pool and toddler pool were still on offer along with popular diving pool sessions.

14. A new partner Evolve Sports Academy, offering further education in sports related education, joined the Dolphin Centre in February 2023. This takes on-site partners up to 40 and welcomes a new footfall into the centre.

15. Carmel College and Darlington College invited the Dolphin Centre team to participate in a student recruitment fair highlighting opportunities to work for Darlington Borough Council Leisure Services. Interest was shown from students around part-time opportunities and longer-term career options.

Health in Haughton Matters

16. We are currently looking at expanding our existing offer in relation to Health in Haughton Matters. The health walk has seen keen interest each week, Tai Chi is extremely popular, and the Active Life Foundation receive strong numbers for Standing Pilates and Low Impact Fitness. Other activities include Archery, Yoga and Adult Fitness Classes, with 130 participants taking part in the last month. Further consultation has been undertaken with current participants and local residents to see what other activities they would be interested in, together with suitable days and times.

Together Fund – Phase 4

17. Phase 4 of the Together Fund has had an increased onus on the return to play. The fund aims to help people return to their regular activity or a viable alternative as current Covid restrictions have eased. They support groups to strengthen coming out of COVID through developing their governance, business planning and resilience. The four target audiences that the funding is directed towards are Statistically disadvantaged communities, Culturally diverse communities, Disabled people, and People with long-term health conditions.

13 community organisations across Darlington have been successful with phase 4 funding applications with over £50,000 of funding support successfully ascertained for various projects across the town.

Eastbourne Sports Complex Capital Project

18. Darlington Borough Council supported by the Darlington Move More Team has had planning approval for the redevelopment and improvement of facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex and received the successful funding award of £941,842 funding from the Football Foundation in February 2023. The new facilities will include an updated UK track mark standard athletics track, an additional stadia artificial grass pitch with changing facilities, new reception area and improved car parking facilities. This project will strengthen the current community delivery and will further develop the Eastbourne Sports Complex facilities to be accessible for a wide range of new community groups and partners.

Sheltered Housing Project

19. The Move More team deliver 15 sessions weekly in sheltered housing schemes. The sessions vary from chair-based exercises to Tai Chi and carpet bowls. The majority of residents are aged 60 years plus.



Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

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

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

2. The Medium Term Financial Plan was considered and approved at the Special Council meeting held in February 2023 and as a result of a better than expected Local Government Settlement, the Council were able to set a legal budget in 2023/24. This allows a net revenue investment in Darlington and its residents of £120m in 2023/24 and new capital investment of over the life of the plan of £111m.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

3. The Council's Capital Programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered.
 - (a) On the Bank Top Railway Station the demolitions phase is ongoing on the eastern side of the scheme with a number of buildings already cleared. On the western side the demolition of the former Hogan's Public House has commenced. The Railway Heritage Quarter project continues on site with the new engineering shed and refurbishment work to the 1861 shed on Whessoe Road. The Head of Steam site itself has been vacated and work is due to start on that part of the site shortly. Works are ongoing at the Central Library and Cattlemarket car park. Issues around the impact of the Nutrient Neutrality requirements from Natural England are being worked through on the Sherborne and Skinnergate housing schemes.
 - (b) Business cases continue to be developed to secure additional projects from funding opportunities.
 - (c) There remains a risk of further inflation related effects on construction related costs.

Council Tax and Business Rates collection

4. As at January 2023, our Revenues and Benefits team has collected a total of £91.56 million in Council Tax and Business Rates, including £1.7 million of arrears. Recovery Officers on the team continue to take decisive action to deal with serious debt cases, including the following recent examples:
 - (a) A Council Tax debt of £2,741 was outstanding, despite numerous attempts to contact the property owner. The debt had been referred to our Enforcement Agents (bailiffs) but had been returned to the Council as uncollectable. However, following several

visits and telephone calls by Recovery Officers to the debtor, the full amount outstanding has now been paid.

- (b) A local business owed £15,157 in outstanding Business Rates. Following insolvency action being commenced by our Recovery Officers, the owner repaid the debt in full.
- (c) An outstanding Housing Benefit overpayment of £22,282 as a result of benefit fraud was being repaid on a voluntary repayment plan. However, the debtor moved and payments stopped. Following investigative work by Recovery Officers, the debtor's employer was located and a direct earnings attachment was set-up to recover the remainder of the debt, which has now been repaid in full.

