



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 26 January 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 24 November 2022 (Pages 5 - 14)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given):-
 - (a) The Public;
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
7. Council Reports.
 - (a) Council Tax Calculation of Tax Base 2023/24 – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 15 - 22)
 - (b) Chief Executive's Appraisal – Report of the Group Director of Operations

(Pages 23 - 26)

- (c) Admission as Honorary Freewoman –
Report of the Chief Executive
(Pages 27 - 32)

8. Cabinet Reports.

- (a) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 33 - 34)
- (b) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 35 - 38)
- (c) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 39 - 42)
- (d) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 43 - 48)
- (e) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 49 - 52)
- (f) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 53 - 56)
- (g) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 57 - 60)
- (h) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio. (Pages 61 - 64)
- (i) Mid Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Monitoring Report 2022/23
– Report of the Group Director of Operations
(Pages 65 - 80)
- (j) Climate Change Progress –
Report of the Chief Executive
(Pages 81 - 86)
- (k) Town Centre Parking Offer –
Report of the Group Director of Services
(Pages 87 - 92)

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

- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 93 - 96)
- (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 97 - 102)
- (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 103 - 106)
- (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 107 - 108)
- (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 109 - 112)

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



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 18 January 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, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis, Willis and Wright

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

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 24 November 2022

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Haszeldine, B Jones, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Newall, K Nicholson, Paley, Preston and Wright.

ABSENT – Councillors Baldwin and Bell.

32 MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 29 September 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 29 September 2022, be approved as a correct record.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

34 SEALING.

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

35 ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Death in Service – The Mayor advised Members of the Death in Service of Robert (Bob) Whitehouse, who worked at the council for ten years as Community Rail Officer for the Bishop Line. After retiring he took up the role of Chair of the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership, and continued to support the new Community Rail Officer.

As a mark of respect, Members stood and observed a short silence in memory of Robert Whitehouse.

36 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.

37 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the outcome of the recent Interim Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations, ahead of the Local Government (Borough Council) Elections in 2023.

The submitted report stated that Members had previously agreed at the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 14 July 2022, that an interim review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations should be conducted. It was highlighted that the interim review has been subject to consultation; that the suitability of Polling Places has been considered in light of the steer from Central Government to avoid, where possible, the use of schools as Polling Places; and also from the perspective of the new duties contained within the Elections Act 2022.

RESOLVED - (a) That the consultation responses received be noted.

(b) That the changes proposed to the existing Polling Places and Polling Stations ahead of the Local Government Elections in May 2023, be approved, as follows:

- (i) That the polling place in Cockerton Ward (Polling Districts CKA) is changed to Cockerton Library, Woodland Road, Darlington (in place of Holy Family R.C. Primary School);
- (ii) That the polling place in College Ward (Polling Districts COA, COB and COC) is changed to the Sports Pavilion, Abbey Road Sports Field, Abbey Road, Darlington (in place of the classrooms in the main Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College);
- (iii) That the polling place in Hummersknott Ward (Polling Districts HKA and HKB) is changed to Salutation Hall, Salutation Road, Darlington (in place of John Caden Hall at Carmel College);
- (iv) That the polling place in Sadberge and Middleton St. George Ward (Polling Districts SMA and SMC) is Bishopton Village Hall, Church View, Bishopton (as Great Stainton Church Hall has ceased to be available); and
- (v) That the polling place in Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward (Polling Districts SMI and SMJ) be changed to Middleton St. George Community Centre, Station Road, Middleton St. George (in place of Middleton St. George Women's Institute Hall).

(c) That the publication of the proposals for Polling Places, as set out in Appendix C of the submitted report, be authorised.

REASONS - (a) To ensure that polling places and polling stations are accessible to voters and have reasonable facilities for voting.

(b) To comply with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Equality Act 2010 and the Elections Act 2022.

(c) To enable the decisions to be made, publicised and implemented in good time for the elections scheduled for May 2023.

(2) INTERIM REVIEW OF POLICIES AND CONDITIONS RELATING TO HACKNEY CARRIAGES, PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES AND THEIR DRIVERS AND OPERATORS

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to authorise amendments to Darlington Borough Council's 'Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy 2021', following approval from the Licensing Committee on 6 September 2022.

The submitted report recommended changes to the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy following the impact covid and the current economic issues has had on the trade. It was reported that consultation had taken place, and included proposals in line with the Department for Transport (DfT) draft 'Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Best Practice Guidance', which is awaiting publication.

The submitted report stated that the proposed amendments had been supported by the Licensing Committee, following a meeting held on 6 September 2022, and reminded Members that the Policy was last approved on 26 November 2020, for implementation on 1 January 2021.

RESOLVED - That the revised Taxi Licensing Policy be approved by Council, and that it be applied to all licences from the day of decision.

REASON - To provide support to the taxi trade in the Borough through difficult economic times, whilst maintaining safety standards for the travelling public.

38 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.

39 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCHEME APPROVAL 2023-24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2023-24 be approved.

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

proposed CTS scheme for 2023/24.

RESOLVED - (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the CTS scheme for 2022-23, as appended to the submitted report, and which continues to provide up to 80% CTS for all working age people, be approved.

REASONS - (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2023-24 by 11 March 2023.

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

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

40 COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION FOR CARE LEAVERS 2023-24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting a Council Tax exemption for care leavers under the age of 25 from 2023-24.

The submitted report stated that since 1 April 2018, a provision has been made in the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme to provide care leavers under the age of 25 up to 100% support with their Council Tax costs, whereas all other working age people could only receive up to 80% support with their Council Tax costs under the CTS scheme. It was report that as the CTS is means-tested, some young care leavers still had some, or all, of their Council Tax costs to pay, depending on their income and other circumstances.

The submitted report proposed to replace the current provision in the CTS scheme for care leavers under the age of 25, with a full Council Tax exemption from 1 April 2023, and that this would be achieved using the Council's powers under Section 13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (discretionary Council Tax discounts). It was reported that the financial implications of this change were considered to be minimal, given that most care leavers under the age of 25 already received support with their Council Tax costs through the CTS scheme.

RESOLVED - (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the Council Tax exemption for care leavers under the age of 25 from 2023-24, be approved.

REASONS - (a) Darlington Borough Council has a responsibility to support young care leavers whilst they are developing the skills and confidence to live independently.

(b) A Council Tax exemption will provide young care leavers with the assurance and stability with their Council Tax costs.

(c) A Council Tax exemption will be much easier for the Council to administer than the current arrangements through the CTS scheme and for young care leavers to access and

understand.

41 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND OUTTURN PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2021/22

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of important information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash-flow. It is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures and by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review that covers treasury activity for 2021/22. The report also sought to approve the Prudential Indicators results for 2021/22, in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The submitted report outlined the circumstances with regard to treasury management for 2021/2022, and stated that it was another unprecedented year with regard to treasury management due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It was reported that the cost of borrowing remained low throughout 2021/22.

The submitted report stated that the Council had complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements during 2021/2022, and that the need for borrowing was only increased for capital purposes.

The submitted report stated that at 31st March 2022, the Council's external debt was £149.649m, which was £11.882m less than the previous year. It was stated that this reduction related to not re-borrowing for matured debt due to an increase in the level of monies received by the Council. It was reported that the average interest rate for borrowing reduced from 2.76% in 2020/21 to 2.47% in 2021/22, and that investments totalled £63.399m at 31st March 2022, in comparison to £59.399m at 31st March 2021, earning interest of 0.21% on short term cash investments, and 2.21% on Property Fund units net of cost.

It was reported that financing costs had been reduced during the year and a saving of £0.366m had been achieved from the original MTFP due to reduced interest on debt, as well as increased investment income, especially from property funds.

RESOLVED - (a) That the outturn 2021/22 Prudential Indicators within the submitted report, and those in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22 be noted.

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

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

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

42 DARLINGTON TRANSPORT PLAN, DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE TRANSPORT PLAN AND DARLINGTON PARKING STRATEGY

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to request that Members give consideration to the adoption of the Darlington Transport Plan, Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy following the consultation process.

The submitted report stated that the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan (STP) 2020-2030 was developed by Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) in partnership with all Tees Valley local authorities, that the strategy had been published in 2020, and set out the strategic direction for transport in the Tees Valley. It was noted that the STP is supported by other strategies developed by TVCA including the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

The submitted report stated that the Darlington Transport Strategy set out how the priorities set out in the STP will be delivered in Darlington, took into consideration local priorities, and set in place a delivery framework to ensure that these priorities were delivered. It was reported that Cabinet approved the Darlington Transport Plan framework on 9 March 2021, as a basis for consulting the public and other stakeholders on our key transport objectives and priorities.

It was reported that the Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan would support the Town Centre Strategy 2019-2030 and the Towns Fund Investment Plan, and that the Darlington Parking Strategy set out a framework for the provision and control of parking within the Borough in order to meet the aspirations of the Darlington Transport Strategy and the Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan.

It was noted that the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee had considered all three plans on 25 August 2022, and that the Cabinet had considered all three plans on 8 November 2022. It was also reported that the plans were consulted on and, in terms of responses, there were 34 responses to the Darlington Transport Strategy, 14 responses to the Darlington Parking Strategy and no responses to Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan. The responses were broadly in support of our approach and no changes were made to the documents as a result of consultation.

RESOLVED - That the Darlington Transport Strategy, Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan, and Darlington Parking Strategy be approved and adopted into the policy framework.

REASONS - (a) To provide a strategic framework to support growth in Darlington through the provision of improved transport infrastructure and promote sustainable transport initiatives.

(b) To support the Town Centre Strategy by improving transport links into, and reducing the impact of traffic travelling through the Town Centre in order to help it be a place where people will want to continue visiting, shopping, working and living in.

43 CABINET URGENT DECISIONS

The Chief Officers Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing decisions taken by Cabinet as a matter of urgency and to which the procedure for call-in could not be applied.

RESOLVED – That the urgent decisions taken by Cabinet be noted.

REASON – To comply with the Council’s Constitution.

44 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

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

45 NOTICE OF MOTION

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

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

If Darlington is to achieve the ambitions of its Climate Change Action Plan and meaningfully contribute to the national zero net carbon emissions target, then improving the relative attractiveness of local bus services as a transport option is one of the quickest, cheapest and most effective way to improve the trajectory of emissions from transport. This applies both over the shorter-term in enabling modal shift away from higher emissions-per-head forms of transport, as well as over the long-term as fleets are electrified.

Bus services, and “modal shift” (to lower emission forms of transport) more generally, is critical for achieving our net zero targets and levelling up our area.

England’s urban bus networks provide a net economic benefit of £2.5 billion, half of which reflects benefits to bus users including employment and amenities, and half of which benefits non-users, related to reductions in congestion and pollution. With the soaring cost of living, well-funded, accessible and regular bus services are critical to assisting our residents during this time.

Council Resolves to :-

1. Recognise the importance of a properly funded public transport system in solving the climate emergency.
2. Recognise the importance of a properly funded public transport system in delivering levelling up for Darlington.
3. Ask the responsible Cabinet Member to consult with the Transport and Capital Projects team to agree a figure which is ring-fenced specifically for the support of local bus services and report to Council on the outcome no later than January 2023.
4. Ask the responsible Cabinet Member to write to the Department for Transport to ask for further support for bus services.

The Motion was Lost.

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

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

Crustacean Deaths

First dead crustaceans were washed up on our region's beaches, followed by dead seabirds and emaciated seal pups. More recently, vast amounts of seaweed, dead razor clams, and fish washed up. It is an environmental and economic disaster in the short term.

The report of the Government Joint agency investigation into the crab and lobster deaths was published - inconclusively - in May 2022, but as healthy animals were being found, the investigation was closed. It is considered that the decision to close the investigation was premature.

A number of universities have undertaken research on the loss of marine life. Newcastle University research identified high levels of pyridine - a chemical with a long history of release into the river Tees, a by-product of the coking process in steel production, and petrochemicals – in tissues of the dead crabs on the North East and North Yorkshire coasts, and in Tees surface sediments.

More must be done to investigate the cause of the mass death of sea creatures on the Teesside coast from October 2021 to the present day.

Council Resolves :-

1. That it writes to the Government and demands that it re-opens its Joint agency investigation into the crab and lobster deaths swiftly to consider the reasons for the initial and ongoing deaths of marine life around the Tees' mouth in light of further independent analysis.
2. That it joins the special joint working group which is being set up by each Tees Valley Council to monitor the on-going situation.
3. That it works with the Tees Valley local authorities to commission a new independent report, to further examine the issues in the light of the inconclusive official report and new evidence of the presence and acute toxicity of pyridine to crustaceans for presentation to Government.
4. That it writes to the Tees Valley Combined Authority and other organisations involved with high risk disturbance activities in the Tees estuary such as piling and demolitions at Teeswork and non-maintenance dredging in highly contaminated parts of the Tees and asks for all works to be paused until the cause of the marine die-offs is determined and a risk assessment and plan for how to safely proceed with these developments is created, if needed.

5. That it writes to the appropriate bodies (which should include EA, Cefas, NEIFCA, MMO, FSA and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Teesworks and the TVCA) to:

(i) detail what action or recommendations can, or have been taken to support the future of our region;

(ii) explain how they will improve monitoring and regulation to prevent contamination events from occurring in the UK - particularly whether the suite of chemicals tested for is adequate, given the Tees' industrial heritage.

The Motion was Lost.

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

Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillor Mrs. D. Jones be appointed to the vacancy on the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee;

(b) That Councillor Willis be appointed to the vacancy on the Climate Change Working Group;

(c) That that Councillor Sowerby replace Councillor Bell on the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee;

(d) That Councillor Haszeldine replace Councillor Lister on the Planning Applications Committee;

(e) That Councillor McEwan replace Councillor Crumbie on the Combined Fire Authority, the Combined Fire Authority's Audit and Finance Committee and the Combined Fire Authority's HR Committee.

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023

COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2023/24

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

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To determine the Council's tax base for 2023/24.

Summary

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

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2023/24 be approved.
 - (b) The tax base for the Council of 34,814.5 and the individual tax base for the parishes as set out at Appendix 2 be approved.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported to comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2023/24 to be set by Council in February 2023.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

Council Tax regulations

Council Tax database

Peter Carrick - Extension 5401

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

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The tax base is the total number of domestic properties in the Borough, calculated as a weighted average 'Band D equivalents'. The amount of Council Tax payable for properties in each of the 8 valuation bands A to H is statutorily determined as proportions of Band D. The tax base is adjusted for discounts, exemptions and estimated changes over the coming year. An estimate of the collection rate is also applied. The tax base represents the amount of revenue that it is estimated will be raised by each £1 of band D Council Tax. It is, therefore, an important part of setting the Council Tax.
6. The council tax base is, for the purpose of calculating a billing authority's and a major precepting authority's council tax, the taxable capacity of an area or part of an area. The amounts are calculated for each financial year and represent the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for reductions and discounts and adjusted to take account of the authority's collection rate.
7. The regulations changed the formula for calculating the council tax base so as to take account of any reductions which will be made under the local council tax reduction scheme, or increases for local premiums for empty or long-term empty dwellings.
8. Under the previous council tax benefit system, billing authorities received payment to cover 100% of the cost of council tax benefit paid. The council tax base was therefore unaffected by changes in council tax benefit granted because the billing authority did not forgo any council tax income from dwellings in receipt of council tax benefit.
9. However, under the local council tax support scheme, the council tax base is affected by whether a dwelling is in receipt of a council tax reduction awarded under the scheme, as the authority is foregoing council tax income from these dwellings.
10. Local council tax support reductions need to be reflected in the calculation of the council tax base, in order to calculate the correct amount of Band D council tax for the billing or major precepting authority area. If the council tax base did not reduce, authorities would set their council tax bills based on an incorrect level of taxable capacity. The outcome being that dwellings where an occupier was eligible to receive a reduction under the local authority's council tax reduction scheme would not be required to pay the full amount of council tax and the authority would not therefore be able to collect the correct amount of council tax to meet its council tax requirement, with a deficit being created on the collection fund.
11. Similarly, the tax base is increased by the premium generated through the empty and long term empty homes scheme whereby the consequent increase in the council tax base is used to lower council tax bills.
12. The actual calculation of the tax base is prescribed in the above regulations and has several components. Calculations must be made of the 'relevant amount' for the year, for each of the 8 valuation bands as shown in the Council's Valuation List submitted by the Listing Officer (HM Revenue and Customs) on 30 November 2022 and the Band A(-) category introduced with effect from 1 April 2000 to provide relief to disabled persons

residing in Band A properties. The relevant amount for each band represents the number of chargeable dwellings, as adjusted for exemptions, disabled reductions, discounts and also estimated changes up to 31 March 2024. The final total for each band has to be converted to the equivalent number of Band D dwellings.

