



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Agenda

10.00 am

Thursday, 11 April 2024

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington. DL1 5QT

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of this Scrutiny Committee: –
1 February 2024 Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee (Pages 3 - 6)
4. Darlington Towns Fund – Report of the Assistant Director – Economic Growth (Pages 7 - 10)
5. Council Plan – Report of the Chief Officers Executive (Pages 11 - 28)
6. Work Programme – Report of the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Pages 29 - 44)
7. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting
8. Questions



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 3 April 2024

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Baker, Coe, Dillon, Durham, Haszeldine, Henderson, Marshall, McGill, Ray and Mrs Scott

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ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 February 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Baker (Chair), Coe, Durham, Henderson, McGill, Ray and Mrs Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillors Dillon, Haszeldine and Marshall,

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Brian Robson (Head of Capital Projects), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer) and Andrew Perkin (Business Growth and Investment Manager)

ER83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Roz Henderson declared employment as Finance Manager for Groundwork North East.

ER84 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Submitted – The following Minutes of meetings of this Scrutiny Committee:

- (a) 4 January 2024 Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- (b) 18 January 2024 Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Minutes of the 4 January 2024 Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be approved as a correct record.
- (b) That the Minutes of the 18 January 2024 Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be approved as a correct record.

ER85 INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY FOR DARLINGTON

The Business Growth and Investment Manager provided members with a presentation to outline the intended approach to develop and build an evidence base in order to create a framework for future long-term sustainable inclusive economic growth that will complement the emerging economic ambitions and priorities of the new Council Plan

Members were informed that the Council's current strategy predates COVID and the cost-of-living crisis and the intention is to now establish a long-term sustainable plan for economic growth in Darlington. It was highlighted that the initial phases of this would require a review of current data followed by the gathering of fresh evidence including scoping work to accurately shape and inform the development of the strategy.

It was highlighted that Darlington has a large business base employing 58,000 people, a job density higher than the UK average with the highest business start-up rate in the Tees Valley however business death rates in Darlington are also the highest in the Tees Valley showing an acute difference to other authorities that the strategy intends to investigate.

Population information for Darlington was provided which included 2,700 residents currently receiving Universal Credit with unemployment rates currently remaining static while jobs and opportunities are available however it was highlighted that certain areas / communities are not receiving benefit of these opportunities as much as others which the strategy aims to address.

Questions included as to how up to date the data is with reassurance given that all data used is most up-to-date available. The impact of recently improved school performance was also queried with clarification given that the effects of this will take time to be represented in data.

A member asked for a clear definition of “inclusive growth” with the response that this does not only translate to the creation of jobs and investment but the assurance that fair access to opportunities is present with the goal that rewards and benefits can be felt by all residents with sustainability being a major focus.

Discussion was held around blockers regarding inclusive growth with a member stressing the importance of identifying these, officers confirmed that next steps will involve establishing base-level feedback through interaction with individuals to create a picture of what can be achieved with available resources for the greatest benefit.

A member asked if it is possible to generate a breakdown of business deaths by sector which officers would need to generate outside of the meeting as well as a breakdown of residents with no relevant qualifications. It was asked if successful models used in other areas such as Preston are being used as precedents and it was confirmed that officers are taking note of proven success stories used in other localities in the production of the strategy.

RESOLVED – That members agreed to endorse the approach and goals outlined to create the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

ER86 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2 2023/24

The Assistant Director Resources presented the performance data around key performance indicators for 2023/24 quarter 2. Members were asked to note the current position regarding the 22 indicators presented.

Members asked questions regarding staff sickness levels and officers confirmed that sickness levels were lower during the COVID period and then increased following the pandemic but have fallen this year. The sickness management strategy is used by management with support from HR to reduce sickness levels alongside wellbeing initiatives for example flu vaccinations which have been positive amongst staff. A member also asked if data can be provided in future regarding numbers of full-time staff no longer working in the Town Centre.

Further questions included if the collection periods of Council Tax have an impact on cash flow and it was confirmed that collecting payments over 10 months enable the Council to collect money quicker and is a well-established method however all residents have the right to pay over 12 months should they wish.

A question was raised as to whether climate change data can be added to future indicators with officers stating that this would be possible if specific indicator topics are requested.

RESOLVED – Members noted the performance information provided and were assured that any relevant queries can be raised with appropriate officers.

ER87 PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING QUARTER 3

The Assistant Director Transport and Capital Projects presented a summary of the latest capital resource and commitment position as well as an update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 February 2024. We were informed that there are currently 41 live projects with 6 projects experiencing delays for which reason were provided.

Members raised questions which included any current issues regarding Skinnergate projects with officers providing assurance that all required documentation has now been submitted. A member also asked for clarification whether the Railway Heritage Quarter is causing any variation on presented expenditure with officers confirming that this has no impact.

Discussion was held regarding the work being undertaken relating to the OneGym access road and car park with confirmation that work started 8 January 2024 and is predicted to be completed in June 2024.

RESOLVED – Members noted the current position of capital projects and projected capital expenditure and resources and endorsed onward submission to 6 February 2024 Cabinet.

ER88 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24 - QUARTER 3

The Assistant Director Resources presented a forecast of the 2023/24 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 February 2024. Projected under / overspends were reported for individual service groups with the latest projections showing an overall decline of £0.738m on the 2023-27 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), however this is an improvement of £0.381m on the Quarter 2 projection.