Local Government (Borough and Parish Council) Elections

- 5. Preparations for the Local Government (Borough and Parish Council) Elections 2023 are now underway, with polling taking place on 4 May 2023. It is intended that the Notice of Election will be published on Friday 24 March 2023 which is the formal start of the election period. The nomination process will run from this date until 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday 4 April 2023. These are the first elections taking place where voters will be required to show photo ID to vote and work is on-going to inform the electors of this new requirement and the changes to the accessibility arrangements in polling stations.
- 6. The Verification and Count for the Elections will take place on Friday 5 May 2023 commencing at 10.00 a.m. in the Dolphin Centre. Attendance at the Count is restricted and only those with a ticket will be admitted to the count venue.

Absent Vote Signature Refresh and Postal Voting

- 7. The final Absent Vote Signature Refresh commenced in January when 4,196 electors were written to, informing them that their Postal Vote was over five years old, and requesting that a fresh specimen signature be provided as part of the security measures in place to ensure that their Postal Vote cannot be used by anyone else. At the end of the six week refresh period, 296 electors had their Absent Vote deleted either at their request or as a result of not responding to the letters they received.
- 8. The Elections Act 2022 will bring in a number of changes to the postal and proxy voting process, including the requirement that electors will only be able to hold a postal vote for a maximum of three years, and rather than complete an absent vote signature refresh form they will be required to make a fresh application, at least every three years, should they wish to continue to vote by post. Secondary legislation is awaited on this and the other elements of the Elections Act that are to be implemented prior to the 2024 elections.

Councillor Scott Durham
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

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

Community Safety

Safer Streets Programmes

2. The Safer Streets 3 programme continues to progress. The multi-agency safe place, 'number 40', Skinnergate, continues to run well and is independently staffed by volunteers, supported by SIA security. Since opening on 1 September 2022, in excess of 220 incidents have been recorded, where assistance has been provided to vulnerable people.
3. Approaching 30 dedicated volunteers have been provided with training and equipment. A supply of personal attack alarms continue to be distributed to vulnerable people through the safe place.
4. Training has commenced for the volunteers to deliver street support in the night-time economy. This element will commence in April/May 2023, where volunteers will patrol the town centre and offer support to vulnerable people.

Civic Enforcement Service

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

5. Officers continue to refer into the Future Pathways initiative, as part of the Safer Streets 4 programme of work, with the following outcomes achieved in the period of reporting:
 - (a) 8 First Warnings have been given to youths identified as being involved in ASB;
 - (b) 2 Final Warnings have been given to youths who refused to sign Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA);
 - (c) 30 ABAs have been signed;
 - (d) 20 youths have been identified as being involved in ASB and are now awaiting an interview and potential intervention activity.

Environmental Crime

6. In the period of reporting the following outcomes have been achieved:
 - (a) 1 conviction for non-payment of fine for the breach of a Community Protection Notice;
 - (b) 1 non microchipping offence taken to court;
 - (c) 4 court cases pending;
 - (d) 2 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for littering (feeding the pigeons in the Town Centre);
 - (e) 8 Community Protection Notice Warnings issued for side waste.

Trading Standards

7. Since 1 January 2023, Trading Standards, in partnership with Durham Constabulary, has seized tobacco and vape products with a retail value of over £70,000 from 14 Darlington premises. This brings the combined retail value of products seized since late 2022 to over £149,000. Investigations are continuing. In addition, premises which are suspected of engaging in under-age sales of these products are under investigation.

Licensing

8. Licensing coordinated a Tees Valley-wide multi-agency operation (Operation Coley), to tackle metal theft, unlicensed scrap metal dealers and unlicensed waste carriers. This has been in response to concerns that collectors and dealers were not renewing licences following a requirement under the Financial Act 2022 to be registered with HMRC.
9. Licensing, with support from police and Immigration Enforcement, have carried out a series of intelligence led inspections of licensed premises to ensure compliance with licence conditions. Whilst most premises were compliant following scheduled re-inspections, further action will be taken against those that still do not comply. Consideration will be given to prosecute and/or review their licence.