13. The relevant amounts for the individual bands are then totalled and the estimated collection rate for the year is applied. The collection rate is based on the proportion of the amount payable into the Collection Fund for the year, including appropriate adjustments for benefits and any transitional relief, which the Council believes will ultimately be collected. The resulting figure, plus any contributions in lieu from the Ministry of Defence in respect of forces accommodation, is the Council's tax base for its area for the year concerned.
14. The estimates and calculations outlined above in respect of the tax base for 2023/24 are shown in **Appendix 1**. Members will see that the calculations produce a total Band D equivalent of 35,146.1 (line 17) which, when combined with an estimated collection rate of 99.0% and contributions in lieu, results in an overall tax base figure of 34,814.5 which is a 1.01% increase on 2022/23.
15. Similar calculations also need to be made in respect of the parishes and in particular the same estimated collection rate must be applied as that used for the whole of the Council's area. The tax base calculations for each parish are as shown in **Appendix 2**.

Outcome of Consultation

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

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2023/24

	Band	A (-)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	Dwellings per Valuation List	0	23,115	11,016	7,582	5,705	3,413	1,360	673	54	52,918
2	Disabled Band Relief	0	(59)	(47)	(47)	(47)	(38)	(16)	(9)	(14)	(277)
3	Disabled Band Relief (Chargeable)	59	47	47	47	38	16	9	14	0	277
4	Disabled Band Relief (Adjusted)	59	(12)	0	0	(9)	(22)	(7)	5	(14)	0
5	Exemptions	0	(720)	(168)	(139)	(64)	(36)	(13)	(9)	0	(1,149)
6	Single discount (25%)	(30)	(11,209)	(4,212)	(2,486)	(1,370)	(624)	(229)	(74)	(2)	(20,236)
7	Double discount (50%)	(1)	(28)	(8)	(14)	(14)	(11)	(5)	(19)	(8)	(108)
8	Equated discounts	(8)	(2,816.25)	(1,057)	(628.50)	(349.50)	(161.50)	(59.75)	(28)	(4.50)	(5,113)
9	Empty Homes Premium (100%)	0	75	8	16	3	1	0	0	0	103
10	Empty Homes Premium (200%)	0	13	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	21
11	Empty Homes Premium (300%)	0	16	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	21
12	Chargeable Dwellings	51.00	19,715.75	9,820.00	6,832.50	5,288.50	3,197.50	1,280.25	641.00	37.50	46,864.00
13	Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	(18.23)	(4,451.06)	(941.90)	(299.84)	(116.78)	(36.00)	(9.93)	(3.92)	(0)	(5,877.66)
14	Chargeable Dwellings after CTRS	32.77	15,264.69	8,878.10	6,532.66	5,171.72	3,161.50	1,270.32	637.08	37.50	40,986.34
15	Estimated Changes					232					232
16	Band D Multiplier	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
17	Band D Equivalent (Relevant Amount)	18.2	10,176.5	6,905.2	5,806.8	5,403.7	3,864.1	1,834.9	1,061.8	75.0	35,146.1
18	Estimated Collection Rate										99.0%
19	Contributions in Lieu					19.8					19.8
20	Council Tax Base										34,814.5

ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2023/24 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

	Each column shows the totals for each Council Tax band A to H. The TOTAL column is the total for the whole Council. The Band A(-) column is the total in Band A where a disabled band relief applies.
Lines	
Line 1	The number of dwellings in each Council Tax band as per the Valuation List, as at 30/11/2022.
Line 2	The number of dwellings in each band where a disabled band relief applies
Line 3	The number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied
Line 4	The net number of dwellings in each band after the disabled band relief has been applied (Line 3 - Line 2)
Line 5	The number of dwellings in each band that are exempt from Council Tax (where an exemption applies), to be deducted from the total number of dwellings
Line 6	The number of dwellings in each band where a single (25%) discount applies
Line 7	The number of dwellings in each band where a double (50%) discount applies
Line 8	The adjustment for each band where a discount applies (Line 6 x 25%) + (Line 7 x 50%)
Line 9	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of two years and which attract a 100% Premium.
Line 10	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of five years and which attract a 200% Premium.
Line 11	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period in excess of ten years and which attract a 300% Premium
Line 12	The equivalent number of chargeable dwellings before the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 13	The equivalent number of properties in receipt of council tax benefit in each band
Line 14	The equivalent number of properties after the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 15	The estimated number of additional band D equivalent dwellings that will be included in the tax base during 2023/24
Line 16	The band D multiplier that is applied to the number of chargeable dwellings in each band (this multiplier is prescribed in law)
Line 17	The adjusted number of chargeable dwellings in each band after applying the multiplier (Line 14 + Line 15) x Line 16
Line 18	The estimated percentage collection rate
Line 19	The estimated number of band D equivalent dwellings for contributions in lieu. (Armed Forces Accommodation)
Line 20	The Council Tax Base for 2023/24 (Line 17 x Line 18) + Line 19

PARISH COUNCILS – ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2023/24

Parish	Current Parish Tax Base (1)	Adjusted Band D Equivalent 23/24 (2)	Collection Rate	Parish Tax Base
Bishopton	179.8	180.8	99.0%	179.0
Heighington	1,111.4	1,124.5	99.0%	1,113.2
High Coniscliffe	111.1	111.9	99.0%	110.8
Hurworth	1,400.8	1,503.3	99.0%	1,488.3
Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	329.4	359.2	99.0%	355.6
Middleton St. George	2,018.1	2,079.8	99.0%	2,059.0
Neasham	246.0	246.7	99.0%	244.3
Piercebridge	63.1	63.4	99.0%	62.8
Sadberge	297.9	304.2	99.0%	301.2
Whesoe	532.8	534.7	99.0%	529.4

PARISH COUNCILS ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2023/24 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Columns	
Current Parish Tax Base (1)	The current Council Tax base for each Parish, using the methodology set out in Appendix 1, for 2022/23
Adjusted Band D Equivalent 23/24 (2)	The calculated Council Tax base for each Parish, using the same methodology set out in Appendix 1, and after the estimated changes for 2023/24 have been applied
Collection Rate	The estimated percentage collection rate
Parish Tax Base	The Council Tax Base for 2023/24 for each Parish

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**COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2022**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Jonathan Dulston, Leader of the Council

Responsible Director – Elizabeth Davison Group Director of Operations

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To endorse the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group in respect of the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal.

Summary

2. The Appraisal Sub-Group met on 16 December 2022 to consider the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal in accordance with the previously agreed process.
3. This was the second appraisal for the Chief Executive, and he presented a statement reviewing the priorities he had been working on since the last appraisal in September 2021.
4. In considering his report, the Group acknowledged and thanked Chief Executive for the work undertaken since his last appraisal.
5. The Appraisal Sub-Group agreed the Chief Executive's priorities for the next year and this report outlines the recommendation of the Group.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that the following recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group be endorsed by Council :-

That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2022/23 and has 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

7. The recommendation is supported to enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

Brett Nielsen
Assistant Director Resources

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no issues in relation to Health and Wellbeing.
Sustainability	There are no issues in relation to Sustainability
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	None.
Groups Affected	None.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through Officer involvement in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.
Impact on Looked After Children	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. The Appraisal Sub-Group (a subsidiary body of the Human Resources Committee) undertakes an annual appraisal with the Chief Executive and reports its recommendations to the Council.
9. The Sub-Group met on 16 December 2022, to undertake the appraisal at which it reviewed the Chief Executive's self-assessment of the previous year and the achievements made, and agreed the objectives for the coming financial year 2023/24.
10. In reviewing the previous year the sub group made reference to difficult climate over the past year and thanked the Chief Executive for all the positive work and achievements in the period including;
 - (a) Strong workforce leadership
 - (b) Continued economic growth and delivery of key regeneration projects
 - (c) Building relationships with key partners particularly with Darlington Economic Campus
 - (d) Good Ofsted judgement in Children's Services
 - (e) A positive Peer Review
11. The Sub-Group made the following recommendation to Council :-

That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2022/23 and has 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.

Conclusion

12. The Chief Executive's appraisal has been undertaken by the Appraisal Sub-Group of the Human Resources Committee. As this is a Committee constituted by Council, Council is required to endorse the recommendation of the Sub-Group.

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**COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023**

ADMISSION AS HONORARY FREEWOMAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Jonathan Dulston, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

Responsible Director - Ian Williams, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To recommend that the service of two Councillors and one former Councillor be recognised by admitting Councillors Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long as 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington.

Summary

2. The Local Government Act 1972 enables 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. The title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman is the highest civic honour that the Council is able to bestow.
3. It is proposed that Councillors Mrs Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long are admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.
4. In order to admit a person as 'Honorary Freewomen', a special meeting of Council will need to be convened for this purpose. At this meeting two-thirds of Members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) To agree to the proposal that Councillors 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) To agree to a Special meeting of the Council to be convened in February 2023, to enable Members to formally vote (with a two-thirds majority) on a resolution that Councillors Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.

- (c) To authorise the Assistant Director, Law and Governance 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

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To recognise the long and eminent service of those individuals by the conferment of the title of ‘Honorary Freewoman’
- (b) For decisions to be made in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Luke Swinhoe x5490

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues in relation to Carbon Impact
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All Wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	There is no impact on any particular group
Budget and Policy Framework	This report requests additional funding as there is no current budget allocation.
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	There are no issues in relation to the Council Plan.
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The Honorary Freedom of the Borough is the highest distinction a local authority can bestow on an individual. The Local Government Act 1972 (Section 249) allows Councils to admit as Honorary Freeman or Freewoman 'persons of distinction' and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough'.
8. It is an honour that is sparingly awarded. The last recipient was the former Leader of the Council Bill Dixon in 2019.
9. Honorary Freemen or Freewomen are purely honorary positions, although they can play a part in Civic and Ceremonial events in the Borough.
10. The proposal is to confer the award on Councillors Mrs Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long, for the eminent service they have rendered to the Borough of Darlington.

Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE

11. Councillor Mrs Heather Scott was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1976 to serve the Park West Ward.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council, Councillor Mrs Scott has been:

Leader of the Conservative Group
Leader of the Council from 2019 to 2022
First female Leader of the Council in its 152 year history
Mayor 1988/1989
Chair of Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
A member of a number of other committees

During her leadership of the Council, Councillor Mrs Scott oversaw the development of the Treasury campus and a number of other major infrastructure projects and the response to the coronavirus pandemic

In 1989 Councillor Mrs Scott received an OBE in recognition of her voluntary and community service.

Councillor Mrs Scott is a member of Rotary, a founder member of the Darlington and District Hospice Movement and a former chair of the Friends of the Bowes Museum.

Councillor Mrs Doris Jones BEM

12. Councillor Mrs Doris Jones was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1983 to serve the Haughton East Ward. Following her move to Middleton St George, she has represented the Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward since 1987.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council Councillor Mrs Jones has been:

Mayor 2002/2003
Chair of the Planning Committee since 2019
A member of a number of other Committees

Councillor Mrs Jones is a Director of Teesside International Airport

Councillor Mrs Jones received a British Empire Medal in 2015 in recognition of her commitment to her ward and work.

Councillor Mrs Jones was a member of Middleton St George Parish Council from 1995 to 2016, including 12 years as Chair. She stood down from the Parish Council in 2016 to be Mayoress to her husband Councillor Brian Jones.

Mrs Dorothy Long

13. Mrs Dorothy (Dot) Long was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1976 and represented the Northgate Ward from 1976 to 1979 and then from 1983 to 2015.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council Mrs Long has been:

Chair of the Nuclear Issues Sub Committee
Chair of the Leisure Services Committee
Mayor 2001/2002
A member of Cabinet
Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee 2009 - 2015

Mrs Long was involved in bringing the Eastbourne Sports Complex into being, supporting the creation of the sculpture 'Train' by David Mach in 1997, and the reimagining and conservation of South Park.

Mrs Long had a regional role as Chair of the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council

On leaving the Council, Mrs Long continued in her role as Associate Manager of a mental health trust, sitting on review panels until 2020.

14. In order to admit a person as an 'Honorary Freewoman', a special meeting of Council will need to be convened for this purpose. At this meeting two-thirds of members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

Conclusion

15. Should the Council agree to confer honours the formal resolutions and ceremony would take place at a Special Council meeting in February 2023. It is requested that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Law and Governance to make the necessary detailed arrangements in consultation with the individuals concerned.
16. It is proposed that after the formal Special Council meeting has concluded that those honoured, their guests and Members could attend a buffet in Central Hall (Dolphin Centre). It is estimated that the costs would be in the region of £3,000.

Consultation

17. Consultation has taken place with the relevant Group Leaders who are in favour of the proposals

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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

2. There is a comprehensive programme of investment progressing on Transport across the Tees Valley:-
 - (a) Work is ongoing on the Tees Valley Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) system, with delivery of the next phase of work due to commence in early 2023 and complete by 31 March 2024. This phase of work will provide a range of opportunities to better manage the highway network, and includes expanding traffic signal connectivity, upgrades to traffic counters, additional CCTV cameras, implementation of a bus priority module, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras, real-time information and expansion of variable message signs.
 - (b) Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) have recently been installed in Darlington as part of the first phase roll-out across the Tees Valley. Five EVCP have gone in on Winston Street's northernmost car park, with Commercial Street West and two car parks on Park Place to receive 14 EVCP between them. The Feethams multi-storey, Kendrew Street West and Abbott's Yard are also set to see EVCP installed soon.
 - (c) Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Council continue to work alongside Arriva to improve operational performance. Performance improved towards the end of 2022 and Arriva is committed to ensuring that this improvement continues into 2023.
 - (d) The Tees Valley Hydrogen Transport Hub competition closed for bids in late 2022. Bids are now being assessed with an announcement expected in early 2023.

Darlington Station

3. The Department for Transport confirmed £93m of funding for the project. This is in addition to the £33m TVCA are investing. The temporary car park on the cattle market site is being constructed and when complete this will enable works to start on the new station and transport interchange on the Neasham Road side of the project. 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

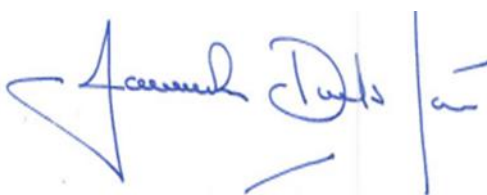
4. The Cross-Party Climate Change Working Group met on 19 December. Members received an update from Ian Thompson, Assistant Director – Community Services, on waste and recycling, including information on the various communications channels being used to encourage residents to recycle more.

Darlington Economic Campus

5. Currently, there are 520 confirmed roles in Darlington across HMT, DLUHC, ONS, DIT, BEIS and CMA. There are also over 750 DfE staff based in Darlington in Bishopsgate House.
6. Over half of these roles (55%) are middle management ranging from executive to senior executive offices. A quarter (26%) are senior management and SCS roles with the remainder comprising of junior grades plus students, apprentices and agency staff.
7. The ratio of jobs that are relocations compared to local recruitment (broken down by job level) for most departments is that they are aiming to secure 20% through relocations and 80% through recruitment.