It was highlighted that the most prominent variance stems from the significant demand in Children's Services, with a 33% increase in children-in-care compared to pre-pandemic levels, it was stressed that this is a national issue. However, we were informed that Darlington's overspend in Children's Services has been offset by an underspend in Adults Services.

Members asked questions which included if lobbying central government is a possibility to acquire more funding with officers confirming that discussions have taken place with the local M.P. who is taking up this issue. The question was also asked as to the average housing maintenance cost of each property. A further question was presented with regards to fly-

tipping and if collection costs are too high with officers confirming that they are aware of this issue and are taking steps to remedy this.

RESOLVED – Members noted the forecast revenue outturn 2023/24 and endorsed onward submission to 6 February 2024 Cabinet.

ER89 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest being included in the previously approved work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be considered, and Members requested updates on the Towns Fund and current town centre footfall and its cause / impacts for the next meeting of this committee 11 April 2024.

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 APRIL 2024**

DARLINGTON TOWNS FUND

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on progress and the current position with regard to the Towns Fund programme within Darlington.

Summary

2. Information is provided on Towns Fund projects delivered and acquisitions made.
3. The Project Adjustment Request to government is referenced, which ensures a reduction in risk of delivery.
4. Progress on projects is provided.
5. Preliminary information relating to the Long Term Plan For Towns funding is provided.

Recommendation

6. Members are asked to note the update information provided in relation to the Towns Fund.

**Ian Williams
Chief Executive**

Background Papers

None

Chris Mains, Towns Fund Programme Manager

S17 Crime and Disorder	No impact from the report
Health and Wellbeing	No impact from the report
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No impact from the report
Diversity	No impact from the report
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	No impact from the report
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.

Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Council Plan	This report directly supports the delivery of the Council Plan to support the economic development of the Borough.
Efficiency	No impact from the report
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No impact from the report

MAIN REPORT

7. Submission of our Town Investment Plan to Government in July 2020, secured a £22.3M Town Deal allocation in October 2020, which together with £1M Forward Funding has provided a total of £23.3M capital and revenue Towns Fund for Darlington. This focused on three key areas: Victoria Road and Northgate gateways and the Town Centre.
8. To date, the Council has received £18,851,251 capital funding from the Government to fund projects to revitalise and improve the town, alongside £438,965 revenue funding to enable programme development. The remaining funding will be provided within 2024/25.
9. The funding has delivered notable successes to date, including:-
 - (a) T-Levels facility - A new extension at Darlington College (£2.65M), delivered on budget and to time, completing in spring 2023. Now called the `Ingenium Centre` the facility is operational and providing new workshops and classrooms for the students.
 - (b) Skinnergate and The Yards – a scheme providing public realm and property frontage improvements along Skinnergate and the Yards, including Clarks, Buckton’s, Post House Wynd, and Mechanics.
 - (c) Contribution of £4.508M to the development of the Hopetown visitor attraction in Northgate, now under construction.
 - (d) The acquisition of properties and land to enable further intervention projects, including the former Northern Echo building; 156 Northgate; land at Garden Street and one of the properties which make up the historic Edward Pease House in Northgate.
10. Alongside the successes there are also projects which have proved to be a higher risk of delivery within the timescale of the Towns Fund. Most notably Edward Pease House and Linear Park (Northgate). A project adjustment request was submitted and agreed by government to address the risk and continue to maximise benefits from the Darlington Towns Fund.
11. The acquisition of the former Northern Echo building, provides the ideal location for the development of a new Adult Skills facility, funded within the Towns Fund.
12. The announcement of the development of the Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) Treasury relocation to the town has created a demand for high quality office facilities within the town centre. Following the successful Towns Fund project adjustment request

to government and allocation of funds from TVCA, funding is now available to refurbish the former Northern Echo Building and play a crucial role in meeting this demand by converting the upper floors into refurbished commercial space, which will complement and work alongside the Adult Skills facility.

13. Development work continues to create an improved cycle route from the Hopetown visitor centre to the town centre.
14. The brownfield site at Garden Street is being progressed as a community focused urban green space, with art provision.
15. The project at Edward Pease House, although reduced in scale, will be progressed within the property acquired by Darlington Borough Council and suggested options developed for the future of the whole building.
16. Number 156 Northgate has Planning permission in place for the development of this listed building for commercial use. Expressions of interest for the refurbishment work have been sought by Darlington Council.
17. The Town Board continues to review and manage the Towns Fund projects.
18. As part of the budget statement in March 2024 it was announced that Darlington would be included in the second tranche of places to benefit from funding from the Long-Term Plan for Towns. The fund will be aimed at developing interventions which are initiated through 'grass roots' involvement and focussed on projects driven by the community. In short:-
 - (a) The £20m allocation is to be spent over a 10-year period
 - (b) 25% revenue and 75% capital
 - (c) The fund will be allocated in the Built-Up Area of the town. This is an ONS definition.
 - (d) Allocation will be on a 'light touch' approach, but an investment plan will be required.
19. There are three main themes:-
 - (a) High Street and Town Centre
 - (b) Local connectivity
 - (c) Safety and security
20. Guidance from government indicates that the development of an Investment Strategy and allocation of funds would be through the Town Board. The Council has received further information and will be discussing how this funding can be dovetailed into the current governance arrangements of the Town Board.
21. A further report will be presented to members once the arrangements have been agreed.

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**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 APRIL 2024**

COUNCIL PLAN 2024-27 – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To introduce the draft Council Plan to the Committee and seek comments.