Private Sector Housing

Energy Company Obligation

10. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) is a government energy efficiency scheme, administered by Ofgem. The main objective of ECO4 is to improve the least energy efficient housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable households.
11. One route that can be used to identify these households is 'ECO4 Flexibility' (ECO4 Flex). The Council has volunteered to participate in the scheme to be able to refer private tenure households that it considers to be living in fuel poverty or on a low income, and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

12. The flexible approach will allow the targeting of low-income households with a household income of less than £31,000, who are unlikely to be in receipt of means tested benefits.

Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2)

13. A bid was submitted in January 2023 for £6.2million to improve energy inefficient properties that are not heated by gas appliances. If successful, the project will be led by the Council to improve 300 properties across the Tees Valley over the next two years.
14. Whilst there are approximately 9,000 potentially eligible properties across the area and 2,800 in Darlington alone this project would continue from phase one, which is currently being delivered and demonstrate an ongoing programme of works to address the issue.

PREVENT

CONTEST Strategy: Pursue, Prepare, Prevent, Protect

15. A number of sessions took place between January to March 2023 focussing on Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in 11 to 18-year-olds in relation to the risk of being radicalised. Sessions took place on 31 January, 13 February and 2, 6 and 21 March respectively, attended by approximately 162 school/college Designated Safeguarding Leads and other professionals working with young people across Darlington and Durham. Webpages on the Council’s website are also being developed to provide ongoing support and information for parents/carers and professionals.
16. A Prevent Awareness event was held on 7 February at the Dolphin Centre. The event was delivered by Counter Terrorism Policing North East and attended by 31 people, including professionals from health, community peer mentors, faith groups and others. Excellent feedback on the session was received from those who attended, and a further session will be organised for September 2023.
17. A mandatory Protect package for all Council staff went live on Academy 10 at the end of 2022. A paper ‘workbook’ version is also available for staff who do not have regular access to a computer or prefer a hard copy. As of 28 February 2023, 79 per cent of staff had completed the Academy 10 package. Figures for workbook completions will be available in early April 2023.
18. The Independent Review of Prevent was published 8 February 2023. Implications for Darlington’s delivery of Prevent are currently being considered.

Crime and Disorder

19. Across the Borough the figures are as follows:

Darlington	YTD JANUARY 2022	YTD JANUARY 2023	% Increase/decrease
Crime	9131	9665	+6%
Incidents	25264	25551	+1%
ASB	2768	2280	-18%

20. The crime increase equates to 534 offences, with public order and harassment rates increasing. This can be attributed to changes made to the way that Durham Constabulary are recording public order offences and in preparation for a change to Home Office counting rules.
21. Incidents have increased by 287 reports, with an increase in youth related incidents. Partnership work between the police and Civic Enforcement teams has been focussed to intervene to try and improve behaviour.
22. Within the town centre the figures are as follows:

Darlington Town Centre	YTD JANUARY 2022	YTD JANUARY 2023	% Increase/decrease
Crime	1174	1195	+2%
Incidents	2118	2058	-3%
ASB	239	198	-17%

23. The crime increase equates to 21 offences, with theft of pedal cycle rates increasing. Further analysis shows that cycles are being left insecure and this is the main reason for the uptick of offences. To address this, the police are holding PACT events focusing on bike security and free bike marking.

Darlington Cares

24. At an event held on 1 March 2023 more than 3,600 hours of volunteering hours have been pledged by companies in a bid to reinvigorate four of Darlington’s parks. The Great Parks Auction, organised by Darlington Cares, saw five companies pledge a total of 3,650.5 employee volunteering hours to work in The Denes, Stanhope Park, Eastbourne Park and Fryers Field.
25. Under the direction of auctioneer Pete Barron, companies competed against each other at the event at the Theatre Hullabaloo, to commit their staffs time to helping improve the areas.
26. Working with the council and the parks’ Friends groups, the volunteer teams will aim to rejuvenate the areas in the parks that are most in need of care and attention.
27. EE pledged 1,300 hours to The Denes, The Darlington Economic Campus and Redde Northgate donated 700 hours to Stanhope Park, Cummins offered 1,300.5 hours to Eastbourne Park and The Education Village, EE and The Darlington Economic Campus volunteered 350 hours to work in Fryers Field.