Towns Fund

8. Development work is progressing across the portfolio of Towns Fund projects, with work continuing on site at Darlington College TLevels project, Skinnergate and the Yards and the Railway Heritage Quarter. Design commenced for the Adult Skills facility, Northgate and Victoria Road.
9. Engagement continues with stakeholders, including an event in Victoria Road, which will help define the strategic direction and identification of specific interventions.
10. A progress return to Government was made on the 15 December 2022.



Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Leader of the Council Portfolio

COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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. Installation and commissioning of the 22kW and 50kW electric vehicle chargers in town centre car parks, that comprise the first phase of the Tees Valley network is now complete. TVCA are leading on a communications strategy around the EVCPs, which seeks to update residents on the availability of the chargers.
3. Further to the provision of off-street EVCPs, it's been agreed that TVCA will develop an EV Infrastructure Strategy, which will ensure we secure quality and consistency in delivery across Tees Valley, which will include provision for on-street infrastructure. This work will consider where infrastructure is needed and what the best model is for future phases of delivery. This Tees Valley strategy is being developed and a draft will be available early this year.

Highway Maintenance Programme

4. The following Highway Maintenance schemes are ongoing:
 - (a) Unc. Greenhill Road, Heighington: Footway Refurbishment (0.302km)
 - (b) Unc. Pierremont Crescent West Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.117km)
5. The following Highway Maintenance Schemes are now completed:
 - (a) Unc. Faverdale: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.474km)
 - (b) C55 Prior Street: Footway Refurbishment (0.466km)
 - (c) Unc. Carriageway Micro Asphalt Contract (46 locations, 9.051km)
 - (d) B6279 Tornado Way (Lingfield Point Junction): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.223km)
 - (e) Unc. Swaledale Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.252km)
6. A new data driven approach to gully cleansing is being implemented to ensure more regular attendance at locations which require more frequent cleansing. Cleansing frequency will be set based on recorded silt levels with those gullies filling quicker receiving more visits throughout the year. Silt levels will be recorded at each visit and reviewed annually to ensure frequencies are set at the appropriate level.
7. Work has taken place with Northumbrian Water Ltd (NWL) to investigate highway flooding and potential highway flooding at a number of locations.

8. Following heavy rain experienced towards the end of 2022, a number of surface water issues were reported by members and the general public which were impacting on use of the highway. Working with partners, officers have investigated these locations, where not resolved, actions will be developed where appropriate.

Highway Improvement Schemes

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

9. The latest phase of the LCWIP which connects Woodland Road to Duke Street via Outram Street is now complete and a lessons learned workshop has been held for phase 1 which was attended by Members and Officers. The session looked at the Consultation, Design, Construction delivery and Communications throughout. Following the session, actions were identified which will be implemented on future walking and cycling schemes. The next phase of delivery will be the Duke Street section. Due to inflationary pressures in the construction industry the scheme is temporarily paused. The final costs and options are being reviewed with funders. It is still expected that the project will commence early this year.
10. Government have agreed the provisional programme of investment across the Tees Valley for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme with TVCA. This will include rail, walking and cycling schemes and bus corridor improvements. For Darlington, a number of walking and cycling routes have been identified along with improvements to key bus corridors in the borough. The programme will now be developed with feasibility work underway that will be brought forward for consultation and briefings as it is developed.

Head of Steam

11. The museum ended the year with the extremely popular Santa at the Station weekends, which saw nearly 1000 children visit Santa throughout December. The museum closed its doors to the public on Friday 23 December with a Festive Farewell event to celebrate the museum taking a holiday ready for reopening as a brand-new attraction in 2024.

Libraries

12. Cockerton Library reopened after a modest refurbishment in November 2022 with a new, dedicated team of staff. Reopening the refreshed space with an engagement-led approach has seen borrowing figures increase and they are now at levels not seen since recording began in 2018/19 (prior to this the branch was operating on full time hours). In October 2022, 7534 books were borrowed from Cockerton Library. Links have been established with neighbouring schools, Bookstart Rhymetime sessions take place several times a week for families with babies and pre-school children, after-school story and craft sessions are held along with Lego Clubs, and specific groups for adults have been added to the programme, including Rock of Ages and Watercolours, which illustrates the different ages and demographics who are now using the space and accessing books.

Hippodrome

13. The Pantomime Adventures of Peter Pan starring Christopher Biggins opened on Friday 9 December, with occupancy across performances exceeding all previous years. The first week included sell out performances with school children and families from across the region attending. The Hippodrome's Place for Everyone fund has also supported ten school visits to the pantomime as well as donations of tickets to Ukrainian families, young carers, care leavers, Future Pathways and fostering services, all of whom would not have been able to attend a performance without the funds support.

Creative Darlington

14. Over 300 artworks, drawings, watercolour paintings, photographs, print and work in other media in the Borough Art Collection, which are not currently available to the public digitally via the Art UK website, were photographed in Darlington between 1 and 6 December 2022 and are expected to be made available to the public digitally in Spring 2023 as the Council is in the process of negotiating a partnership agreement with Art UK to share more of our public collection online.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

15. The Christmas shopping season was launched in November with the annual Christmas lights switch on bringing thousands of visitors to the town centre. To support the high street retailers and encourage movement of people around the town centre, the team programmed and delivered two ice sculpture trails which attracted visitors to Darlington. 2022 also saw the launch of a new Christmas tree festival, which saw 75 community groups decorating trees displayed throughout the high street.
16. The 2023 events programme will offer exciting activities, events and animation, including some new cultural dates and engagement opportunities, which started with a Chinese New Year celebration on 22 January 2023.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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 facilitate safe hospital discharges in a timely manner. The discharge to assess model is working well and we continue to utilise available capacity in reablement. We have seen an increase in referrals to facilitate safe hospital discharges and have ensured that 98% of reablement assessments are completed in 2 days. This is working well with positive feedback received.
3. Deborah Parker, Social Worker based in the OAIT team, has recently completed and presented a piece of work about Dyslexia. This was to raise awareness for practitioners and managers about how Dyslexia affects people within the workplace, and the best way to support employees, employers, and colleagues. It focuses on a “no one size fits all” approach to bring about a better understanding of fitting the support around the individual. Deborah has presented this to the Head of Quality, Workforce and Development, and a group of students / ASYE’s. The plan going forward is to present this to the senior leadership team and then across the wider workforce in adult social care. Moving forward there will be consideration of a podcast recording to be included as part of an induction for anybody in a leadership role.

Communications and Marketing

4. A profile of the Adults Learning Disability team appeared in the January 2023 edition of One Darlington Magazine, which was distributed in the first week of the month. A major regional campaign, Made in Care, highlighting some of the success stories of the industry, has also launched this month. A series of short social media videos, offering an insight into adult social care, is being prepared for February.

Commissioning and Contracts

5. On 16 December, the Council with its partner, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) submitted to the Government their funding plans and associated schemes for the Adult Social Care Fund. Darlington Borough Council and NENCICB has been allocated a total of £856, 314. The objective of this funding is to: facilitate more people to be discharged in a safe, timely and effective manner to appropriate settings (including mental health in-patient settings), prioritise approaches to free up the maximum of hospital beds and reduce bed days lost and to boost adult social care workforce including recruitment and retention initiatives. The Adult Social Care Fund

must be spent between 1.12.22 and 31.3.23. The Adult Social Care Fund schemes are aligned with the Fund's objectives and were presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 15 December 2022 for discussion.

6. The Commissioning, Contracts and Brokerage Team is continuing to work with statutory, voluntary, independent sectors to ensure that there is resilience this winter period as the health and social care system faces unprecedented challenges. The well-established relationships and the additional capacity afforded by the Adult Social Care Fund schemes will enhance the support to local communities in Darlington through this challenging time.
7. In light of the national economic situation, there is now a degree of uncertainty with regard to the next steps in the national Fair Cost of Care Exercise and longer-term national funding streams. It is understood that the Government has committed to funding levels to remain at the 2022/23 levels for 2023/24 and confirmation is expected in the Local Government Settlement on 21st December 2022. The Council submitted to the Government the required Market Sustainability Plan and Fair Cost of Care statutory returns for review on the 14 October 2022. To date, no further updates have been received.

Disabled Facilities Grant.

At 10th January 2023 Cabinet approved the updated Disabled Facilities Grant Policy and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025.

8. The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested statutory grant provided by the Government to undertake adaptations to homes such as walk in showers, stair lifts, ramps, or building extensions for disabled adults or children to enable them to live independently in their own homes.
9. Disabled Facilities Grants are governed by housing legislation and therefore have set guidance and eligibility criteria which govern how funding can be allocated. Historically these conditions have restricted the way in which funding could be released which resulted in year-on-year underspends on the budget.
10. The Government has also increased the DFG grant paid to local authorities nationally, this increase in allocated Government funding together with carry forward amounts has resulted in a DFG budget for 2022-2023 of approximately £2.6M.
11. A Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order gives local authorities permission to broaden the scope of how DFGs are used to support housing renewal and assist with the improving housing conditions.
12. The updated Darlington DFG policy has therefore been developed in a way which will enable the Council to make use of the powers provided under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order and use the funding in an appropriate way, to the benefit of residents.
13. A summary of initiatives of new areas of expenditure facilitated by a revised DFG Policy including RRO Housing Assistance (2002) include:

- a. Waive the means test for certain items and raise the recovery threshold
- b. Additional costs to be charged to the DFG fund
- c. Amendments to the Kinship Care contribution
- d. Expand policy to widen the support that can be provided for Children and adults with autism/behaviours that challenge, including the provision of safe spaces
- e. Dementia Grants & Smart Home kits
- f. Home accident prevention or health and safety initiatives

Climate Change

14. We have encouraged teams to recycle their cards, wrapping and Christmas trees following the festive period.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

15. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners met in November and reflected on the Multi-agency Safeguarding Partnership Group meeting held in October, which had been a really positive and engaging session. It was agreed to host face to face three sessions each year with a flexible and thematic approach to agendas and discussion.
16. Statutory Safeguarding Partners were provided with an overview of the Modern Slavery Conference held in October, hosted by the Durham and Darlington Modern Slavery Network. The conference identified a requirement to develop a victim care pathway and practice guidance to support practitioners as well as mapping out voluntary/community services who provide support to victims.
17. The DSP Annual Report for 2021/22 has been published and the Independent Scrutineer is providing an overview of the report to Adult Scrutiny members in February.

Councillor Lorraine Tostevin
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the report following the OFSTED ILACS Inspection has been published. The Inspection took place between the 10 and the 21 October 2022 and was the first full inspection of Children's Services since 2018, at which time the service was judged as "Requires Improvement". The outcome of the most recent inspection found that Children's Services are "Good" overall and judged to be "Outstanding" in its services for Children in Care and Care Leavers. This is a tremendous achievement which recognises the hard work and dedication of the staff team and the high quality relationship based services they provide to children and their families across Darlington.
2. In addition to the recent inspection, there has continued to be a great deal ongoing within the service and the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio.

Early Intervention and Front Door

3. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) remain stable and settled following their move from the Police Station to the Town Hall. Since moving we have been able to progress with the growth of the multi-agency team with the addition of a health representative and an additional early help worker. Moving into 2023 we are working towards our police representative also moving to the Town Hall which will further develop our existing multi-agency approach for children in Darlington. CIAT played a significant role within the recent ILACS Ofsted inspection and good outcome with comments such as *'timely and effective response', 'robust discussions with partner agencies', 'clear and detailed', 'understand risk and provide consistent clarity'*.
4. The Missing and Exploited Team has developed at pace over the last 6 months and early identification of missing and exploited remains our focus. The Community Safety Check In Meetings are now fully embedded, the Early Intervention Exploitation Panel is developing well and moving into 2023 we will be focusing on closing the loop in terms of working together to improve the identification of risky 'places and spaces' and 'people and associates'. The Missing and Exploited Team also played a pivotal role in the recent Ofsted inspection with comments such as *'children at risk of exploitation are judiciously identified and supported', 'robust risk assessments', 'enhanced place assessments used to identify and respond to risk effectively'*.

Building Stronger Families Service

5. We have reviewed our current Facebook page and have updated our usage to appeal to a wider age range, and to promote our offer of services. We are seeing positive uptake of new parenting workshops as a result of this.

6. 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 Services

7. 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

8. 287 children supported through a Child in Need (CiN) plan as at the end of November 2022. This is a decrease from the position in June 2022 when 291 children were supported through a CiN plan. This is part of a general decrease from 305 at year end March 2022.
9. 105 children were subject to a Child Protection plan at the end of November 2022. This is similar amount to the 104 children who were subject to Child Protection Plan at the end of June 2022. However, is a return to the more usual amount for the last 18 months, after a dip in July this year.
10. 101 children from 71 families came into care since April 2022 as a result of court proceedings undertaken by the local authority. 66 children from 49 families have ceased to be in care during this time.
11. The Assessment and Safeguarding duty team is now office based within the Town Hall, and duty colleagues from Children with Disabilities and the Family Group Conferencing team are co-located with them. A report exploring the options for a virtual locality model is in progress.

Looked After and Care Leaver statistics

12. 308 children were looked after by Darlington Borough Council on 2 December 2022, 17 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 are at cycle 24 of the National Transfer Scheme, and Darlington will receive a further 4 referrals in cycles 25-28. The duration between completed cycles is dependent upon the number of UASC reaching the UK. Although 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
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 per cent of our care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, this

was due to 1 young person being in custody, and 80 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 are working on a project called “This is the Place” with Blue Cabin (who we work with on the Creative Life story project). The project will begin on 11 January 2023 and is for foster carers and pre-school children to engage in making music together to help develop skills and relationships.
15. We have held a pre-launch event on 28 October 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 planned 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.
16. We are also planning a 26-week course on “Trauma informed Care”, which will begin 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

17. 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 September, 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.
18. Harewood Hill Lodge was inspected by Ofsted on 22 and 23 November and maintained their grading of Good.
19. 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.
20. A task and finish group has been established to support an improvement plan across the homes, and to ensure developments are consistent across all children’s homes. Key members of the task and finish group have been identified and a plan of work has been created.

Education

21. Mount Pleasant Primary School was recently inspected by Ofsted and maintained its “Good” grading. Inspectors recognised the high expectations of leaders and staff for all pupils including those with SEND, the strong sense of community, strong relationships with local families and exceptional behaviour. St John’s Church of England Academy was found to be “Outstanding” at its recent Ofsted inspection. Inspectors recognised the outstanding provision, that children flourish at St John’s, staff have high expectations and children achieve extremely well.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

22. Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Review Group of childcare sufficiency and the general supply within the borough and the barriers to the provision of childcare provisions.
23. We agreed to provide assistance in communicating the availability of jobs in the childcare sector and include this communication of jobs in Events Planning, Jobs Initiatives, Publications and Digital communication; and make local Members of Parliament aware of the concerns highlighted by Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with regard to the provision of sufficient childcare to meet the needs of our families.

Youth Unemployment

24. The Middlesbrough and Redcar 18-24 year old claimant rate for October 2022 was 7.3 per cent, closely followed by Darlington and Stockton at 7.6 per cent. Hartlepool is an outlier at 9.5 per cent.
25. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) programme runs until 31st July 2023 and it is planned to take referrals right up until project closure. To date the DBC YEI team has had; 1,219 starts, 1,167 completions, 1,136 progressions and 646 sustained outcomes (measured at six months after leaving the programme).
26. TVCA are due to put out an open call for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) early in the new year as part of the people and skills element. It is understood there will be some funding for ‘employment support for the economically inactive’. DBC intend to bid as a consortium of the five Tees Valley local authorities.

Children’s Commissioning and Contracts

27. In line with the priorities of our Looked After Children and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy a new residential children’s home opened in Darlington on 16 October 2022 operated by Evolve. This home is specifically for children who require the additional support of a residential care home for a time lime period before moving on into foster care. This home is a really positive addition which diversifies the range of Ofsted registered Darlington based care and accommodation for local children.