Summary

2. The Council Plan is an official document that outlines the long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities of the council to deliver over the next three years (2024-2027).
3. The plan gives strategic direction to the Council - and council services - defining priorities and shaping delivery. It gives clarity to residents, businesses and stakeholders on our values, what is important and what we will do.
4. The public consultation for the draft plan is now open and runs from 6 March to 25 April. The council is seeking views from residents, businesses, charities and key stakeholders. It is intended that the final plan goes to Cabinet and Council in May for approval and adoption.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that the Committee:-
 - (a) Review the plan and provide feedback views in the meeting
 - (b) Share the plan with your networks and encourage people to complete the survey.

Chief Officers Executive

Background Papers

Draft Council Plan and Survey available at: <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/councilplan>

Author: Lynne Davies, Extn: 5070

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Council Plan prioritises the safety of our residents and communities. The Communities Priority identifies key actions that we will deliver in partnership. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome.
Health and Wellbeing	The Council Plan prioritises the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities. The Health and Wellbeing Priority identifies many actions and good health will be an important outcome across the plan. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome improving health and reducing health inequalities.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The Council Plan prioritises addressing carbon impact and climate change. Addressing climate change is a core value and will be considered in everything the council does. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome.
Diversity	Addressing inequalities is a core value within the plan. A desktop Equality Impact Assessment has not identified any significant negative impacts on protected characteristics. The key deliverables referenced in the plan will be progressed through other strategies and plans and will involve separate equality impact assessments where appropriate.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The Council plan will be part of the policy framework and will be the primary strategy that strategies and plans demonstrate their contribution to the vision, ambition and priorities of the Council Plan
Key Decision	This is a key decision because following consultation, agreement to the recommendations will result in the Local Authority adopting a plan which will have an effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the area of the local authority.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision as it will require adoption by full Council after consultation.
Council Plan	This is the draft Council Plan for 2024-2027 for consultation.
Efficiency	The draft Council Plan prioritises efficient and effective resources as a key value and will be considered in all council business.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The Council remains committed to ensuring the best outcomes for Looked After Children, and contains a number of priorities and actions that will have a positive impact on this group.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Council Plan – Draft for Consultation

6. The draft Council Plan is a strategic document that gives direction to the Council and council services by defining priorities and shaping delivery; and gives clarity to residents, businesses and stakeholders on our values, what is important and what we will do.
7. The draft plan proposes a long term vision and ambitions for Darlington, and priorities for delivery over the life of the plan. Three core values feed into the plan: addressing inequalities, tackling climate change and efficient and effective use of resources. These are important principles we'll consider in everything we do.
8. The six priorities are given equal importance:
 - (a) Economy: A strong, sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.
 - (b) Homes: Affordable and secure homes that meet current and future resident need.
 - (c) Living well: A healthier and better quality of life for longer supporting those who need it.
 - (d) Children and young people: best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
 - (e) Communities: Healthier, safer and more engaged communities.
 - (f) Environment: A well connected, clean and sustainable borough.
9. Each priority has a number of key deliverables to be progressed over the life of the plan. The plan is ambitious and requires a Team Darlington approach by strengthening our relationships and building new partnerships with our stakeholders and communities.
10. The public consultation for the draft plan is now open and runs from 6 March to 25 April. The council is seeking views from residents, businesses, charities and key stakeholders.
11. A survey has been published alongside the plan allowing for feedback. It is on the consultations page of the Darlington Borough Council website alongside a Questions and Answers paper. Printed copies of the plan and survey are available in Darlington Library, Cockerton Library and the Dolphin Centre and upon request. The March edition of One Darlington which is distributed across the borough also contains an article on the Council Plan with information on how to complete the survey.
12. Awareness raising will primarily take place through social media, ward surgeries of local councillors, at relevant stakeholder meetings and other suitable opportunities that arise. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet in May. It is intended that the final plan goes to Cabinet and Council in May for approval and adoption.

Monitoring the Council Plan

13. Delivery is structured around the six priorities and three core values and will be progressed in a cross-council collaborative approach through key strategies and plans. The deliverables in the plan will be owned by key strategies and plans, in particular those highlighted in the council plan:

- (a) Climate change action plan
- (b) Inclusive economy strategy
- (c) Homes strategy
- (d) Health and wellbeing strategy, and
- (e) Children and young people’s plan.

14. Political accountability for the priorities and core values will be collaborative with a Cabinet member leading each priority and core value, working with relevant portfolio leads to deliver.

Priority / Core Value	Lead Cabinet member	Portfolio Holders
Economy	Cllr McEwan	Adults Children and Young People Economy Local Services Stronger Communities
Homes	Cllr Roche	Adults Children and Young People Health and Housing Stronger Communities
Living Well	Cllr Curry and Cllr Porter	Adults Health and Housing Resources
Children and Young People	Cllr Wallis	Children and Young People Economy Resources Stronger Communities
Communities	Cllr Riley	Adults Children and Young People Economy Local Services Stronger Communities
Environment	Cllr McCollom	Adults Economy Local Services
Addressing inequalities	Cllr Riley	All
Tackling climate change	Cllr McEwan	All
Efficient and effective resources	Cllr Porter	All

15. Progress will be reported in a six monthly report to Cabinet. The process for reporting is currently in development whilst the public consultation is ongoing. It is expected to:
 - (a) Structure around the 6 priorities and 3 core values
 - (b) Include a core set of longer term indicators with a wellbeing approach designed to reflect the plan's focus on thriving, fair and sustainable lives and places. Taking a life course approach with a focus on understanding inequalities and their causes
 - (c) Contain a clear narrative for the priorities, deliverables and core values that demonstrate progress.