**Councillor Mike Renton
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Dementia Care Services – Update

2. The Director of Place, North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, provided the Committee with an update on Dementia Services. The presentation advised Members of the current position in Darlington, together with projections to 2040, and gave an overview of the Well Pathway for Dementia, including the strands covering prevention, diagnosis, support, living and dying.
3. We entered into discussion on the size of the predicted increase in Dementia cases to 2040, and whether there were proposals for the budget to be increased accordingly. The Committee were also keen to learn more about the support available for carers within the home setting, and how the available support was communicated to carers. It was noted that some family members or carers may be reluctant to recognise or acknowledge early indications of Dementia.
4. Particular reference was made to the Crisis Team, and whether this could be accessed by the general population, or whether the support was only available to those already within the system, with a focus also made to communication and signposting of the service.
5. Discussion ensued on the improvements made to services, including advice on financial support and specialist equipment. Members were also keen to learn more about cross-authority arrangements, and how effective safeguarding measures were for those being cared for in the home setting.

Substance Misuse Service Update – Support Treatment and Recovery in Darlington Through Empowering (STRIDE)

6. The Contract Manager, We Are With You, and the Executive Director, Contract Management and Business Development, We Are With You, provided the Committee with a presentation on the Substance Misuse Service (STRIDE).
7. We heard that the service provided pharmacological interventions, psychosocial interventions, harm reduction and needle exchange, health and wellbeing assessments, group programme and awareness sessions, signposting and onward referral, ambassador training programme, and an outreach team to support adults who are finding it difficult to engage with the service. The programme included drop in sessions, awareness sessions and structured groups.

8. The Committee were advised that STRIDE worked with a range of partners, including the Police, Social Services, Children's Services, Safeguarding Teams, Housing Teams, the Darlington Carers Service, Mental Health Services (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS), and domestic abuse services.
9. We were keen to establish when the service would be moving into the Tubwell Row site, and were pleased to learn that the operational team was ready, however were awaiting final agreement from Estates, although it was anticipated that the move would be within this financial year.
10. It was suggested that alcoholism within the Middle Class was on the rise, however that there was potentially a reluctance from those within this demographic to recognise the problem, and Members were keen to discover what targeted work was being undertaken to address this. Members were also keen to establish what work was being undertaken with Balance and our GP practices, and what was being done to liaise with habitual / binge drinkers.
11. Members were pleased to learn that peer-2-peer and outreach work was taking place, and requested more information about how this worked in practice.
12. Disappointment was expressed that there was no mention of organisations such as the 700 Club, Number Forty and the Y.M.C.A., however Members were reassured that work was undertaken with the voluntary sector. Members were keen to ascertain the number of service users per group, how feedback in relation to the service was obtained, and how many staff and partners carried Naloxone.

Performance Indicators Mid-Year Report 2022-23

13. We received a report which provided performance data against Key Performance Indicators for 2022-23, 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.
14. It was highlighted that 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 (ASC003 and ASC019); six indicators showed a decline in comparison to the same period last year (ASC002, ASC045, ASC046, ASC049, ASC054 and ASC055); one indicator showed a performance that was the same as the same time last year (ASC050); and three indicators were not comparable and were reviewed at a point in time (ASC208, ASC209 and ASC211).
15. Members entered into discussion on the lasting impact of the Covid pandemic on the performance information, and enquired as to whether Care Homes had seen an post-Covid increase in admissions. Members also scrutinised the figures in terms of the number of people with Learning Disabilities in Employment, noting the success of Hartlepool Borough Council in this area, and acknowledging that the true figure of those in employment could be higher, but many did not require Adult Social Care input.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – 2021/2022

16. The Committee received a copy of the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2021/22. We were informed that the Local Safeguarding Partnership was required to produce an Annual Report to account for the Partnership's achievements over the previous year and make an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.
17. The report outlined what the Partnership had done over the period 2021/22, drawing upon a range of data and information to outline the progress made and illustrate the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements across Darlington.
18. Members welcomed the report and entered into discussion on the work being undertaken in relation to self-neglect and hoarders, and what actions local Councillors could take in relation to concerns about vulnerable people. Members noted that the legislation governing children and young people seemed clearer than that governing the care of adults, and were keen to see information provided in 'layman terms'. It was acknowledged that funding remained an issue and a challenge, however Members we pleased to note that there had been no serious case reviews.