Climate Change

28. Children's Services SLT continue to ensure that our contribution to Climate Change is prevalent on our agenda, through these discussions we were able to feed back where the Heating of the Town Hall was not at its most efficient and this has resulted in positive changes to the heating which reduces our Carbon Footprint. All services remain committed to identifying proactive changes, even small ones, which make a positive contribution.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.

Development Management

2. There have been 236 complaint cases recorded in 2022. 191 closed with justification.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 1,490 applications have been received of which 63 are categorised as major. 2044 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.
4. Notices under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act [untidy land and buildings] have been served on a property in Skinnergate and Northgate House. Satisfactory conclusions have been arrived at, relating to both buildings, which will involve significant external appearance changes to the betterment of the Town Centre, supporting the work currently being undertaken under the Towns Fund. Work has now commenced.

Nutrient Neutrality

5. 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. There is a degree of uncertainty since the change in Government Leadership on how this issue will progress or change in the coming weeks. Guidance is awaited. Solutions have however been found on a limited number of sites to ensure that a limited supply of implementable permissions is ongoing and available.

Environmental Health

Student EHO

6. Officers from Environmental Health are currently investigating opportunities to give one or more people a role as a Student EHO, whereby they spend part of their time at college and part of their time working with us doing training/gaining the necessary experience. It is envisaged that they would spend the whole of their "gap" year with us working.

7. We have secured some funding from Public Health which is to be used to facilitate this and the post is currently undergoing Job Evaluation with a view for it to commence in academic year 2023/24

Food Hygiene Ratings

8. Post Covid officers from Environmental Health have noticed a downturn in standards in a minority of food premises, which has resulted in enforcement action and a significant reduction in their Food Hygiene Rating. Many businesses have been under the impression that if corrective action is taken a good rating can instantly be restored. However, the reality is it can take a number of inspections for officers to have confidence that these improved standards can be maintained.
9. Therefore officers, with the help of the Communications team, have recently run a social media campaign advising businesses of the importance of good food hygiene practices and the impact that failures can have on their Food Hygiene Rating.

Climate Change

10. Work is continuing to develop an adaptation plan, with the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer speaking to SMTs. We are hoping to have an action plan for Cabinet approval by the beginning of the next financial year.
11. We have also started to look at our approach to offsetting any residual emissions that we are not able to remove through energy efficiencies and other actions.

Planning Policy

12. The consultation period on the second draft of the Skerningham Design Code has now ended. At the time of writing the consultation period had not ended so I am unable to give a written update, but I will give a verbal update at the meeting. A further report will be submitted to February Cabinet and hopefully a Design Code can be adopted in February.
13. I am pleased to confirm a new Conservation Officer has been appointed who will commence employment towards the end of February. It is important we have conservation advice not only to advise on the exciting projects that are happening in our historic quarters but to ensure we meet our statutory obligations in relation to Conservation Area Appraisals and support our Development Management Team.
14. The housing market remains buoyant with starts and completions meeting targets which reflects the economic confidence in the Borough despite the global economic and environmental challenges.
15. Officers are working with colleagues across the Tees Valley and wider area to tackle the challenges of Nutrient Neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain, I will give further updates in a future report.

Business Investment

16. Darlington Jobs Fair is back, bigger and busier than ever. Last year's event was a huge success with hundreds of people visiting and taking advantage of the chance to meet with employers and training providers. For those seeking new employment, the Darlington Jobs Fair is the place to be when it returns to the Dolphin Centre on Thursday 9 February 2023. There will be opportunities for all levels of experience and education backgrounds from over 70 different employers with hundreds of job opportunities available. Amongst the organisations already set to attend are: Aldi, Lidl, Durham Police, Arriva, EE, NHS, Darlington Economic Campus, Darlington Borough Council, Premier Inn, Royal Air Force, Nobia, Rockcliffe Hall, Premier Inn, Student Loans and Darlington College.
17. 2023 sees the end of many of the European Structural Funded business support programmes. Already, a number of business support activities in the Tess Valley have been either terminated or scaled down. There is now a transition phase, as plans are underway to develop and implement new support mechanisms via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and will see new business support activities roll-out during 2023.
18. Businesses are facing many challenges as a result of the rising costs of living. The Business Investment Team have collated a range of information and resources to help local business access the support it may need. Further details can be found at:
<https://www.investindarlington.co.uk/cost-of-living-business-support/>

Towns Fund

19. Delivery onsite continues on the Skinnergate and the Yards project, with enhancement to properties and public realm. Construction continues on the college T Levels project, with a forecast completion date of February 2023. In addition, the Rail Heritage Quarter, part funded by the Town Fund, project continues.
20. Works associated with the west of station improvements at the top of Victoria Road are progressing, with the enabling demolition work now contracted.
21. Elsewhere design work continues at the Northern Echo building in relation to the proposed Adult Skills facility.
22. In Northgate and the Garden Street/Weir Street, design and property acquisitions/negotiations being progressed. Including the acquisition of number 156 Northgate and ongoing acquisition negotiations for Northgate House.
23. The development of the Creative Strategy for Victoria Road is in final draft form and has been shared with the local community at an engagement event, held on the street. This will assist 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 and the re-establishment of the pocket park at the junction with the ring road.

Councillor Jamie Bartch
Economy Portfolio

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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. The Director of Public Health and Public Health team have been working to help support the NHS in their efforts to maximise the uptake of the seasonal flu and COVID booster vaccinations in Darlington.
3. This has included using our own communications resources to get the messages out to our local communities encouraging individuals and families to take up their vaccination. Campaigns such as the COVID Booster and Flu Vaccines campaigns are a key part of a broad range of efforts to avoid preventable illnesses and hospital admissions over the winter period. The Public Health team has also been working with the social care settings to ensure that our most vulnerable people in Darlington have been provided with their vaccinations.
4. Following the launch of the Council's Levelling Up Plan the Director of Public Health has been working with colleagues in economic development in investigating the development of a range of tools and metrics measure the impact of the plan on reducing health inequalities in Darlington through focussing on population approaches.

Health and Well Being Board

5. The Health and Wellbeing Board last met on 15 December and the agenda included an update to the Board on the progress of the submission of the Darlington Better Care Fund Plan and a review of the 2022/23 Programme.

Housing Services

Damp and Mould

6. Following the tragic case of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, who died of a respiratory condition caused by mould in his home, the Regulator of Social Housing has written to all social housing providers, seeking assurance that they have a clear understanding and strong grip on damp and mould issues in their homes and are addressing risks to tenants' health.
7. I am pleased to report that issues of damp and mould in Darlington Council homes are treated as a high priority, including responses to reports of damp and mould from tenants.

Our arrangements include:

- (a) Undertaking a full property inspection of empty Council properties, and remedying any issues before a new tenant moves in.
 - (b) Issuing advice and guidance to new tenants on the typical causes of condensation and what they can do to alleviate problems in their home.
 - (c) Ensuring tenants know how to report issues and responding straight away to reports by undertaking a property inspection, arranging any necessary repairs and new equipment, such as Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) units and providing advice and guidance to tenants on how they can help to manage condensation in their property.
8. We have recently undertaken a stock condition survey of our Council Homes by an independent organisation, and this has confirmed that our homes continue to be a good standard with very few issues of damp and mould identified. Our commitment to continue to invest in our homes, including energy efficiency measures to help reduce condensation, damp and mould issues, whilst reducing tenant's energy bills, is set out in the Housing Revenue Account 2023-24 report.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

9. The annual rough sleeper count was undertaken by staff on the evening of 9 November into the morning of 10 of November 2022. We chose to carry out an Evidence Based Count this year and the data has now been verified by Homeless Link. The outcome of the count was that four individuals were found to be rough sleeping and all were provided with appropriate advice and support.
10. Additional Government funding has been secured for Homeless services in Darlington, including £31,795 additional Winter top-up grant for the Homeless Prevention Fund and £11,000 extension to the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Funding.
11. At the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 December 2022, it was reported that all of the actions within the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy have now been completed, ensuring that Darlington is fully compliant with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. However, it was agreed at this meeting to refresh the action plan for 2023, to ensure that we can continue to meet the demands on our Housing Options service and support those residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Lascelles Garages

12. I am pleased to report that work has now commenced on the demolition and removal of 47 Council garages in the Lascelles area, previously approved by Cabinet. The land on which the garages currently stand, will now be included as part of the tenant's existing gardens, with new timber sheds, new fencing and hard standing to be included in the work.

Dolphin Centre

13. The Dolphin Centre events programme has been very busy throughout December and included five Christmas Party Nights, welcoming around 180 guests on each night to a tribute night and 3 course meal. Feedback from the events has been very positive with reservations already requested for the 2023 programme.
14. Dolphin Centre visitor numbers for quarter 2 (22-23) have increased significantly by 51,443, compared to the same quarter in 21- 22. Visits in July (84,000) were the highest monthly total since reopening following lockdown.
15. Darlington College students visited the Dolphin Centre to launch a project whereby Level 3 Business Students are pulling together a proposal on how the Dolphin Centre can better engage with and attract students to use the facilities. Both year 1 and 2 students have begun a consultation exercise with other students and will present their findings and recommendations to the management team in May 2023.
16. The main swimming pool closed on Sunday 1 January 2023 to accommodate essential works. The pool is 40 years old and requires structural work to be completed that will ensure customers can continue to enjoy the pool facilities in the future. The work is anticipated to take four months to complete, and a temporary timetable is now operating in the remaining pool complex.
17. There have been numerous interventions and changes to the building over the years, the most significant in 2006, which resulted in remodelling of the building, however limited work was carried out on the pool, mechanical and electrical installations at that time. The pool works forms part of a £3.9m improvements programme delivered over the last four years, which has included the installation of the bowling alley, new soft play area and gym refurbishment, as well as improvements to changing areas. Although the main pool remains temporarily out of action, swimming lessons and lane swimming are still on offer in the training pool. The diving pool and toddler pool are also available during maintenance on the main pool.

Holiday Activity Programme

18. For the Christmas holiday period, 16 Christmas themed events were organised at venues across the town offering 610 places. Sessions included travelling pantomimes, pantomime at the Hippodrome, ice skating and Christmas themed activities. The team have also been working with the Parent Carer Forum, who organise sessions for families and children with special educational needs and disability (SEND).



Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.

Climate Change

2. To reduce the Council's energy consumption the setpoint for the heating boilers in the Town Hall has been reduced by four degrees. This has achieved a sixteen per cent weather corrected reduction in the consumption for December compared to the previous year. The sodium light fittings in the Central Hall at the Dolphin Centre, external light fittings at Eastbourne Sports Complex and fluorescent light fittings at the Town Hall are currently being replaced with LED's. In addition to this work, there is a renewed commitment to secure zero carbon electricity for 2023/24.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

3. The draft MTFP proposed at Cabinet in December is now out for consultation. Since then the draft Local Government Finance settlement has been received and the MTFP will be updated accordingly in the final draft going to Cabinet and on to Council in February. The details of the settlement are still being reviewed however the overall settlement was good news for the Council with additional funding for social care which will help to address some of the significant pressure in that area.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

4. 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. The Railway Heritage Quarter continues on site with the new engineering shed and refurbishment work to the 1861 shed on Whessoe Road and works are ongoing at the Central Library, and new Chapel development. The recently completed Innovation Central development on Central Park has some companies already operating from it. 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 collection

5. Collection of outstanding Council Tax arrears continues to perform well, with over £1.4 million of arrears collected by our Revenues and Benefits team since April 2022. Included in these amounts are the following cases, further demonstrating our commitment to pursue property owners who deliberately avoid paying Council Tax on their properties:
 - (a) A landlord responsible for a number of properties in the Northgate area had multiple Council Tax debts outstanding. Following the commencement of bankruptcy proceedings, the full amount of £3,825 owed was paid.
 - (b) A property in the Haughton and Springfield area was purchased in 2017, although the owner failed to notify the Council. Outstanding Council Tax remained unpaid but, following a charging order being obtained on the property in October 2022, the owner paid the full outstanding amount of £3,895.
 - (c) A property in the Pierremont area was purchased in 2020, although again the owner failed to notify the Council. Following the commencement of charging orders being instigated, the owner paid the full amount outstanding of £3,704.
 - (d) Charging orders had been obtained against an empty property in the Northgate area. The property was sold in December 2022 and the full amount outstanding of £4,593 was repaid from the proceeds of the sale.

Customer Services

6. From December 2022, our Customer Services team are running an on-line customer feedback pilot that will capture the views of Street Scene customers. A key theme of the Customer Services and Digital strategy is to listen to our customers and use this feedback to improve services. It is hoped that, following a successful trial, we will be able to roll this out to other services which Customer Services provide.
7. In line with our new Customer Standards of telephones being answered within an average of 5 minutes, I am pleased to report that performance continues to improve with the average waiting time for customers in November 2022 of 2 minutes 24 seconds.
8. Unison recently recognised our Customer Services as part of their Champions Day project for the hard work and excellent services provided by staff to support residents during the Covid pandemic.

Parliamentary Boundary Review

9. Public consultation on the 2023 Parliamentary Review has now closed. It is anticipated that the Boundary Commission for England will send their final recommendations to Parliament by 1 July 2023. Further information on the review and interactive maps can be found on the BCE's website <https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>.

Register of Electors

10. The Annual Canvass, the third under the new canvass reforms, was completed in November with the new Register of Electors being published, on 1 December 2022. Work will continue during the year to keep the register up to date by locating new electors and encouraging them to register.

Elections Act 2022 - Voter Identification (ID)

11. The Voter Identification Regulations 2022 were made on 22 December 2022. These regulations will come into force for the Local Government Elections in May and for UK Parliamentary Elections from October 2023. The new regulations require voters, for the first time, to identify themselves by showing an approved form of photographic identification at a polling station before being issued with a ballot paper to cast their vote. The full list of accepted ID can be found on the Government's website (www.gov.uk).
12. Should an elector not have an accepted form of photo ID, they can apply for a free Voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate. This can be done online via the Government's website or by completing a paper application form. The publicity campaign by the Electoral Commission for Voter ID commenced on 9 January 2023.

Councillor Scott Durham
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.
3. There are now nearly 30 dedicated volunteers who have been provided training of equipment. A supply of personal attack alarms are distributed to vulnerable people through the safe place.
4. In early 2023, volunteers will undergo further training to equip them to deliver on street support where they 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 final quarter of 2022:
 - (a) 6 First Warnings have been given to persons identified as being involved in ASB.
 - (b) 17 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA) have been signed.
 - (c) 7 Final Warnings have been given to persons who refused to sign ABAs.
 - (d) 6 people have been identified as being involved in ASB and are now awaiting an interview.

Environmental Crime

6. In the period of reporting the following outcomes have been achieved:
 - (a) Four files pending for court for fly tipping offences;

- (b) One Fixed Penalty Notice issued for littering and two enquiries ongoing in relation to pigeon feeding in the town centre;
- (c) One Fixed Penalty Notice issue for breach of Duty of Care in relation to a fly tip;
- (d) Four Community Protection Notice Warnings issued for side waste.

Trading Standards

- 7. Under Operation CeCe (a national illegal tobacco initiative) the Trading Standards team, supported by law enforcement partners and a tobacco detection dog team, visited and searched seven retail premises in Darlington on 29 November 2022. This operation follows enforcement action carried out on 27 September 2022. The team seized illegal, high strength, disposable vapes as well as a quantity of illegal cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco. There was a mixture of concealed products and products on open display.
- 8. On 1 December 2022, an officer from the Trading Standards team carried out night-time economy visits as part of a multi-agency operation under the name 'Operation Autumn'. Two retailers of particular interest to Trading Standards were searched, and a quantity of illegal disposable vapes, cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco were seized.
- 9. A further visit was conducted by an officer from Trading Standards and Durham Constabulary to a retailer on 5 December 2022 and, once again, a quantity of illegal disposable vapes, cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco were seized.
- 10. Across all three days of action, 19,580 sticks of cigarettes, 7.65 kg hand rolling tobacco and 498 disposable vapes were seized with a total street value of nearly £12,000.
- 11. Investigation and reinforced action is being focussed on retailers who are attempting to cash in on the popularity of disposable vapes by increasing the supply of illegal versions, often selling them to under-age children.