16. This performance report will be supplemented annually by a refreshed Darlington profile report that analyses the most up to date published data and intelligence, including feedback from key surveys. We are in the process of evolving the Darlington profile report to align with the proposed new structure of the Council Plan. It will provide a more detailed analysis of key data to help us understand how lives are improving now and in the future. This will be prepared for use as a shared evidence base for the core strategies and plans that will deliver this council plan.

Outcome of the Consultation

17. There will be regular reporting to Chief Officers Executive and members of Cabinet on consultation feedback throughout the consultation period and a final report will be produced when the consultation closes. It is intended that that final plan will go to Cabinet and Council for approval and adoption in May 2024.

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Council Plan 2024-27

Draft For Consultation
6 March 2024



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Foreword

It is an honour to be Leader of Darlington Borough Council and to have the opportunity to share with you our draft Council Plan for 2024-2027. This plan sets out our long term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for the next few years. We want to hear your views.

Darlington is a great place to live and work. We are committed to making Darlington fairer and greener for everyone, building on opportunities and successes and facing up to the difficult challenges.

However, over the previous decade inequalities across our communities have worsened. The North East has seen the highest increase in child poverty over much of the previous decade. Child poverty restricts the chances for children to flourish. This is just a one example of inequalities that results in not everyone having the same life opportunities.

At the heart of the plan is our vision to be one of the best places in the UK to live, learn, work and invest - with a strong economy, healthy thriving communities and opportunities for all.

This means Darlington will have an inclusive and sustainable economy; people living well and staying healthy; thriving places and connected communities. This is a long term vision and the beginning of our journey that we want to make together.

Three core values feed into this plan:

- **Addressing inequalities** - Darlington is a wonderful place to live and work and we want these opportunities to be accessible to everyone. We will develop a long term focus on understanding and addressing the causes of inequality ensuring our communities are safe and can thrive.
- **Tackling climate change** - the changing climate will impact all our lives. We will play our part by making the council carbon neutral by 2040 and working with others to deliver a more resilient Darlington.
- **Efficient and effective resources** - we will remain focussed on the financial sustainability of the council, ensuring good governance and delivering the best services possible with the resources we have for our residents, communities, and business.

The Council faces unparalleled financial challenges. Reductions in public spending between 2010 and 2019 meant the Council's budget was reduced by £46m in real terms, a 36% reduction in budget. After covid, we have seen the cost of living increasing, income deprivation and poverty rising, high inflation and interest rates along with a significant increase in demand for adult and children's services consuming over two thirds of our budget.

You will see the plan sets out six priorities for the Council for the next three years: economy, homes, living well, children and young people, communities and the environment.

This is ambitious and requires collaborative effort to deliver with existing partnerships such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, Public Sector Executive Group and Voluntary and Community Sector Executive Steering Group to new partnerships focussed on the economy.

The health, wealth and wellbeing of our residents is really important to us. At the heart of our Council Plan is a determination to have a focus on addressing inequalities. This can only be achieved by the Council working in partnership with our communities.