Work Programme

19. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Bob Donoghue
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee

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**COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023**

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Childcare Sufficiency Review 2022/23

2. Members considered the findings of the 2022-23 Childcare Sufficiency Review.
3. Local authorities are required by the Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities June 2018' to ensure sufficient childcare as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children; and to report annually to elected Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents.
4. The childcare market in Darlington is made up of private day nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, out of school clubs, nursery schools and nursery units and prior to March 2020, was fairly stable and the parental take-up rates of the various entitlements was predictable however since the pandemic the picture had become more complex and less predictable.
5. The most up-to-date census data showed that the total supply of pre-school places (FTE) in the borough in Spring 2022 was 2,476 and the demand for pre-school places (number of children) was 1,719 therefore there was no overall lack of childcare sufficiency in the borough.
6. However, feedback from the childcare sector was that registered holiday provision (not run by schools) was experiencing a decline in take-up and it was unclear yet whether hybrid working was affecting take-up and there had been a slight increase in the number of school registered out of school and breakfast clubs.
7. It was also noted that local providers had indicated that recruitment and retention remained an issue in a Childcare Recruitment and Retention survey carried out October 2021; and during 2022 early years funding audits had taken place with 13 of the 27 day nurseries and pre-schools in the borough where Managers also confirmed that recruitment and retention were affecting their business.
8. We continue to work with the sector through the Early Years Education Strategy Group and support continues to be provided to the childcare sector and two Members of that Group, Ella Long from the Play Hut Day Nursery and Amanda Summers from All Saints

Blackwell Pre School attended our Scrutiny meeting on 27 February to give their views on childcare sufficiency.

9. Members questioned how the Council can help raise awareness of the support and assistance available to families and in particular to promote Tax Free Childcare which in a mini survey of parents/carers at Beaumont Hill Academy revealed that 62 per cent of respondents said they had not heard of schemes to support childcare costs such as Tax Free Childcare and the Universal Credit Childcare Offer.
10. We also discussed the increased costs of living and the effect on both families and the childcare sector; the on-going difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff within the sector and what was being done within the authority to promote childcare as a career; the reducing numbers of childminders which was a national issue; discussed the general underfunding within childcare; and we raised our concerns at the costs of childcare for those children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and the difficulties the childcare sector have in accessing SEND funding.
11. We agreed with the priorities for the Local Authority to continue to provide parents with up to date information about financial assistances towards children care costs, including any available tax credits; to work with settings and other interested stakeholders to continually improve the quality of care and make settings/activities more inclusive; and to assist childcare providers by providing information on matters relating to funding and sustainability.

Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2021/22

12. Members considered the Annual Reports of the Independent Reviewing Officer for 2021/22 and the Child Protection Conference Chair for 2021/22.
13. These annual reports provide us with an overview of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service in relation to Looked After Children and Children who are the subject of Child Protection Conferences and / or multi-agency Child Protection Plans.
14. It was highlighted that for the period April 2021 – March 2022, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, formal meetings, which in previous years would have been face to face, had been conducted using virtual platforms. This applied to all Child Protection Conferences, Child Looked After Review, and most of the contact with children, young people, and their families.
15. We discussed the actions for 2022/23 and the ways in which the authority plan to increase the number of children who attend their Child Looked After Review; discussed advocacy services available for Children Looked After and in particular how the

authority planned to increase uptake of advocacy services for those children and young people who were subject of Child Protection Conferences; and the improvements to the Independent Reviewing Officer footprint since the 2018 Ofsted inspection by the introduction of the Liquid Logic system.

The Refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan 2023-2028

16. We considered the proposals for the refreshed Children and Young People's Plan 2023 – 2028, a strategic plan for delivering outcomes for children and young people and the setting of priorities for the medium term.
17. It was noted that although the plan was no longer a statutory requirement, the production of such a plan was considered to be best practice and the refreshed CYPP will be completed and launched in Spring 2023. Progress against the refreshed CYPP will be managed through the Health and Well Being Board.
18. Members supported the Plan and acknowledged the key themes of the Plan drawn from feedback with face to face consultation with local schools and colleges, the Darlington Youth Partnership, the Youth Member of Parliament and engagement with key stakeholders which included children and young people's mental health and wellbeing; cyber bullying and suicide rates; the impact of young people awaiting a diagnosis for autism from the CAMHS service; and child poverty and the impact of hardship on families and their children.

Work Programme

19. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2022/23, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Paul Crudass
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2022

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Northgate Initiative

2. Scrutiny welcomed an update from the Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities on the Northgate Initiative.
3. Members were informed that a planning meeting was held to discuss the future of the initiative, the objectives were reviewed and refreshed and a work programme developed. We noted that the issues being addressed were long term and therefore short term timescales could not be assigned. Any exit strategy that the steering group determined would be a long way in the future.
4. We discussed in particular resources for the initiative and Members felt that further updates are required in relation to benchmarking and progress against the objectives.