Private Sector Housing

Damp and Mould Growth

- 12. Over the 3 years, 2018-19 to 2020-21, the Private Sector Housing Team receive on average 90 service requests per year where damp and mould growth is a contributory factor.
 - (a) 23% of all damp and mould growth service requests were dealt with within 10 days by providing advice to the occupier or landlord.
 - (b) The remaining 77% of cases required an inspection. In those cases, an inspection is arranged for 10 days later to allow the landlord to make contact with the tenant and start any necessary works. On average these requests were resolved within 70 days.

13. Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale (where prolonged environmental mould exposure within his home contributed to his death), the Team anticipates a further rise in service requests over the winter period; October figures showed a 104 per cent increase on average figures for the time of the year.
14. The Private Sector Housing Team have recently reviewed information on the Darlington Borough Council website and will continue to do so over the winter period to advise residents of available support for energy efficiency measures, how to reduce condensation and mould growth as well as financial assistance available.

PREVENT

15. A successful joint bid was submitted with Durham County Council to the Home Office for £30k to deliver specific education to designated safeguarding leads in schools/colleges. The bid focusses on the impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder on 11–18-year-olds in relation to the risk of being radicalised. A project provider was identified in December, with delivery expected to commence in February/March 2023.

Crime and Disorder

16. Across the Borough the figures are as follows:-

Darlington	YTD NOVEMBER 2021	YTD NOVEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	7337	7711	+5%
Incidents	20464	21096	+3%
ASB	2351	2112	-10%

17. The crime increase equates to 374 offences with burglary in private dwellings and possession of weapons rates increasing. Action has been taken with regards to residential burglaries and a number of offenders have been identified and charged. Rates in possession of weapons has seen an increase due to the number of stop searches carried out.
18. Incidents have increased by 632 reports, with an increase in youth related incidents. Partnership work between the police and Civic Enforcement teams has seen youths identified and actions taken to try and improve behaviour.
19. Within the town centre the figures are as follows:-

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	YTD NOVEMBER 2021	YTD NOVEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	920	978	+6%
Incidents	1701	1719	+1%
ASB	199	186	-7%

20. The crime increase equates to 58 offences with vehicle crime rates increasing. Further analysis shows that vehicles being insecure is the main reason for this uptick in offences.

Councillor Mike Renton
Stronger Communities Portfolio

**COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023**

**MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND
TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2022/23**

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

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. The mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council's borrowing, requires Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, relating to capital spending and borrowing. Prudential Indicators are set in three statutory annual reports, a forward looking annual treasury management strategy, a backward looking annual treasury management report and this mid-year update. The mid-year update follows Council's approval in February 2022 of the 2022/23 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.
3. The key objectives of the three annual reports are:
 - (a) to ensure the governance of the large amounts of public money under the Council's Treasury Management activities:
 - (i) Complies with legislation
 - (ii) Meets high standards set out in codes of practice
 - (b) To ensure that borrowing is affordable.
 - (c) To report performance of the key activities of borrowing and investments.
4. The key proposed revisions to Prudential Indicators relate to:

- (a) The Operational Boundary will reduce to £156.699m and the Authorised Limit to £239.879m which will allow for any additional cashflow requirement.
5. Investments include £30m in property funds which are expected to increase our net return on investments by around £0.340m in future years.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that :
- (a) The revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 are examined.
 - (b) The Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) projected outturn shown in Table 11 is noted.
 - (c) Council approve the updated prudential indicators.

Reasons

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

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23
- (ii) Prudential Indicators & Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23
- (iii) Accounting records
- (iv) The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities

Peter Carrick: Extension 5401

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

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. This mid-year review report meets the regulatory framework requirement of treasury management. It also incorporates the needs of the Prudential Code to ensure monitoring of the capital expenditure plans and the Council's prudential indicators (PIs). The Treasury Strategy and the PIs were previously reported to Council on 17 February 2022.
9. This report concentrates on the revised positions for 2022/23. Future year's indicators will be revised when the impact of the MTFP 2023/24 onwards is known.
10. A summary of the revised headline indicators for 2022/23 is presented in Table 1 below. More detailed explanations of each indicator and any proposed changes are contained in the report. The revised indicators reflect the movement in the Capital MTFP since its approval in February 2022 and the means by which it is financed.

Table 1 Headline Indicators

	2022/23 Original Estimate	2022/23 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure (Tables 2 and 3)	76.970	71.466
Capital Financing Requirement (Table 4)	243.523	228.456
Operational Boundary for External Debt (Table 4)	185.966	156.699
Authorised Limit for External Debt (Table 6)	255.699	239.879
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- General Fund (Table 14)	2.14%	2.14%
Ratio of Financing Costs to net revenue stream- Housing Revenue Account (HRA)(Table 14)	14.79%	14.93%

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

Key Prudential Indicators

14. This part of the report is structured to update:
- (a) The Council's capital expenditure plans
 - (b) How these plans are financed
 - (c) The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the PI's and the underlying need to borrow
 - (d) Compliance and limits in place for borrowing activity
 - (e) Changes to the Annual Investment Strategy
 - (f) The revised financing costs budget for 2022/23

Capital Expenditure PI

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

Table 2

Capital Expenditure by Service	2022/23 Original Estimate	2022/23 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	40.231	55.315
HRA	32.980	16.359
Total Estimated Capital Expenditure	73.211	71.674
Loans to Joint Ventures	3.759	(0.208)
Total	76.970	71.466

16. The changes to the 2022/23 capital expenditure estimates have been notified to Cabinet as part of the Capital Budget monitoring process (Quarterly Project Position Statement Report).
17. The current capital programme that has not already been financed now stands at £207.208m, but this includes a number of schemes that will be spent over a number of years not just in 2022/23. A reduction of £135.742m has been allowed for schemes which are known will be finalised in future years, but it is likely that other schemes will also slip into future years.

Impact of Capital Expenditure Plans

Changes to the financing of the Capital Programme

18. Table 3 draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans shown above, highlighting the original elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element (Borrowing Need) increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). Borrowing need has reduced for 2022/23 due to schemes

that have been estimated to have slipped into future years. This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Table 3

Capital Expenditure	2022/23 Original Estimate	2022/23 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
General Fund	40.231	55.315
HRA	32.980	16.359
Loans to Joint Ventures	7.446	6.165
Total Capital expenditure	80.657	77.839
Financed By:		
Capital Receipts - Housing	0.303	0.303
Capital Receipts –General Fund	3.832	0.794
Capital grants	4.575	39.643
JV Repayments	3.687	6.373
HRA Revenue Contributions	17.618	13.384
HRA Investment Fund	0.000	2.672
Self-Financing - GF	20.000	9.119
Total Financing	50.015	72.288
Borrowing Need	30.642	5.551

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

19. Table 4 shows the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), which is the underlying external need to borrow for capital purposes. It shows the expected actual debt position over the period. This is called the Operational Boundary. The reduction in Borrowing Need (Table 3) is around £25.1m and currently actual borrowing for the Council is £144.082m. The reduction is due to slippage in the Housing programme and the Railway Heritage Quarter which is predominantly grant funded. It is proposed to set an actual borrowing figure of £148.582m this will accommodate the additional borrowing need and any debt requirements for cash flow purposes. Other Long-term liabilities (the PFI scheme) will be added to give the revised operational boundary for 2022/23.

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

	2022/23 Original Estimate	2022/23 Revised Estimate
	£m	£m
Prudential Indicator- Capital Financing Requirement		
Opening CFR- Post Audit of Accounts	225.663	224.285
CFR General Fund	141.661	143.275
CFR General Fund PFI/Leasing IFRS	8.117	8.117
CFR – Housing	77.225	67.225
CFR – Loans to Joint Ventures	16.520	9.839
Total Closing CFR	243.523	228.456
Net Movement in CFR	17.860	4.171
Borrowing	177.849	148.582
Other long-Term Liabilities	8.117	8.117
Total Debt 31 March- Operational Boundary	185.966	156.699

Limits to Borrowing Activity

20. The first key control over the treasury activity is a PI to ensure that over the medium term gross borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2022/23 and the next two financial years. As shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5

	2022/23 Original Estimate £m	2022/23 Revised Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m	2024/25 Revised Estimate £m
Gross borrowing	177.849	148.582	163.582	178.582
Plus Other Long Term Liabilities	8.117	8.117	7.011	5.912
Total Gross Borrowing	185.966	156.699	170.593	184.494
CFR* (year-end position)	243.523	228.456	241.924	255.398

* includes on balance sheet PFI schemes and finance leases

21. The Group Director of Operations reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current and future years in complying with this PI.
22. A further PI controls the overall level of borrowing, this is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which while not desirable, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. The Authorised Limit is currently set 5% above the Capital Financing Requirement to allow for any additional cashflow needs, the revised figure for 2022/23 has been raised by 5% of the new CFR total.

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

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

Table 6

Authorised Limit for External Debt	2022/23 Original Indicator £m	2022/23 Revised Indicator £m
Capital Financing Requirement	243.523	228.456
Additional headroom to Capital Financing Requirement	12.176	11.423
Total Authorised Limit for External Debt	255.699	239.879

Interest Rate Forecasts Provided by Link Asset Services (as at 9 August 2022)

24. A forecast of future interest rates was provided by the Council’s treasury management advisors on 9th August to give an update to Audit Committee in September as part of this report. As members will be aware the economic position of the country has changed significantly, since this update was provided, with the financial landscape moving rapidly and possible further interest rates projected. Further updates will be provided in the next treasury management report update.

Table 7

	Bank Rate	PWLB rates for borrowing purposes*			
		5 year	10 year	25 year	50 year
	%	%	%	%	%
2022/23					
Sept 2022	2.25	2.80	3.00	3.40	3.10
Dec 2022	2.50	3.00	3.20	3.50	3.20
March 2023	2.75	3.10	3.30	3.50	3.20
2023/24					
June 2023	2.75	3.10	3.30	3.50	3.20
Sept 2023	2.75	3.00	3.20	3.50	3.20
Dec 2023	2.50	3.00	3.10	3.40	3.10
March 2024	2.50	2.90	3.10	3.40	3.10
2024/25					
June 2024	2.25	2.90	3.00	3.30	3.00
Sept 2024	2.25	2.80	3.00	3.30	3.00
Dec 2024	2.25	2.80	3.00	3.20	2.90
March 2025	2.25	2.80	2.90	3.20	2.90

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

25. The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and to economies around the world.
26. Central banks in the developed economies have significantly quickened the pace of their monetary policy tightening. Although their policies are bespoke and reflect the economic backdrop in each of their countries, that is not to say there has not been a similar approach to dampening inflationary pressures that are still spiking upwards. In that respect, the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) has led with increases of 225bps in the year to date, whilst the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has increased its Bank Rate by 150bps to 1.75%.
27. The latest Bank Rate increase was implemented on the 4 August. After an 8-1 vote in favour, Bank Rate shifted up 50bps from 1.25% to 1.75%, but the MPC was careful to keep its options open regarding future decision-making (also note that one vote was for only a 25bps increase). It tweaked its forward guidance in a couple of ways. First, it added that "policy is not on a pre-set path" and that the MPC will decide the "appropriate level of Bank Rate at each meeting". Second, it now says that "further changes" rather than "further increases" in Bank Rate "will reflect the Committee's assessment of the economic outlook and inflationary pressures". The first change suggests that rates will not automatically rise by 50bps at the next few meetings and that the higher rates go, the more important the level. The second change appears to open the door to rate cuts further ahead.
28. In addition, the MPC surprised the market with its candidness in respect of its UK economic growth forecast assumptions. It stated that the UK is in for five quarters of recession starting in Q4 2022 and running all the way through to the end of 2023. In the interim, it is projected that CPI inflation will exceed 13% in Q4 2022. Half of this increase can be attributed directly to gas/electricity price inflation and a further 2% - 2.5% to the indirect knock-on effects of higher energy on production/services.
29. Furthermore, the MPC said that it is "provisionally minded" to commence gilt sales of £10bn per quarter from the end of September. That means the balance sheet will soon start to shrink at a faster pace.
30. However, that said, the MPC appeared also to be sending dovish signals further ahead as the forecast recession involves a 2.2% decline in GDP and if interest rates rise to 3.00%, as the markets currently expect, inflation will be below the 2% target in three years' time. That appears to imply that rates don't need to rise as far as 3.00% and/or that at some point in the next three years rates will need to be cut again to boost inflation.
31. The Bank also acknowledged it has not taken account of the prospect of a change in Government policy regarding the potential tax cuts offered up by the new Prime Minister. If this policy change occurs, regardless of whether it is to a lesser or greater extent, it is likely to add to inflationary pressures and will be an additional issue for the MPC to consider in full at its November meeting.
32. There is a lot to digest from what the MPC has said and done but as has been apparent for some time, there is also a huge influence on UK gilt yields and their movements emanating from what happens with US Treasuries. Therefore, in putting together the interest rate

forecasts it is worth noting that should US inflation continue to be stubbornly high (currently the CPI reading is 9.1%) and the jobs reports continue to surprise on the upside (528,000 new jobs reported on Friday and unemployment at a record low of 3.5%), there is the prospect that any downward momentum in UK yields could be offset by Treasury yields shifting higher. Conversely, yield falls could also be supported by the Fed's determination to get inflation down in the US through robust monetary policy tightening.

33. Overall, the pace of the Bank Rate increases in the forecasts have quickened. We still have a peak of 2.75% in Q1 2023 but that is now based on a 50bps hike in September followed by two 25bps increases in Q4 and Q1. At this juncture, we feel the MPC will want to be seen to be remaining tough on inflation, but they will also be cognisant of the cost-of-living squeeze accelerating, following 60%+ gas/electricity price increases in October. Therefore, after Bank Rate moves up to 2.25% in September, we forecast the pace of rate increases will fall back again from Q4. However, the MPC could also reach 2.5% at the end of the year by implementing equal 25bps hikes in September, November and December. A further 25bps increase in Q1 2023 is our best estimate, but by then we should have a better understanding of whether inflation has peaked, how fast it is falling and what is happening in the broader economy following the important Christmas retail sales data and monthly jobs and wages data.
34. Regarding gilt yields, these have been on a march upwards since the turn of the year, but that march has been accompanied by significant bouts of volatility that have sometimes been not only hard to explain but also difficult to predict, including the direction of travel. The best judgment is that gilt yields across the curve have a little further to rise but only by 20 – 30bps, so a lower peak than we were forecasting back in June.
35. However, given the volatility we have witnessed in recent months, we are forecasting more of the same over the next couple of quarters at least. So, those clients looking to borrow will need to ensure they can act nimbly when the opportunity arises for locking out some interest rate certainty at attractive levels, whilst those looking to repay borrowing should take advantage of upward momentum in yields when that arises.

Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 and Annual Investment Strategy Update

36. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2022/23 was approved by this Council on 17 February 2022.
37. There are no policy changes to the TMSS.
38. The details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

Debt Activity during 2022/23

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

Table 8

	2022/23 Original Estimate £m	2022/23 Revised Estimate £m
CFR (year-end position) from Table 4	243.523	228.456
Less other long term liabilities PFI and finance leases	8.117	8.117
Net adjusted CFR (net year end position)	235.406	220.339
Expected Borrowing	177.849	148.582
(Under)/ Over borrowing	(57.557)	(71.757)

40. The Council hasn't taken on any new debt in the current year to date.
41. The amount borrowed by the Council now stands at £148.582m, this excludes any additional cashflow loans which may be required.
42. There will still be an element of under-borrowing by the Council at the end of March 2023.