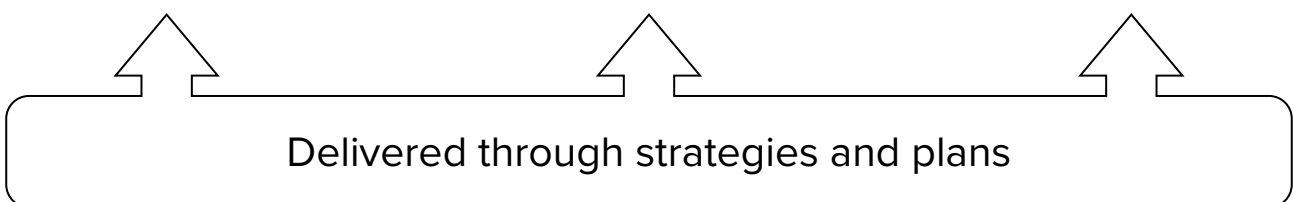
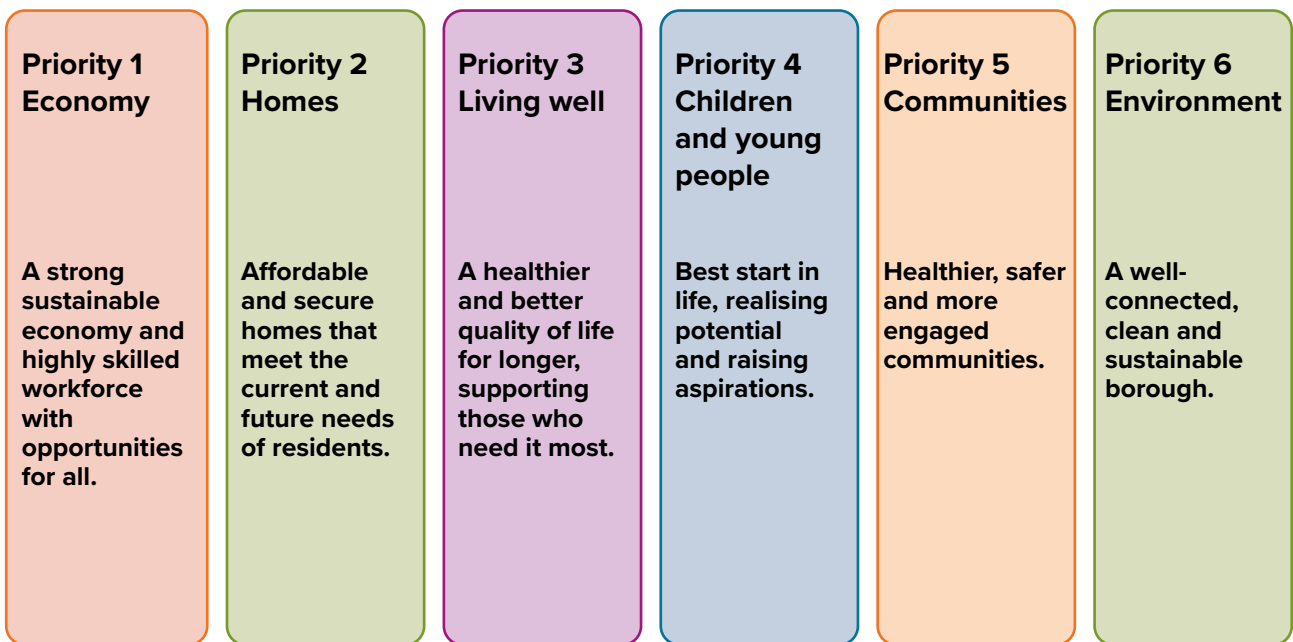
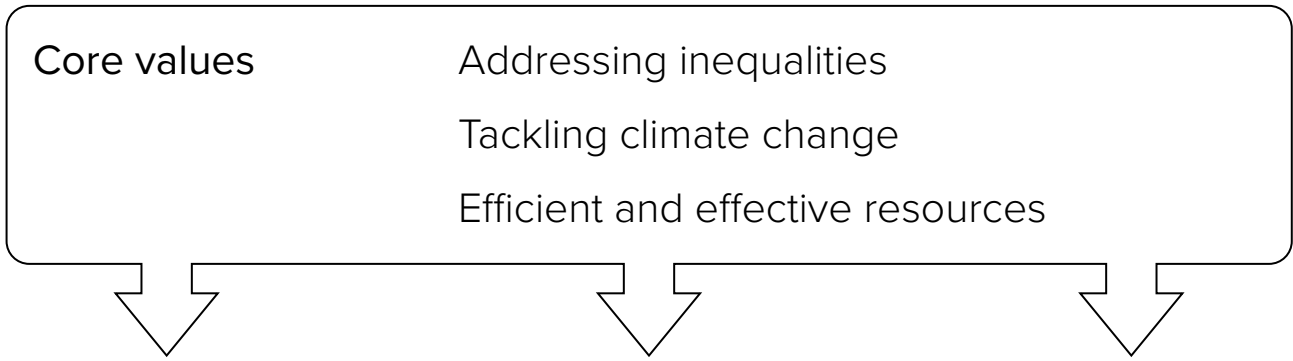
These are both exciting and challenging times for Darlington, and we want your views on our proposals in this plan to help shape our priorities and how we deliver.



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Our Plan For Darlington



What long term success looks like

An inclusive and sustainable economy will have:

- More people of all ages in good work
- Key sectors and sites innovating and growing by creating jobs, attracting more business and investment
- A healthy, productive and vibrant business community
- A business friendly public sector supporting businesses to locate and grow
- Increased skills levels in the resident labour market
- Vibrant town and neighbourhood centres providing services, retail and work for all generations
- A growing economy that supports our environment and heritage.

Living well and staying healthy will mean:

- Health outcomes are improved and inequalities reduced
- Children and young people have the best start in life
- People are supported to be independent
- Homes are affordable, healthy, secure and meet needs
- Households are more financially secure
- Residents live longer, healthier, more productive lives
- People are active and involved.

Thriving places and connected communities will have:

- Climate resilience where places are prepared for change and can adapt, with reduced CO₂ emissions
- Access to good services
- Happy, safe and secure communities with improved safety in public spaces
- Cultural, heritage and community assets
- Well-connected people and communities, with links to places within and outside the borough
- Digitally connected residents who are benefitting from opportunities offered online
- Attractive, relevant and welcoming places
- Sustainable and integrated transport across the borough and beyond.

Core values

We are committed to making Darlington a fairer and greener place for everyone. We are focussed on ensuring everyone has the opportunity for a good job, home and social connections. Our three core values are important principles we will consider in everything we do.

Addressing inequalities

Darlington is a wonderful place to live and work. We have a high quality of life and our economy is resilient and growing, but this is not felt by everybody. There are widening inequalities, and the gap between the people and places with the best and worst outcomes is unacceptably high. There are unacceptably high levels of child poverty and disadvantage, demonstrated by 25% of Darlington's children living in low income families, with the highest ward reaching nearly 47%. We want opportunities to be accessible to everyone. To achieve this will require a collaborative approach with our partners. We will:

- Develop a cross-council approach based on an in-depth understanding of inequalities and their causes, with a focus on local communities experiencing disadvantage
- Ensure all new strategies and plans consider inequalities, starting with the development of an inclusive growth strategy and a review of the health and wellbeing strategy
- Strengthen partnership working with key stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector with a long term focus on opportunity and addressing the causes of inequality; and short term focus on reducing the burden of the cost of living.