Public Sector Executive Group

5. Scrutiny received an update on the Public Sector Executives Group (PSEG), formed as one of the arrangements to replace the Darlington Partnership.
6. Members were provided with membership details, the key aims of the group and we were informed of the recent activity of the group, including sharing information with agencies in relation to cost of living and supporting the development of the Levelling Up Darlington Plan. Particular reference was made to the role of the PSEG in the Household Support programme.

Local Transport Plan

7. Scrutiny 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 2022/23 and outlining the 2023/24 programme, including the release of funding; and providing an update on the Darlington Transport Plan.
8. Members were advised that there has been good progress on the development and delivery of the transport capital programme; the Tees Valley has secured significant funding from government, including the £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme; and that the Council has adopted a new Transport Strategy for the Borough, Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy, with work underway on implementing the associated action plan.

9. It was reported that the Department for Transport (DfT) is focussed on progressing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and Darlington has started the delivery of one of two priority schemes in the LCWIP with the creation of phase one of a cycling route on Woodland Road. We were informed that an Enhanced Bus Partnership has been created to deliver improvements to bus services.
10. Scrutiny were provided with details of the progress on the schemes delivered in 2022/23, the Transport Capital Programme 2023/24 and proposed programme of schemes, and the Performance Indicators.
11. We discussed cycle path usage, maintenance of structures and following ongoing concern regarding bus services, Members were informed of the Enhanced Bus Partnership which has been created to deliver improvements to bus services. Members were also provided with a progress update on the School Streets Initiative.

DBC Mobile App - Update

12. Scrutiny received an update regarding the development of the DBC mobile app, which was launched in November 2021, noting the reporting features for the two main back office systems, Lagan and Symology.
13. We were informed that an established programme of work is in place to enhance mobile working processes within the street cleansing section of the council and to introduce some new reporting functions, with a focus on the bin/dog bin reporting feature. We acknowledged that prerequisite work is required to determine how people would report the location of the bins.
14. Scrutiny discussed the different mechanisms to enable residents to identify and report full bins via the app and following issues raised in relation to feedback from the app, Members were advised of the long term aim for feedback to be generated for all problems reported.

Work Programme 2022/23

15. We have given consideration to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Steven Tait
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Towns Fund

2. We received a presentation from the Towns Fund Programme Manager which provided Members with an overview of the budget position of a number of Town Centre schemes, noting that the Towns Fund revenue received to date was £291,965 Programme development and £243,029 Capacity funding, alongside over £18M capital funding received to date.
3. The Committee received an overview of a number of projects including Skinnergate and the Yards, Urban Green Space, Northgate and Commercial Street, Adult Skills on the corner of Priestgate and Crown Street, Northgate and Victoria Road. Members also received a brief update on the Railway Heritage Quarter, Bank Top and Edward Pease House.
4. We were keen to learn more about the immediate plans for Skinnergate, and to see concept pictures and key dates being placed in the public arena. Members were also keen to hear more about the feedback on the Yards project.
5. Discussion ensued on the Adult Skills project, with the Committee keen to understand the financing of the project, learning that funding had been allocated for the Ground Floor of the building, however an application for further funding would be required to progress the project.
6. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of funding received for the Northgate Linear Park concept, however we acknowledged that Darlington had done quite well in terms of funding to date. Members heard that negotiations were still ongoing in terms of Northgate House, and clarified details around the development of 156 Northgate. We were pleased to learn more about the Tiny Forest programme.
7. We had an interesting discussion on how the history of Darlington could be best promoted around the Town Centre, touching upon the use of plaques, the development of the Heritage Trail, signage and branding, the use of mobile phone apps and walking routes, the development of a Ghost Trail, and the promotion of the short films recently created by Chris Lloyd.
8. It was noted that some of the gaps in financing were due to the biannual assessment and biannual release of funding.
9. Overall, we were pleased to hear of the ambition for Northgate, with suggestions put forward that retail units be removed to reveal the original houses that back onto North

Lodge Park, opening up the Northgate entrance to the town, and we would also be keen to see work undertaken to improve shop frontages ahead of the 2025 bicentennial railway celebrations.