Debt Rescheduling

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

Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23

Investment Portfolio

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

Treasury Management Activity from 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022

45. Current investment position – The Council held £53.849m of investments at 31/08/2022 and this is made up of the following types of investment.

Table 9

Sector	Country	Up to 1 year
		£m
Banks	UK	12.000
AAA Money Market Funds	Sterling Funds	11.850
Property Funds - CCLA	UK	10.000
Hermes		10.000
Lothbury	UK	9.999
Total		53.849

Short Term Cashflow Investments

46. Cash balances are invested on a daily basis to maximise the benefit of temporary surplus funds. These include investments in Money Market Funds, the Government's Debt Management Office and bank short term notice accounts. A total of 61 investments were made in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 totalling c£132m these were for short periods of up to 180 days and earned interest of £0.143m on an average balance of £32.893m which equated to an annual average interest rate of 1.02%.

Investment returns measured against the Service Performance Indicators

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

Table 10

	Cashflow Investments %
Darlington Borough Council - Actual	1.02%
External Comparators	
Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) – 6 months	1.00%

Treasury Management Budget

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

- (a) Longer term capital investments interest earned – a cash amount of which earns interest and represents the Councils revenue balances, unused capital receipts, reserves and provisions, this will now include Property Funds.
- (b) Cash flow interest earned – the authority has consistently had a positive cash flow. Unlike long term capital investments it does not represent any particular sum but it is the consequence of many different influences such as receipt of grants, the

relationship between debtors and creditors, cashing of cheques and payments to suppliers.

- (c) Debt serving costs – this is the principal and interest costs on the Council’s long term debt to finance the capital programme.

Table 11 - Changes to the Financing Costs Budget 2022/23

	£m	£m
Original Financing Costs Budget 2022/23		0.637
Add Increased debt costs	0.302	
Less Increased returns on Investments	(0.554)	
Add net reduced returns on Property Funds	0.252	
Total adjustments		0.000
Revised Treasury Management Budget 2022/23		0.637

49. This statement concludes that the Treasury Management budget is forecast to Outturn on budget in 2022/23, this will be reflected in the current MTFP projections.

Risk Benchmarking

50. A regulatory development is the consideration and approval of security and liquidity benchmarks. Yield benchmarks are currently widely used to assess investment performance and these are shown in Table 12. Discrete security and liquidity benchmarks are also requirements of member reporting.
51. The following reports the current position against the benchmarks originally approved.
52. **Security** – The Council’s maximum security risk benchmarks for the current portfolio of investments, when compared to historic default tables were set as follows;

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

Table 12

Maximum	Benchmark 2022/23	Actual May	Actual July
Year 1	0.077%	0.007%	0.001%

N.B. this excludes Property Funds

53. The counterparties that we use are all high rated therefore our actual risk of default based on ratings attached to counterparties is very low.
54. **Liquidity** – In respect of this area the Council set liquidity facilities/ benchmark to maintain
- (i) Bank overdraft - £0.100M
 - (ii) Liquid short term deposits of a least £3.000M available within a weeks notice
 - (iii) Weighted Average Life benchmark is expected to be 0.4 years with a maximum of 1 year

55. The Group Director of Operations can report that liquidity arrangements have been adequate for the year to date as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

	Benchmark 2022/23	Actual May	Actual July
Weighted Average Life	0.4 – 1 year	0.21 years	0.20 years

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

Treasury Management Indicators

57. **Actual and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream** – This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (financing costs net of interest and investment income) against the net revenue stream.

Table 14

	2022/23 Original Indicator	2022/23 Revised Indicator
General Fund	2.14%	2.14%
HRA	14.79%	14.93%

Treasury Management Prudential indicators

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

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

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

Table 15

	2022/23 Original Indicator	2022/23 Revised Indicator
Limits on fixed interest rates	100%	100%
Limits on variable interest rates	40%	40%

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

Table 16 - Maturity Structures of Borrowing

	2022/23 Original indicator	2022/23 Actual to Date	2022/23 Revised Indicator
Under 12 months	25%	17%	30%
12 months to 2 years	40%	6%	40%
2 years to 5 years	60%	12%	60%
5 years to 10 years	80%	9%	80%
10 years and above	100%	57%	100%

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

Table 17 - Principal Funds Invested

	2022/23 Original Indicator	2022/23 Revised Indicator
Maximum principal sums invested greater than 1 year	£50m	£50m

Conclusion

63. The prudential indicators have been produced to take account of the Council’s borrowing position. The key borrowing indicator (the Operational Boundary) is £156.699m. The Council’s return on investments has been good, exceeding both of the targets. Based on the first five months of 2022/23 the Council’s borrowing and investments is forecast to be on target on the approved 2022/23 budget.
64. The Council’s treasury management activities comply with the required legislation and meet the high standards set out in the relevant codes of practice.

Outcome of Consultation

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

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**COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023**

CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Jamie Bartch, Economy Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Ian Williams, Chief Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Council on progress towards the Council's net zero target.

Summary

2. Following the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in July 2019, a Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer was appointed in late January 2020.
3. The Climate Change Strategy was adopted in July 2020 and working with lead officers across the Council, an action plan was produced and adopted in October 2021. A trajectory of 30% reduction in the Council's emission every five years was agreed at Cabinet in October 2021. Our emissions data is collected annually, so the next update will be reported in the July 2023 report to Cabinet and Council.
4. Milestones have been developed and are being used by the Climate Change Officer to monitor progress. The Climate Change Officer will be working with lead officers to develop the milestones for 2023/24.
5. Work has begun on an adaptation plan to sit alongside the carbon reduction plans. This will ensure continuing resilience to climate change. Work also continues on the development of a strategy for how the Council intends to offset residual emissions. This will be presented to Cabinet in September 2023.
6. The Council continues to communicate externally with residents and businesses and internally with staff. Each issue of One Darlington carries a sustainability article. A new section for young people has been added to the Sustainable Darlington section of the website. The Sustainability and Climate Change intranet pages have been revamped. A series of staff drop-in sessions have been introduced.
7. A sustainability event is in the planning stages. It will be held over two days on 2/3 June 2023.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that Council notes the report.

Reasons

9. The recommendation is supported because with increasing public awareness and desire to take action on climate change, the Council needs to deliver on its own Declaration.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Margaret Enstone : Extension 6229

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no expected impact on Crime and Disorder in Darlington.
Health and Wellbeing	According to the WHO, climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. This report is a progress report of our journey to becoming a carbon neutral council.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The Council has recognised the need to consider the carbon impact of the decisions it makes. This report is a progress report of our journey to reducing our carbon emissions and adapting our services to the unavoidable effects of climate change.
Diversity	Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. This report demonstrates how we are addressing our own carbon emissions and resilience, giving us the ability to demonstrate through good practice what other people can do themselves
Wards Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular ward.
Groups Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	This report has no particular implications for the Council Plan
Efficiency	Our approach to reducing emissions will mean that resources are used more efficiently
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

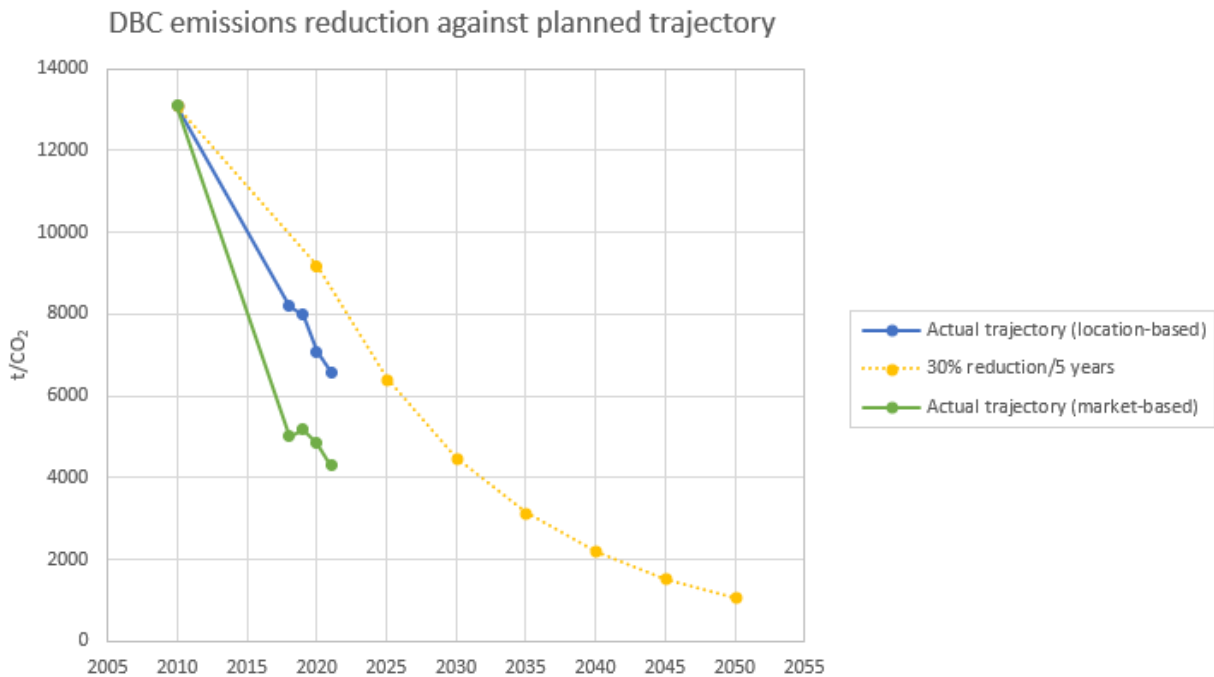
10. Following the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in July 2019, a Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer was appointed in late January 2020. The Climate Change Strategy was adopted in July 2020 and working with lead officers across the Council, an action plan was produced and adopted in October 2021. An independent benchmark review in 2021 scored us well above the national average. A trajectory of 30% reduction in the Council's emission every five years was agreed at Cabinet in October 2021.
11. Our emissions data is collected annually, so the next update will be reported in the July 2023 report to Cabinet.

	2010/11	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂
Streetlighting	3,487	759	596	515	458
Corporate Estate	7564	5,928	5,907	5,014	4864
Business Travel	2,050	1,509	1,482	1,426	1270
Total	13,101	8,196	7,985	6,955	6,592
Total estimated working from home emissions/tCO ₂ ,e				125	

Electricity generation from the solar panels on the roof of the Town Hall:

	2010/11	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation
	kWh	kWh*	kWh	kWh	kWh
Total		1,008	7,846	7,362	9,440

12. Trajectory:



13. Milestones have been developed and are being used by the Climate Change Officer to monitor progress. 113 actions are to be completed by the end of March 2023.

14. At end Q2 (2022/23) the end of year projection for these is:

- (a) 26 complete
- (b) 70 on target
- (c) 5 not on target but progress being made
- (d) 4 unlikely to hit target:
 - (i) 2 x staff capacity issues, expected completion 2023/24
 - (ii) 1 x work outsourced, expected completion July 2023
 - (iii) 1 x external partner withdrawn from project

15. The remaining 8 actions are due to be taken forward in later quarters.
16. The Climate Change Officer will be working with lead officers to develop the milestones for 2023/24 and is working with the Corporate Strategy and Performance Team to explore whether the same reporting system as the corporate targets can be utilised. It is anticipated that this would make it easier for officers to complete their reports and for senior managers and members to see progress.

Adaptation

17. Most of our activity to date has been focused on reducing our emissions, in line with the declaration made in 2019. The Council need, though, to ensure that it is positioned to withstand the impacts of climate change that are currently being experienced.
18. Work is ongoing with teams to determine what activity is already being undertaken to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver services under extreme weather conditions and what still needs to be put in place. From these discussions, an adaptation action plan will be put together to sit alongside the carbon neutral action plan.

Offsetting Plan

19. The Council will do everything it can to reduce our emissions, but there will inevitably be a gap between where our actions can take us and where the authority need to be. Currently a strategy for how we intend to offset our residual emissions. This plan will be brought to Cabinet in September 2023.

Climate Change Fund

20. £100k was allocated in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to help fund projects that will help us meet our target.
21. Just short of £18,000 has been spent so far. In addition to the three projects reported on previously the following has been agreed:
 - (a) Provided funding for six videos about recycling to be shown on Freeview TV and social media.
 - (b) Funded a consultant to look at the carbon emissions associated with our supply chain.
 - (c) Pending bid for school's competition to design a sustainable & climate resilient flower bed.

Communications

22. Climate change activities continue to have a presence on social media and in One Darlington. A new section for young people has been added to the Sustainable Darlington section of the website. This includes activities to do at school and at home, learning resources, online recycling or reselling sites and a blog area. Officers are still trying to encourage schools to get their pupils to write for this area. The aim is that these pages will

be youth led.

23. The sustainability and climate change intranet page has been updated to include opportunities for volunteering, guides and information and an update area. A series of drop-in sessions have been arranged for staff to be able to ask the team questions and learn about a different topic each time.
24. In addition, the team are working with the Event Management Team on a sustainability event for the weekend of 2/3 June 2023. The event will include interactive learning and experiences, entertainment, information, opportunities for local businesses to showcase themselves, business advice and a ticket talks programme.

Financial Implications

25. Chief Officers Board has recently approved the creation of a Green Initiative Reserve which will help to capture and ring-fence savings arising as a result of the implementation of green initiatives.
26. A system to report on and monitor expected savings is planned for development.

Legal Implications

27. There are no legal implications.

HR Implications

28. The report does not affect the terms and conditions of any staff, or change their duties.

Estates & Property Advice

29. The report does not affect the Council's land holdings or involve a lease, or license or any transfer or purchase of land.

Procurement Advice

30. The report does not involves any purchase over £100k.

Equalities Considerations

31. Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. By ensuring that the Council is resilient to the effects of climate change, the Council continues to ensure that it will be able to continue providing services to all residents.

Consultation

32. This report is a progress report for the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions and increasing its resilience to the impacts of climate change. No public consultation has been carried out.

COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023

TOWN CENTRE PARKING OFFER

Responsible Cabinet Members
Councillor Andy Keir, Local Services Portfolio
Councillor Jamie Bartch, Economy Portfolio

Responsible Director
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update on the town centre car parking offer and seeks a budget variation and funding release.

Summary

2. Parking offers have been in place in various pay and display locations to support the town centre since June 2018. Since January 2021 the Tees Valley Combined Authority have provided the funding to support parking offers across the Tees Valley for a two-year period. In November 2022 Cabinet agreed to fund an extension of the parking offer from January 2023 until the end of March 2023.
3. The sustainability of the town centre is an immediate priority for Members, and it is the strong desire of the administration that the council should continue to support the town centre and encourage use of the town centre. On 10 January 2023 Cabinet agreed a further extension of the parking offer for a further 3 months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.
4. The Cabinet approval is subject to Council considering varying the budget and release the funding because the further extension of the parking offer exceeds Cabinet's delegated authority to limit to vary the budget. This report seeks approval from Council to vary the budget and release the funding. The detail of the funding of this offer is covered in the financial implications section of this report.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Council approves the variation to the budget and releases £387k to enable the current parking offer to be extended a further 3 months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, and at that point parking charges are reintroduced on 1 July 2023.