Tackling climate change

The climate is changing, which has an impact on our lives from the risk of flooding and more extreme weather to health impacts for our most vulnerable residents. We are also all facing increasing energy costs and potential threats to energy security. We cannot address these challenges alone, but we know we have an important role to play. One of the first things we did when we came to office was bring forward by 10 years the Council's commitment to being carbon neutral. We will:

- Deliver the climate change action plan to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040
- Involve all parts of the council in a cross-council approach to sustainability and climate change
- Work alongside our business community collaborating with groups such as the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership to transition to net zero
- Work with partners, government, public and private sectors and residents for a resilient Darlington so we are able to respond and adapt to change.

Efficient and effective resources

The council is facing unparalleled financial challenges with rising costs and a significant increase in demand for services. We have a responsibility to ensure residents get value for money for their council tax and that every pound is spent efficiently and effectively. We will remain focussed on the financial sustainability of the council, ensuring good governance and delivering the best services possible with the resources we have for our residents, communities, and businesses. Our people are our best asset and will lead a culture of collaboration, innovation and creativity, and compassion, whilst maintaining focus on continuous improvement. We will:

- Deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan and positive Value For Money outcome
- Deliver high quality governance and decision making
- Review and refresh the Asset Management Plan and Procurement Strategy
- Build on the Capital Project Management process by introducing an enhanced ICT system to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Review and deliver the workforce strategy
- Maximise income through new joint venture companies, increase levels of business rates by growing the local economy; and maximising grant opportunities
- Explore opportunities to exploit digital assets to create efficiencies and increase productivity, including online delivery
- Continue to build strong relationships with partners, residents and communities.

Key deliverables

Priority 1 - Economy

- Develop and deliver an inclusive economic growth strategy to create the conditions for businesses and the economy to thrive and provide good work opportunities for residents
- Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes
- Complete the refurbishment of the historic indoor market
- Accelerate bringing key sites to the market to attract private sector investment including Central Park, Ingenium Parc and Symmetry Park
- Deliver the Towns Fund projects, including the refurbishment of the Northern Echo building to secure new business occupiers
- Provide more education and skills opportunities for residents by delivering the Adult Skills Centre and collaborating with providers and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)
- Ensure that the borough is safe, clean and maintained to levels that support the economy and encourage inward investment
- Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

Priority 2 - Homes

- Develop and deliver a new homes strategy to deliver current and future housing needs including social and affordable homes across the borough, in accordance with the Local Plan
- Review and refresh the preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, working with partners to ensure the provision of the right support and services to help people avoid homelessness and support those who are
- Review our approach to empty homes across the town so more quality homes are available
- Support the delivery of more social houses and supported accommodation by building more council homes and working with other social landlords and charities
- Continue to improve the quality of housing through healthy home design principles, ensuring developers meet the new Building Regulations requirements to create greater energy efficiency in new homes. Continue investment in the Council's existing and new housing stock to ensure greater energy efficiency
- Introduce additional licencing for homes of multiple occupation, a voluntary landlords charter and work towards the introduction of selective licencing in areas with a high number of private rented sector homes
- Ensure effective use of the Disabled Facilities Grant to enable people to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

Priority 3 - Living well

- Health and Wellbeing Board to agree and deliver a new strategy to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities, and lead the creation of a health and wellbeing network
- Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities. Including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity
- Continue to develop joint working with the NHS and key partners to support people to lead healthier lives, stay in their homes for longer and reduce hospital stays
- Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex
- Shape a sustainable and accountable care market which delivers support focussed on promoting, regaining and maintaining people's independence and wellbeing
- Develop an Adult Social Care engagement strategy to ensure people requiring care and support, and their carers are involved in service development and commissioning activity
- Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

Priority 4 - Children and young people

- Refresh and deliver the Children and Young People's Plan working with services across the council, key stakeholders in Darlington, and children and young people
- Develop more meaningful services by ensuring children and young people are involved in service development and commissioning activity
- Work with the Department for Education and the successful academy trust sponsor to ensure the free school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is developed on schedule providing vital additional specialist capacity in Darlington
- Continue the successful management of the Safety Valve plan to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, eliminate the historic deficit on funding and deliver a financially sustainable system
- Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington
- Widen access for children in receipt of benefits related school meals to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme with a focus on health, wellbeing and raising aspirations
- Work in partnership with the early years sector and health services to promote school readiness and the delivery of the expansion of funded childcare entitlement
- Increase the number of local in-house placements for looked after children who are cared for by the council.

Priority 5 - Communities

- Support and strengthen partnership working with voluntary and community groups with a focus on addressing the causes of inequality, financial inclusion, social exclusion, and vulnerable families with children and young people
- Work with partners to reduce the burden of the cost of living with a focus on food and fuel insecurity
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to develop a strategy for informal volunteering which empowers people to volunteer and directs volunteering to areas of greatest need, including working with Darlington Cares to deliver an enhanced volunteering programme
- Support communities to remain safe and resilient by working with key agencies and communities to address anti social behaviour and crime issues in the community
- Support a strong Community Safety Partnership to ensure the issues affecting the safety and security of our communities are addressed collectively, including addressing hate crime
- Ensuring business activity is regulated, licensed and enforced effectively to protect the health and wellbeing of residents, visitors and businesses.

Priority 6 - Environment

- Celebrate the opening of Hopetown and deliver a successful 2025 festival programme that helps to promote Darlington as a destination for visitors and investment
- Work with local stakeholders and businesses to promote a diverse and accessible programme of events that maximises footfall in the town centre and has a positive impact on the local economy
- Deliver revised supplementary planning documents that guide better design in new developments and contribute to a sense of pride in place
- Enable improvements in transport systems by working in partnership with TVCA and public transport operators to deliver the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme, including the improvement of bus facilities and the reliability of services
- Introduce food waste collections and encourage residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average
- Work with statutory bodies to progress studies of flood risk in Darlington and enable funding to be sought to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Monitoring the plan

Progress in delivering the plan will be regularly reported to Cabinet. It is anticipated this will include a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators that demonstrate progress against the long-term ambitions, priorities and deliverables. Some long-term indicators, which we know will take time to move, are likely to be included.

The Council Plan performance report will be supplemented annually by the Darlington Profile report that analyses the most up to date published data and intelligence, and feedback from surveys.

Have your say

We want to support the Borough to be the best it can be and have set out our long term ambitions and short term actions for you to review and have your say. This consultation is the beginning of a conversation with you on the future of Darlington and our priorities.

We want to know what you think of the plan and what is most important to you.

Follow the link below or scan the QR code to complete the short survey:



<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/consultations/>

The survey is open from 6 March 2024 and closes on 25 April 2024.

Printed copies of the plan are available to view and comment on at Darlington Library, Cockerton Library and the Dolphin Centre. Please email **strategy@darlington.gov.uk** if you would like a copy of the draft Council Plan in an alternative format.



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 April 2024

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the next Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

Summary

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the next Municipal Year which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and recommendations previously agreed by this Scrutiny Committee.
3. Once the work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 3**)

Recommendation

4. Members are requested to consider and approve the attached draft work programme as the agreed work programme and consider any additional items which they might wish to include.

Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Background Papers

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

Mike Conway: Extension 6309

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and 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 the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.
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 format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.
6. The Council Plan sets the vision and strategic direction for the Council through to May 2023, with its overarching focus being 'Delivering Success for Darlington'.
7. In approving the Council Plan, Members have agreed to the vision for Darlington which is a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate, where the economy continues to grow, where people are happy and proud of the borough and where everyone has the opportunity to maximise their potential.
8. The vision for the Economy Portfolio is :-

'a borough where economic growth is high and the benefits are enjoyed by all residents'

by delivering

- More sustainable and well paid jobs
- More businesses
- More homes

9. The vision for the Resources Portfolio is :-

'a Council that is financially stable and delivering much needed services and support for the Borough'

Forward Plan and Additional Items

10. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims. A revised process for adding an item to a previously approved work programme, has been agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group.
11. Details of the items included on the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 2** for information.

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ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

	Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Scrutiny's Role
RESOURCES				
	Performance Management Framework	Work to be undertaken to look at relevant PI's. Informal meeting to be arranged	Relevant Assistant Directors	To understand/monitor and challenge the indicators
	Sickness Absence Year-end turn out	To be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee as a briefing note	Brett Nielsen	N/A
	Health and Safety Year-end turn out	To be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee as a briefing note	Brett Nielsen	N/A
	Medium-Term Financial Plan - Monitoring	Quarterly monitoring reports to be submitted to meetings of this Scrutiny Committee	Brett Nielsen	To contribute and challenge the Medium-Term Financial Plan and assist with the implementation and development of the required savings
	Capital Programme and project Position Statement	Quarterly monitoring reports to be submitted to meetings of this Scrutiny Committee Most recent – 1 February 2024	Anthony Hewitt	To look at the position

	Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Scrutiny's Role
	E&R Performance Indicators 2023/24	Most Recent – 1 February 2024	Brett Nielsen	
ECONOMY				
106	Economic Strategy	1 February 2024	Mark Ladyman Andrew Perkin	Development of Strategy
114	Housing Strategy	TBC	David Hand	Development of the Strategy and Actions
209	Climate Change	On-going	Cabinet Member	To update on the work of the Review Group
	Office Demand Study	TBC	Mark Ladyman	Update

Past Items

	Topic	Date	Lead Officer	Scrutiny's Role
	Investment Fund	31 August 2023	Brett Nielsen	To consider progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund.
	Customer Services and Digital Strategy	31 August 2023	Anthony Sandys	To brief Members on the work being undertaken
	Complaints, Compliments and Comments - Annual Report 2019/20	31 August 2023	Lee Downey	To look at the position
	Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	31 August 2023	Lee Downey	To consider the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and forward any view to Cabinet
	Council Tax Support Scheme	2 November 2023	Anthony Sandys	To provide comment to Cabinet on the proposed scheme

	Council Tax Changes to Empty Property Premiums 2024	2 November 2023	Anthony Sandys	To review and provide a response to Cabinet
	Economic Impact Study	2 November 2023	Mark Ladyman	Update
	Markets Update	2 November 2023	Mark Ladyman	To update Scrutiny
	Towns Fund	2 November 2023	Mark Ladyman	To update Scrutiny
	Medium-Term Financial Plan	4 January 2024 Special - 18 January 2024	Brett Nielsen	To provide a response to Cabinet on the proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan
	Discretionary Housing Payment Policy	4 January 2024	Anthony Sandys	To review and provide a response to Cabinet
	Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy	4 January 2024	Anthony Sandys	To review and provide a response to Cabinet

	Council Tax and Business Rates Debt Recovery Strategy	4 January 2024	Anthony Sandys	To review and provide a response to Cabinet
	Housing Services Climate Change Strategy	4 January 2023	Anthony Sandys	To update Scrutiny on current strategy

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**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