Markets Update

10. A verbal update on the Markets was provided to the Committee, with Members receiving information on a new street food bar, a review of the mechanical and electrical systems, and the biomass heating system.
11. We received an overview of Phase Two, which had commenced in Summer 2022, and included work on the Vault Bar, uplifts to the façade of the market, new toilet facilities, and improved signage. Members were informed that there were some long-standing traders who had a loyal customer base, however who were struggling to attract new customers, so work was being undertaken in cooperation with the established traders to attract fresh business to the site. It was reported that work had also been undertaken to encourage electronic trade.
12. The Committee was informed that in the preceding twelve months a number of different speciality markets had taken place, and that there would be a continuation of such offers. Members entered into discussion on the offer available, noting that the Management Company had invested in the bar/food sector, potentially to the detriment of a more traditional market offer, however Members were informed that the more traditional retailers were not taking up the option to move into the market, and therefore the offer needed to be more reflective of what people wanted.
13. Members noted that markets in similar local towns appeared to be thriving, and we were advised that Darlington's outdoor market was slowly starting to recover. Members scrutinised the rental costs, and were advised that the rate was competitive, with a discounted rate for new stall holders. We felt that it was important that financial incentives were in place to attract new traders.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23 – Quarter 3

14. We received a copy of the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23 – Quarter 3 report, which was being considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February, 2023.
15. We heard that the latest projections showed an overall decline of £0.616m on the 2022-26 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), however this was an improvement of £0.735m compared with the previous Quarter 2 Revenue Budget Monitoring report submitted to Cabinet in November 2022. It was stated that this was due to an improvement in the departmental position of £0.412m, which was broken down within the submitted report, and the release of the Risk Contingencies budget of £0.323m.
16. The Committee was advised that the Council's projected revenue reserves at the end of 2022/23 were £23.397m, a £0.616m decline on the initial 2022-26 MTFP position. This reduction in reserves included a brought forward amount of £0.384m from 2021/22, £0.127m of projected departmental overspends, and a £0.873m decrease in corporate resources.

17. It was reported that, of the £23.397m projected reserves, there was a commitment to use £22.490m to support years 2–4 of the current MTFP (2022–26), which left a £0.907m in unallocated reserves.
18. We sought greater clarity around the projected overspend of £2.418m in the Adoption and Placements budget, which was £0.706m greater than reported at Quarter 2, due to an additional eight residential placements (at a projected cost of £0.612m) and two additional independent foster carer placements (at a cost of £0.161m), though Members recognised and acknowledged the unpredictable nature of residential placements.
19. Members were also keen to receive further information around the improved situation in Adult Social Care and Health (an improvement of £0.416m on the position reported in Quarter 2), noting the reduction in care packages, including domiciliary care and attrition. We also sought clarification as to how budgets were continually monitored.

Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3

20. The Committee gave consideration to the Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 report, which was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2023. The submitted report provided a summary of the latest Capital resource and commitment position, to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council’s capital programme, and an update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council.
21. We heard that the projected outturn of the current Capital Programme was £277.981m against an approved programme of £279.857m, and remained affordable within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23–2025/26, and the submitted report outlined the Council’s substantial annual construction programme of work, noting that there were 44 live projects currently being managed by the Council, with an overall projected outturn value of £183.507m. We noted that the majority of projects were running to time, cost and quality expectations, however were continually being monitored given the current pressures on resources in the construction sector nationally.
22. Members were eager to know more about those allocated funds in the Capital Programme which were no longer required, and were reassured that these monies were paid back into the investment fund.

Economic Growth Strategy for Darlington

23. We received a report which outlined the approach to develop the intelligence and local economic understanding in order to build an evidence base to provide the foundation for the development of the local economic growth strategy. The report stated that there had been much change since the production of the previous Economic Development Strategy, and that the Council needed to reposition its economic growth strategy to take advantage of changing economic circumstances.
24. The Committee heard that the new economic growth strategy would identify local priorities for economic development, with the aim of promoting growth and inclusion for all parts of our area. It was outlined that the first step in this process was to gather intelligence and assess the current state of the Darlington local economy, and that this

would be achieved through the production of a series of scoping papers to gather research, knowledge, and qualitative and quantitative data to fully understand where the Council are at.

25. Members were keen to be engaged in future work to shape the Economic Growth Strategy, and were eager to learn more about the work being undertaken to halt the 'brain drain' from the North-East. We were pleased to learn of the sector profiling that would be taking place with employers, and the focus on the wage rate.

Equality Policy and Objective Refresh

26. We gave consideration to the proposed changes to the Equality Policy, and were invited to comment on the proposed Objective, which must be updated every four years.
27. The Committee was informed that the Equality Policy had been reviewed and updated to reflect the current Council Plan, and that the previous objective has been reviewed, and a new objective drafted. We were pleased to learn that consultation on both had taken place, and in light of the consultation, some minor changes had been made to the wording of the policy itself.
28. Members welcomed the revised policy, noting that previous training provided had been well-received.

Work Programme

29. We gave consideration to the work programme of this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of this Municipal Year.

Councillor Heather Scott
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

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

2. 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.
3. Members welcomed a presentation, noting the progress against the quality priorities for 2022/23.

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

4. 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.
5. We received a presentation outlining the progress against the three improvement Actions for 2022/23, which are underpinned by 17 actions and performance information in relation to the nine quality metrics for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2.
6. We remain concerned regarding the Trust's performance against the quality metrics and ongoing challenges and have sought assurances from the Trust's Chief Executive Officer.

Primary Care Access

7. We welcomed a presentation from the Commissioning Lead – Primary Care, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, updating Members on Primary Care access.
8. The presentation provided Members with an overview of primary care in the Tees Valley, with details provided of the configuration and the contract requirements for practices. Reference was also made to the Primary Care Network (PCN) Contract Directed Enhanced Services (DES). Members noted the PCN enhanced access services which were available to all Darlington patients and that a mixed model was in operation in Darlington, with practices providing some hours and Primary Healthcare Darlington providing the remaining.
9. Details were provided of the findings of the GP Patient survey 2022, an independent survey run by Ipsos on behalf of NHS England and primary care appointment activity and

causes of access challenges were outlined. We noted that improvements to access included increased practice workforce and increased PCN workforce, with 244 staff funded across the Tees Valley from Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme, 33 of those being employed by Darlington PCN.

10. Members were also provided with details of additional access to GP appointments on Sundays and Bank Holidays through a Winter Resilience scheme commissioned by the ICB.
11. We discussed in particular the GP Patient Survey results which Members feel does not reflect residents feedback. Members were assured that Darlington practices implement a number of different mechanisms to capture patient feedback in addition to the GP Patient Survey.
12. We also discussed did not attends (DNAs), highlighting the need for greater work to identify barriers to access, reasons for DNAs and how these could be addressed. We have requested that this be fed back to the PCN for consideration. The Commissioning Lead – Primary Care, informed Members of the range of measures in place to address DNAs including appointment reminders and the use of social media.
13. We were advised of a range of training courses on offer to all staff in the GP practices via the Primary Care training hub, including customer service skills and managing difficult conversations and Members highlighted the need to communicate the different roles of staff in GP practices to the wider public.

Housing Services Allocations Policy

14. We received a report on the draft Housing Services Allocation Policy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March 2023.
15. Scrutiny were informed that the Council has been part of a sub-regional scheme for allocating social housing since 2009 and that a Tees Valley Common Housing Allocations Policy was adopted by the five Local Authorities, which has been in place since 2012 and was last updated in 2019.
16. We noted that the existing policy no longer meets the strategic needs for Darlington and notice has been given on Darlington Borough Council's membership of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, due to expire in June 2023 and that a new Housing Services Allocations Policy is required.
17. Members were provided with details of the key changes to the policy, including a number of changes to the priority banding. We noted the consultation undertaken with the Tenants Panel and that the Panel are in support of the proposed policy.
18. This Scrutiny Committee supports the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Allocations Policy to Cabinet for approval.

Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

19. Members received a report on the draft Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March 2023.

20. The Council has a responsibility to ensure its homes are free from hazards, including damp, mould and condensation and the Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy explains how the Council will ensure that prompt action is taken to remedy issues and support tenants, offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process.
21. We noted the consultation undertaken with the Tenants Panel and that the Panel are in support of the proposed policy.
22. This Scrutiny Committee supports the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy to Cabinet for approval.

Work Programme

23. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.
24. We have requested that a special meeting of this Scrutiny Committee be arranged to receive an update on dental services and noted that a Housing Services Climate Change Strategy is in development and will be brought to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Wendy Newall
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee

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