Reason

6. The recommendation supports the ongoing recovery of the town centre.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

- Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report June 2018
- Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report October 2019
- Town Centre Car Parking Cabinet Report September 2020
- Town Centre Parking Cabinet Report December 2020.
- Town Centre Parking Offer Report November 2022

Dave Winstanley : Extension 6618
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S17 Crime and Disorder	Whilst anti-social behaviour and crime does on occasions take place in car parks, there is no impact on crime and disorder as a result of this report
Health and Wellbeing	Parking offers can potentially conflict with some other Council and Government policy objectives such as promotion of sustainable transport and climate change that have a positive impact on health and well-being. However, this is a short-term extension to ensure recovery post Covid is established
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	Parking strategy and controls are a method of encouraging more sustainable travel choices and impacting positively on climate change. If the offer is extended there may be an impact on carbon emissions as a result of encouraging car journeys into the town centre
Diversity	An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the offer introduced in January 2021. The offer remains the same and therefore the assessment undertaken at the time remains in place.
Wards Affected	Car parks are located in Park East and Northgate, however residents from across the Borough and beyond will utilise them
Groups Affected	No group is affected any differently to any other
Budget and Policy Framework	This is a Council decision and is a variation to the MTFP.
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The proposals contained in this report have impacts on aspects of the Council Plan. The proposal seeks to provide a further period of support for the town centre recovery
Efficiency	There is no impact
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The Council has funded a variety of Town Centre Parking initiatives to support the Town Centre Economy since June 2018. The Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet of 27 November 2020 approved funding to support parking offers across the Tees Valley for a two-year period. This funding ceased at the end of December 2022 and Cabinet agreed in November 2022 to fund an extension of the parking offer to the end of March 2023.
8. The November 2022 Cabinet report identified that parking numbers in car parks had returned to pre-Covid numbers. However, it recognised that the post-Christmas period is a tough trading period. The cost-of-living challenges will continue throughout the winter and beyond, and it is acknowledged this will be a tough period for both residents and business.
9. The sustainability of the town centre is an immediate priority for Members, and it is the strong desire of the administration that the council should continue to support the town centre and encourage use of the town centre. On 10 January 2023 Cabinet agreed a further extension of the parking offer for a further 3 months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.
10. The Cabinet approval is subject to Council considering varying the budget and release the funding because the further extension of the parking offer exceeds Cabinet's delegated authority to limit to vary the budget. This report seeks approval from Council to vary the budget and release the funding. The detail of the funding of this offer is covered in the financial implications section of this report.
11. The Council is not immune to the cost-of-living challenges; inflation, energy cost rises and the post-Covid impacts are placing considerable pressures on Council resources and as such the Council is not able to sustain free parking offers indefinitely.
12. It is acknowledged that if the parking offer is extended it temporarily prioritises town centre recovery over other policy objectives, specifically the promotion of sustainable transport and climate change impacts. However, the Sustainable Transport and Climate change agenda and outcomes continue to be extremely important and high priorities for the Council.
13. The parking offer is only one factor in a range of activity being delivered by the council and businesses to support the town centre. Therefore, it is always difficult to isolate and quantify the benefits any such offer has made.
14. As previously reported, there are many factors that influence the success of a town centre, the businesses and what they offer in the town centre is a huge factor, markets and events also draw people into the town and many other factors.

15. It is also difficult to compare data as there have been several different parking offers in place since June 2018. Similarly, comparisons with pre-covid visitor numbers are difficult because consumer behaviour has undoubtedly been changed with the acceleration of internet shopping habits and online banking resulting in less frequent visits and homeworking changing patterns and behaviours.
16. Some of the metrics of the town centre have been reviewed and are presented below. Members consider a further extension of the parking offer through the winter and into the summer would enable the traders the best opportunity to succeed following the traditionally more challenging winter period:
 - (a) There is no doubt that the response to the initial three-month parking offer extension has been positive from town centre businesses and visitors, with feedback suggesting a further offer will help. This feedback in itself is not unexpected, but what cannot be quantified is whether visitors would continue to use the town centre if a parking charge was in place, or they would make other choices.
 - (b) In general car parking ticket numbers have been gradually increasing in Darlington since 2017 (other than during periods of national lockdowns). Prior to the lockdowns in 2020 car parking ticket numbers had reached around 100k per month from around 80k in 2017. The current parking offer has seen a recovery (post covid lockdowns) to levels of around 116k per month over the last 6 months. This equates to about 192,000 additional tickets per year.
 - (c) In terms of the off street car parks, where offers have been in place during 2021/22 these have seen an additional 261k tickets issued compared to 2019/20 (circa 21k per month). Around 140k of these were from visits to Feethams MSCP (circa 12k per month). The fact that there has been a significant increase in use of the offer car parks compared to the overall increase in ticket numbers suggest some displacement from car parks where charges exist to car parks where there is a free offer.
 - (d) In terms of the on-street parking bays the parking machines were installed in 2005 and there is no back-office system to analyse ticket data. However, some analysis has been done manually to gauge the use of the spaces. In Grange Road and Northumberland Street comparing ticket numbers pre-offer and during the offer there have been around 280 more tickets per month issued in Northumberland Street and 540 more tickets per month issued in Grange Road. It is estimated the overall numbers of people parking in the on-street bays has remained the same but there has been a change in pattern on where people park on-street, with people favouring the free-offer bays or free car parks. The scope to increase additional visits to the on-street bays was limited given the high occupancy levels that existed in some locations.
 - (e) Footfall figures in the town centre are analysed but the council moved to the springboard counter system in April 2020, so it is not an exact like for like comparison. The monthly average before Covid is still slightly higher than numbers today, but this is based on data from two different systems and recording points. Over the last 2 years footfall numbers have increased and the average this year so far is 1.25million per month. Pre-covid and on the old system it was 1.37million per month on average.

- (f) There have been issues with the performance of bus services post-Covid and bus patronage has not recovered to pre-covid levels. As such people boarding and alighting in the town centre is less. This could be for numerous reasons, more people working from home, the performance issues of bus services and the parking offer could mean more people are using the car to visit the town.
- (g) In terms of occupied units in the town centre the monthly average occupancy levels in retail areas of town have seen occupancy increase in 3 areas but decrease in three areas. Hospitality has seen a slight decline in the number of Cafes, Pubs and nightclubs.

Location	Average 2021/22 Monthly Occupancy	Average 2022/23 Monthly Occupancy	Trend
Retail			
Duke Street (68 Units)	97%	100%	↑
High Row (22 Units)	88%	91%	↑
Post House Wynd (27 Units)	88%	91%	↑
Grange Road (28 units)	97%	94%	↓
Skinnergate (59 units)	87%	86%	↓
Cornmill (55 units)	87%	85%	↓
Hospitality			
Pubs/Night (39)	92%	90%	↓
Restaurants (28)	86%	86%	↔
Cafes (26)	86%	85%	↓

Financial Implications

17. Council funding has been released by drawing down funds from the TVCA Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF). The Rail Heritage Quarter has drawn down further funding of £496k and a further drawdown of £150k is being sought for the purchase of Loco No.1 replica. A drawdown of £216k is also being sought from the IGF for the Crown Street Library restoration and refurbishment. These projects contribute to the aim and the targets of the IGF Programme to:
- (a) Remediate/regenerate vacant and derelict land and property
 - (b) Revitalise town centres and urban core and stimulate investment
 - (c) Enhance culture and tourism physical infrastructure
18. The drawdown of these funds from the TVCA IGF programme displaces an aggregated total of £862k of council funding. Members will note the November 2022 Cabinet report released £475k to support a further 3 months parking offer. Correspondingly, we believe that with the approval and release of a further £387k, the funds released would be sufficient to cover the extension of the parking offer through until the end of June 2023. This assumption is based on the historical profiles of income through these traditionally lower parking income months.

19. The extension of the offer will reduce the available Indigenous Growth Fund by the amount indicated in the report.

Legal Implications

20. Members must take into consideration that the parking offers for Council operated car parks are likely to have adverse impacts on providers of private car parks. The proposals set out in the report have been reviewed from the perspective of subsidy control and anti-competition law and it is considered that the proposals are lawful.

COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.

Reforms to Adult Social Care – Update

2. The Assistant Director, Adult Services, reported that the Charging Reforms had been paused until 2025, and that the Inspection Framework would be implemented April 2023. Members requested that a written update, rather than a verbal update, be provided to future meetings, and we are looking forward to an update on the Fair Cost of Care at our next meeting.

Workforce Recruitment and Development

3. In light of the national issues surrounding recruitment in the Adults Services Sector, we received a presentation on workforce recruitment and retention in Adult Services from the Assistant Director, Adult Services, the Darlington Academy Coordinator and the Workforce Development Manager.
4. We heard about the wider issues in terms of recruitment and retention, our use of the workforce recruitment and retention fund, and received information in relation to recruitment and retention in Darlington, with greater detail provided around the Council's retention schemes and programmes. We also received information regarding targeted recruitment campaigns and the different approaches adopted, and then how that fed into the bigger picture.
5. Members entered into discussion on the success of the differing strands of the recruitment campaign, recruitment of both young people and older people into the sector, the use of relief contracts as opposed to zero hour contracts, the benefits and disadvantages of zero hour contracts within the sector, the need for workers to access services to enable them to continue to work within the sector, and the reduction in staff turnover in Darlington.

Care Homes in Special Measures (Executive Safeguarding Arrangements) Task and Finish Review – Final Report

6. A report was submitted to provide an update on the work of the Care Homes in Special Measures (Executive Safeguarding Arrangements) Task and Finish Group.
7. At a meeting of this Committee on 21 June 2022, Members requested that a piece of work be undertaken to allow Members to receive information on those Care Homes in 'Special Measures', and to understand the reasons as to why those Care Homes had entered Executive Safeguarding Arrangements. An invitation was also extended to the Members of

the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee to be involved in the work. The Task and Finish Group met on 8 November 2022.

8. A note of the meeting, together with the recommendations of the Group, were appended to my report, and the recommendations were endorsed and agreed by the Committee.

Work Programme

9. 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.

Medium Term Financial Plan

10. At a Special Meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023, we gave consideration to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, which had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2022, as a basis for consultation.
11. The report reflected on the briefing held on 14 December 2022, which had been offered to all Members, on the background and the overall proposals contained within the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27, and we examined those services and finances specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to enable a response to be formulated to Cabinet as part of the consultation exercise.
12. We also received an update on the Local Government financial settlement, which had been received on 19 and 20 December 2022, subsequent to the approval of the draft MTFP by Cabinet, and were advised on the impact this settlement had on the assumptions made within that approved draft MTFP.
13. Members of the Committee welcomed the additional funding for Social Care announced in the Local Government settlement, however noted that, as most of the expenditure covered statutory requirements, there was little scope for robust scrutiny. Discussion ensued on the Fair Funding Review and the concerns that existed around future funding, in particular the potential deficits in the latter two years of the draft MTFP and the assumptions in terms of the interest rate.
14. Members discussed more general themes, including the establishment of charitable foundations to assist local authorities in terms of delivering non-statutory services, the collection of donations to assist with costs, and whether these approaches had been considered by this Council.
15. Clarification was also sought in terms of the current budget position, and how this fed into the draft MTFP, and Members were reassured that the Quarter 3 position for this financial year would be reported to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February 2023. It was noted that at Quarter 2 there was an overall overspend due to the recent pay settlement, however it was highlighted that the Adult Social Care budget had an underspend.

16. We gave consideration to the increased ageing population and the work being undertaken to ensure that elderly residents were able to remain in their homes for longer, reducing the burden on the Care Sector, and the efficiencies that could be achieved from 'spend to save' schemes and the use of sustainable energies.
17. Members felt that it was important that Adult Social Care should not be seen as a drain on local authority resources, but as an investment, which generated wealth and jobs, and should be discussed in business terms. Clarification was sought in terms of the PFI Funding identified within the MTFP, and the period covered by the New Homes Bonus.

Councillor Bob Donoghue
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2021/22

2. Members considered the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2021/22 which reflected on the work of the Partnership over the period 2021/22, drawing upon a range of data and information, to outline the progress made and to illustrate the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements across Darlington.
3. During this reporting period the Covid-19 Pandemic had continued to pose a significant challenge throughout the year ensuring children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded.
4. Ann Baxter, Independent Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership attended the meeting to respond to our questions and comments on the Annual Report and in particular how the current scrutiny arrangements were working following the revised Partnership Governance arrangements and the exclusion of schools and external bodies from the Board.
5. She acknowledged some concern over the changes to the legislation regarding the exclusion of education but advised that during the pandemic arrangements had been strengthened with schools and there had been improved engagement with the education sectors, however felt that there had been some loss of voice from the wider partners and she also attended the Primary and Secondary Heads meeting to address any concerns
6. The Children's MASH Operational Group meets as a Multi Agency group which focusses on a number of key themes being seen through the Children's Front Door and we suggested that an elected member from this Scrutiny Committee also be invited to attend those multi-agency meetings.
7. We also sought reassurance that the voices of the Gypsy Roma Travelling (GRT) Community traveller families were being heard, especially in relation to education as 50 per cent of our Elective Home Educated (EHE) were from the GRT community and were advised that the EHE advisor works closely with the GRT Education Service of which this authority is one of only a few authorities that maintain such a service.

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS)

8. The Assistant Director of Children's Services provided an update on the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in Darlington carried out between 10 and 21 October 2022.

9. This was the first inspection of this kind since 2018 when services were found to 'Require Improvement'.
10. We were pleased to hear that the inspection led to an overall grading for the service of 'Good' including an 'Outstanding' rating for the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers.
11. Members agreed that it was an excellent report and acknowledged that the inspectors had recognised strengths and improvement across all areas within Children's Services and we acknowledge the hard work of all since the last rating in achieving the 'Good' rating overall.
12. Going forward timeliness of assessments and workforce stability and recruitment are the priorities and this Scrutiny will continue to hold the service to account and help drive improvement.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2022/23

13. Children's Services Quarter 2 (July to September 2022) performance information was presented to the December meeting which highlighted the following areas of good practice:
 - (a) 84.4 per cent of referrals were screened and completed within 1 day during Q2 and although below the target of 90 per cent, this was a continuing improvement when compared with previous quarters;
 - (b) 15.3 per cent of the children referred during Q2 had been re-referred to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral, which was below the threshold of 18 per cent and an improvement on the same period last year;
 - (c) 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had an allocated social worker;
 - (d) 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 98.9 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had their reviews completed within timescale;
 - (e) No child ceased to be subject to a CP plan during Q2 who had been subject to the plan for two or more years;
 - (f) no child open to CP had been on their plan for more than 18 months; and no child became subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within two years of the previous plan ending during Q2;
 - (g) 286 Children were in care at the end of September 2022, 13 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children;
 - (h) 24.2 per cent of the children ceasing to be in care did so due to being adopted, 42.3 per cent had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted to a relative and 12.1 per cent returned home to their parent;

- (i) 72.4 per cent of children due a review health assessment and 40.7 per cent of Children in Care that were due a dental check assessment by September 2022 had had one completed;
- (j) The percentage of children who had refused their medical checks had positively decreased throughout the year;
- (k) 19.6 per cent of our care leavers, aged 19-21 and 19.6 per cent of our care leavers, aged 22-25, years were not in employment, education, or training (NEET) which was positivity below target of 30 per cent;
- (l) 98.2 per cent of care leavers aged 19-21 and 96.1 per cent aged 22-25, were in suitable accommodation; and
- (m) 58.9 per cent of our care leavers, aged 19-21 and 68.6 per cent of our care leavers, aged 22-25 were in training or employment and 21.4 per cent of those aged 19-21 were engaging in education, 10.7 per cent in studies beyond A level with 11.8 per cent of those aged 22-25 years also engaging in education and 7.8 per cent were in studies beyond A level.

14. Areas highlighted for focus were in respect of:

- (a) 68.1 per cent of assessments had been completed within timescale in Q2, however there had been a reduction in the timeliness of the written aspect of the assessments;
- (b) 87.2 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences, during Q2 2022/23.
- (c) 62.2 per cent of children received a statutory CP visit within 10 working days during Q2 which was negatively below the internal target of 90 per cent;
- (d) 85.2 per cent of statutory CiC visits were completed within timescale during Q2 which was negatively below the internal target of 90 per cent;
- (e) 11.9 per cent of Children in Care had had three or more placements within the previous 12 months, which was negatively above our internal target (10 per cent);
- (f) 63.3 per cent of Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years, which was negatively below our internal target (68 per cent); and
- (g) 11.1 per cent of Children in Care had needed to be placed 20 or more miles away from home as of September 2022 which was negatively above the target of 10 per cent, but all placements had been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

15. We discussed our concerns around placement stability and the availability of long term placements and also the challenges anticipated as a consequence of the cost of living crisis and Christmas with the fear that more families will be in need of help in the new year.