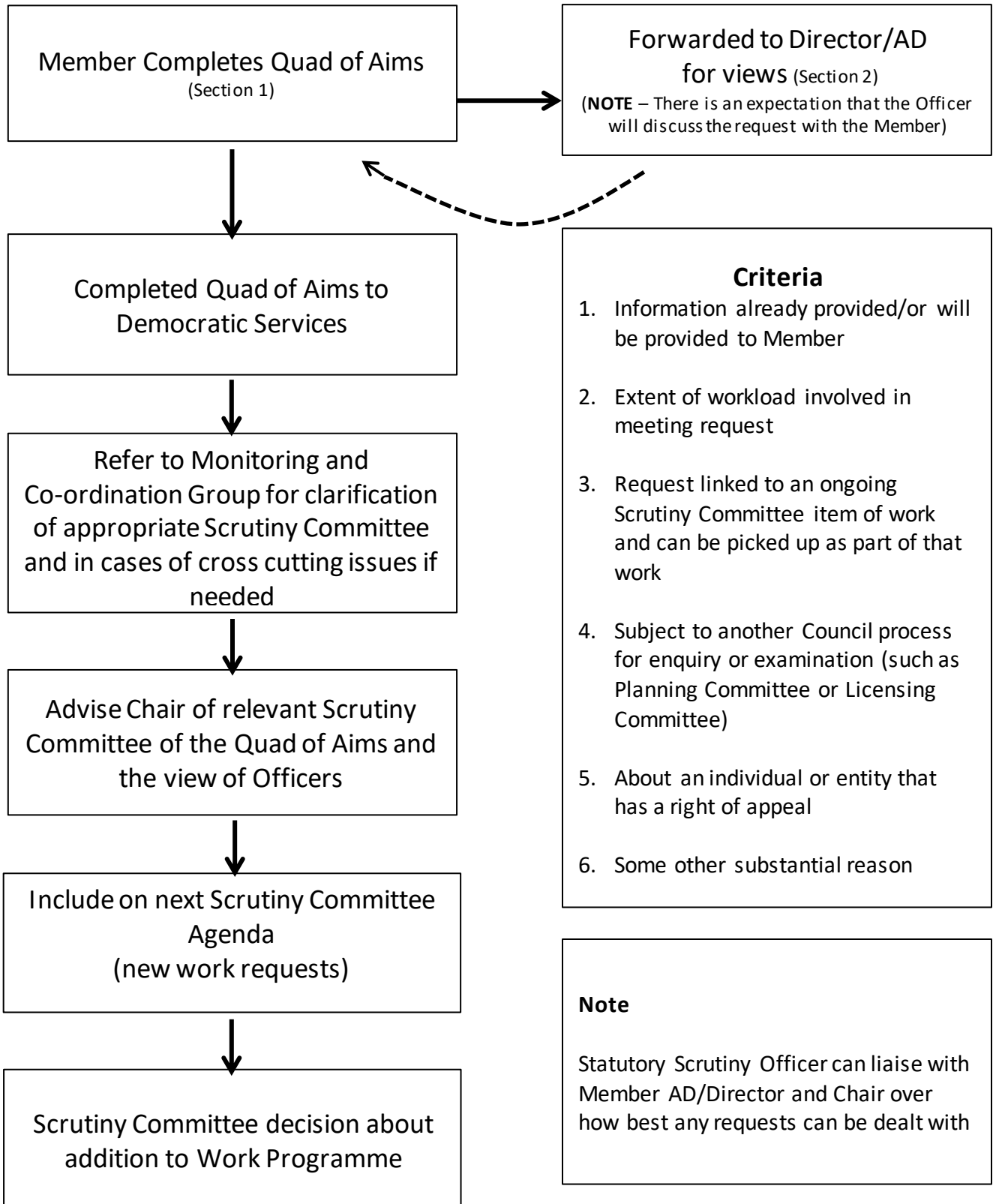
**FORWARD PLAN
FOR THE PERIOD: 3 JANUARY 2024 - 31 MAY 2024**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Council Plan Quarter Two	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Council Tax and Business Rates Recovery Strategy 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Delivery of New Homes at Blackwell - Joint Venture Proposal	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Discretionary Housing Payment Policy 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Housing Services Climate Change Strategy 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Land at Central Park – Sale to Network Rail	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Maintained Schools Capital Programme - Summer 2024 and High Needs Capital	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Northern Echo Redevelopment	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Revised Climate Change Strategy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2024/25	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Housing Revenue Account - Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/28	Council 15 Feb 2024
	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024/25 to 2027/28	Council 15 Feb 2024
	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Proposed Acquisition of Leasehold Interest, East Street, Darlington	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy	Council 15 Feb 2024
	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Schedule of Transactions - January 2024	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Schools Admissions 2025/26	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Council Plan	Council 21 Mar 2024
	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024
Land at Faverdale - Burtree Garden Village - Proposed	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

Infrastructure Development Agreement (IDA)	
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024
Local Transport Plan	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024
Offset Strategy	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 5 Mar 2024
Annual Procurement Plan	Cabinet 9 Apr 2024
Housing Services Asset Management Strategy	Cabinet 7 May 2024
Housing Services Vulnerability Policy	Cabinet 7 May 2024
Revised Climate Change Action Plan	Council Cabinet

PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

NOTE – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Signed Councillor

Date

SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS
(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)

	Criteria
1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes No If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services)	1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member
(b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so?	2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request 3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work
2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff?	4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)
3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that?	5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal
4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway?	6. Some other substantial reason
5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal?	
6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme?	

Signed **Position** **Date**

PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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