Work Programme

16. 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.

Medium Term Financial Plan

17. At a Special Meeting held on 9 January 2023 Members considered the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, including setting a budget and Council Tax increase for 2023/24 and had the opportunity to ask any questions relating to the services and finances within remit of this Scrutiny Committee. Following consideration of the MTFP our comments were forwarded to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for its meeting on 19 January 2023.
18. We were provided with an update on the financial pressures on the public sector over the last couple of years as a result of the Covid pandemic and also a decade of significant financial challenge following the economic downturn and the reductions in public sector spending.
19. We noted the current economic climate also presented new and significant financial challenges to the Council's budgets ie. rising inflation and interest rates, energy costs, post Covid demand on social care and national living wage rises putting significant pressure on affordability and unless additional government funding was forthcoming the Council would need to undertake a fundamental review over the course of 2023 to decide how services would be delivered in the coming years.
20. When examining the Revenue Estimates for 2023/24 and the budget pressures and savings we noted in particular the increased demand on the Strengthening Families Team and the increased number of Children and Families requiring support and await the response to the review commissioned by Central Government in respect of the challenges facing Children's Social Care nationwide.
21. We expressed our concern for the long term financial implications on Children's Services and what we perceived as a lack of future investment for children and young people at a particularly challenging time for families and children; discussed budget costs in relation to Adoption Tees Valley, the Regional Adoption Agency and if there was equability across the authorities; and regarding the capital provision of £1.124 m for the replacement roof at Whinfield School questioned if the authority were considering other sources of funding and plans towards future discussions with schools on the implementation of the Education White Paper for full academisation of all schools.
22. We also examined the provision within the budget for discretionary services and discussed whether we felt that these services were being provided at the expense of other core services within Children's Services which are under continued pressure and will continue to do so with the cost of living, working wage and child poverty challenges ahead. We

agreed to forward to Economy and Resources Scrutiny our recommendation that Cabinet consider the impact on Children and Families of all future discretionary spending.

Councillor Paul Crudass
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

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COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 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.

Darlington Libraries

2. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the Library Manager updating Members on the progress of the renovation work to Crown Street Library.
3. We were provided with details of the work being undertaken on the roof and we welcomed drone footage and photos of this work. We also noted the internal work that had been undertaken to date which included restoration of plasterwork and redecoration, improved connectivity with access to Wi-Fi and improved lighting.
4. Members were provided with graphics for the renovated adult lending library, and reference library and noted the layout and facilities.
5. We discussed library usage and were assured that the engagement led approach along with the new facilities that would be available in the library, would help to increase library usage and we noted that a Library Plan outlining the aims of the library, was in development.

Camera Replacement Programme

6. Scrutiny received an update on the camera replacement programme agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 22 June 2022, noting that the tender process will commence in January 2023 and the duration of the programme is expected to be 3 to 6 months, with work due to be completed by the end of 2023.
7. Following concerns raised regarding disruption to the CCTV feed, Members were advised that any disruption to the CCTV feed would be minimised to ensure there is no significant disruption during the replacement programme

Rail Heritage Quarter

8. Scrutiny received a presentation from the Assistant Director Community Services updating Members on the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter.
9. We were informed of the timeline for the works, which are anticipated to be completed by Quarter 2/3 in 2024 and a number of graphics were provided along with details of the planned attractions.

10. We discussed in particular the possible risks to the delivery of the timetable and revenue costs for the site.

Management of Open Spaces

11. Scrutiny also welcomed a presentation from the Head of Environmental Services on the management of open spaces in Darlington.
12. We were provided with details of the types of open spaces in Darlington and the resources in place to manage these. We also noted the volunteer groups, which included 17 Friends Groups and 470 street champions and the support provided by the Council to the volunteer groups.
13. The presentation provided Members with details of the range of other agencies involved in managing open spaces in Darlington along with the Inspections and Health and Safety regime and the other undertakings by the Council including maintaining wildflower sites, maintenance of sports pitches and play areas.
14. Members queried the sufficiency of signage and lifesaving equipment, particularly in relation to frozen bodies of water and we were informed that an emergency meeting of the water safety group had taken place to identify requirements for additional measures and that increased signage and comms was planned.
15. We also discussed the adequacy of the resources in place to manage open spaces in the borough and the insurance arrangements for all volunteers involved in managing open spaces.

Performance Indicators - Quarter 2 2022/2023

16. We have received the information on the Quarter 2 performance against those key performance indicators for 2021/22 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee.
17. Members noted that of the 25 indicators which are reported six monthly at quarter 2, seventeen are showing performance better than the same period in the previous year; one indicator is showing performance the same; five indicators are showing performance not as good as the same period in the previous year; one indicator does not have comparative information and one indicator is unavailable.
18. We requested and have received performance information in respect of the library digital offer and Members agreed that the indicator REG – 803 Trading Standards : % of high risk inspections carried out, be reported to this scrutiny committee on an annual basis.

Public Waste Bins Task and Finish Review Final Report

19. As Chair of the Public Waste Bins Task and Finish Group, I presented the outcomes and findings of the Group, established to look at the current and future levels of service provided by the Council in relation to public waste bins and any particular issues which may be affecting the service.

20. Overall, Members of the Task and Finish Group gained a better understanding of the service provided by the Council in relation to public waste bins, acknowledging that resources are limited and that the circumstances which led to bins not being emptied in the summer period, have been addressed.
21. The Scrutiny Committee approved the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and look forward to receiving an update at a future meeting regarding the digitalisation of the service.

Work Programme 2022/23

22. 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.

Medium-Term Financial Plan

23. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet, via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, on the proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27.
24. We were provided with an update on the finance settlement which had been received subsequent to the draft MTFP and that the Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept levels remained as anticipated at 2.99 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, and there had been additional one off funding for Social Care which was positive but did not change the overall context of the MTFP. As part of the consultation process the Committee reviewed the MTFP, in particular the services and finances which are specifically in the remit of this committee. Officer answered questions on fees and charges, assumptions made with regards to interest rates and inflation and on service areas.
25. There were mixed views on the MTFP, the majority view was that this Scrutiny Committee is dismayed at the lack of consultation with residents on the MTFP and that it does not support the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99 per cent plus a 2 per cent Adult Social Care Precept in light of the cost living crisis and the impact of the proposed increases on residents and this Scrutiny Committee is concerned regarding the reliance on positive assumptions in the MTFP which may not come to fruition, and the potential increased risk in the future.
26. A minority view was also submitted as part of the consultation that this Scrutiny Committee supports the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27.

Stronger Communities Fund

27. The Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder provided Members with an update on the spend to date against the Stronger Communities Fund and we gave consideration to continuation of the scheme into the next financial year.
28. Members of this Scrutiny Committee support the continuation of the scheme in the 2023/24 financial year.

Councillor Steven Tait
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
26 January 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.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24-2026/27

2. At our Ordinary Meeting on 5 January 2023, we gave consideration to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, which had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2022 as a basis for consultation, and we examined those services and finances within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to enable a response to be formulated to Cabinet as part of the consultation exercise.
3. In introducing his report at this meeting, the Assistant Director - Resources provided an update on the Local Government financial settlement, which had been received on 19 December 2022, subsequent to the approval of the draft MTFP by Cabinet, and advised on the impact this settlement had on the assumptions made within that approved draft MTFP.
4. Members entered into discussion on the timing of the receipt of the Local Government financial settlement and the timescales involved in producing an updated MTFP, and the level of response to, and the wider public interest in, the consultation on the MTFP.
5. We sought clarification on the timescales involved in terms of potential future Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept increases, with concerns expressed that any future reduction in the cap would leave a shortfall in the latter years of the MTFP. Clarification was also sought on the timescales involved in the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) reset, and the small improvements in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). We heard that there were small increases in the income stream, and that there was a significant budget gap between expenditure and income which was being covered by the use of reserves to allow time for improved economic growth, although it was noted that protection was in place for ear-marked reserves.
6. The Committee examined the budget pressures and savings, noting some savings resulted from a reduced administrative burden, and the income from concessionary fares was scrutinised, with linkages to patronage explored. Members expressed disappointment that there was no dedicated funding for climate change initiatives, though it was acknowledged that there was funding in relation to specific schemes and projects.
7. At a subsequent Special Meeting of the Committee on 19 January 2023, we heard the views of the other four Scrutiny Committees, which enabled us to formulate an overall response from Scrutiny to Cabinet, as part of the consultation process.

Performance Indicators

8. We received a report providing detailed performance information against the key Performance Indicators for Quarter 2, which were within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee. Twenty-two indicators, aligned to key priorities, are reported to this Committee, eighteen on a six-monthly basis and four annually.
9. We entered into discussion on staff retention, specifically in relation to the Customer Service Centre, with the Committee hearing about the work undertaken to improve retention, and the reasons for high turnover. Discussion continued on the increase in voluntary leavers (FHR 019), however it was reported that this was anticipated during the post-Covid-19 pandemic recovery period.
10. Clarification was sought on the number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools) (FHR 001), and it was confirmed that the number of days had increased over the previous quarter, however it was suggested that the baseline figure was unrealistic as this figure was skewed due to the previous method of recording absence due to Covid-19.

Work Programme

11. 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
26 JANUARY 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.

Children and Young People's Services Darlington

2. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the General Manager – Durham and Tees Valley Community Children and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust on the Children and Young People's Services for Darlington, with details provided of the work being undertaken in the three key areas, patient experience, workforce and service delivery.
3. Members noted the findings from the recent CQC report published in September 2022 following the inspection in July 2022, the evidence of positive changes were outlined and that further improvements are still required.
4. The wait times to assessment and treatment for non-neuro referrals and wait time for specialist neuro assessment were outlined and we welcomed details of the next steps for the service.
5. We raised concerns regarding services for children with autism and the General Manager Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS informed Members of the range of services commissioned for children with autism.
6. Discussion ensued regarding plans for reducing wait times and following a question regarding lived experience, we were advised that a young person with lived experience has been employed to lead on co-creation with young people and works closely with the parent/carer forum in Darlington. We also noted the intention of the Trust to employ peer support workers.
7. We also discussed capacity and demand for services and the Keeping In Touch (KIT) process and we look forward to receiving further updates on autism-specific services for Darlington residents and the process for contacting residents on the waiting list/keeping in touch.

Community Transformation NHS England: Tees Valley

8. We also welcomed a presentation from the Service Manager, Adult Mental Health Darlington and Specialist Services, updating Members on the work being undertaken to review the mental health system as part of the Community Transformation NHS England: Tees Valley.

9. Scrutiny were reminded of the core aims of the community transformation and were provided with details of the principals and vision of the transformation which included local community support, community hub and treatment and intervention services, all of which would be supported by care navigators.
10. We were advised of the work being undertaken in Darlington, which was being led by the 700 Club, noting that a physical location for the community hub has been identified in Darlington, this will be a resilience centre staffed by trained third sector staff and is due to be finalised in the new year.
11. Details were also provided of the reconfigured teams in the Trust, including the remit of each team and we also noted the recognition received for the work to date. We noted the expected outputs through the model and Members welcomed in particular the holistic offer for patients, who will receive a package of care from TEWV and system partners.
12. We discussed the location of patient assessments and safeguarding arrangements, noting that an accessible clinic is operating from the Dolphin Centre to undertake new assessments and that in relation to decision making, governance arrangements are in place and a multi-disciplinary team established with oversight of decisions made for patients.
13. Members were informed that a directory of services available via the community hub would be made accessible and work is being undertaken to provide one stop shops in the wider community using established local hubs and groups.
14. We look forward to receiving an update on the community hub at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Housing Services Low Cost Home Ownership Policy

15. We received a report on the draft Housing Services Low Cost Home Ownership Policy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March 2023.
16. The policy outlines the range of home ownership options available for Council properties, covering Right to Buy, Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership options for residents who would like to own their own home but are unable to afford to purchase a property outright from the open market.
17. 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 Low Cost Home Ownership Policy to Cabinet for approval.

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

19. Members welcomed an update from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenues on the progress against the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, noting that of the 28 actions in the strategy, all had either been completed or remained ongoing due to continuing demands on services.

20. Reference was made to the new “Ending Rough Sleeping for Good” strategy that was published by the Government in September 2022. Scrutiny have agreed, in light of this strategy, the existing pressures on the Homeless and Housing Options services and as all actions in the Council’s strategy have successfully been completed or delivered on an ongoing basis, that the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy action plan for 2023-24 be reviewed and refreshed. We welcome an update at a future meeting of the Committee.
21. We also received an update on the homeless services provision during 2022. Members noted the continued significant increase in demand for Homeless and Housing Options services and the impact of the lifting of the ban on Section 21 (no fault) evictions in June 2021 on homeless presentations and requests for housing advice.
22. Members were pleased to note that that despite the significant challenges, everyone in need of emergency accommodation has been provided somewhere to stay, and most of the people placed in emergency accommodation have now been moved to more permanent housing.

Performance Indicators – Quarter 2 2022/2023

23. We received Quarter 2 performance data against key performance indicators for 2022/23.
24. Members were advised that data was available for nine of the twelve Housing and Culture indicators and that of the twenty-four Public Health indicators, eight had new data available at Quarter 2.
25. We noted that of the nine Housing and Culture indicators, four indicators were showing an improved performance compared to the same point in the previous year whilst five indicators showed a performance not as good as that recorded at the same time in the previous year, and of the eight Public Health indicators, two indicators were showing performance better than the previous year whilst six indicators were showing performance not as good as the previous year.

Work Programme

26. 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.

Medium-Term Financial Plan

27. As with all Scrutiny Committees, we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet, via the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, on the proposals in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27.
28. Members noted the report and as part of the consultation process we submitted a majority view that whilst additional funding from the Local Government finance settlement has improved the position of the MTFP for 2023/24, Members remain

concerned regarding the medium to long term and the potential requirement for a review of service provision.

29. A minority view was also submitted as part of the consultation, to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99 per cent plus a 2 per cent Adult Social Care Precept and the Schedule of Charges.

Housing Revenue Account – MTFP 2023-24 to 2026-27

30. The Assistant Director Housing and Revenue provided Members with an update on the key decisions within the HRA for 2023-24 which included a proposed revenue expenditure of £26.557M, a proposed Capital Programme of £24.585M and a proposed rent increase.
31. In relation to the proposed rent increase, Members noted that Councils had the discretion to inflate rents by CPI plus 1 per cent, which would mean a rent increase of 11.1 per cent for 2023-24. Taking into account the current economic pressures faced by tenants and balancing this with increased costs of maintaining and improving Council housing and the need to deliver the Councils ambitious capital and energy efficiency programmes, that an increase of 5 per cent was recommended which equated to an average £3.69 increase in weekly rents. We also noted Cabinet recommendation that service charges be increased by an appropriate inflationary amount.
32. We noted the consultation exercise that was undertaken with the Tenants Panel and that the Panel fully supported the proposed increase on the annual rent charge, were in support of the spending priorities and energy efficiency work to help reduce tenant's energy bills.
33. We discussed in particular the service charges and raised concern in relation to the increases. Members were advised that over 70 per cent of Council tenants had their rent and most service charges covered by Universal Credit or Housing Benefit payments, and that a mid-year review of the service charges for gas and electricity would be undertaken.
34. Overall Members of this Scrutiny Committee are in support of the average weekly rent increase of 5 per cent for 2023/24, increases to the garage rents and services charges, the budget, Housing Business Plan and capital programme.
35. We have requested that Members concerns regarding the increases in service charges and the impact on residents and concerns in relation to the Council's Housing Revenue Account subsequent to 2023-24 be noted.

Councillor Wendy Newall
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee