



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Cabinet Agenda

5.00 pm

Tuesday, 7 January 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

**Members and Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.**

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting.
2. Declarations of Interest.
3. To hear relevant representation (from Members and the General Public) on items on this Cabinet agenda.
4. Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23 –  
Report of the Executive Director – Resources and Governance.  
(Pages 5 - 64)
5. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 3 December 2024 (Pages 65 - 72)
6. Matters Referred to Cabinet –  
There are no matters referred back for reconsideration to this meeting
7. Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committee –  
There are no issues referred back from the Scrutiny Committees to this Meeting, other than where they have been specifically consulted on an issue and their comments are included in the contents of the relevant report on this agenda.
8. Key Decision - Environment Act 2021 - Household Waste Management Arrangements –  
Report of the Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services.  
(Pages 73 - 100)

9. Council Plan 2024/27 Performance Reporting Update – Report of the Chief Officers Executive.  
(Pages 101 - 168)
10. Climate Change Progress – Report of the Chief Executive.  
(Pages 169 - 174)
11. Maintained Schools Capital Programme Summer 2025 – Report of the Executive Director of People.  
(Pages 175 - 178)
12. Release of Capital for Children’s Play Area - West Park – Report of the Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services.  
(Pages 179 - 184)
13. Council Tax Calculation of Tax Base 2025/26 – Report of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance.  
(Pages 185 - 192)
14. Schedule of Transactions – Report of the Chief Executive.  
(Pages 193 - 196)
15. Membership Changes - To consider any Membership Changes to Other Bodies to which Cabinet appoints.
16. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting.
17. Questions.

### EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

18. To consider the exclusion of the Public and Press :- –  
**RESOLVED** - That, pursuant to Sections 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the ensuing items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in exclusion paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### PART III NOT FOR PUBLICATION



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

**Friday 27 December 2024**

**Town Hall  
Darlington.**

**Membership**

Councillors Curry, Garner, Harker, McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Roche and Wallis

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Lynne Wood, Elections Manager, 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 (e-mail [Lynne.Wood@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Lynne.Wood@darlington.gov.uk) or telephone 01325 405803).

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## **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Elizabeth Davison, Executive Director – Resources and Governance**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To present a report by the Council's external auditors, Ernst and Young LLP (EY), on the audit for the year ended 31 March 2023.

#### **Summary**

2. In accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2023, all Local Authorities were required to produce the draft annual Statement of Accounts by 31 May 2023 and an audited set published by 30 September 2023.
3. Due to national issues which led to a delay in finalising the 2021/22 accounts and the subsequent delay in commencing the 2022/23 accounts our external auditors EY (Ernst & Young) were not in a position to deliver the audit by the statutory deadline.
4. This was not an isolated situation. The backlog in the publication of audited accounts has reached an unacceptable level with the national number of outstanding opinions as at 30 September 2023 standing at 918.
5. This backlog undermines accountability in the local government sector and reduces information available to the users of the accounts. In a bid to provide a solution the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 provide for statutory 'backstop' dates to help clear the backlog of audits and rebuild assurance.
6. The first statutory 'backstop' date is 13 December 2024 and applies to all outstanding audits up to and including the 2022/23 accounts.
7. Following the completion of the 2021/22 accounts in April 2024, the Council offered their full support and additional resources in order to try and fully complete the 2022/23 audit before the backstop date; however, EY have not had the capacity or the resources available in order for them to schedule the 2022/23 audit.
8. EY have therefore not been able to complete a full audit; this has led to EY issuing a Disclaimer of opinion for the 2022/23 accounts.

9. A Disclaimer of opinion means that EY have not been able to gain sufficient audit evidence by the backstop date to provide an opinion for the reasons outlined above.
10. EY's report is attached at **Appendix 1** and will be presented by a representative from EY.

### **Recommendation**

11. It is recommended that the Auditor's Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance for the Council's 2022/23 financial statements be noted.

### **Reason**

12. The recommendation is supported to enable Cabinet to receive the results of external audit work carried out.

**Elizabeth Davison**  
**Executive Director - Resources and Governance**

### **Background Papers**

- (i) Audit Committee Report 25 November 2024
- (ii) Auditor's Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance

Judith Murray : Extension 5204

Council Plan	The Council's financial statements contribute to all priorities outlined within the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	This report presents the auditors opinion of the Council's financial statements for 2022/23. There is therefore no impact as a result of this report.
Tackling Climate Change	This report presents the auditors opinion of the Council's financial statements for 2022/23. There is therefore no impact as a result of this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report includes the auditors findings on our arrangements to secure Value For Money.
Health and Wellbeing	This report presents the auditors opinion of the Council's financial statements for 2022/23. There is therefore no impact as a result of this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	No specific impact on an individual area as a result of this report.
Groups Affected	No specific impact on an individual area as a result of this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

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# Darlington Borough Council Completion Report for Those Charged with Governance

Year ended 31 March 2023

Report issued – 25 November 2024

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Audit Committee  
Darlington Borough  
Council  
Town Hall  
Darlington  
DL1 5QT

25 November 2024

Dear Audit Committee

#### Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance

Attached is our Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance. The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee of Darlington Borough Council (the Council) with a detailed complete report covering our approach and outcomes of the 2022/23 audit.

Given that Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI) imposes a backstop date of 13 December 2024 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

This decision is in line with ISA 200: Failure to Achieve an Objective 24.

If an objective in a relevant ISA (UK) cannot be achieved, the auditor shall evaluate whether this prevents the auditor from achieving the overall objectives of the auditor and thereby requires the auditor, in accordance with the ISAs (UK), to modify the auditor's opinion or withdraw from the engagement (where withdrawal is possible under applicable law or regulation). Failure to achieve an objective represents a significant matter requiring documentation in accordance with ISA (UK) 230 (Revised June 2016).4 (Ref: Para. A77&A78)

Taking the above into account, for the years ended 31 March 2023 we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.

In completing our work for this audit year we have taken into account Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024", Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance. We have also taken into account the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice (including recent 2024 updates), the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. Against this backdrop, we have also considered the Committee's service expectations.

The Audit Committee, as the Council's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Council's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit.

We consider and report on the adequacy of the Council's external financial reporting arrangements and the effectiveness of the Audit Committee in fulfilling its role in those arrangements as part of our assessment of Value for Money arrangements, and consider the use of other statutory reporting powers to draw attention to weaknesses in those arrangements where we consider it necessary to do so.

We draw the Audit Committee members and officers attention to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements (see Appendix E).

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit Committee, and management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

Yours faithfully

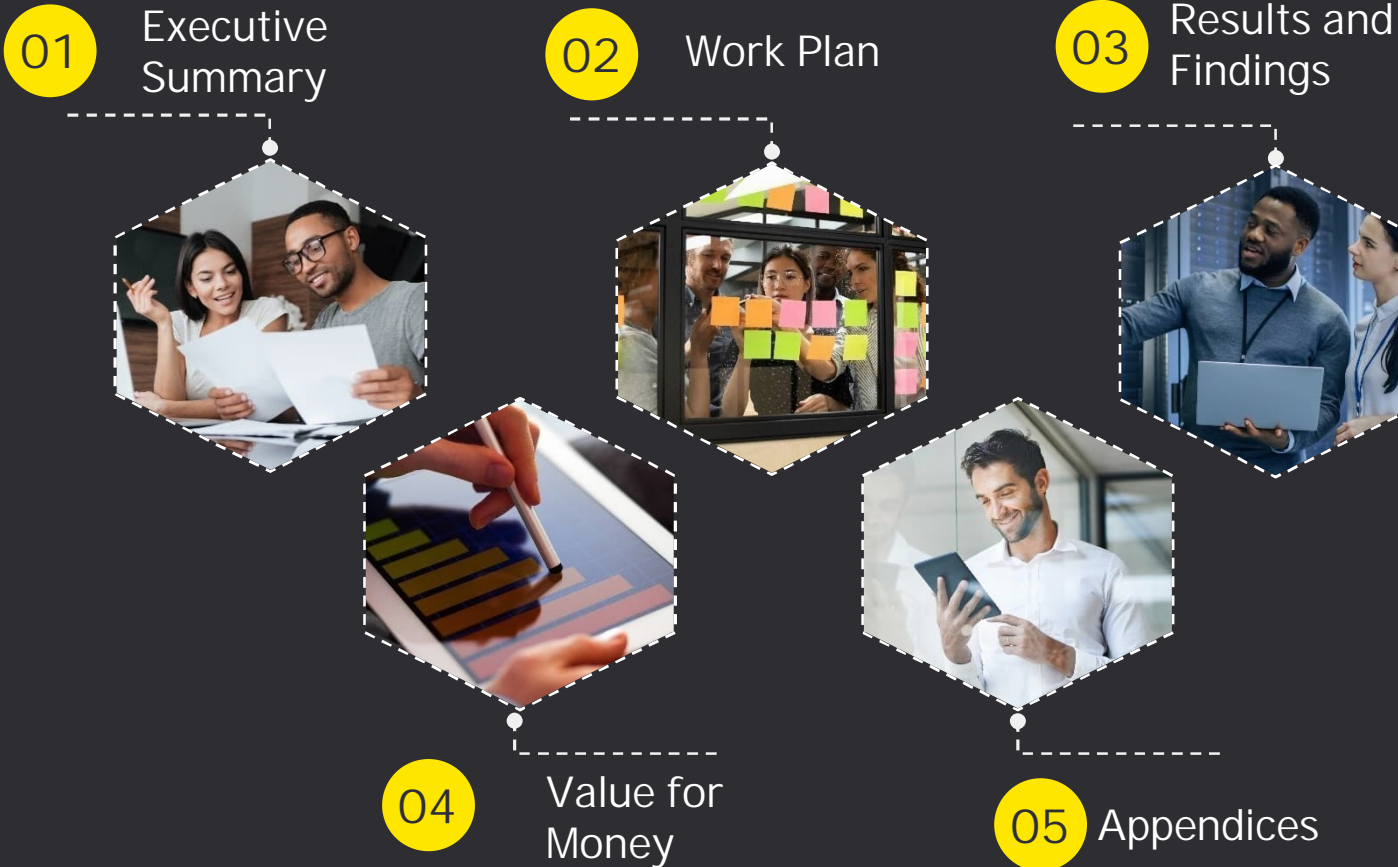
Caroline Mulley

Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the “Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies”. It is available from the PSAA website. The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The “Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)” issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit Committee and management of Darlington Borough Council. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit Committee and management of Darlington Borough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit Committee and management of Darlington Borough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



# 01 Executive Summary

# Executive Summary – System wide and local context

Context for the audit – Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays

Timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. It supports good decision making by local bodies and ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. There is general agreement that the backlog in the publication of audited financial statements by local bodies has grown to an unacceptable level and there is a clear recognition that all stakeholders in the sector need to work together to address this. Reasons for the backlog across the system have been widely reported and include:

- Lack of capacity within the local authority financial accounting professions
- Increased complexity of reporting requirements within the sector
- Lack of capacity within audit firms with public sector experience
- Increased regulatory pressure on auditors, which in turn has increased the scope and extent of audit procedures performed

DLUHC has worked collaboratively with the FRC, as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop and implement measures to clear the backlog. Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI), together with the updated NAO Code of Audit Practice 2024 and the Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance, which have all been developed to ensure auditor compliance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), consist of three phases:

- ▶ Phase 1: Reset involving clearing the backlog of historic audit opinions up to and including financial year 2022/23 by 13 December 2024.
- ▶ Phase 2: Recovery from Phase 1 in a way that does not cause a recurrence of the backlog by using backstop dates to allow assurance to be rebuilt over multiple audit cycles.
- ▶ Phase 3: Reform involving addressing systemic challenges in the local audit system and embedding timely financial reporting and audit.

As a result of the system wide implementation of backstop dates we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit opinion on the Council's 2022/23 accounts. The proposed disclaimer of the Council's 2022/23 accounts impacts the audit procedures that we have planned and undertaken to gain assurance on the 2022/23 financial statements and the form of the audit report.

# Executive Summary – Local context

## Local Background and Context

The position at this Council has developed over the past few years resulting in unaudited financial statements for 31 March 2023.

The main reasons for the Council's financial statements not being audited and signed to date include:

- ▶ During the pandemic Council staff were required to prioritise the maintenance of key processes and service delivery and therefore had less capacity to respond to the audit requirements, remote working and illness in both the Council and EY audit teams results in slower progress with the audit.
- ▶ Following the pandemic the Council teams were working on current year priorities and the EY team were available at times when the finance team were dealing with current priorities e.g. budget preparation.
- ▶ There were a number of new technical issues and challenges to address during this period, including accounting for infrastructure assets and taking into account the updated pension fund valuations.
- ▶ As a result of the above, the 2021/22 audit was only concluded in April 2024.
- ▶ The Council has been in a position to present draft statements of account for audit within the regulatory timeframe in recent years.
- ▶ The post pandemic timelines resulted in audit teams trying to move delayed audits onto completion, which used a significant amount of our finite audit resource leading to a lack of capacity to move onto the 2022/23 audit year.
- ▶ As a result, with acknowledgement of the wider reset proposals to move to the most recent year of audit (which at that point in time was 2023/24), we concluded it was not practical to schedule the 2022/23 audit. Therefore, for the reasons listed above we did not have the audit resource necessary to perform the 2022/23 audit for the Council before the backstop date.

# Executive Summary – Report structure and work completed

## Report structure and work completed

This report covers the work we have completed to meet the requirements of the International Standards on Auditing (UK&I), (ISAs) and the Local Audit Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance (LARRIGs) along with the National Audit Office Value for Money Code (NAO VFM Code). It has been split into the following sections.

Section 1 – Executive Summary – this section setting out the national and local context and the structure of our report.

Section 2 – Work Plan – We have completed the following planning tasks:

- ▶ Required independence procedures.
- ▶ Set a level of materiality.
- ▶ Issued letters of inquiry to Management, Those Charged with Governance, the Head of Internal Audit and the Monitoring Officer.
- ▶ Updated our understanding of the business, including through review of responses to inquiry letters, minute review and in discussion in our internal planning meeting,
- ▶ Identified significant, inherent and other areas of higher risk or focus.
- ▶ Considered any other matters that may require reporting to regulators or which may result in a modification to the audit report e.g. non-compliance with laws and regulations, objections, significant weaknesses in arrangements for value for money, any matters that may result in the use of the auditor's powers.

Section 3 – Results and findings - Work completed to issue the disclaimer, findings and results:

- ▶ Review of the financial statements.
- ▶ Consideration of any matters that came to light during our planning and review procedures in relation to laws and regulations, fraud, related parties, litigation and claims, significant changes to contracts and systems, service organisations, which we report as appropriate.
- ▶ Reporting on any other matters that may require the use of the auditor's powers, formal reporting or a modification to the auditor's report e.g. non-compliance with laws and regulations, objections, significant weaknesses in arrangements for value for money, any matters that may result in the use of the auditor's powers.

Section 4 – Value for money reporting

- ▶ The value for money report covering the year to 31 March 2023.

Section 5 - Appendices





BOARDROOM



# 02 Work Plan

# Work Plan – Audit Scope

## Audit scope

This Completion report covers the work that we performed in relation to:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2023 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ Our commentary on your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources for the relevant period. We include further details on VFM in Section 4.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- ▶ Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- ▶ Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- ▶ The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

Given that Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI) imposes a backstop date of 13 December 2024 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

This decision is in line with ISA 200: Failure to Achieve an Objective 24.

If an objective in a relevant ISA (UK) cannot be achieved, the auditor shall evaluate whether this prevents the auditor from achieving the overall objectives of the auditor and thereby requires the auditor, in accordance with the ISAs (UK), to modify the auditor's opinion or withdraw from the engagement (where withdrawal is possible under applicable law or regulation). Failure to achieve an objective represents a significant matter requiring documentation in accordance with ISA (UK) 230 (Revised June 2016).4 (Ref: Para. A77&A78)

Taking the above into account, for the years ended 31 March 2023 we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.

# Work Plan - Materiality

## Materiality

### Planning materiality

£5.7m

Materiality for y/e 31 March 2023 has been set at £5,653,580, which represents 2% of 2023 gross expenditure on provision of services.

### Performance materiality

£2.8m

Performance materiality for y/e 31 March 2023 has been set at £2,826,790, which represents 50% of planning materiality.

### Audit differences

£282k

We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the primary statements greater than £282,679 for y/e 31 March 2023. Other misstatements identified will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit Committee.

In order to ascertain the significance of issues in the draft financial statements we have set materiality based on the 2022/23 audit year. We have considered updating this materiality for any key changes or known factors from that year of which there are none. We determined that our audit procedures would be performed using a materiality of £5.7m. This level of materiality remains appropriate for the actual results for the financial year.

These materiality levels have been set based on the Darlington Borough Council financial statements - we have not considered group materiality. These levels are being used to assess our response to any issues identified in the Council's financial statements.

# Work Plan – Significant, inherent and other risk areas

The following ‘dashboard’ summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters identified as part of our planning work. It seeks to provide Those Charged with Governance with an overview of our initial risk identification for the year 2022/23

## Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk/area of focus	Applicable year	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition	31 March 2023	Fraud risk/ Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.
Misstatements due to fraud or error	31 March 2023	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	As identified in ISA 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that would otherwise appear to be operating effectively.  We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement. We perform mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.
Valuation of investment Property	31 March 2023	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The fair value of Investment Properties (IP) represent significant balances in the Council’s accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.
Valuation of land and building held at depreciated replacement cost and existing use value	31 March 2023	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The value of land and buildings held at depreciated replacement cost represents a significant balance in the Council’s financial statements and is subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgements in respect of key assumptions and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet. We recognise that there are fewer assumptions used in the valuation of assets held at depreciated replacement cost, rather than open market value, and have revisited our risk assessment for these assets.

# Work Plan – Significant, inherent and other risk areas

The following ‘dashboard’ summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters identified as part of our planning work. It seeks to provide Those Charged with Governance with an overview of our initial risk identification for the 2022/23.

## Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk/area of focus	Applicable year	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Pension liability valuation	31 March 2023	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>The pension liability is the most significant liability on the Council’s balance sheet and is calculated through use of a number of actuarial assumptions. A small movement in these assumptions can have a material impact on the balance sheet.</p> <p>Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>
Group accounts	31 March 2023	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>The Council is working in conjunction with Esh Homes Limited to develop six (four in the prior year) housing projects in the borough. The Council owns a 50% share in these projects, which are at various stages of completion. It is expected that these projects will deliver in excess of £3.6 million of pre-tax profits by 2026/27.</p> <p>The CIPFA Code requires the Council to consider both qualitative and quantitative factors of its joint arrangements to assess if group accounting is required to reflect the Council’s share of the joint ventures in the financial statements.</p>

# Work Plan - Independence

The FRC Ethical Standard 2019 and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

## Required communications

### Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence

### Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

# Work Plan - Independence

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

## Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Caroline Mulley, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

## Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your company. Examples include where we have an investment in your company; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees. At the time of writing the report, the final fee variation for the 21/22 audit has been recently agreed and invoiced in October and so is not considered to be long outstanding.

We are currently undertaking a non-audit service re assurance over housing benefit, we believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

The services relating to housing benefit, is not prohibited under the FRC's ES and the services have been approved in accordance with your policy on pre-approval.

In addition, when the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

At the time of writing, the current ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees is approximately 0.4:1. No additional safeguards are required.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4. There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report.

# Work Plan - Independence

## Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

## Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

## Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.

## EY Transparency Report 2024

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the period ended 28 June 2024 and can be found here: [EY UK 2024 Transparency Report | EY - UK](#)





## 03 Results and findings

# Results and findings

## Status of the audit

The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures were outstanding at the date of this report.

- ▶ Completion of subsequent events procedures;
- ▶ Receipt of a signed management representation letter

Given that the audit process is still ongoing, we will continue to consider existing and new information which could influence our final audit opinion.

## Value for Money

Our value for money (VfM) work is complete and reported in Section 4 of this report. We did not identify any risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements during our planning procedures. Having completed the planned VfM procedures we did not identify a significant weakness. See Section 4 of the report for further details.

## Audit differences

The Audit Committee should ensure that in approving the Statement of Accounts, that all sets cast correctly, all prior year comparatives agree to the final set of prior year Statement of Accounts. The Audit Committee should also seek explanations for any material variances between years to fully understand the Statement of Accounts and that unadjusted differences from the prior year audited accounts, have been reflected within the 2022/23 financial statements to the extent that they are applicable.

## Other Reporting Issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Council. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

The Comptroller and Auditor General has confirmed that he plans to issue his opinion and certificate on the 2022-23 Whole of Government Accounts on 22 November 2024. Given we expect to issue our 2022/23 audit report after that date but before the statutory backstop of 13 December 2024, we therefore expect to be able to certify completion of the audit as part of our final 2022/23 audit report.

We have not received any objections to the 2022/23 accounts from members of the public.



# Results and findings

## Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Council to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. “a report in the public interest”). We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

## Areas of audit focus

In our Work Plan (set out in Section 2 above) we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of Darlington Borough Council. We concluded we would disclaim the audit and therefore have not completed detailed audit testing on these areas but instead have reported any matters that came to light from the work we did complete. There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Audit Committee.

## Control observations

During the audit, we did not identify any significant deficiencies in internal control.

## Independence

Further to our review of independence in section 2 of this report we have not identified any issues to bring to your attention..



# Results and findings

## Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Council's financial reporting process. They include the following:

- ▶ Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- ▶ Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- ▶ Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- ▶ Written representations we have requested;
- ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report;
- ▶ Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;
- ▶ Findings and issues around the opening balance on initial audits (if applicable);
- ▶ Related parties;
- ▶ External confirmations;
- ▶ Going concern;
- ▶ Consideration of laws and regulations; and
- ▶ Group audits

We have no other matters to report.

# Results and findings

## Summary of unadjusted differences

In addition, we highlight the following misstatements identified in the audit of the 2021/22 financial statements which were not corrected by management.

Uncorrected misstatements 31 March 2022 (£'000)	Effect on 2021/22:		Net assets: (Decrease)/Increase				Reserves Debit/ (Credit)
	OCI Debit/ (Credit)	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Debit/(Credit)	Assets current Debit/ (Credit)	Assets non current Debit/ (Credit)	Liabilities current Debit/ (Credit)	Liabilities non-current Debit/ (Credit)	
<b>Audit differences (Council)</b>							
Known differences:							
• PFI Liability (This matter has been reported in prior years and the above reflects the current year unwind.)		(141)				(1,115)	1,256
• Overstatement of L&S Management Team Debtor – Note A			(359)				359
• Share of Joint Ventures' 2018/19 profits incorrectly recognised as a debtor in the single entity - Note A			(338)				338
• Overstatement of housing benefits debtor XX26 - difference between the sub-ledger and the amounts included in the financial statements		280	(280)				
• Discrepancy noted for the valuation of Rise Carr College between management's experts' valuation report and the value recognised in the fixed assets register	(300)			300			
• Evidence to support the Dolphin Centre Income was inaccessible due to these documents being placed into storage – Note B		285	(285)				
• Overstatement of Prepayments – Note C		254	(254)				
Judgemental differences:							
• Understatement of the valuation of Honeypot Lane due to inappropriate valuation technique and outdated valuation information (2009 when further developments had been made by 2021)	(1,657)			1,657			
Projected differences:							
• Short-Term Creditors pertaining to the 2022/23 financial year that have been incorrectly assumed as income in advance in 2021/22. The contra entry was a debit to debtors.			(1,330)		1,330		
• Cash refunds to debtors were credited to creditors instead of reducing the debtors.			(1,712)		1,712		
Income effect of uncorrected misstatements (before tax)	-	-					
<b>Total of 2021/22 uncorrected misstatements – Note C</b>	<b>(1,957)</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>(4,558)</b>	<b>1,957</b>	<b>3,042</b>	<b>(1,115)</b>	<b>1,953</b>

# Results and findings

## Summary of unadjusted differences cont'd

We have reported the prior year uncorrected misstatements on the previous page of this report. Please note that except for the misstatements discussed in Note A and B below, management have not corrected the remaining misstatements in the current year. Further, we have not audited the adjustments made and did not confirm if the errors existed in 2022/23. There are no amounts that we identified that are individually or in aggregate material to the presentation and disclosures of the consolidated financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Note A: Management have indicated that this error has been corrected in the 2022/23 financial statements. There was no impact on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Note B: The Council maintains the same retention policies for holding information and the amount in the misstatement was not significant. However, the Council committed to take appropriate steps in providing information which is held in storage where it will have a significant or material impact on the accounts.

Note C: This audit difference was below the Group's 2021/22 reportable threshold of £0.255m, which has resulted in a difference between the total impact of uncorrected misstatements on current assets and the CIES for the Group and Council. The impact of the total uncorrected misstatements on the Group current assets and CIES was -£4.304m and £0.424m.

# Results and findings - Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Disclaimer of opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of Darlington Borough Council ('the Council') and its subsidiaries (the 'Group') for the year ended 31 March 2023. The financial statements comprise the:

- ▶ Council and Group Movement in Reserves Statement,
- ▶ Council and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- ▶ Council and Group Balance Sheet,
- ▶ Council and Group Cash Flow Statement
- ▶ the related notes 1 to 40 to the Council financial statements and the Group Accounts Introduction, Joint Venture and Group Accounting policies including a summary of significant accounting policies
- ▶ Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement, and the related notes 1 to 7
- ▶ Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to 3.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022).

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Group and the Council. Because of the significance of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

### Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 requires the accountability statements for this financial year to be approved not later than 13 December 2024.

We completed the audit of the 2021/22 financial statements in April 2024 and issued our audit opinion on 12 April 2024.

The backstop date and the wider requirements of the local audit system reset, meant we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the 2022/23 financial statements. Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.

### Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Group and the Council.

### We report to you if:

- ▶ we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- ▶ we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)

# Results and findings - Audit Report (cont'd)

## Our opinion on the financial statements

- ▶ we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- ▶ we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- ▶ we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- ▶ we are not satisfied that the Group and the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

### Responsibility of the Group Director of Operations

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Group Director of Operations' Responsibilities set out on page 16, the Group Director of Operations is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Group and Council, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022), and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Group Director of Operations determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Group Director of Operations is responsible for assessing the Group and the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Group and the Council either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Group and the Council's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report.

However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

We are independent of the Group and the Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

### Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in January 2023, as to whether Darlington Borough Council had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether Darlington Borough Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.



# Results and findings - Audit Report (cont'd)

## Our opinion on the financial statements

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, Darlington Borough Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

### Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of Darlington Borough Council in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

### Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Darlington Borough Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Group and the Group's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Caroline Mulley (Key Audit Partner)  
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Date

The following footnote does not form part of our Auditor's Report.

Additional information related to the disclaimer of opinion is set out in our Completion Report for Those Charged with Governance dated 25 November 2024, available on the Authority's website, which includes further explanations about the implementation of the statutory instrument which led to the disclaimer of our opinion on the financial statements.



# 04 Value for Money

# VFM - Executive Summary

## Purpose

Auditors are required to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We do not issue a 'conclusion' or 'opinion', but where significant weaknesses are identified we will report by exception in the auditor's opinion on the financial statements. In addition, auditors provide an annual commentary on arrangements contained in our Interim VFM Report dated 12 July 2024. In doing so, we comply with the requirements of the 2020 Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

The purpose of this commentary is to explain the work we have undertaken during the period 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our findings for audit year 2022/23. The NAO has confirmed that where VFM reporting is outstanding for more than one year, the auditor can issue one report covering all years.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has worked collaboratively with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to address the delay in local audit. As part of the NAO consultation issued on 8 February 2024, there was a proposal to reduce the scope of the VFM reporting up to and including the 2022/23 financial year. However, the consultation stated that where auditors had begun or already undertaken work that no longer fell under the reduced scope, they may still report on it in accordance with Schedule 4. We continued to report VFM in line with our existing responsibilities as set out in the 2020 Code to ensure a smooth transition to the 2023/24 audit year when auditors are required to meet the full Code reporting responsibilities.

The report sets out the following areas which have been assessed up to the point of issuing this final report:

- Any identified risks of significant weakness, having regard to the three specified reporting criteria;
- An explanation of the planned responsive audit procedures to the significant risks identified;
- Findings to date from our planned procedures; and
- Summary of arrangements over the period covered by this report.

We have summarised our final view of the value for money arrangements as part of in this report.



# VFM - Executive Summary (continued)

## Risks of Significant Weakness

In undertaking our procedures to understand the body's arrangements against the specified reporting criteria, we identify whether there are risks of significant weakness which require us to complete additional risk-based procedures. AGN 03 sets out considerations for auditors in completing and documenting their work and includes consideration of:

- our cumulative audit knowledge and experience as your auditor;
- reports from internal audit which may provide an indication of arrangements that are not operating effectively;
- our review of Council committee reports;
- meetings with the Monitoring Officer, s151 Officer and Audit Committee;
- information from external sources; and
- evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Council management and the finance team.

We completed our risk assessment procedures and did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's VFM arrangements.

As a result, we have no matters to report by exception.

# VFM - Executive Summary (continued)

## Reporting

The following commentary summarises our understanding of the arrangements at the Council based on our evaluation of the evidence obtained in relation to the three reporting criteria (see table below) throughout 2022/23. We include within the VFM commentary below the associated recommendations we have agreed with the Council.

Interim VFM Report dated 12 July 2024 set out the detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria. These were reported in our 2021/22 Auditor's Annual Report and have been updated for 2022/23.

In accordance with the NAO's 2020 Code, we are required to report a commentary against the three specified reporting criteria. The table below sets out the three reporting criteria, whether we identified a risk of significant weakness as part of our planning procedures, and whether, at the time of this report, we have concluded that there is a significant weakness in the body's arrangements.

Reporting Criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified

# Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

No significant weakness identified

Finance staff work with Service managers to identify any potential pressures/savings over the next 4 years at budget setting time (also reviewing any pressures/savings previously identified), agreed by the relevant Assistant Director (AD)/Director and then these are collated by the Corporate Finance Manager and presented to the Chief Officers' Executive (COE) who review and challenge. Numerous iterations are brought back to COE until they are satisfied that the pressures/savings show a true representation of the potential pressures/savings for the foreseeable future. Costings and business plans are required to substantiate pressures/savings where necessary. To underpin all of the above, management performs budget management continuously to identify any pressures/savings at an early stage and these are presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis with appropriate action taken. The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget Monitoring (RBM) process also involves portfolio holders in discussions. Management also proactively monitors and amends the budget where considered necessary. Furthermore, the council is also in the process of undertaking a Minimum Service Level (MSL) exercise to look at the services we deliver which again will contribute towards managing financial pressures going forward.

Savings and pressures are identified in a holistic approach. Resources are identified and projected based on intelligence gathered and forecast numbers i.e. council tax is calculated on the existing taxbase with relevant projections of new housebuilding (from Planners) taken into account as well as any previously agreed council tax increases. The Council also commissions external consultants (Local Government (LG) Futures) to help predict any potential changes in resources going forward i.e. NNDR changes through a reset, changes to new homes bonus, etc. The MSL exercise and service reviews are being undertaken to review how services are delivered and look at reducing costs and challenging expenditure. The Council are also looking for innovative ways to provide services differently and looking at ways to increase/generate income from sources other than Council Tax, Business Rates, grant income and as well as from other alternative revenue sources.

The Council's revenue reserves at the end of 2022/23 as per draft financial statements, before any updates relating to adjustments made in the final 2021/22 accounts, were £23.905m, which is £0.508m higher than the 2023-2027 MTFP planned opening balance of £23.397m. This improvement in reserves included a brought forward amount of £0.384m from 2021/22 and a net underspend of £0.124m in overall outturn position during the year. This is an improved position from the 2021-25 MTFP projected year end position of £22.533m.

The 2024/25 MTFP projects a reserves balance of £16.384m at the end of 2023/24 after taking into account the risk reserve balance of £5.350m. As per 2023/24 draft financial statements, the general reserve balance amounted to £18.138m (including the Joint Ventures' reserves), which represents an improvement from the projected reserves balance by £1.754m. The Council anticipated that there will be ongoing pressures leading to a full review of the MTFP in 2024/25. While significant, it is due to costs associated with high demand for Children's Social Care, the rising cost of inflation and living wage increases, which is consistent with Councils across the country. Due to these added pressures, the MTFP projects a budget deficit of £6.283m at the end of the 2024/25 year. In light of the significant financial pressures the Council is facing, efficiency measures and savings to reduce expenditure in areas which do not have a direct impact on service provision has been undertaken and services are continually reviewed in this regard. The 2024/25 MTFP projects savings of £4.019m.

When establishing the Councils medium term financial plan the Council adopts a risk-based approach looking at relevant external factors such as changes in government policy, the state of the economy and the impact on demand for services.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services (continued)

No significant weakness identified

The Council maintains a corporate risk register. The risk register contains the risks which are influenced by external factors and arise from outside the Council and internal risks which can stem from normal operations, which may impact upon the achievement of the Council's priorities. The risk register is reviewed by Assistant Directors constantly for the position on the matrix and reported through Audit Committee on a half yearly basis. In order to arrive at an overall risk rating, a risk matrix is used based on the impact of the risk and the likelihood of it materialising. Once the risk rating is determined an action plan identifying further mitigating action is put in place.

The risks identified in the 2022/23 are in line with our expectations of both the Council's and the sector's risks, many of which relate to, the Covid-19 pandemic, and changes in service demand, as well as the rising cost of living expenses. The identification of such risks is clear, and the Council has sufficient arrangements in place to mitigate the impacts of these risks to ensure sustainable delivery of services. Furthermore, the Council have a revenue budget management process in place to support the sustainable delivery of services as well as capital expenditure monitoring reports with financial commitments and business case reviews which are taken to DLT/SLT. These support sustainable delivery in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities.

The MTFP is under the same directorship as the workforce, capital, investment and operational planning ensuring consistency across the board. The capital strategy incorporates the capital programme and was previously embedded with the investment strategy plan being part of the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS). The Capital Strategy is now separate and just goes to Council. From 2022/23 the Capital MTFP was merged into the main MTFP report. The TMS is presented to Audit Committee, Economy & Resources Scrutiny, Cabinet & Council to be scrutinised by Members. The main MTFP is presented to Cabinet and Council. The MTFP, Capital Strategy & TMS are interlinked, and all approved by Council at the same time. Finance & Legal sign off all reports after the Director/Assistant Director. Chief Officers Board (COB) which consists of all the assistant directors of the Council meet on a weekly basis and all above plans will be discussed as appropriate to ensure consistency and that they are all fit for purpose and agree with the Council's vision. The management team of the Council that consists of all the Directors also meets independently of COB to discuss the strategic direction of the Council. The Director of Operations has regular scheduled meetings with other Directors of Resources in the Tees Valley where common aims are discussed and agreed and to share best practice ensuring some form of consistency across the Tees Valley. The Assistant Director of Resources also meets with their Tees Valley counterparts which helps to enforce and support sharing best practice and consistency. There are also lots of meetings with other external counterparties across the services, e.g. Tees Valley Chief Accountants group and a regional HR group. All of these help to ensure financial plans are consistent with other plans where relevant.

The Council has a (costed) risk reserve that identifies potential changes in demand, again as the Council does continual budget management any changes or inherent risks are identified at an early stage so that appropriate action can be taken and to ensure that any risks identified can be built into future plans.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

No significant weakness identified

The Council has a comprehensive risk register that is facilitated by the Complaints and information Governance Manager who liaises with all service groups and produces a Corporate risk register as well as individual service group matrices - the results are presented to Audit Committee on a half yearly basis with the Risk Management Strategy going to Cabinet. The Council has an Internal Audit Section (a shared service with Stockton Borough Council) that has a comprehensive risk based audit approach to all of the services in Darlington, this includes an Audit dashboard where each AD and Director can access the audit results in their areas and reported to Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. The council also have policies to protect against fraud, e.g. whistleblowing and adopt the Academy 10 training units which all staff are required to undertake. Compliance with Academy 10 is also reported to AD's for action.

The Council starts its budget setting cycle early (July) with Finance officers liaising with service managers and reviewing the previous year's performance as well as the current MTFP budgets before identifying any potential future pressures/savings. A set of guidance notes is produced by corporate finance to ensure a consistent approach. Any changes to services are identified early so that COE can review them to ascertain their validity. Each service group works to an agreed resource allocation envelope that is part of the MTFP process that identifies resources to fund the MTFP. The draft MTFP for the next 4 years is presented to Cabinet in December to allow a consultation period with relevant stakeholders etc until it is brought back to Cabinet in February before going to full Council in February for approval and subsequent implementation. The continuous RBM that the Council carries out also contributes to the budget cycle as most pressures/savings or potential amendments to the MTFP will have been identified at an early stage. Cabinet are also kept in the informed of the contents of the MTFP before the formal report goes to Cabinet.

The Council does continuous budget management with the aid of an electronic budget management system (FMS) that automatically sends out budget management reports on spend/budget/commitments etc. every month on email to each budget holder. This is completed by the budget manager with support from the finance team. The completed sheets are loaded back into the FMS to allow relevant reports to be produced. The Council works on a risk basis with high risk areas receiving financial advice on a monthly basis and low risk areas every 3 months, with an Outturn report taken at end of year (June/July). The results of the budget management process are presented to COE/Chief Officer's Board (COB) and AD's have monthly briefings with the relevant portfolio holder to update them of the financial situation. These reports are also on the Agenda of Economy & Resources Scrutiny Committee every quarter who scrutinise the budget position and pass comments on to Cabinet. The reports then go to Cabinet every quarter to enable Members to analyse the ongoing financial situation. Budget managers have responsibility in their job descriptions and will discuss their budgets with their manager/AD.

Furthermore, the Audit Committee meet on a quarterly basis to review and challenge the Council's governance, audit and treasury management activities and policies. Audit committee will also review and challenge the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. The Council recognises that in order to fulfil its purpose and deliver the intended outcomes for its citizens and service users it needs to have in place comprehensive arrangements for corporate governance and accountability designed to ensure that it operates in an effective, efficient and ethical manner.

The Council has a wide range of HR policies covering expectations and requirements of staff. These are categorised into a number of themes, for example policies relating to the conduct of individuals (e.g. anti-fraud, bullying, whistleblowing policies etc.). Failure to adhere to these policies can result in disciplinary procedures against individuals.



# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks (continued)

No significant weakness identified

The Council also has a scheme of delegation for decision making. Matters are considered by management teams (DLT/SLT) and also by COE/COB. The Constitution shows the reporting cycle. Finance provide assistance/advice (as well as legal, procurement etc) on all Cabinet reports to ensure members have all the information needed for the decision.

The Council has policies on these areas that everybody is required to read and acknowledge, with relevant statistics produced and reported to Audit Committee on a regular basis as well as the results of any said action taken if the standards have not been met (report by Monitoring Officer).

The Council published their draft 2022/23 financial statements for audit on the 03 July 2023 and made available for inspection between 03 July and 14 August 2023 in line with the Audit and Accounts regulations. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council is required to start the inspection period within the first 10 working days of June. The Council issued a notice of delay for inspection citing valuation issues that arose during 2021/22 audit as reason. As the inspection period did not commence on or before 10 June 2023, the Council was in breach of these regulations. Furthermore, we have noted that the publication of draft 2023/24 financial statements was also delayed and published on 21 June 2024. The reason for the delay was due to the delayed receipt of external valuations. We have noted similar breaches in the regulations (i.e. late publication of the draft financial statements) for a number of councils across the sector due to various reasons.

We also confirm that the 2022/23 draft financial statements were arithmetically correct, agreed to the data in the general ledger, and prepared in line with the content required by the CIPFA Code. We take note that the draft 2022/23 financial statements was not reissued to reflect the adjustments from the audited 2021/22 financial statements. This was due to the delay in finalisation of the 2021/22 financial statements and the then impending reporting requirements for the draft 2023/24 financial statements publication. The Council has also carried out bank reconciliations during the year. Therefore, appropriate arrangements for financial reporting were in place during 2022/23.

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control, and this is documented in this Annual Governance Statement. The review of effectiveness is informed by an Assurance Framework, which includes the work of the executive managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Annual Internal Audit Report, and also comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Annual Governance Statement was published on 30 June 2023 and thereby made available for inspection alongside the financial statement. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (Section 15, Para. 2), the Council is also required to include a copy of Annual Governance Statement during the inspection period and must be published within the required period set by the regulation. As the Annual Governance Statement was not made available until end of June 2023, the Council was in breach of these regulations. Similarly to the late publication of the draft financial statements above, we have noted similar breaches in the regulations (i.e. late publication of the Annual Governance Statement) for a number of councils across the sector due to various reasons.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks (continued)

No significant weakness identified

While we are content that appropriate arrangements for preparation of financial statements and Annual Governance Statement were in place during 2022/23 to support the Council's governance arrangements, we recommend that the Council ensures that future financial statements and Annual Governance Statement is published in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

Management does benchmarking with other local authorities within the Tees Valley area to ensure that it is not an outlier in terms of performance - they still strive to keep costs at an acceptable level. In setting the budget, they use statistical data to ensure costs are correctly identified. Performance improvements are reported through Scrutiny Committees and there is a performance clinic held with AD's/Directors. Performance teams review performance with managements.

The Council is constantly striving to improve their services by embracing and identifying best practice. Whilst formal oversight and input from the Department for Education (DfE) and Leeds City Council ended in 2022, the Council have continued to develop the programme which informs the key strategic aims for the service for 2023/24. The Council also has peer reviews to help identify direction of travel and where appropriate work with strategic partners to help identify areas for improvement. Performance teams review performance with managements. The Council is also externally inspected by Ofsted and work with regional and Tees Valley groups such as the Tees Valley Director of Resources group to monitor and benchmark our performance and identify areas for improvement.

The Council have a partnership tool kit that identifies the significant partners of the Council to ensure that adequate governance arrangements are in place, and this is reported to Audit Committee annually. There are also annual reviews of significant partnerships led by the Darlington Partnership Director based upon the completion of an annual review form and provision of evidence demonstrating the governance arrangements have been adhered to. The report to Audit Committee provides evidence on performance and that governance arrangements in place are being adhered to. The toolkit also allows for identification of high-level concerns of the significant partnership which can therefore be monitored closely. As above quarterly financial reports (both revenue and capital) are taken to Cabinet to allow them to monitor the financial situation of the Council and take any action as appropriate. The annual MTFP is presented to Cabinet every December and recommended for consultation with stakeholders, the public and scrutiny committees before the final report is presented to Special Council in the following February (after taking account of any constructive feedback). The council also consult on other potential service changes which may not be included within the MTFP.

The Council has a dedicated Procurement section and a well-established process to ensure that all contracts (over the de minimis limit of £10k) follow the recognised procedure of going to Procurement Board (with AD's) to be agreed. There is also a flag on the FMS (Agresso) that gives a warning to the Procurement section of any invoice over the £10k limit that has not had Procurement Board approval. The contracts register is published on the website and is periodically updated. Procurement also analyse the spend of the Council on a continuous basis to ensure consistency and identify anomalies. The Council also has a set of Contract procedure Rules (issued in accordance with s135 of the Local Government Act 1972) which are intended to promote good purchasing practice and public accountability, deter corruption and assure value for money is obtained in the use of public funds. Officers responsible for purchasing or disposal must comply with these contract procedure rules. Procurement also provide an annual list of contract up for renewal and these are agreed by Cabinet. Procurement also provide advice to managers on procurement related matters

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services (continued)

No significant weakness identified

In May – June 2022, the Council embarked on a Peer Review. The Council wrote a position statement and over 120 people from the Council, private and the third sector were interviewed by the team from the Local Government Association (LGA). The report highlighted that the Council is well led with a positive culture, where staff are keen to get on with things and make a difference to the Borough. Compared to local government as a whole, the organisation is financially secure and has the appropriate governance and risk management arrangements in place - though there are emerging financial risks on the horizon associated with increased demand for social care services, inflation and the cost-of-living crises. The LGA has also made particular references to the partnerships the Council has, the workforce who resonated positivity, the great economic growth achievements made to date, and the opportunities emerging for Darlington.

The LGA report raised 6 recommendations and on 11 October 2022, the Council has agreed to develop and publish an action plan and an update on Cabinet's recommendations was presented on 8 November 2022. The recommendation and respective actions plans are summarised below:

- Develop a strategic framework to ensure that economic growth is linked to tackling the challenges of inequality and deprivation in Darlington.
  - Action Plan: The Council will continue to work with partners to develop and deliver the Levelling Up Darlington (LUD) Action Plan. The LUD plan directly supports two of the key priorities within the Council Plan, these being 'Working with communities to maximise their potential' and 'Supporting the most vulnerable in the borough'. A performance framework associated with the LUD plan will be used to monitor its delivery and impact.
- Undertake further work to ensure the whole of the organisation understands their role in Council priorities, including making the link between economic growth and improving opportunities for the most vulnerable in the Borough.
  - Action Plan: The annual service planning process requires managers to consider how activities within their service areas contribute to the delivery of the priorities within the Council Plan. An internal communications plan will also be developed before the end of the financial year which will highlight links between economic growth and improving opportunities for the most vulnerable. New members are offered an induction programme, with additional training, briefings and support offered to all members throughout their term in office.
- Establish a refreshed strategic partnership for Darlington which can engage all partners in the delivery of the Levelling Up Darlington Plan, including the business community and the community & voluntary sector.
  - Action Plan: Prior to Peer Review, there's already the creation of the Public Sector Executive Group (PSEG) consisting of senior representatives from local and sub regional public bodies who have the interest and ability to have a significant positive impact in the delivery of a shared vision (Levelling Up Darlington). Also, a newly established overarching 'Stronger Communities Board' (SCB) had its inaugural meeting in November 2022. Where possible, this will include board level representatives from the public, voluntary and community, and business communities.
- Further lever the Council's strategic influence in the region
  - Action Plan: Kept s numerous formal and informal relationships which include roles within the Tees Valley Combined Authority, the Association of North East Councils (ANEC), and arrangements with various health related organisations and blue light services. The Council also established an active role within the new local NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB).

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services (continued)

No significant weakness identified

- Review the assumptions in the MTFP - particularly the reliance on reserves over the medium term - in the light of rising costs, increased demand for social care services and greater economic uncertainty.
  - Action Plan: The MTFP is a standing item on the weekly Chief Officers Executive and Chief Officers Board meetings, and cabinet members are regularly briefed on developments. The current year budget is reviewed by finance officers and budget managers monthly with any issues reported through departmental management teams and chief officers as appropriate. Formal quarterly budget reports, which identify the current budget position, trends and future projections are reported to Cabinet. Finance staff and budget holders also reviewed the budgets for the next 4 years of the MTFP in advance of the scheduled planning activities between October and February which will involve officers at various levels across the council. The planning activities explore established and innovative approaches for income generation and cost reduction.
- Develop, with partners and local people, a compelling narrative as to how economic growth brings benefits to residents and communities.
  - Action Plan: The Council started to develop an economic growth narrative with key stakeholders and an associated action plan with performance measures will be created to ensure the message is clearly communicated to and understood by the target audiences. This also supports the action plan for the second recommendation discussed earlier. Furthermore, the narrative will be developed in conjunction with partners within the refreshed strategic partnership and their endorsement and support will be sought to help amplify the narrative.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.



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# 05 Appendices

# Appendix A – Management representation letter

Management representation letter

## Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

xx November 2024

Caroline Mulley

Ernst and Young LLP

Citygate

St James' Boulevard

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 4JD

Dear Caroline

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audits of the (consolidated) financial statements of Darlington Borough Council ("the Council") for the year ended 31 March 2023. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the consolidated and Council financial statements present fairly, in all material respects (or 'give a true and fair view of') the financial position of Darlington Borough Council and of the group as of 31 March 2023 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the period ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our consolidated and parent Council financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control

and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

### A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with, for the Group and the parent Council, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Group and Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the consolidated and parent Council financial statements. We believe the consolidated and parent Council financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Group and parent Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)), and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.

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3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the Group and Council financial statements are appropriately described in the Group and Council financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Group and Council, we believe that the Group and Council have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)) for the Group and for the Council that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the consolidated and parent Council financial statements taken as a whole.  
We confirm the Group and Council does not have securities (debt or equity) listed on a recognized exchange.

#### **B. Non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud**

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Group and Council's business activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws or regulations, including fraud.

2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of a system of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and that we believe we have appropriately fulfilled those responsibilities.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the consolidated and parent Council financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud, that may have affected the Group or Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
  - Involving financial improprieties
  - Related to laws or regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements
  - Related to laws or regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Group and Council's business, its ability to continue in business, or to avoid material penalties
  - Involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others
  - In relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.



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## C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
  - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
  - Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
  - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of shareholders, directors and committees of directors (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: **[list date]**.
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Group and Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements.

5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).
6. We have disclosed to you, and the Group and Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the consolidated and parent Council financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.
7. From 11 April 2024 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you, to the extent that we are aware, any (1) unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or is reasonably likely to have occurred, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material effect on the consolidated and parent Council financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate, and (2) ransomware attacks when we paid or are contemplating paying a ransom, regardless of the amount.

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## D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

## E. Going Concern

1. Note 40 to the consolidated and parent Council financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Group and Council's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

## F. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the consolidated and parent Council financial statements or notes thereto.

## G. Group audits

1. There are no significant restrictions on our ability to distribute the retained profits of the Group because of statutory, contractual, exchange control or other restrictions other than those indicated in the Group financial statements.
2. Necessary adjustments have been made to eliminate all material intra-group unrealised profits on transactions amongst parent Council, subsidiary undertakings and associated undertakings.

## H. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the narrative report and Glossary of terms.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

## I. Climate-related matters

1. We confirm that to the best of our knowledge all information that is relevant to the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of climate-related matters has been considered including the impact resulting from the commitments made by the Group and Council and reflected in the consolidated and parent financial statements.
2. The key assumptions used in preparing the consolidated and parent financial statements are, to the extent allowable under the requirements CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and

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Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)), aligned with the statements we have made in the other information or other public communications made by us.

## J. Ownership of Assets

1. The Group and Council has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheets, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Group and Council's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Group and Council has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheets.
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the consolidated and Council financial statements.
3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts.

## K. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the consolidated and Council financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

## L. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the consolidated and Council financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the consolidated and Council financial statements).
2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of non-compliance, except as follows:
  - (1) Matters of routine, normal, recurring nature (e.g., examinations by bank and insurance examiners, examinations by taxing authorities, none of which involves any allegations of noncompliance with laws or regulations that should be considered for disclosure in the consolidated and Council financial statements or as a basis for recording a loss contingency.

## M. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of property and valuation of the pension liability and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the consolidated and Council financial statements and the underlying accounting records.

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We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

### N. Estimates

#### Valuation of Land, Buildings and Investment Properties Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the valuation of land, buildings and investment properties have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the valuation of land, buildings and investment properties estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the valuation of land, buildings and investment properties estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out an accurate valuation on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and Council financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).

5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the valuation of land, buildings and investment properties.

#### IAS 19 Pensions Liability Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate have taken into account all relevant information of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out accurate valuation of the IAS 19 pensions liability on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and Council financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate, including those describing estimation uncertainty, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate.

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## Creditor Accruals Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the creditor accruals estimate have taken into account all relevant information of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the creditor accruals estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making creditor accruals estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out appropriate valuation of creditor accruals on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and Council financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate, including those describing estimation uncertainty, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).

## P. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

*Yours faithfully,*

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Group Director of Operations  
Elizabeth Davison

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Chair of the Audit Committee  
Councillor Roz Henderson

# Appendix B – Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

The original fees for these years were based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council; and
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment
- ▶ The Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26 - 28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly sets out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. These are set out in full on the previous page.

Due to the reset, the above clearly will not be achieved and we will be liaising with PSAA Ltd to discuss and agree fees.

	Current Year	Scale fee	Prior Year
	£	£	£
Total Fee – Code Work – Note 1	90,818	90,818	71,813
Scale fee variation	TBC	-	126,261
<b>Total audit</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>90,818</b>	<b>198,074</b>
Other non-audit services not covered above (Housing benefits)	TBC	N/A	41,150
<b>Total other non-audit services –Note 2</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>41,150</b>
<b>Total fees</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>90,818</b>	<b>239,224</b>

*All fees exclude VAT*

As set out in the joint statement on update to proposals to clear the backlog and embed timely audit issued by DHLUC, PSAA will use its fee variation process to determine the final fee the Council have to pay for the 2022/23 audit.

Note 1 - PSAA Ltd, in line with the joint statement issued DLUHC (as at that date) and the FRC, is responsible for the determination of the final audit fee in respect of 2022/23.

In doing so, PSAA Ltd will apply the principles that where auditors have worked in good faith to meet the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice in place at the time the work was conducted (and have reported on work that is no longer required), then they are due the appropriate fee for the work done, including where their procedures were necessary to conclude the audit by the legislatively imposed backstop date by way of a modified or disclaimed opinion and the body is due to pay the applicable fee.

Note 2 - in prior year we also performed procedures on the Housing Benefits Subsidy Certification, Teachers' Pension and Pooling of Capital Receipts. For 2022/23, we are not engaged to perform these procedures for Pooling of Capital Receipts.

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the audit committee.

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the audit committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	<p>Communication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The planned scope and timing of the audit</li> <li>▶ Any limitations on the planned work to be undertaken</li> <li>▶ The planned use of internal audit</li> <li>▶ The significant risks identified</li> </ul> <p>When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures</li> <li>▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit</li> <li>▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management</li> <li>▶ Written representations that we are seeking</li> <li>▶ Expected modifications to the audit report</li> <li>▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process</li> <li>▶ Any other matters considered significant</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements</li> <li>▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation</li> <li>▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods</li> <li>▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected</li> <li>▶ Material misstatements corrected by management</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity</li> <li>▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist</li> <li>▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Management;</li> <li>b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or</li> <li>c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements</li> </ol> </li> <li>▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected</li> <li>▶ Matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud</li> <li>▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance



# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Non-disclosure by management</li> <li>▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions</li> <li>▶ Disagreement over disclosures</li> <li>▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, integrity, objectivity and independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The principal threats</li> <li>▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness</li> <li>▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards</li> <li>▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to integrity, objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations</li> <li>▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur</li> <li>▶ Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Group audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ An overview of the type of work to be performed on the financial information of the components</li> <li>▶ An overview of the nature of the group audit team's planned involvement in the work to be performed by the component auditors on the financial information of significant components</li> <li>▶ Instances where the group audit team's evaluation of the work of a component auditor gave rise to a concern about the quality of that auditor's work</li> <li>▶ Any limitations on the group audit, for example, where the group engagement team's access to information may have been restricted</li> <li>▶ Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in group-wide controls or others where the fraud resulted in a material misstatement of the group financial statements</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
System of quality management	How the system of quality management (SQM) supports the consistent performance of a quality audit	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations includes:

Any act or suspected act of omission or commission (intentional or otherwise) by the entity (including any third parties under the control of the entity such as subsidiaries, those charged with governance or management or an employee acting on behalf of the company), either intentional or unintentional, which are contrary to the prevailing laws or regulations

## Management Responsibilities:

"It is the responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, including compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that determine the reported amounts and disclosures in an entity's financial statements."

ISA 250A, para 3

"The directors' report must contain a statement to the effect that... so far as the director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware, and he has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information."

ISA 250A, para 3

"Management is responsible for communicating to us on a timely basis, to the extent that management or those charged with governance are aware, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations ..."

Audit Engagement Letter

Management's responsibilities are also set out in the International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics (IESBA Code) Para 360.08

## Auditor Responsibilities

[The International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics \(IESBA Code\)](#) section 360 sets out the scope and procedures in relation to responding to actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.

Professional accountancy organisations who are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) are required to adopt the IESBA Code of Ethics.

We as your auditor are required to comply with the Code by virtue of our registration with ICAEW.

"If the auditor becomes aware of information concerning an instance of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, the auditor shall obtain:

An understanding of the nature of the act and the circumstances in which it has occurred; and  
Further information to evaluate the possible effect on the financial statements

The auditor shall evaluate the implications of the identified or suspected non-compliance in relation to other aspects of the audit, including the auditor's risk assessment and the reliability of written representations, and take appropriate action."

ISA 250A, paras 19 and 22

## Examples of Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

### Matter

- ▶ Suspected or known fraud or bribery
- ▶ Health and Safety incident
- ▶ Payment of an unlawful dividend
- ▶ Loss of personal data
- ▶ Allegation of discrimination in dismissal
- ▶ HMRC or other regulatory investigation
- ▶ Deliberate journal mis-posting or allegations of financial impropriety
- ▶ Transacting business with sanctioned individuals

### Implication

- ▶ Potential fraud/breach of anti-bribery legislation
- ▶ Potential breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ▶ Potential breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential GDPR breach
- ▶ Potential non-compliance with employment laws
- ▶ Suspicion of non-compliance with laws/regulations
- ▶ Potential fraud / breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential breach of sanctions regulations

# Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR) (cont'd)

## What are the implications of NOCLAR matters arising?

Depending on the nature and significance of the NOCLAR matter the following steps are likely to be required, involving additional input from both management and audit.

This can have an impact on overall achievability of audit timeline and fees.

Across our portfolio of audits we have seen a steady increase in NOCLAR matters that need to be addressed as part of the audit over the past 3 years



### Management response:

Timely communication of the matter to auditors (within a couple of days)

Determine who will carry out any investigation into the matter - in-house or external specialists or mix of both

Scope the investigation, in discussion with the auditors

Evaluate findings and agree next steps

Determine effect on financial statements including disclosures

Prepare a paper, summarising the outcome of the investigation and management's conclusions

Communicate the outcome to Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and to us as your auditors. Report to regulators where required.

### Key Reminders:

- ▶ Make sure that all areas of the business are aware of what constitutes actual or potential non-compliance and associated requirements
- ▶ Communicate with us as your auditors on a timely basis - do not wait for scheduled audit catch-ups
- ▶ Engage external specialists where needed
- ▶ Ensure that your investigation assesses any wider potential impacts arising from the matter, not just the matter itself.
- ▶ Plan upfront and consider any impact on overall accounts preparation and audit timeline - discuss the implications with us as your auditor

### Audit response:

Initial assessment of the NOCLAR matter and its potential impact

Initial consultation with risk team to determine responsive procedures and the involvement of specialists

Understand and agree scope of management's investigation with support from specialists as needed

Evaluate findings and undertake appropriate audit procedures

Determine audit related impact including accounting and disclosure and audit opinion implications

Document and consult on the outcome of our procedures

Communicate the outcome with management, TCWG and where necessary other auditors within the group or regulators

# Appendix E – PSAA Statement of Responsibilities

As set out on the next page our fee is based on the assumption that the Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

## *Preparation of the statement of accounts*

*26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.*

*27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:*

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;*
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.*
- assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;*
- provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;*
- maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;*
- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;*
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and*
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.*

*28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable and the start date of the audit will be delayed.*

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**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE  
MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2024**

**CABINET**

Tuesday, 3 December 2024

**PRESENT** – Councillors Harker (Chair), Curry, Garner, McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Roche and Wallis

**INVITEES** – Councillors Dulston, K Nicholson and Snedker

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Bartch, Durham, Henderson, Holroyd, Mammolotti, Toms and Tostevin

**C71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C72 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

In respect of Minutes C76 and C78 below, representations were made by Members and members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

**C73 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS CABINET HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2024.**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 5 November 2024.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

**REASON** – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

**C74 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET**

There were no matters referred back for re-consideration to this meeting.

**C75 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no issues arising from Scrutiny considered at this meeting.

**C76 (REPORT CALLED IN) KEY DECISION - SKERNINGHAM MASTERPLAN CONSIDERATION**

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio presented the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to the Skerningham Masterplan Document (also previously circulated) to ensure that is consistent with the Darlington Borough Local Plan Policy H 10 and the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code

## Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The submitted report stated that Policy H 10 of the Local Plan required a comprehensive Masterplan, including an infrastructure phasing plan to be prepared, in consultation with the community, prior to the submission of any planning application relating to the site, that informed the mix of uses, layout, scale, design, provision of local and strategic infrastructure, including social and community facilities, and phasing of the proposed development. The final version of the Masterplan was prepared by Litchfields, on behalf of Theakston's Land and Banks Group, the two companies with the largest amount of land interest in the area; a consultation exercise ran from 30 October to 30 November 2023; following that consultation the responses received were reviewed and some amendments were made to the Masterplan; and following discussions between officers and the authors of the document, further amendments were made.

It was reported that the Garden Communities Officer from Homes England had also been involved with the process and was content that the Masterplan had met the terms of public engagement and did not conflict with the Garden Communities principles nor the Local Plan or Design Code SPD. The Council had sought legal advice who had confirmed that, in their opinion, the Masterplan, as drafted, was consistent with the Local Plan Policy H 10 and the adopted Design Code SPD.

Members and members of the public addressed Cabinet in respect of the Skerningham Masterplan and raised a number of issues and concerns and requested what assurances could be given that the number of authorised builds would not exceed 1,650 before 2036; the section of the local distributor road between Barmpton Lane and Bishopton Lane would be completed prior to house 450 being completed; the section between the A167 and A1150 would be completed between the 900th and 1,500th dwellings; and how this could be achieved, as no agreements had been reached with the landowners to secure the land for the local distributor road (LDR).

References were made at the meeting to the fact that the masterplan did not meet the '20 minute walkable neighbourhood' for all homes and essential services; the nearest schools to the development; the fact that planning applications had already been submitted for development of the site; the development of the bridge on the site; involvement of National Rail in the development of the bridge; the options for the alignment of the LDR; the development of the haul road, for construction traffic via Bishopton lane; the impact on traffic of the development on other roads in the area; the impact on the ecology and the woodland; biodiversity net gain; the impact on residents; possible flooding implications of the development; lack of sustainable travel; lack of protection for Skerningham Woods; construction traffic along Barmpton Lane; the fact that the development was taking place on a flood plain; and who would have oversight over the whole scheme.

References were also made on when and how often the document would be reviewed and the involvement of Scrutiny Committees and Council in agreeing the masterplan.

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio and the Leader of the Council responded thereon.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Cabinet was content that the developers Skerningham Masterplan, as

appended to the submitted report, was consistent with the Local Plan Policy and the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Supplementary Planning Document.

(b) That the Skerningham Garden Village Masterplan, as appended to the submitted report, be agreed.

(c) That any subsequent revisions to the Skerningham Garden Village Masterplan be returned to Cabinet.

**REASON** - Policy H 10 of the Darlington Borough Local Plan requires the Council to agree a comprehensive Masterplan for the Skerningham Garden Village allocation in the Local Plan.

## **C77 PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT APPRAISAL PROPOSING THE DESIGNATION OF A NEW MIDDLETON ST GEORGE CONSERVATION AREA**

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to commencing a public consultation exercise on a draft appraisal (also previously circulated) proposing the designation of a new Middleton St George Conservation Area.

The submitted report outlined the background to the establishment of a conservation area; the definition of a conservation area; stated that much of the special interest in Middleton St George comprised structures and associations linked to the birth / early days of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR), which was of international significance, being the world's first public railway; general interest in the railway heritage had increased as a result of the 2025 bicentennial celebrations; and provided justification for the completion of an appraisal for Middleton St George including proposals to designate conservation area boundaries.

Particular references were made to assessment process; the public consultation process; financial, legal and climate change implications; and Estates and Property Advice.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the public consultation on the draft appraisal for Middleton St George, as appended at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be authorised.

(b) That the draft document be publicised for a period of at least six weeks, to allow members of the public and other stakeholders sufficient time to submit comments.

(c) That the draft document be amended and finalised in the light of comments received during the public consultation period.

(d) That a finalised appraisal be submitted to Cabinet for adoption and designation of conservation area boundaries.

**REASONS** – (a) Middleton St George includes non-designated heritage assets of international significance due to structures and associations directly linked to the birth/early years of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) of 1825.

(b) The bicentennial of the S&DR is next year. There will be many events in Darlington and elsewhere to celebrate the birth of the modern railway. The Council is currently making

significant investments in preparation for the 2025 celebrations.

(c) In the run-up to 2025, heritage assets at Middleton St George have been promoted through the neighbourhood plan, S&DR Heritage Action Zone and Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub.

(d) The draft appraisal picks up the 'unfinished' work carried out recently by Durham County Council who proposed a conservation area boundary for Middleton St George in 2022.

(e) The draft appraisal provides a detailed record and analysis of Middleton St George and its wider surroundings which will be of interest to the public and other stakeholders, as well as some of the Council's staff (e.g. planning officers). It draws attention to locally important heritage assets to further public understanding and inform decision making.

(f) The proposed conservation area boundaries not only relate directly to the S&DR but also to other early development of the village, which used to be very industrialised due to the railway links.

(g) The draft appraisal also includes suggestions to improve the condition of the area. These are in line with the aims of the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan and the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub.

#### **C78 DARLINGTON COLLEGE PRE-16 CENTRE**

The Cabinet Member with the Children and Young People Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of People requesting that consideration be given to the release of £2.6m of Department for Education (DfE) High Needs Capital Funding for the development of a Pre-16 alternative provision centre at Darlington College.

The submitted report stated that the current provision for young people who had disengaged, or were at risk of disengaging from mainstream provision, was currently commissioned by the secondary academies for young people on an ad-hoc basis, often at significant expense; in developing a pre-16 centre at Darlington College, more young people would be able to access an alternative provision curriculum that counted towards school's educational outcomes and supported the development of young people; stated that Darlington College already had experience in delivering to a pre-16 age group; outlined the proposal to build a 50 place pre-16 academy; and the funding implications.

Reference was made at the meeting to the importance of having provisions for young people who did not fit into mainstream education; the importance of providing post 16 maths and English as part of that provision; the assessment process, to ensure that the right young people attended the centre; and the timescales for spending the available funding. The Cabinet Member with the Children and Young People Portfolio responded thereon.

**RESOLVED** – That £2.6m of DfE High Needs Capital Funding for the development, as detailed in the submitted report, be released.

**REASON** - There are a number of young people who have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, from mainstream provision. Often, these young people are placed in expensive

alternative provision commissioned by mainstream schools. This provision, whilst engaging the young people, often do not provide the educational outcomes needed for that young person to move forward and become an economically active member of the community.

## **C79 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/27 TO 2028/29**

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the proposals for the revenue budget, capital programme, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2025/26, in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2028/29 and the 30-year Business Plan.

The submitted report stated that the Council was the largest provider of social housing in the Borough, providing 5,260 homes to local residents; those homes were of a high standard of accommodation that met the Decent Homes Standard; as a result of the high quality of the homes and the services provided they were in high demand; to meet that demand the Council had an ambitious programme to build new homes in Darlington, funded through capital receipts from the right to buy sales, grant funding and borrowing of £13.8m.; and that the HRA funded a Tenancy Sustainment Service to provide tenants with advice and support to address the financial challenges that they were facing. The proposed revenue budget expenditure of £30.186m included £6.503m to fund responsive repairs and maintenance and £15.947m contribution to the capital programme. The proposed capital programme of £30.092m included funding for work to current properties and £16.925m to deliver the new build Council housing programme.

It was reported that the key decision to be made regarding the HRA each year was the balance between setting rent and service charge levels that were affordable to the Council's tenants whilst ensuring there was sufficient resources to invest in housing stock, tackle climate change and maintain services; Local Authorities had the discretion to increase rents by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus one per cent; CPI for September 2024 was 1.7 per cent which meant that Members could decide to increase rents by up to 2.7 per cent; and that consideration would need to be given to the current economic pressures facing tenants balanced against the need to maintain and improve the housing stock and deliver the capital and energy efficiency programme, in setting the rent levels.

**RESOLVED** - That the following recommendations be agreed for wider consultation, namely that :-

- (a) an average weekly rent increase of 2.7 per cent for 2025/26 be implemented giving an average social rent of £86.15 and affordable rent of £97.55;
- (b) garage rents and service charges be increased, as shown in Table 3 of the submitted report;
- (c) the revenue budget, as attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved;
- (d) the Housing Business Plan, as attached at Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be

agreed; and

- (e) the capital programme, as attached at Appendix 3 to the submitted report, be agreed.

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

## **C80 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) FOR CONSULTATION**

The Leader introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive requesting that consideration be given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 (also previously circulated) for consultation, including setting a budget and council tax increase for 2025/26.

The submitted report stated that the Council was facing significant and unparalleled financial challenges stemming from reductions in public spending; the aftermath of Covid; the current economic climate; increased cost of living; income deprivation and rising poverty; high inflation; and the increased demand for services particularly in relation to adults and children's social care and homelessness. Although the Council had previously met the challenges faced head on the significant additional demand for services was putting unprecedented pressures on affordability and despite additional savings achieved, the Council's reserves would be fully depleted by the end of 2026/27.

It was reported that the additional funding for core services had been announced in the budget along with a fundamental reform of how local government was funded; Darlington currently had the second lowest Council Tax in the North East, which limited the amount the Council could raise to fund the spending pressures; savings of £3.649m had been achieved following a review and challenge of services; and that reserves would be utilised to meet the funding gap. The MTFP had been developed to help meet the vision and priorities contained within the Council Plan despite the financial challenges faced, by directing the resources available to the areas where most impact could be made.

Reference was made to the additional funding announced by the Chancellor in the budget in October and to the Local Government Finance Settlement. As the Local Government Settlement was not expected until late December, a number of assumptions had been made in the draft 2025/26 budget which aimed to ensure that the Council set a legal budget and continued to provide the core offer of services to the residents of Darlington.

Details of the projected expenditure and income; budget pressures and savings; schedule of proposed fees and charges; assumptions used to prepare estimates; projected Revenue Outturn 2024/25; and proposed Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29, were all also appended to the submitted report.

**RESOLVED** - That the Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively to the submitted report, be approved for consultation, including:-

(a) a Council tax increase of 2.99 per cent plus a two per cent Adult Social Care Precept to fund social care for 2025/26;

(b) the Schedule of Charges, as set out in Appendix 3 to the submitted report; and

(c) the efficiency savings, transformation and the services reviewed proposed.

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

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

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

(d) To reduce the pressures on the MTFT in the medium term.

(e) To ensure investment in the Council's assets is maintained.

**C81 MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2024/25**

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the revised Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators and providing a mid-yearly review of the Council's borrowing and investment activities.

It was reported that the mandatory Prudential Code, which governed the Council's borrowing, required Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, which related to capital spending and borrowing. The Prudential Indicators were set out in three statutory annual reports, a forward looking annual treasury management strategy; a backward looking annual treasury management report; and the mid-year update. The key objectives of those three annual reports were set out in the submitted report, together with the key proposed revisions to the indicators which related to a reduction in the Operational Boundary to £179.323m and the Authorised Limit to £259.628m to allow for any additional cashflow requirements.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the revised prudential indicators and limits, as detailed within Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 of the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) projected outturn as shown in Table 11 of the submitted report, be noted.

(c) That the report be forwarded to Council in order for the updated prudential indicators to be approved.

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

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

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

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

**C82 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.**

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Councillor Garner replace Councillor Dr Riley as this Council's representative on Darlington Cares.

(b) That Councillor Garner replace Councillor Dr Riley as this Council's representative on the Town Centre Deal Board

**REASON** – To enable a change to this Council's representation on Darlington Cares and the Town Centre Deal Board.

**DECISIONS DATED –  
FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2024**



**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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## **ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 – HOUSEHOLD WASTE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Libby McCollom, Local Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Dave Winstanley, Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to outline the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and to provide details on options for improved dry recycling as part of the development of a new statutory weekly food waste collection service.

#### **Summary**

2. The Environment Act 2021 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Act') has a broad remit to improve air and water quality, protect wildlife and increase recycling and reduce plastic waste. This report provides an overview on the requirements of the Act in relation to waste management and focusses on the requirement to introduce a weekly food waste collection service by April 2026.
3. The main requirements of the Act are:
  - (a) **Food Waste Collection:** from March 2026, local authorities must collect food waste weekly from all residential properties.
  - (b) **Simpler Recycling:** new Simpler Recycling collections will be introduced with the aim to produce standardisation. This will be applied to local authorities and businesses over the coming years.
  - (c) **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** this element of the Act places the responsibility onto packaging producers to cover the full net cost of dealing with the packaging they place on the market.
  - (d) **Deposit Return Scheme:** will be operational from October 2027 where individuals can return polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles, steel, and aluminium cans from 150ml to 3L in size and will receive a refund on the deposit paid. Supermarkets and convenience stores to act as return points.

4. The main report provides more information on the above requirements of the Act.

#### Food Waste Collection

5. The Council will have to provide residents with the facility to recycle food waste and have it collected weekly from their property.
6. The report outlines the current household waste management arrangements and what actions the Council needs to consider to introduce a weekly food waste collection service.
7. To assist in developing a service the waste composition from refuse has been analysed to understand the volumes and food types that are disposed of currently. There has also been a review of best practice and performance undertaken on authorities already operating a food waste collection and we have engaged the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to inform options for the service.
8. Best practice from Authorities that have been operating food waste collection for a number of years suggests providing a 5-litre or 7-litre internal kitchen caddy and a 23-litre external bin for food waste provides the best arrangement and yield performance.
9. Given the nature of food waste, the provision of compostable caddy liners to manage the food waste within caddies is also shown to yield better uptake of recycling.
10. There are a number of options on how food waste can be integrated into household waste management arrangements, and these are presented in the main report. The options compare the cost and performance in terms of recycling activity.
11. The costs of introducing the new statutory requirements are from New Burdens funding from Government, which should mean a cost-neutral impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). However, the initial indications are that the allocation from New Burdens funding may not be sufficient to fully cover the costs of any of the options being considered.
12. Officers have sought clarity from Government on the levels of funding that will be forthcoming to assist planning and decision making. It was hoped that levels of funding would be made known as part of the Autumn Budget and settlement, but that is not the case. The latest position on funding is below.
  - (a) Capital Allocation - £1,182,778 allocated to Darlington Borough Council.
  - (b) Transition Funding – expected to be announced at the end of financial year 24/25.
  - (c) Operational Funding – expected to be announced early in financial year 25/26.
13. Decisions on the project have been delayed in anticipation of having more information on New Burdens funding to make more informed decisions. However, Government have confirmed the timetable above for funding announcements and as such decisions do need to be taken to progress with the project.
14. The Council have alerted Government that the deadlines are extremely tight given the uncertainty on funding and as such will undertake best endeavours to ensure food waste collections are in place by April 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter.

15. Officers are progressing preparations where possible. Procurement exercises will need to be progressed for equipment and vehicles, and there will be additional requirements to manage vehicles and waste management services.
16. There will also need to be a procurement exercise for a provider to treat the food waste. Collaborative procurements with other Authorities will be undertaken where practical and possible.
17. The new service will require additional staff as outlined in the main report and a staff recruitment process and training programme will be put in place.
18. A communication and implementation strategy will also be developed to make residents aware of the new requirements and ensure recycling is maximised.
19. The options have been considered by the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee and they requested further options be modelled, which have been included in the report. Further clarification and feedback from the Government has been provided regarding consultations that have been undertaken, which has informed some of the options considered.
20. Waste Management and recycling are important services to our residents and contribute to the Council's climate change ambition. Councils are judged on recycling performance, and this will increasingly be the case. Therefore, household waste management arrangements are likely to evolve further, which informs the recommendation to Cabinet. It is recommended that Option 4 (weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current and fortnightly residual waste collection using current residual bin) be progressed given the timescale challenges that exist. This option provides the maximum flexibility to build and further develop on this option once embedded. It is considered that a move to Option 3 or 5 within the current time constraints is not achievable and further work should be progressed on these options once the food waste service has been established and performance reviewed.

### **Recommendations**

21. It is recommended that following be approved.
  - (a) The arrangements for waste collection identified as Option 4 in the main report be progressed.
  - (b) Each household be issued with a 5-7L internal caddie and external 23L bin for food waste.
  - (c) For the first year of the scheme each household be issued with 52 compostable liners at a cost of approximately £35,000.
  - (d) The capital funding of £1,182,778 be released to enable the scheme to progress.

### **Reasons**

22. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) Option 4 provides the maximum flexibility to develop recycling performance once food waste recycling has been introduced and embedded.
- (b) To enable the project to progress and procurement processes to commence for vehicle, caddies, bins and treatment of food waste.
- (c) To enable the Council to undertake best endeavours to ensure food waste collections are in place by April 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- (d) To enable the funding to be utilised on scheme costs.

**Dave Winstanley**  
**Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services**

**Background Papers**

- (i) Composition Analysis of Darlington Kerbside Residual Waste report.
- (ii) Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) report - An Assessment of Alternative Household Waste Collection Services Design.
- (iii) Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) - Darlington Borough Council Benchmarking Report

Ian Thompson: Extension 6628

Council Plan	A positive impact on the core principle of tackling climate change and the Local Environment priority is anticipated by managing waste more sustainably.
Addressing inequalities	There is no adverse impact on diversity as a result of this report. Assisted collections will still be available.
Tackling Climate Change	A high-level assessment of the impact on carbon emissions has been carried out on the different options within this report and presented for members to consider.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Option 4 provides a step change in performance and provides the greatest flexibility to continue to review performance with the opportunity to move to Option 3 or 5 in the future, which allow for savings to be made.
Health and Wellbeing	Collecting and disposing of waste more sustainably has a positive impact on residents' health and wellbeing.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no direct impact on crime and disorder resulting from the recommendations of this report. However, there is an indirect impact if refuse and recycling is not collected on regular basis.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	There is no impact on any particular group as a result of this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	Yes – affects all wards.
Urgent Decision	No
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

21. The main requirements of the Act with regards to waste management are:

- (a) Statutory Food Waste Collection;
- (b) Simpler Recycling;
- (c) Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR);
- (d) A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS).

### Food Waste Collections

22. From the end of March 2026, local authorities must collect food waste weekly from all residential properties, unless transitional arrangements have previously been agreed. The analysis and options for providing this new service are detailed later in the report. The date for Darlington to implement this service is 31 March 2026. The challenges associated with this deadline and flagged in this report and have been raised with DEFRA.

### Simpler Recycling

23. The Simpler Recycling policy aims to make recycling easier for people in England, by making collections consistent for all households, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises (such as schools and hospitals).
24. Collections will be designed with the aim to produce standardisation of collections and recycling of materials across the Country: plastic, metal, glass, paper, card, food waste and garden waste (a charge can be applied for collection of garden waste).
25. The following considerations were introduced in government proposals on 21 October 2023:
- (a) Subject to consultation, Waste Collection Authorities can co-collect dry recyclables without the need to submit a written assessment.
  - (b) Subject to consultation, a requirement that Waste Collection Authorities collect residual waste at least fortnightly, if not more frequently, to protect local amenities and prevent unintended consequences of cutting residual waste frequency.
26. The above proposals were subsequently included in a private consultation with local authorities earlier this year. At the end of November 2024, DEFRA issued separate updates and guidance on Simpler Recycling. DEFRA announced that the new default requirement for households will be four containers, which are for:
- (a) Residual (non-recyclable) waste;
  - (b) Food waste (which can be mixed with garden waste, if appropriate);
  - (c) Paper and card;
  - (d) All other dry recyclable materials.

27. If a Local Authority proposes to mix paper and card with other recyclable material, an assessment must be completed that would establish whether the separate waste collections are technically, environmentally and economically practical (known as TEEP assessment). A Local Authority would need to evidence that the separate collection of paper and card is not believed to be technically practicable, economically practicable or has no significant environmental benefit, if it wished to co-mingle materials.
28. The government has also issued guidance on ensuring good waste collection services to households, which states the following:

*“As is currently the case, waste collection authorities should continue to decide collection frequency and methodology for collecting residual waste (non-recyclable waste) and dry recycling waste streams and do so in a way that meets local needs and provides value for money for the taxpayer.*

*When waste collection Authorities are planning and delivering waste collection services from households, they should make sure that: -*

- a) All households have reasonable residual and recyclable waste collections*
- b) They consider providing additional services for specific needs, such as households with medical needs*
- c) There is no build-up of odorous waste at the kerbside*
- d) Changes to collections do not lead to an increase in fly-tipping of residual waste”*

29. The Environment Act 2021 also places requirements on businesses as well as local authorities. Timescales for implementing the various requirements are as follows:
- (a) By 31 March 2025, businesses, and non-domestic premises (except micro-firms - businesses and non-domestic premises with less than 10 full-time equivalent employees), will be required to recycle all recyclable waste streams: metal, glass, plastic, paper, card, and food waste (excluding garden waste and plastic film).
  - (b) By 31 March 2026, local authorities will be required to collect all six recyclable waste streams (excluding plastic film), from all households. Local authorities must collect food waste weekly (except where a transitional arrangement applies, affected local authorities will have a later implementation date set in regulations). The date for Darlington is 31 March 2026.
  - (c) By 31 March 2027, micro-firms (businesses and non-domestic premises with less than 10 full-time equivalent employees) will be required to recycle all recyclable waste streams (excluding garden waste). Plastic film collections from all households, businesses and non-domestic premises will also begin.

### **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

30. This element of the Act places the responsibility onto packaging producers to cover the full net cost of dealing with the packaging they place on the market. This funding is to assist Local Authorities to pay for the cost of waste collection and disposal and will be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

31. EPR is not intended to subsidise food waste collections because New Burdens Funding should cover the cost. However, the EPR funding is not ringfenced and with the New Burdens funding likely to be insufficient, it can be used to cover any shortfall in delivering new waste arrangements.
32. Local authorities will receive EPR payments from 2025/26, and the Council was notified in late November 2024 that the payments for 2025/26 will be £2,627,000. This EPR figure will be reviewed annually and will decrease over time as producers improve their systems and processes.
33. This payment also has a performance related assessment. There will be a regulator appointed to manage the scheme who will also carry out an assessment of a local authority's recycling service based on the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. From 2027/28 a deduction from the payment to local authorities can be imposed if falling below the required benchmark. The maximum deduction will be 20%.

### **Deposit Return Scheme**

34. The scheme will be operational from October 2027 where individuals can return polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles, steel, and aluminum cans from 150ml to 3L in size and will receive a refund on the deposit paid. Supermarkets and convenience stores will act as return points.

### **Review of existing Waste Management Services to meet the requirements of the Act**

35. The requirements of the Act and the provision of a food waste collection service for residents will have implications for the Borough's local waste management. The following section of the report outlines the current arrangements and what will be necessary to meet the requirements of the Act.

### **Existing Services**

36. As background information, the following provides Members with an overview of the current waste management services.
  - (a) There are five fortnightly residual waste collection service rounds across the Borough using a 240L wheeled bin (larger 360L bin for larger households).
  - (b) There are six fortnightly dry recycling collection service rounds across the Borough collecting paper, card, glass, plastics and tins. Most properties use a 240L wheeled bin for plastic and tins and internal caddy for paper and card as well as 40L box for glass.
  - (c) Approximately 7,000 properties (mainly terraced properties) use a reusable sack for paper and card, a 40L box for plastic and tins and a 40L box for glass. Families of five or more people can request a larger 360L wheeled refuse bin, which can be swapped for their 240L bin free of charge.
  - (d) The Council operates an optional fortnightly garden waste collection service operating from April to December using a 240L wheeled bin.



- (e) There are two rounds covering the Borough and there is an annual charge of £45, with 11,000 subscriptions to the service in 2024.
- 37. Residual waste is delivered to the treatment plant where it is bio-dried and any remaining recycling material that can be extracted from dried waste is removed through a mechanical process. The remaining waste is either then used as a refuse-derived fuel (RDF) and sent to a suitable facility or waste is landfilled in accordance with the waste management hierarchy.
- 38. Recycling material is delivered to the transfer station where it is bulked up and then sent onto reprocess.
- 39. Garden waste is composted through the treatment plant to PAS 100 standard, which can then be spread onto farm fields. PAS 100 is the compost association accreditation scheme and certified by the British Standards Institute.
- 40. Our existing collection arrangements meet the requirements of the Act, except for the requirement to provide a food waste collection service.
- 41. Whilst not part of this report, the Council provides a commercial residual waste collection service to 449 businesses within the Borough, including DBC facilities. All businesses have been contacted to inform them of the changes within the Act that affect them. In addition, information has been requested from businesses to enable us to understand how many of our customers meet the requirements and what services they will require from March 2025. We have also included information in One Darlington, on our web site and through the team to try and inform businesses that are not currently DBC customers.
- 42. The costs associated with the existing household waste collection treatment and disposal services are set out in **Table 1**, below:

**Table 1**

Description of Expenditure	Cost / £
Vehicle Costs	1,242,000
Employee cover costs including PPE, Training and consumables	2,097,156
Collection containers – replacements and new require	103,034
Waste disposal costs	2,461,415
Income from recycled material and garden waste service	-613,618
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>5,289,987</b>

- 43. The annual tonnage from each of the waste streams from the current collection arrangements based on 2022/23 data is as follows:
  - (a) Residual waste 22,338 tonnes, an annual household yield of 427 kg.
  - (b) Dry recycling 6,226 tonnes (including 15% contamination) an annual household yield of 119 kg.
  - (c) Garden waste 2,390 tonnes, an annual household yield of 228 kg.

44. This generates an annual total of 30,954 tonnes of waste collected from all households with an annual yield per household of 774 kg.
45. From kerbside collection, this equates to a recycling and composting rate of 24.8%.

#### Performance and Benchmarking

46. The Waste and Resources Action Programme charity (WRAP) have been engaged by DBC officers to support the development of options. WRAP is a government-funded charity that works with and supports local authorities, business and communities, helping them to reduce and manage waste in a sustainable way. They have extensive knowledge of the waste industry and have developed a range of products and tools to support local authorities.
47. A detailed benchmarking exercise of the existing services against local authorities with a similar profile to DBC has been carried out. The comparator groups used were other North East Authorities and WRAP's Rurality Groups 4 and 5 (mixed urban/rural high/medium deprivations). While benchmarking provides an opportunity to compare with others, WRAP provides an objective assessment and understanding of DBC performance and where improvements are required. When compared with the other North East authorities the amount of waste generated by each household annually from the three waste streams (residual, dry recycling and garden waste) the key findings for the borough are:
  - (a) The yield per household (annual tonnage) of residual waste from each property is the second lowest of all authorities;
  - (b) The yield per household from recycling and garden waste from each property is low which leads to lower recycling rates;
  - (c) Overall, the total waste yield from the three waste streams is the lowest in the North East and in bottom quartile of local authorities in the UK.
  - (d) For the overall recycling rate (kerbside collected material and HWRC material) for the North East authorities, DBC are slightly above average with a rate of 31.7% with the average being 30.2%. DBC is the fifth highest out of the 12 local authorities.
  - (e) When comparing the overall recycling rate (material collected at kerbside and from the HWRC), DBC performance against rurality group 4 and 5 is bottom quartile at 31.7% as opposed to the average of 42.2% (which for some authorities in the comparator group will include food waste). If performance is compared to dry recycling only collected at kerbside, then DBC's recycling rate of 20.1% is just below the average of 23.2%.
  - (f) Comparing authorities that have similar collection arrangements as DBC in rurality group 4 and 5, DBC have the lowest kerbside recycling rate.
48. The benchmarking data shows that Darlington has a low yield of household waste but overall below average recycling performance. A completed Waste Composition Analysis, summarised later in the report, has identified a significant amount of dry recycling in the residual waste stream. Using this analysis alongside the benchmarking information highlights the need and capacity to improve performance by maximising kerbside recycling.

## **Implications of the Act on existing Waste Management Services**

49. We have assessed our current services against the requirements of the Act.
- (a) We do not have a food waste collection service. Therefore, a service will need to be designed and implemented.
  - (b) Our current dry recycling and garden waste service does meet the requirements of the Act. However, with the introduction of food waste to collect there are options that need to be considered that could impact on the current arrangements.
  - (c) We will need to review our commercial collection service. From March 2025, we will be able to offer residual waste and dry recycling to customers who are required to separate their waste to meet the Act. However, we will not collect separate food waste from March 2025 and will have to direct customer to other providers.

## **Waste Composition Analysis**

50. To establish how much food waste is within residual waste and help inform the design of a new service, DBC commissioned a specialist company to provide a compositional analysis of residual waste collected within Darlington.
51. The survey took place over a four-day period in November / December 2023 with a total of 200 households selected for the analysis. To ensure representative samples and an accurate reflection across the borough was obtained, samples were collected from a range of households and locations based on a range of socio-demographic groups. 1,592 kg of waste was collected for analysis.
52. The key points from the report are as follows, which are shown as a percentage of the overall residual waste and kilograms per household per week (kg/hh/wk).

## **Food Waste**

53. Food waste is classed into the following two categories:
- (a) Avoidable waste, i.e. food and drink thrown away that was, at some point prior to disposal, edible (e.g., slice of bread, apples, meat).
  - (b) Unavoidable waste, i.e. waste arising from food or drink preparation that is not, and has not been, edible under normal circumstances (e.g., meat bones, eggshells, pineapple skin, tea bags).
54. 34% of the waste collected for analysis was food waste, therefore applying the 34% to 2023/24 residual waste tonnage means there is approximately 7,595 tonnes of food waste in the residual waste stream.
- (a) 88.1% of food waste was classed as avoidable. This equates to around 6,691 tonnes per year.
  - (b) 11.9% of food waste was classed as unavoidable. This equates to around 904 tonnes per year.

- (c) Of all avoidable food waste being disposed of, an average of 52.3% was disposed of in its packaging. This equates to around 3,499 tonnes per year.

### **Existing Recyclable Materials within Residual Waste**

55. In terms of the recyclable material found within residual waste:

- (a) Paper made up 7.5% of residual waste, of which 38% could have been recycled at kerbside using the current service.
- (b) Card and cardboard items made up 7.6% of residual waste, of which 77% could have been recycled at kerbside using the current service.
- (c) Plastic items made up 14.7% of residual waste, of which 23% could have been recycled at kerbside using the current service.
- (d) Metallic items made up 3.3% of residual waste, of which 73% could have been recycled at kerbside using the current service.
- (e) Glass items made up 2.9% of the residual waste, of which 83% could have been recycled at kerbside using the current service.

56. Therefore, approximately 3,775 tonnes of recyclable material is currently disposed of in the residual waste stream.

### **Garden Waste**

57. 9.7% of residual waste was found to be garden vegetation, which could have been recycled through the garden waste collection service. This represents approximately 2,166 tonnes, which will be significantly higher in the growing season as the sample was carried out November/December 2023.

### **Developing a New Food Waste Collection Service**

58. The approach taken to develop options for a new food waste collection service has been as follows.

- (a) A waste composition analysis has been undertaken to understand the composition of our residual waste in a range of socio-economic groups and to understand the volumes that will need to be collected and treated.
- (b) Engaged the services of the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to ensure best practice and experience is built into the design process, including benchmarking and performance assessment of existing DBC arrangements.
- (c) Developed a proposal based on best practice and evidence, for a system to be rolled out to residents for collection of food wasted within their property.
- (d) Considered numerous options for the collection and transfer of the food waste from the property to the treatment facility, taking into account our requirement to collect residual waste, recycling and garden waste.

- (e) Considered the use of the food waste product once collected.
59. The project is complex and there are multiple aspects that must be progressed if the Council are to meet the statutory deadline. Some of the major elements of the project involve:
- (a) Establishing the funding levels to be provided by Government. The Council has been advised the level of transition funding will be announced by the end of this financial year and operational funding early in the next financial year 2025/26. Therefore, all authorities are progressing without full knowledge of funding. A decision will need to be taken without the level of funding being known to enable the project to progress towards the statutory timeline.
  - (b) Agreeing the in-property collection option so that procurement exercises can be designed and undertaken to establish costs and place orders for supply.
  - (c) Agreeing the collection and transfer option so that procurement exercises can be designed for vehicles and orders placed for their supply.
  - (d) Consideration of adapting or procuring new facilities for the additional fleet.
  - (e) Recruitment of staff to collect waste, maintain vehicles and manage new regulated systems.
  - (f) Staff training.
  - (g) Procurement exercise to manage and treat the food waste collected.
  - (h) Communications exercise and roll-out plan to improve recycling rates.

### **Proposals for the collection of food waste within residential properties**

60. The Act requires food waste to be collected weekly and as such there must be a system for residents to collect and store food waste in the property. The food waste that will be collected from households will include:
- (a) All uneaten food and plate scrapings
  - (b) Dairy products
  - (c) Bread, cake, pastries
  - (d) Raw meat, cooked meat, bones
  - (e) Tea bags, ground coffee
  - (f) Raw and cooked vegetables, fruit and peelings
  - (g) Raw and cooked fish, fish bones
  - (h) Rice, pasta, beans
61. There are a significant number of local authorities that already collect food waste and WRAP have experience of best practice.
62. From the evidence gained from long-standing schemes, the system that produces the greatest yield of food waste provides each property with the following:
- (a) An internal kitchen caddie, 5L / 7L

- (b) An external 23L bin to store waste once the internal caddie is full.
  - (c) The 23L external bin is then placed out to kerbside within curtilage of the property weekly for collection.
63. Food waste can be placed directly into the internal caddie then transferred to the external food waste bin when full. However, there is evidence that if a compostable liner is also provided for the internal caddie, then the amount of food waste generated increases. If liners are issued, we are advised there will be a higher yield of food waste and will be more convenient for residents to adopt food waste recycling.
64. It is therefore proposed to issue each household with a 5-7L internal caddie and a 23L external bin and for the first year of the scheme issue each household with 52 compostable liners at a cost of approximately £35,000.

### **Options for Food Waste Collection from the kerbside**

65. The Council has operated waste collection services the same way with no major changes since 2015, when alternate weekly collections were introduced.
66. The Council must introduce a weekly food waste collection service. Therefore, a review of the collection arrangements has been undertaken to examine how food waste can be introduced to the collection system.
67. Several options were modelled to comply with the changes that were being proposed nationally in terms of both food waste and recycling. The options range from simply adding a separate food waste collection service to existing arrangements to taking the opportunity to consider a weekly dry recycling collection alongside weekly food waste. Options have also been modelled to reduce the capacity of the residual waste bin or reduce the frequency of collection. Changing the frequency of dry recycling to weekly is anticipated to increase the yield of material collected improving overall performance and changing capacity or frequency of residual waste collection will further improve performance.
68. Initially, a three-weekly residual waste collection scenario (Option 5) was not included in the modelled scenarios as this did not comply with the Government Policy. However, the policy has been amended and Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee were also keen to understand the modelled outcomes of a three-weekly residual waste collection option. Therefore, this option has been included.
69. The options presented vary by frequency and the way the vehicle is configured to collect the various waste streams.
- (a) **Option 1:** Same as existing collection arrangements, with the addition of a separate food waste collection service. A series of new rounds and vehicles that only collect food waste.
  - (b) **Option 2:** Residual waste collection fortnightly, dry recycling and food waste weekly utilising a kerbside manual sort vehicle that operatives will hand load from containers/bags, placing materials in separate compartments on the vehicle. This will require new containers and bags at properties.

- (c) **Option 3:** This involves a reduced residual waste capacity by replacing existing 240L bins with a 180L wheeled bin, which will be collected fortnightly. This will mean collecting and recycling the current bins and providing a new smaller bin. Dry recycling and food waste would be weekly in a similar vehicle to the existing recycling vehicle. Food waste would be collected in the front pod of the vehicle. In the split body back of the vehicle, paper and card would be collected in one side and then co-mingled glass, tins and plastic in the other side.
  - (d) **Option 4:** Residual waste collection fortnightly as existing with the same residual bins. Dry recycling and food waste would be weekly in a similar vehicle to the existing recycling vehicle. Food waste would be collected in the front pod of the vehicle. In the split body back of the vehicle, paper and card would be collected in one side and then co-mingled glass, tins and plastic in the other side.
  - (e) **Option 5:** reduces residual waste frequency to three-weekly with the same residual waste bins. Dry recycling and food waste would be weekly in a similar vehicle to the existing recycling vehicle. Food waste would be collected in the front pod of the vehicle. In the split body back of the vehicle, paper and card would be collected in one side and then co-mingled glass, tins and plastic in the other side.
70. Further detailed information and analysis for each option is provided later in this report.
71. The proposals above are to collect paper and card separate from other dry recycling and co-mingle glass, tins and plastics, which is in line with the latest government default position. However, this will be subject to the waste treatment contractor being able to accept the co-mingled waste for separation. If, in the short-term, mixing glass with other material is not practical for the treatment contractor, then a TEEP assessment will be carried out to collect paper and card with plastics and tins and glass separately. This change will not impact on the vehicle specification.
72. The Council's garden waste service would be unaffected by the proposal, and it should be noted that residents would still be able to recycle or dispose of waste at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).
73. The national changes set out in the Act do not have an impact on the procurement process or required capacity of the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TV-ERF), where the Council will be sending its residual waste once the facility is built and operational - expected to be 2028/29. Detailed waste modelling was carried out as part of the business case process to ensure there was adequate capacity and that the plant was not oversized. That detailed modelling included the assumption that all seven councils would be doing all they could to maximise dry recycling and introducing a separate food waste collection service, thereby reducing the amount of residual waste needing to be treated.

### **Option Analysis and Financial Implications**

74. **Table 2** compares the five modelled collection options against the existing collection service. The table shows the operational requirements and arrangements for each option including number of vehicles, staff, frequency and types of containers used.

**Table 2**

<b>OPERATIONAL OPTIONS</b>			
<b>Option</b>	<b>Residual</b>	<b>Recycling</b>	<b>Food</b>
<p><b>Existing baseline</b>                      Refuse collection 5 vehicles, plus 2 spare.                      Recycling 6 vehicles, plus 2 spare                      45 FTE, plus 1 team leader</p>	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	N/A
<p><b>Option 1</b>  <i>Additional food collection service only</i></p> <p>Nine extra vehicles required:                      Seven rounds plus two spares.                      Additional 21x FTE                      Plus one additional team leader</p>	<p>Fortnightly</p> <p>As existing service</p>	<p>Fortnightly</p> <p>As existing service</p>	<p>New weekly service.                      Specific food waste vehicles and rounds.</p> <p><b>Containers</b>                      5-7L internal kitchen caddie and 23L external food waste bin.</p>
<p><b>Option 2</b>  <i>Weekly dry recycling service including food waste in a kerbside sort vehicle</i></p> <p>Nine extra vehicles required over the existing fleet.                      Total of 15 rounds plus two spare: 17 vehicles.                      Additional 21x FTE                      Plus one additional team leader</p>	<p>Fortnightly</p> <p>As existing service</p>	<p>Weekly Recycling &amp; Food Waste                      Kerbside sort vehicle for dry recycling &amp; food waste at same time.                      Kerbside manual sort by operative to put waste into correct compartment.</p> <p><b>Containers:</b>  <b>Dry recycling</b>                      resident has existing box for glass, weighted sack paper and card and second weighted sack for tins and plastic. Existing 240L recycling wheeled bin and caddie to be collected and disposed of.</p> <p><b>Food Waste</b>                      5-7L internal kitchen caddie and 23L external food waste bin.</p>	



OPERATIONAL OPTIONS		
<p><b>Option 3</b> <i>Reduces residual waste capacity smaller bin weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current</i></p> <p>Six extra vehicles required. Total of 12 rounds plus two spares: 14 vehicles 24 extra FTE Plus one additional team leader</p>	<p>Fortnightly</p> <p>As existing service with a smaller 180L wheeled bin.</p>	<p>Weekly Recycling &amp; Food Waste Similar vehicle to existing recycling vehicles: front pod for food waste, split back body for paper and card on one side and co-mingled glass, tins and plastics in the other side.</p> <p><b>Containers:</b> <b>Dry Recycling</b> Existing 240L recycling wheeled bin for co-mingled, glass, plastics and tins and existing internal caddie for paper and card. For approximately 7,000 terraced properties: bag for paper and card and existing boxes for tins, plastics and glass.</p> <p><b>Food Waste</b> 5-7L internal kitchen caddie and 23L external food waste bin.</p>
<p><b>Option 4</b> <i>Weekly dry recycling, including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current</i></p> <p>Six extra vehicles required. Total of 12 rounds, plus two spares: 14 vehicles 24 extra FTE Plus one additional team leader</p>	<p>Fortnightly</p> <p>As existing service with same size residual waste bin.</p>	<p>Weekly Recycling &amp; Food Waste Similar vehicle to existing recycling vehicles: front pod for food waste, split back body paper and card on one side and co-mingled, glass, tins and plastics the other side.</p> <p><b>Containers</b> <b>Dry Recycling</b> Existing 240L recycling wheeled bin for co-mingled, glass, plastics and tins and existing internal caddie for paper and card. For approximately 7000 terraced properties bag for paper and card and existing boxes for tins, plastics and glass.</p> <p><b>Food Waste</b> 5-7L internal kitchen caddie and 23L external food waste bin.</p>
<p><b>Option 5</b> <i>Reduces residual waste frequency to three-weekly alongside weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current.</i></p> <p>Six extra recycling vehicles required and reduction of one residual vehicle. Recycling Total of 12 rounds, plus two spares: 14 vehicles 24 extra FTE for recycling, less three for residual: total 21 extra FTE. Plus one additional team leader.</p>	<p>Three Weekly with existing same size residual waste bin.</p>	<p>Weekly Recycling &amp; Food Waste Similar vehicle to existing recycling vehicles: front pod for food waste, split back body paper and card on one side and co-mingled glass, plastics and tins in the other side.</p> <p><b>Containers</b> <b>Dry Recycling</b> Existing 240L recycling wheeled bin for co-mingled glass plastics and tins and existing internal caddie for paper and card. For approximately 7000 terraced properties bag for paper and card and existing boxes for tins, plastics and glass.</p> <p><b>Food Waste</b> 5-7L internal kitchen caddie and 23L external food waste bin.</p>

75. The funding position for delivering this new requirement is complex. The government have stated that New Burdens funding will be provided to cover the capital cost, transitional costs and ongoing revenue costs associated with the legislation.
76. The government have calculated what they believe authorities will need in terms of capital and have announced Darlington will receive £1,182,778 to cover the cost of caddies, bins and vehicles. Based on the options analysis, this will not be sufficient to cover the cost of the vehicles, caddies and bins. This money is provided as a one-off grant and it is highly unlikely that there will be further funding when the vehicles and caddies need replacing. Any shortfall in New Burdens funding will add costs into the Council's MTFP. This has been raised with the relevant government departments and whether this can be challenged. A response to the Council's concerns has not been received at the time of writing this report.
77. The transitional funding to develop and implement the schemes and the ongoing revenue funding has yet to be announced. To meet the statutory deadlines set, councils have had to progress at their own cost and decide whether to commit to procurement. This leaves councils in the wholly unsatisfactory position that they are developing a scheme at cost and committing to it before they know whether the scheme is affordable within what government provide in terms of New Burdens or whether it will result in a pressure to council finances. It is now expected that the transitional funding will be announced at the end of this financial year and operational funding early in the next financial year 25/26. Any shortfall in New Burdens funding will add costs into the Council's MTFP. This will be assessed when the funding is released and if not deemed sufficient the Council will decide whether this will be challenged with Government.
78. **Table 3** below shows the estimated annual revenue collection costs of each option including costs for vehicles, employees and associated costs, containers disposal and income from recycling and garden waste. The lower section of the table sets out a number of one-off project transitional costs.
79. Financial models for each option have been built from estimated costs associated with vehicles, staffing, containers disposal and income. These will need to be confirmed through procurement processes and as such a contingency will be considered as part of the project costs. All councils are progressing on the same timescale, and this will put pressure on the market and supply chains. This may drive up prices and the availability of products and resources and has been highlighted as a significant risk to government departments. A phased introduction was suggested to government rather than a 'big bang' on the same date for everyone and we are seeking clarification from the new UK government that this remains the case.
80. All options require a significant increase in the waste fleet and staffing. There is not enough space to park the additional fleet vehicles at the depot. Therefore, the project will need to investigate options to extend if possible, reconfiguring the parking arrangements, reducing staff parking significantly or look to acquire additional parking at an alternative site. The increased fleet will also require the creation of an additional pit within the fitting shop with an indicative budget estimated one-off cost of £100,000.
81. As part of the roll out of the changes to waste collection, there is a need to have a communication and engagement programme to maximise the take up of the new services regardless of which option members agree to implement. This will include employment of temporary staff to engage with residents as well as other communication and marketing activities, for which an indicative budget of £120,000 is estimated. In addition, there will

be project management and administration costs associated with the roll out at an indicative estimated budget of £50,000. Therefore, there will be a one-off cost of £170,000 to implement the changes. As part of the New Burdens transitional funding, an allocation will be provided. However, at the time of writing the report, the level and of this funding is unknown. For modelling purposes, best estimates have been used for both the transitional and delivery new burdens funding.

82. In addition to the above, there is the potential of a final payment to make on the existing eight recycling vehicles of £421,000 in 2026/27 depending on which option is finally chosen. Only Option 1 uses the existing recycling fleet, therefore if any of the other options are taken forward the existing recycling vehicles would not be required, and the final payment would still be due. The vehicles would be sold but it is highly unlikely they would generate anywhere near the £421,000. Any deficit in income received from the sale of the vehicles will be a one-off cost.
83. Through New Burdens funding, the government have already allocated DBC £1,182,778 to cover the cost of caddies, bins and vehicles as a one-off Grant and does not account for future replacements. The costing undertaken identifies that the funding is not enough for the outright purchase of any of the options.
84. The funding model is based on estimated annual operational costs, taking into account current market information and funding assumptions.

**Table 3**

<b>Project Cost Overview</b>						
Option 1 - Additional food collection service only						
Option 2 - Weekly dry recycling service including food waste in a kerbside sort vehicle						
Option 3 - Reduces residual waste capacity (smaller residual bin) weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current						
Option 4 - Weekly dry recycling (uses current residual bin) including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current						
Option 5 - Reduces residual waste frequency to three-weekly alongside weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current						
<b>Projected Operational Costs (Annual)</b>						
<b>Description of Expenditure</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Vehicle Costs	1,242,000	1,478,625	1,785,000	1,740,000	1,740,000	1,670,000
Employee costs including cover PPE, Training and consumables.	2,097,156	3,081,707	3,060,855	3,173,214	3,173,214	3,034,790
Collection containers – replacements and new requirements	103,034	154,335	215,059	225,175	128,161	128,854
Waste disposal costs	2,461,415	2,152,714	2,108,246	1,956,395	2,089,636	1,926,275
Income from recycled material and garden waste service	-613,618	-613,618	-707,028	-710,287	-623,416	-710,287
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>5,289,987</b>	<b>6,253,763</b>	<b>6,462,132</b>	<b>6,384,497</b>	<b>6,507,595</b>	<b>6,049,632</b>
<b>Difference</b>		<b>+963,776</b>	<b>+1,172,145</b>	<b>+1,094,510</b>	<b>+1,217,608</b>	<b>+759,645</b>

Note: The above figures show annualised costs for comparison purposes and do not include the Capital Grant provided by Government.

<b>Project Transition Costs (One-Off. Transitional Costs)</b>						
	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
		£	£	£	£	£
Project Management Support to deliver transition		50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Communication and Engagement Plan		120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000
Additional Pit within fitting shop to service additional vehicles		100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Depot Space costs to park additional fleet.		250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Collection and disposal of existing bins option 2 recycling bin option 3 waste bin		Nil	TBD Estimated 250,000	TBD Estimated 250,000	Nil	Nil
Fleet costs (Final payment of eight recycling vehicles option 2,3,4)		Nil	421,000 (Max.)	421,000 (Max.)	421,000 (Max.)	421,000 (Max.)
Contingency		300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>820,000</b>	<b>1,491,000</b>	<b>1,491,000</b>	<b>1,241,000</b>	<b>1,241,000</b>

85. **Table 4** compares the projected kerbside recycling rate from the material collected at kerbside dry recycling, garden waste and food waste for the various options. All options demonstrate a projected increased recycling performance compared to the existing arrangements.
86. Carbon performance is also compared in **Table 4**, this is a very high-level comparator carried out by WRAP based on their carbon waste and recycling metric (Carbon WARM). Carbon WARM applies a set of conversion factors to enable users to express waste management tonnage data in terms of its greenhouse gas emissions measure as carbon dioxide equivalent. This is a high-level assessment and assumes the treatment of residual waste is through the new TV-ERF.

**Table 4**

Option	Kerbside Recycling rates	Carbon Impact of Operations / tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> per annum
Baseline	24.8%	2,197
Option 1	35.2%	2,067
Option 2	40.3%	730
Option 3	40.7%	1,134
Option 4	37.9%	1,346
Option 5	41.7%	1,272
<u>Description of Options</u>		
Option 1 - Additional food collection service only		
Option 2 - Weekly dry recycling service including food waste in a kerbside sort vehicle		
Option 3 - Reduces residual waste capacity (smaller residual bin), weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current		
Option 4 - weekly dry recycling (uses current residual bin) including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current		
Option 5 - Reduces residual waste collection frequency to three-weekly, dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current collected weekly		

87. **Table 5** sets out the “pros and cons” of the four options, considering the costs, performance and operation for both residents and staff.

Table 5	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Additional food collection service only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change to refuse collection (collection points)</li> <li>• No need to change existing recycling vehicles.</li> <li>• New vehicles, purpose-built for food waste.</li> <li>• Simplest to implement and manage</li> <li>• Operators can focus on one collection - food waste only</li> <li>• Minimal change for residents</li> <li>• Greater flexibility to maximise efficiency of food waste collection service as independent of other services.</li> <li>• No impact on dry recycling and residual waste collection services</li> <li>• Lowest financial impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to buy a separate fleet of food waste-only vehicles</li> <li>• Not maximising the opportunity to re-model the service and improve recycling</li> <li>• Dry recycling remains fortnightly, whilst food waste weekly</li> <li>• Less incentive for residents to change behaviour and recycle more</li> <li>• Lowest recycling rate of the four options</li> <li>• Highest carbon impact on the environment of the four options</li> <li>• Potentially an additional, different day for food waste collection for residents to existing collection day</li> </ul>
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Weekly dry recycling service including food waste in a kerbside sort vehicle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One vehicle collects all recycling &amp; food waste in one pass</li> <li>• No change to refuse collection (collection points)</li> <li>• Weekly recycling service - step change in waste collection and encourages behavioural change increase recycling</li> <li>• Materials are kerbside sorted and put into individual stillages on vehicle; better-quality recycling material and higher value</li> <li>• Less contamination due to hand sorting and visibility of material for operative obtained</li> <li>• Second highest recycling rate of all four options</li> <li>• Lowest carbon impact on the environment of the four options due to increased recycling less residual waste and reduced cost for waste treatment</li> <li>• Reduced collection days for residents as all recycling and food waste collected together</li> <li>• May help with OFLOG monitoring as recycling performance a metric about general Council performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More demands on residents for additional containers</li> <li>• Will need to issue new containers / reuseable bags to majority of properties</li> <li>• Need to collect and dispose of all existing recycling wheeled bins from residents which may lead to adverse publicity</li> <li>• Will need to replace existing recycling vehicles one year early at significant cost</li> <li>• Increased manual handling at kerbside by operators to sort material into individual compartments which cannot be designed out and will lead to increased muscular skeletal injuries.</li> <li>• Slower operation due to hand sorting of materials by operative at kerbside therefore more rounds required</li> <li>• Residents require more bags and boxes at property to store for separate waste streams</li> <li>• Third highest cost option</li> </ul>

Table 5	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Reduces residual waste capacity (smaller residual bin) weekly dry recycling including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes for the resident for dry recycling apart from food waste added to recycling service and available weekly</li> <li>• Dry recycling and food waste in one pass and one vehicle</li> <li>• No change to refuse collection (collection points)</li> <li>• Weekly recycling service - step change in waste collection and encourages behavioural change to recycle more</li> <li>• Highest recycling rate of all four options</li> <li>• Second-lowest option for carbon impact on the environment</li> <li>• Will increase garden waste service take up because of less residual waste capacity; increasing composting rate</li> <li>• May help with OFLOG monitoring as recycling performance is a metric about general Council performance</li> <li>• Reduced treatment costs as less residual waste to treat at more expensive gate fee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling materials may be of poorer quality than Option 2 due to co-mingled and therefore less valuable</li> <li>• Resistance of residents to reduced residual waste capacity</li> <li>• Residents may use additional capacity in weekly recycling bin for residual waste therefore potentially higher levels of contamination than other weekly options</li> <li>• Cost of replacement wheeled bins</li> <li>• Will need to replace existing recycling vehicles a year early at significant cost</li> <li>• Costs to collect and dispose of existing 240L bins which may lead to adverse publicity</li> </ul>
<p>Option 4</p> <p>Weekly dry recycling (uses current residual bin) including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes for the resident for dry recycling, apart from food waste added to recycling service and available weekly</li> <li>• One vehicle collects dry recycling &amp; food waste in one pass</li> <li>• Weekly recycling service demonstrates step change in waste collection and encourages behavioural change to recycle more</li> <li>• No change to refuse collection (collection points)</li> <li>• Increased recycling rate as from weekly collection service</li> <li>• May help with OFLOG monitoring as recycling performance a metric about general Council performance</li> <li>• Due to increased recycling less residual waste therefore reduced cost for treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling materials may be of poorer quality than Option 2 due to co-mingled and therefore less valuable</li> <li>• Of the weekly collection options considered this option is the poorest performing in terms of recycling rate and carbon impact and the most expensive.</li> <li>• Will need to replace existing recycling vehicles a year early at significant cost</li> <li>• Residents may use additional capacity in weekly recycling bin for residual waste therefore higher levels of contamination than Option 2</li> </ul>

Table 5	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 5</p> <p>Reduces frequency of residual waste to three-weekly (uses current residual bin) Weekly dry recycling, including food waste in similar recycling vehicle as current</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One vehicle collects dry recycling &amp; food waste in one pass</li> <li>• Weekly recycling service demonstrates step change in waste collection and encourages behavioural change to recycle more</li> <li>• Increased recycling rate as from weekly collection service</li> <li>• May help with OFLOG monitoring as recycling performance a metric about general Council performance.</li> <li>• Due to increased recycling less residual waste therefore reduced cost for treatment</li> <li>• Highest recycling rate of all five options</li> <li>• Moving to three-weekly residual collection will drive behaviour change with a focus on recycling</li> <li>• Lowest cost option</li> <li>• Could help maintain EPR payments at maximum levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential issues and concerns to consider from residents to reduced residual waste frequency</li> <li>• Residents may use additional capacity in weekly recycling bin for residual waste therefore potentially higher levels of contamination than other weekly options</li> <li>• Will need to replace existing recycling vehicles a year early at significant cost.</li> <li>• Both collections will change at the same time recycling and residual will take time for residents to get used to.</li> </ul>



## **Treatment and Use of Material**

88. The final aspect of the project is how the collected material will be treated. The food waste will need to be delivered to a treatment facility.
89. 11 of the 12 North East local authorities carried out a feasibility study on availability of treatment facilities and the capacity in the North East in September 2022. The outcome of that study identified there was adequate treatment capacity in the North East and adequate land available to spread the digestate within acceptable distances from the treatment facilities.
90. Subject to approval, a procurement exercise will commence later this year either with the other Tees Valley Authorities or as standalone DBC contract. There are local facilities that will be able to receive the food waste directly from the collection vehicle without the need to drop off and bulk up at a transfer station, which would be required if there was significant traveling required from Darlington to the treatment plant. It is anticipated there will be a saving in the cost per tonne through the new food waste contract as opposed to the existing residual waste treatment costs. These savings have been factored into the financial model.
91. As part of the treatment process, gas will be produced that will go into the grid network. The waste output from the treatment process is a digestate that would be to the required standard PAS 110, which can then be spread onto farmland.

## **Key Risks, Issues & Conclusions**

92. There are a number of risks and issues outlined in this section of the report and these inform considerations of a recommended way forward.
93. The feasibility work to date suggests the capital allocation from government would appear not to be enough to cover the entire cost of any option presented. The transitional and operational funding may also be inadequate to cover all the costs.
94. Decisions on the project have been delayed in anticipation of having more information on New Burdens funding to make more informed decisions. However, Government have confirmed the timetable for funding announcements and as such decisions do need to be taken to progress with the project if there is any chance of delivering by the deadline. The Council have alerted Government that the deadlines are extremely tight given the uncertainty on funding and will undertake best endeavours to ensure food waste collections are in place by April 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter.
95. The availability of vehicle and containers may be limited due to the number of councils implementing food waste at the same time and therefore there could be significant lead-times that impact on the programme.
96. There are significant aspects of the project in relation to the physical infrastructure, communications and recruitment that need to be progressed and developed that will require additional project management support.

97. The intention of the Environment Act 2021 is to improve recycling performance and the impact on the environment. The late changes in guidance and legislation that allows authorities to consider the frequency of residual waste collections does have an impact on possible options in terms of costs and recycling performance. This could also have an impact on EPR payments to the Council if and when the regulator starts considering the Councils performance and future EPR payments.
98. Further investigation of **Option 2** has highlighted operational concerns that should be considered. The process builds in increased manual handling by operators, which will lead to increased muscular skeletal injuries. Therefore, this option is being discounted by officers. This effectively leaves two options in principle: -
- (a) The addition of a separate food waste collection service with a series of new rounds and vehicles that only collect food waste (**Option 1**).
  - (b) The introduction of weekly recycling opportunities alongside a food waste collection service (**Option 3,4 or 5**).
99. Options 3, 4 and 5 provide better opportunities and flexibility to improve recycling rates and the carbon impact of the service in the future. Therefore, it is recommended Option 1 be discounted.
100. The timetable to introduce food waste collections is incredibly challenging given the delays already encountered. Option 4 is the simplest to introduce given there is no requirement to purchase and change all bins or consider changes to residual waste frequencies and the associated consultation. Whilst it is initially the most expensive option, it is recommended Option 4 be progressed to ensure the food waste service can be introduced as quickly as possible and residents are able to get used to food waste collections without any further changes to arrangements. Officers will then review the performance of food waste and recycling rates and continue to investigate options 3 and 5 with a view to bringing future reports and phases of waste management and recycling performance improvements.

### **Procurement Advice**

101. Procurement activity will be carried out in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and current Procurement Legislation.
102. Where possible collaborative procurement exercises will be carried out across the region and pre-existing Frameworks will be utilised.

### **Financial Implications**

103. **Table 6** below summarises the financial impact on the MTFP of both the implementation and future years.

**Table 6**

<b>Financial Summary - implementation year</b>					
<b>Description of Expenditure</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Existing budget	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987
Projected operational costs	6,253,763	6,462,132	6,384,497	6,507,595	6,049,632
Projected transitional costs	820,000	1,491,000	1,491,000	1,241,000	1,241,000
Food bin liners	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
<b>Variance</b>	<b>1,818,776</b>	<b>2,698,145</b>	<b>2,620,510</b>	<b>2,493,608</b>	<b>2,035,645</b>
Capital funding	1,182,773	1,182,773	1,182,773	1,182,773	1,182,773
Estimated Transitional funding	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
Estimated Operational funding	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000
<b>Surplus/Gap</b>	<b>363,997</b>	<b>515,372</b>	<b>437,737</b>	<b>310,835</b>	<b>147,128</b>
<b>Financial Summary - future years</b>					
<b>Description of Expenditure</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Existing budget	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987	5,289,987
Projected operational costs	6,253,763	6,462,132	6,384,497	6,507,595	6,049,632
<b>Variance</b>	<b>963,776</b>	<b>1,172,145</b>	<b>1,094,510</b>	<b>1,217,608</b>	<b>759,645</b>
Estimated Operational funding	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000	700,000
<b>Surplus/Gap</b>	<b>263,776</b>	<b>472,145</b>	<b>394,510</b>	<b>517,608</b>	<b>59,645</b>

104. As can be seen for Option 4, the recommended option, there is a £310,835 anticipated gap in funding in the transition year and £517,608 when fully operational.

As noted above the Council has been allocated EPR funding to assist with waste collection and disposal costs. This funding is not ringfenced and can be utilised to meet the funding gap.

### **Consultation**

105. No public consultation has taken place around this report as there is a statutory duty to introduce food waste collection from March 2026. A detailed communications plan will be developed to inform residents of changes to waste collection services once agreed.

106. The Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee considered this report on 24 October 2024. There was a lengthy debate with a number of proposals including moving to a three weekly residual waste collection, which has now been included in the modelling as Option 5 in this report. Following debate and discussion, members of Scrutiny agreed to the following for Cabinet to consider: *“...the majority view of this Scrutiny Committee supports Option 3 with the recommendation of a 1-year limit supply of bin liners, and that the option for three weekly refuse collections be explored.”*

**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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**COUNCIL PLAN 2024-27 PERFORMANCE REPORTING UPDATE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -  
Chief Officers Executive**

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## **SUMMARY REPORT**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is the first performance report of the new Council Plan 2024-27. It summarises progress against the key commitments and deliverables in the plan. The **Appendix** to this report contains further narrative and supporting data.
2. The full plan can be found on the council website: [Darlington BC - Council Plan](#)

### **Summary**

3. The Council Plan was approved by Council on 18 July 2024. The plan outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the council and council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions and shaping delivery.
4. The plan recognises the fundamental link between health, wellbeing and the economy. There are six priorities: economy, homes, living well, children and young people, communities and local environment. Three core principles shape the delivery of the plan: addressing inequalities, tackling climate change and efficient and effective use of resources.
5. This is the first report for the new plan and provides a summary of the key actions taken by the council to deliver the priorities in the Council Plan. The appendix contains narrative from lead service areas on key actions, demonstrating delivery of the priorities and core principles.
6. Cabinet agreed that they will receive two reports a year on progress and performance. The annual report will be a more detailed look, whilst this six-month report is a 'check-in' giving Cabinet the opportunity to discuss progress.

## Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Cabinet note and review the progress made in the delivery of the Council Plan and approve this report.

## Reason

8. The report and appendix provide a summary of key actions undertaken by the council, highlight key issues and progress.

## Chief Officers Executive

## Background Papers

Council Plan 2024 – 2027: [Darlington BC - Council Plan](#)

author: Lynne Davies Extension: 5070

Council Plan	This report is about the delivery of the council plan
Addressing inequalities	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Tackling Climate Change	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Efficient and effective use of resources	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Health and Wellbeing	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
S17 Crime and Disorder	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This does not require a decision affecting the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

9. The Council Plan was agreed at Council on 18 July 2024. The plan is shaped by three core principles: addressing inequalities; tackling climate change; and efficient and effective resources. They are a long-term commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of all residents and ensuring the council is able to deliver the greatest impact within available resources.
10. There are six priorities for delivery:
  - (a) Economy
  - (b) Homes
  - (c) Living well
  - (d) Children and young people
  - (e) Communities
  - (f) Local environment
11. This report summarises key actions over the first six months and areas of progress in delivering the priorities and core principles in the plan. The appendix to this report contains further narrative and supporting data.

### Core Principles

#### Efficient and Effective Use of Resources:

12. On the 3 December 2024 Cabinet agreed the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 - 2028/29 to go out for public consultation which will conclude on the 23 January 2025. The MTFP will then return to Cabinet and be presented to full council in February 2025 for approval.
13. As the Local Government Financial Settlement is not delivered until late December a number of assumptions were made in regard to resourcing levels informed by the Government's Autumn Budget announcement on the 30 October 2024. The Government's long term commitment to putting the local government sector on a sustainable footing is welcome and will be an important factor in enabling the success of council plan.
14. External auditors Ernest Young LLP are required to be satisfied that the council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and must report if there are any significant weaknesses in the financial stability, governance and performance improvement. In the latest report for year ending 2022/23 the Auditors found no risk or actual significant weaknesses in the council's arrangements.
15. A number of key strategies and plans are being reviewed and refreshed:
  - (a) The asset management plan will be presented to Cabinet early 2025.
  - (b) Work continues on the procurement strategy which will be finalised in 2025 after the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

- (c) The refresh of the workforce strategy has begun with key stakeholders.
  - (d) The Digital Darlington strategy 2025-30 is currently out to public consultation.
  - (e) The Customer Services strategy 2025-30 is currently out to public consultation.
16. Strategic partnerships are important to delivering the plan with many examples highlighted throughout this report. Partnership working continues via Xentrall, with recent work developing a bespoke project management system for capital projects. Relationships with key stakeholders continue to be managed through the Public Sector Executive Group and Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group. The council also continues to work in partnership with ESH Homes Ltd to deliver a number of housing sites across the Borough.

### **Addressing Inequalities:**

17. Many actions delivered for the council plan address inequalities and these are highlighted throughout the priorities section of this report.
18. The development of the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been underpinned by a consideration of health inequalities, building on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the recommendations of the Marmot Review. The thematic priorities taken forward will explicitly include consideration of inequalities, understanding differences in outcomes across wards and targeting actions to population groups or geographical areas where need is greatest.
19. The council has been taking an active role as a member of the North East Child Poverty Commission, supporting the work of the collective to inform lobbying on key issues for the national Child Poverty Strategy. This has included taking part in themed roundtables, a workshop specifically organised for Tees Valley partners, and ensuring representation from the voluntary and community sector.
20. Work continues to design and deliver Household Support Fund programmes, as highlighted later in this report with Round 6 currently being delivered. The Autumn Budget committed to a further round of funding for next financial year, and planning is underway for the new programme.

### **Tackling Climate Change:**

21. Progress continues to deliver the climate change commitments through the delivery of the climate change action plan. We are following our trajectory of a 40% reduction in council carbon emissions every five years.
22. This is a cross-council ambition and we have:
- (a) Involved the public – Ecofair June 2024 was a big success with over 5,000 people being introduced to eco-friendly products and services and engaging with hands on activities such as crafts and science demonstrations.



- (b) Engaged with business – shared sources of help, funding and success stories direct to businesses through our business newsletter and council website.
- (c) Continued to be an active member of Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership, a collaboration of businesses aimed at spreading good practice around the net zero challenge. The council attended the network and learn event at the North East Net Zero Innovation Centre.
- (d) Briefed elected members at a seminar including representatives from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.
- (e) Worked with services across the council to trial a new report on our adaptation activities for the Department for Food and Rural Affairs, to help ensure we are resilient to future climate change. This involves the council risk assessing against risks identified by the Climate Change Commission.

## **Priorities**

### **Economy:**

- 23. The general economic outlook for Darlington is positive with unemployment levels remaining steady at around 4.4%, employee and residents' earnings on an upward trajectory and town centre footfall being higher in key months in 2024 when compared with 2023 figures. Some of the data around total employment growth rates and self-employment is showing a recent decline. The new inclusive growth strategy will look at this data in further detail as part of the evidence building stage.
- 24. The council continues to prioritise the economy and using the main levers to create the right conditions for new investment, businesses and jobs. In July 2024 Market Asset Management successfully completed phase three of the market refurbishment project and is growing its reputation as a community hub. The new trading area has attracted new traders and includes a new stall which sells goods manufactured by small scale producers.
- 25. The new government hub office development for Darlington Economic Campus on Brunswick Road was given planning approval on 7 August 2024, marking a significant milestone for the project. The complex will be home to 1,400 civil servants and is due to complete in 2027.
- 26. The council delivered the first of two annual Darlington Jobs Fairs in October 2024 at the Dolphin Centre, promoting good jobs and career opportunities available in the Borough. 1000 jobs seeker attended to meet around 100 employers and support organisations.
- 27. The Government's Autumn Budget confirmed the Long Term Plan for Towns programme will be retained and reformed, and focused on regeneration. Darlington's designation has been retained and will focus on a wider urban footprint in the Borough. The council will receive £20m over 10 years, beginning in financial year 2025/26 with a focus on capacity building. A board of local partners will provide strategic leadership for this programme, supported by the council.

28. Work continues to deliver Towns Fund projects with improvements to Victoria Road and to shops and the public realm along Skinnergate and the Yards. Significant work will take place over the next nine months on the creation of the Adult Skills Hub within the Northern Echo building refurbishment and the redevelopment of Coniscliffe Road public realm.
29. The council continues to prioritise the safety and cleanliness of the Borough for the benefit of residents and to sustain business confidence and investment. Independent auditing during the reporting period has given the overall cleanliness of the area an excellent rating.

#### **Homes:**

30. There remain challenges in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping, in particular in achieving positive outcomes to prevent homelessness due to the lack of move on accommodation. A new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed with partners and has been published for consultation. It proposes priorities for action and will involve the council working in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations, social housing providers, public health and statutory agencies to focus on prevention. The strategy will return to Cabinet in February 2025 for approval.
31. Investment in council houses continues with work beginning on site in July 2024 for Phase Two of new council housing at Sherbourne Close. Phase Two will deliver 14 new homes including 11 affordable rented properties, 2 buy to rent and one for Children's Services. The Neasham Road new build site which will deliver 130 council houses had tenants move into the first 22 council homes in September, further phases will be released in 2024 and 2025.
32. Work continues to deliver greater energy efficiency in existing properties. Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) has delivered energy efficiency solutions to 23 council homes. Wave Two commenced in September to support 130 council homes funded by £1.27m Government funding and £1.27m Housing Revenue Account Capital expenditure.
33. The council has bid into Wave Three of SHDF to deliver upgrades to 1,600 council homes over a three year period. If successful this would significantly uplift the percentage of homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above from the current level of 52%, going some way to help achieve the Government's target of all properties with an EPC 'C' rating by 2030.
34. The new build housing sector has seen a slow down in delivery largely due to the impact of the nutrient neutrality designation, it is anticipated that this will continue throughout this year. Recently applications have been progressing and gaining consent, and there have been 100 completions in quarter two of this year.
35. The council has reviewed and streamlined the Disabled Facilities Grant. The Adult Services Team now leads the management of applications, communication and approvals; working with the Commissioning Team who leads contract oversight.

## Living Well:

36. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed with partners and takes a life course approach underpinned by thematic priorities. The strategy was presented and approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2024.
37. In addition to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy there is also work ongoing to develop the public health approach to tackling health inequalities, working in partnership with key stakeholders. Priorities include developing the Physical Activity Strategy and Healthy Weight Plan; delivering strategic priorities and actions on domestic abuse and sexual violence through a partnership board; refreshing the domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy with Durham County Council; and working with the Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership to monitor local plans.
38. Council teams continue to collaborate with health and care partners to support residents, particularly through the NHS led Integrated Care Board arrangements and partnership with the Foundation Trusts. A task and finish group has recently been set up to review the intermediate care offer.
39. The Dolphin Centre pool complex fully reopened in August 2024 after significant refurbishment. The new toddler pool is popular with families and swimming lessons are at their highest numbers since 2019, with lessons accommodating over 900 children. Memberships are at their highest ever levels and a partnership with Darlington College has driven more student use, with 600 active accounts using the facilities at off peak times.
40. Events and hospitality at the Dolphin Centre have seen the return of the BBC Make a Difference Awards and the hosting of the United Dance Organisation Dance Competition which attracted an audience from across the country. The significant investment in new facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex is also encouraging an increase in visits and substantial growth in women and girls' participation.
41. There is an increase in residential care by older people (aged 65+) in Darlington. The council is actively working to reduce the reliance on residential care through the strength-based practice approach and through a home first approach to hospital discharges. This trend will continue to be monitored.
42. Work on the adult social care transformation plan is ongoing, the team has introduced Netcall within the adult contact team to ensure timely, effective and efficient referral pathways for people contacting adult services. The new support plan review process has also been implemented to undertake reviews of support plans and needs, and ensure a timely review process. The adult social care engagement and co-production strategy has been developed and shared with local groups including Darlington Association on Disability, with an agreement to develop co-produced activities and plans.
43. Market capacity for community placements continues to be a challenge. In support of developing a sustainable care market in Darlington the council has worked with colleagues across health, housing and the VCSE sector to develop a Market Position Statement and Commissioning Strategy with an Accommodation with Care and Support Needs Strategy (Adults) and a Sufficiency Statement (Children).

### **Children and Young People:**

44. The council has increased the proportion of Children in Care who are being cared for by Local Authority Foster Carers to 20%, supported by an increase in the number of approved Foster Carer Households to 64 (50 in 2023). Short term placement instability has reduced to 9.2% compared to 15.5% in the same period in 2023.
45. The council continues to work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high-quality inclusive education sector. The Education Strategy Group launched the Darlington Inclusion Charter at an all-schools event on 21 June 2024. A new Education Exploration Partnership will be facilitated by the Education Endowment Foundation to support the council and schools to develop evidence-informed practices and strategies to embed the commitment to inclusion.
46. The Education Village Academy Trust has been confirmed as the preferred sponsor of the new free school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The council is working with the Trust and the Department for Education to ensure the earliest possible opening. A local governing board has been established to ensure local planning and estates issues are identified and addressed at the earliest point.
47. A Revised Children and Young People's Plan 2024-27 has been produced with extensive engagement with children, young people and key stakeholders. The plan is a poster and video designed and produced by local children. Five priorities were agreed: health, education, family and carers, employment and community. The plan will be launched in the second half of this year with regular updates published on the council's website.
48. The Young Darlington Advisors project has been established bring together current work to involve young people in service development and design and enable it to happen on a wider scale. The young people will form a board, and membership will be from local young people aged 13-19 (or up to 25 for care leavers or those with an Education Health Care Plan/Special Education Needs plan). To date six young people have been identified to for the board and training is currently underway.
49. The council continues to successfully manage the safety valve plan for the education budget. The council is on track to eliminate the deficit within the terms of the agreement by 2026/27. After being approached by the Department for Education, the council has agreed to take part in ISOS-led research to reflect Darlington's successful use of the safety valve initiative for SEND funding to address historic budget deficits and support sustainable financial delivery.
50. The April and September 2024 roll out of expanding funded childcare entitlement has progressed well with no current evidence of unmet demand.

### **Communities:**

51. Work continues with partners to reduce the burden of the cost of living, supported by the Government's Household Support Fund. Round 6 delivery is being supported by the voluntary and community sector and will deliver: one-off payments of £175 for 1000 households living in food and fuel poverty; one-off payment of £175 for 550 pensioners; home energy proofing for elderly residents via Age UK; food provision for Darlington

foodbanks; vouchers for children in receipt of free school meals; support for care leavers and up to £100 support via Citizens Advice for residents experiencing financial crisis.

52. Combined total incidents of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) have seen a decline compared to the previous quarter (crime is down by 16% and ASB up by 13%). The ASB trailblazer project focuses activity across 8 hotspot areas and 575 patrols were undertaken between 1 July and 22 October 2024.
53. Whilst crime figures have declined, burglary, vehicle crime and shoplifting are areas being monitored and targeted. Support for business is provided by the Shopwatch network which now has a membership of 167; and work is ongoing to ensure all retail and businesses have a means of communication outside of this membership.
54. To support community safety Future Pathways held the first of three community events in the Eastbourne Community Arena with sporting and intergenerational activities for young people, police and council staff. North Road and North Gate Community Cohesion Panel has been set up with financial support for locally driven community initiatives. For rural areas progress continues as rural crime co-ordinators have been appointed and support has been offered to Darlington's rural areas.
55. Council officers have continued to tackle problems associated with fly tipping and waste in back lanes with 118 environmental crime cases received. The majority of cases have been closed and a range of actions have been taken including 1 prosecution for breach of a Community Protection Notice, 3 Fixed Penalty Notices issued and 10 prosecutions for environmental offences.
56. The begging figures for July to September 2024 show a decrease of 36% when compared to the same period last year, with support services offering support to those still on the streets. Further information on the council's approach to homelessness is in the Homes priority.
57. Partnership working with key agencies continues to support communities to remain safe and resilient. Number 40 continues to provide a service to anyone who needed assistance on a night out in Darlington, supported by volunteers. Darlington Cares membership and volunteering continues to grow to support the delivery of a programme of activities focussing on three areas: environment, education and social justice.

#### **Local Environment:**

58. Figures show high use of council-run cultural and sporting facilities, and in some cases such as the Theatre Hullabaloo significant growth. Hopetown Darlington is a new facility and opened to the public on 16 July 2024. The railway-based visitor attraction welcomed 55,000 visitors in the first 10 weeks. The official opening took place on 27 September, the 199<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and was officially opened by The Worshipful the Mayor of Darlington Cllr Bob Donoghue.
59. The Stockton and Darlington Railway 200 Festival was launched to the media at Darlington Hippodrome on 19 September 2024. This will be a nine-month international festival beginning in March 2025 and Hopetown will be central to several key events.

60. The annual events programme continues to be a success offering free welcoming activity to attract visitors to the town centre and customers to businesses. The council is working with high street businesses to ensure the programme of events is planned to encourage movement around the town centre and increase dwell time. Events this year have included animation days such as dinosaur day and large-scale music events using the stage in the market square.
61. There has been a fall in the percentage of household waste collected by the council that is sent to landfill. It is at its lowest level at 16.3% as more waste is sent to energy recovery and causes less environmental impact. However waste recycling continues to be a challenge, with the amount of waste that is recycled, composted or reused falling slightly in recent years. There is ongoing work by Street Scene and communications teams to increase recycling and reduce contamination.
62. Cabinet will receive a paper before the end of this financial year on the implementation of a new weekly food waste collection service. The team has been working on delivery options but there are some challenges with the resourcing of this service as Government funding will not be sufficient. The Chief Executive and the MP for Darlington have both written to DEFRA expressing concerns and seeking clarification.
63. Finally, work is progressing with studies on flood risk in Darlington, with a particular focus on mitigating the impact of climate change. The Darlington Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP) study has prioritised a scheme covering West Beck and Cocker Beck watercourses including the Cockerton area. The Flood Asset Risk Study identified a scheme on West Beck which has been incorporated into the NIDP, and business case is currently being assessed for a scheme at Killerby.



# Darlington Borough Council

## Council Plan Performance Management Report

### 2024/25 Quarter 2

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## Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

Darlington is a wonderful place to live and work and we want opportunities to be accessible to everyone. We will have a long-term focus on understanding and addressing the causes of inequality ensuring our communities are safe and can thrive.

### Develop a cross-council approach based on an in-depth understanding of inequalities and their causes, with a focus on local communities experiencing disadvantage

Preparation of a report analysing inequality to be discussed with the Council's Policy Team with an option paper to be presented to the Council's Chief Officers Board and Chief Officers Executive. The report would consider approaches taken by other local authorities and include consideration of 'poverty proofing' Council services, how collaboration with voluntary, public and business partners could be focused to address inequality, and how discretionary funding, such as the Long Term Plan for Towns, may be deployed.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities



**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**

Following consultation the final version of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was agreed at the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 5th December 2024. The development of the strategy has been underpinned by a consideration of health inequalities, building upon the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the recommendations of the Marmot Review. The thematic priorities to be taken forward will explicitly include consideration of inequalities, for example by understanding the difference in outcomes across wards in Darlington (where the data is available) and targeting actions to those population groups or geographical areas where need is greatest.

The council has been taking an active role as a member of the North East Child Poverty Commission to inform lobbying on key issues for the national Child Poverty Strategy. This has included taking part in themed roundtables, a workshop specifically organised for Tees Valley partners, and ensuring representation from the voluntary and community sector.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

**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. We will work with communities to understand first-hand the challenges they face**

Household Support Fund (HSF) Round 6 is being delivered through voluntary and community organisations and will provide:

- Vouchers during holiday period for children currently in receipt of Free School Meals
- Support for Care Leavers
- 1000 households identified by the Low Income Family Tracker as living in food and fuel poverty will be contacted directly and offered a one off payment of £175.00
- 550 pensioners identified by the Low Income Family Tracker as eligible but not claiming pension credit or those who miss out on pension credit by up to £1000 annually will be contacted directly and offered a one off payment of £175.00
- Elderly residents will be offered support in energy proofing their homes via Age UK
- Darlington-based foodbanks will be supported with food provision.

A new element this year is an online application for those experiencing financial crisis. Residents can apply for up to £100 via Citizens Advice. This is open to anyone but residents need to meet set criteria to be eligible.

A further round of HSF has been announced for 2025/26. A continued focus will be given to supporting benefit take up which has a sustained positive impact on households' income.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

## Core Principle: Tackling climate change

The changing climate impacts all our lives now and we know this is particularly important to our younger residents. One of the first things we did when we came to office was bring forward by 10 years, to 2040, the Council's commitment to being carbon neutral.

### Deliver the climate change action plan to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040

The climate change action plan is reported on twice a year to Cabinet and Council. An annual report is also published on the Council's website. The Council has made progress on the actions within the plan and are following the trajectory of 40% reduction in the council's carbon emissions every five years. The Council is over half way towards the carbon neutral target.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

## Involve all parts of the council in a cross-council approach to sustainability and climate change

The Council's Climate Change commitment is a cross-council ambition, with actions in our action plan from directorates across the Council.

This year has seen the second year of the popular Eco Fair held in June 2024. This year more than 5,000 people passed through the marquee to engage with hands on crafts, science demonstrations and interactive theatre shows, while also exploring various eco-friendly products and services.

The Council held a Members' seminar and invited representatives from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Association for Public Sector Excellence.

The Council recently begun work on a trial for the Department for Food and Rural Affairs to report it's adaptation activities. It required the authority to risk assess it's activities against those identified by the Climate Change Commission in its last climate change risk assessment. Officers from across the Council have been involved in this piece of work, which will help ensure we are resilient to future climate change.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

## Work alongside our business community collaborating with groups such as the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership to transition to net zero

The Council continues to be an active member of the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership and also sit on the Steering Group for the partnership.

The Council's Business Development Team newsletter carries information and articles relevant to Darlington businesses, including sources of help and funding to support the business community transition to net zero.

The Council's Communications Team creates content to showcase what businesses have been able to achieve and use it's own successes to inspire and encourage. The climate change pages of the website also have sources of advice and information for businesses.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

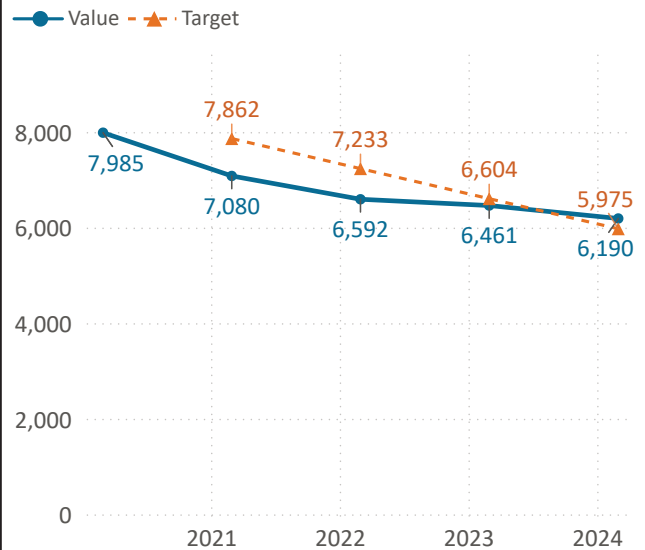
**Work with partners, government, public and private sectors and residents for a resilient Darlington so we are able to respond and adapt to change.**

Darlington Employers Environment Partnership (DEEP) was set up in 2023. It brings together likeminded local businesses to generate more sustainable outcomes from products, services and approaches. In September it held a network and learn event at the North East Net Zero Innovation Centre. As a consequence, two DEEP members were able to engage in Net Zero research projects being delivered by the Centre.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director  
 Core Principle: Tackling climate change

**Darlington Borough Council emissions (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)**

Overall carbon emissions for the council continue to fall. The year 2023/24 saw us at 6,190 tonnes. We are slightly above our projected trajectory because the electricity grid used more natural gas generation than renewables, so the conversion factor we use to convert energy use to carbon emissions was higher than previous years. We continue to take actions to reduce our energy and fuel use.



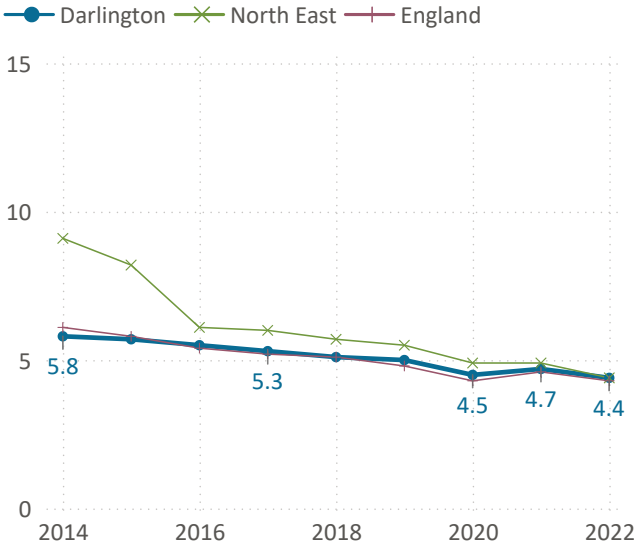
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth  
 Core Principle: Tackling climate change  
 Key Deliverable: Deliver the climate change action plan to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040

### CO2 emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)

Data for this indicator is published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, two years in arrears. Therefore the latest data is for 2022. The data shows a drop in per capita emissions to 4.4kt/person. This is equal to the north east per capita emissions and just 0.1 above England emissions.

We are continuing to push social media and communications messages to residents, young people and businesses to encourage action from everybody. Our Eco Fair in June 2024 saw more than 5,000 people attending the event.

We are supporting the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership and its efforts to reach out to businesses across Darlington.



- Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth
- Core Principle: Tackling climate change
- Key Deliverable: Work alongside our business community collaborating with groups such as the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership to transition to net zero

## Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of 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 businesses.

### Deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan and positive Value For Money outcome

Council approved the 2024/25 - 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) at their meeting in February 2024. The quarter 2 revenue budget management report identified a projected decline in the MTFP during 2024/25 of approximately £1.36m mainly due to national pressures in Homeless and Adult Services. All services continue to scrutinise their budgets to assist with the current and future years budget.

The Council is currently in the process of preparing the next MTFP for 2025/26 - 2028/29 which will be presented to Full Council in February 2025 for approval.

The latest audit report of the Council accounts undertaken by our external auditors EY has not identified any significant weaknesses in the arrangements to secure value for money in the use of Council resources.

Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Deliver high quality governance and decision making

Statutory officers met to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance and work progress on 8 March, 2 September and 9 December 2024.

The Constitution was reviewed with updating changes approved by Council on 28 November 2024. In July 2024 a Member Working Group began to review Council Decision Making and the role of Scrutiny Committees.

The Audit Committee received reports on Ethical Governance and Member Standards on 8 April 2024 and 4 November 2024.

Complaints reports and Ombudsman decisions were considered by Cabinet on 10 September 2024 for transparency and to assist with organisational learning.

Training been ongoing during 2024 on a range of topics including; Code of Conduct, Procurement, Governance and Political Awareness. A number of Deputy Monitoring Officer training sessions were held in Nov and Dec 2024.

Council Cabinet and Committee papers have been reviewed throughout the year for compliance and delegated decisions review meetings have also been held.

The Register of gifts and hospitality has been updated throughout the year.

Staff and member coms have been circulated during the year, including topics such as the pre election period, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and Whistleblowing.

A Corporate Governance Newsletter was produced in December 2024 highlighting a range of issues.

Lead Officer: Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Review and refresh the Asset Management Plan

An Asset Management Plan has been developed over a period of time. The completion of the Asset Management Plan was delayed while completion of the Council Plan was adopted to ensure that each of these corporate documents were aligned. The Asset Management Plan is now complete and a report will be presented to a Cabinet meeting in early 2025 for Council agreement.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Review and refresh the Procurement Strategy

The Council spends millions of pounds every year and we want to use money effectively and achieve value by purchasing and procuring what we need at the right price and quality.

The Council Plan prioritises growing the local economy and procurement activity can help in delivering this goal.

Whenever possible we want our spending to have positive social, economic and environmental impacts that benefit the well-being of local people.

We are working on a refreshed Procurement Strategy which will be finalised after the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 in 2025.

Lead Officer: Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Build on the Capital Project Management process by introducing an enhanced ICT system to improve efficiency and effectiveness

In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Capital Project delivery, the Capital Projects team have worked alongside the Xentrall team to develop a bespoke project management system within Microsoft Teams. This system will allow more efficient flow and recording of information and will feed into the Project Position Statement which is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The system is currently undergoing final testing before full use can begin in 2025.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources



**Review and deliver the workforce strategy**

We have commenced the refresh of the new Workforce strategy with key stakeholders. This has included meetings with the Senior Managers Network, Engagement Ambassadors, Trade Union Consultative Group, Joint Consultative Committee and Human Resources department.

Frameworks underpinning the proposed Workforce strategy pillars which provide detail on how strategic aims will be achieved and measured are also being designed in association with Public Health and other key stakeholders.

Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

**Maximise income through new joint venture companies, increase levels of business rates by growing the local economy; and maximise grant opportunities**

The Council continues to work effectively with ESH Homes Ltd to deliver a number of housing sites in the Borough. These developments include Blackwell (Havelock Park) and Neasham Road. A reserved matters planning application is being finalised for 300 homes on Burtree Garden Village. Construction work on the 4 commercial units along Tornado way nears completion which will provide circa 500,000 sqft of commercial space which, when occupied, will contribute significantly to business rates income.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Explore opportunities to exploit digital assets to create efficiencies and increase productivity, including online delivery

A draft Digital Darlington Strategy has been produced in preparation for consultation. It will help the council be more efficient and productive through the use of technology. Work to improve the content and functionality of the corporate website, and to maximise the benefits available from our back office systems is ongoing. A campaign to raise awareness and use of our online services instead of other channels that cost the council more has been developed and will be rolled out in the Autumn. We are exploring how artificial intelligence and other technology such as Alexa skills can be of benefit to the council and its customers, and the governance controls that need to put in place first.

Lead Officer: Elizabeth Davison: Group Director of Operations

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Continue to build strong relationships with partners, residents and communities.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group continues to be an effective way for the Council to engage with the sector. Following the disturbances over the summer, the Community Safety manager was able to discuss community cohesion with the group and develop better communication processes should they be needed in any future incidents.

The Public Sector Executive Group continues to provide a means for the Chief Executive to meet with his counterparts in the other public sector agencies. A project exploring how agencies could work together more effectively was discussed at its last meeting in September.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

## Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all**

**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**

An Inclusive Growth Strategy is being developed as part of the Economic Growth Strategy for Darlington. There are a number of large scale investments which will present real opportunities for people within the Borough to gain employment. In addition these investments offer opportunities for local businesses to be included within the various tiering of procurement levels to provide services and goods.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes**

A new place based partnership with stakeholders will form part of the Long Term Plan for Towns. This will include representatives from retail, hospitality and other businesses within the town centre, including Darlington Economic Campus, and other employers in sub-centres including Cockerton. The new partnership will be chaired by an independent representative with the overall objective to increase business activity and employment within the town centre.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Ensure that the borough is safe, clean and maintained to levels that support the economy and encourage inward investment**

Prevention and education measures are used to intervene in problems, with enforcement a tool that can be used to when appropriate to help protect the appearance of the town, damage to the environment and public health issues. In quarters 1 and 2, 2,297 environmental cases were reported, of which 76 resulted in some form of enforcement action (1 in 4 cases).

Street Scene continues to sustain levels of cleanliness to the highest standard within the constraints of available resources. Overall cleanliness of the area following independent auditing confirms an average score of 85% which falls within the 'excellent' category.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**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.**

The Council continue to work with employers in the local area to develop good job and career opportunities. Working with individual or clusters of local businesses, they are encouraged to develop their skills pipeline and invest in recruiting and sustaining talent by helping identify the support and or training they need. The Council also continue to host the Darlington Jobs Fair, with the last event in October 2024 attracting almost 1000 jobseekers. At the event around 100 employers and support organisations helping people find work, and support in overcoming any barriers to employment.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Provide more education and skills opportunities for residents by delivering the Adult Skills Centre and collaborating with providers and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)**

It is anticipated that the Adult Skills Centre based in the Northern Echo Building will be open in July 2025. Agreement between Darlington Council Learning and Skills and Darlington College has been made. In addition further discussions with other providers including the Department of Work and Pensions and the voluntary sector have commenced with the aim of establishing an holistic service provision for learning and skills.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Work with Market Asset Management to deliver improvements to the historic indoor market**

Market Asset Management successfully completed phase 3 of the market refurbishment project in July 2024. The new trading area has begun to attract new traders including a florist, various delicatessens, jewellery stalls and retro clothes store. In addition there has been established a stall which sells goods manufactured by various small scale producers. The market hall is now viewed as a community hub used by various organisations and corporate businesses.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Accelerate the delivery of key sites to the market to attract private sector investment, including Darlington Science Park, Ingenium Parc and Symmetry Park**

Two key sites which include Symmetry Park are being developed by private sector investors. Overall approximately 500,000 sqft of commercial space will be delivered by mid 2025. The occupier for one of the buildings has indicated that this will create approximately 150 new jobs. Working with partners from CPI and Teesside University a new marketing and promotion of the remaining sites at Darlington Science Park (formally known as Central Park ) has commenced.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

**Deliver the Towns Fund projects, including the refurbishment of the Northern Echo building to secure new business occupiers**

The Town Fund Programme continues to deliver real tangible improvements to the town centre. The refurbishment of the Northern Echo Building is in progress with the Adult Skills Hub planned to be opened in July 2025. The refurbishment of the upper floors into high quality office accommodation will be complete in early 2026. Improvements to shops and public realm along Skinnergate and the Yards together with improvements along Victoria Road continue. The redevelopment of Coniscliffe Road commenced in October 2024 which will provide permanent outdoor seating for hospitality businesses together with public realm improvements. Two key buildings along Northgate have gained planning permission for redevelopment, 156 Northgate to be developed into quality office accommodation and an element of the historic home of Edward Pease into a home for Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR). Conversations with the owners of Northgate Tower are continuing.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth  
Council Plan Priority: Economy

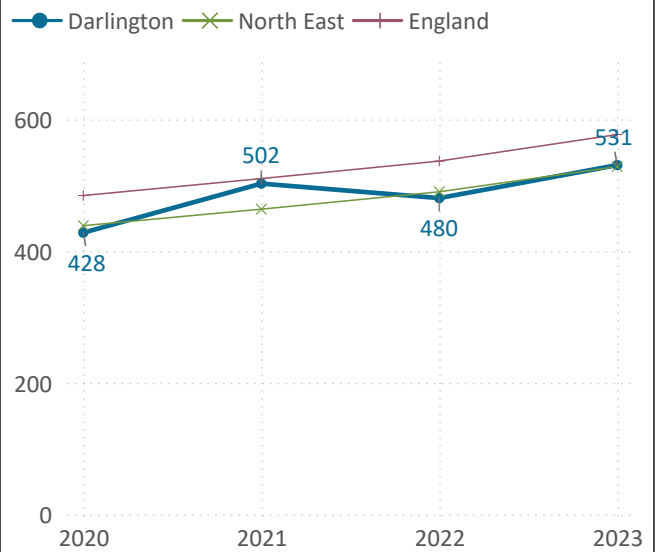
**Work effectively with Darlington Economic Campus to fully realise the opportunities this investment presents to the town and its communities**

Close working arrangements with officers from Darlington Economic Campus (EDC) continues. The DEC have played a pivotal role in the recent job fairs where they have effectively promoted various roles and careers that are currently available within the civil service in Darlington. Officers have worked with Government Property Agency to finalise designs for the permanent DEC building on Brunswick Street. It is anticipated that work will commence in early 2025 with local construction firms being invited to submit bids for work.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth  
Council Plan Priority: Economy

## Median weekly all residence based earnings

Darlington resident median weekly earnings increased by 10.6% to £531 in 2023. This annual increase was greater than both the North East figure (7.7%) and the England figure (7.5%). The weekly median all residence based earnings is now £46 less than the England level and £3 more than the North East level. The long term trend projection for Darlington shows gradual increases.



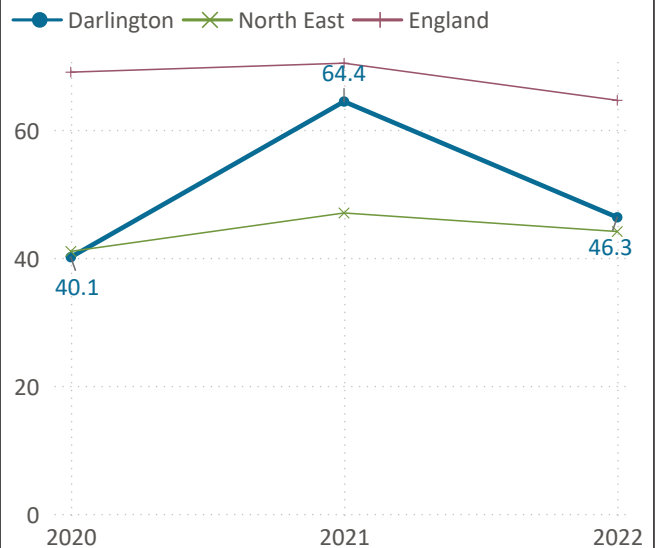
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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

## New business registration rate per 10,000 residents

New business formation rates have fallen in Darlington since 2018, an overall trend mirrored by both the rates for the North East and England. The data shows figures up to 2022 and are significantly impacted by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the number of new business registrations per 10,000 residents in Darlington was 46.3, significantly lower than the England rate of 64.6



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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



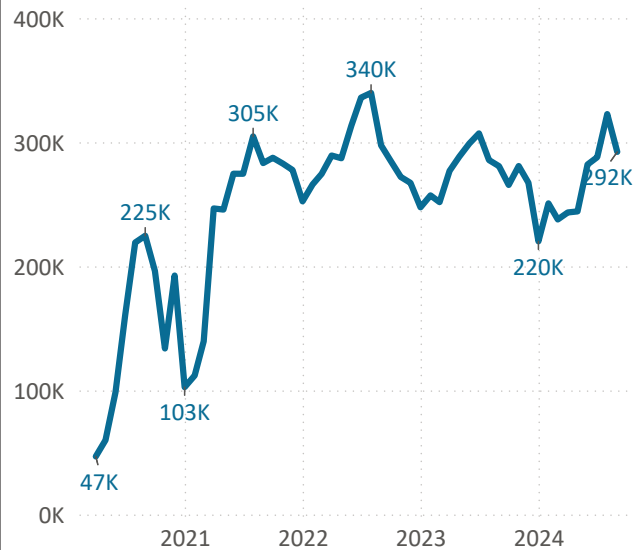
## Town centre footfall weekly average for the month

The trendline for town centre footfall continues to follow a similar trendline, August (+12.97%) and September (+4.1%) have been higher than 2023 figures.

The redevelopment of the covered market is well advanced, with another 5 new retailers across a variety of food and retail are now trading on the market floor this has added increased interest and footfall into the market hall building.

Town centre animation and events attract increased numbers into the town centre aimed at encouraging visitors to dwell for longer in Darlington and move around different locations.

Occupancy rates continue to sit at 88% with a number of new businesses opening in units that had become vacant.



Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes

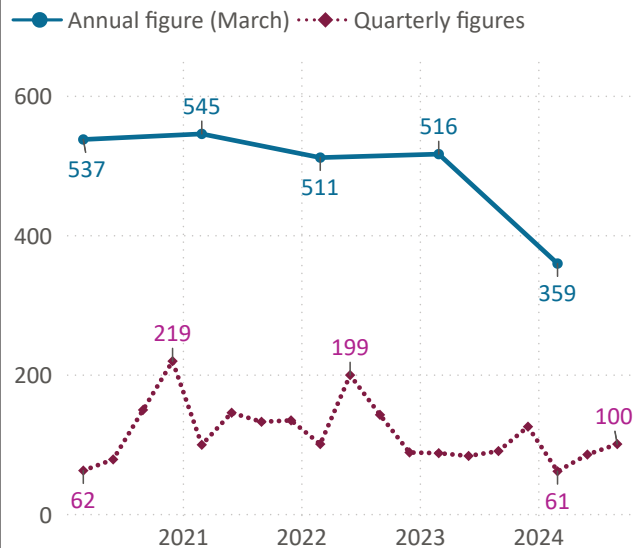
## New homes delivered, annually

Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality (NN) designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment.

Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England NN credit scheme. The Borough has fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington.

Looking at the latest monitoring data on housing starts this lag in delivery may continue for the current financial year 2024/25 but will hopefully recover beyond that with the permissions currently being granted likely to have started.

There were 100 completions in Q2 of 24/25. This is slightly up from 90 completions at Q2 of last year.

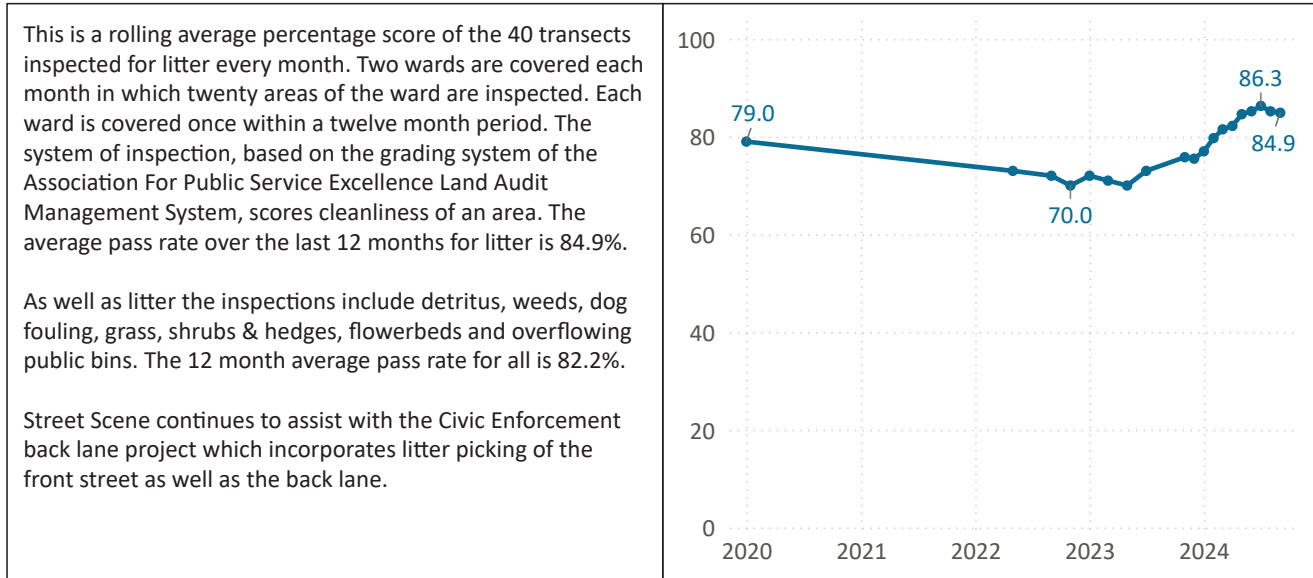


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes

## Land Audit Management System - Litter Score (Environmental Quality Survey)

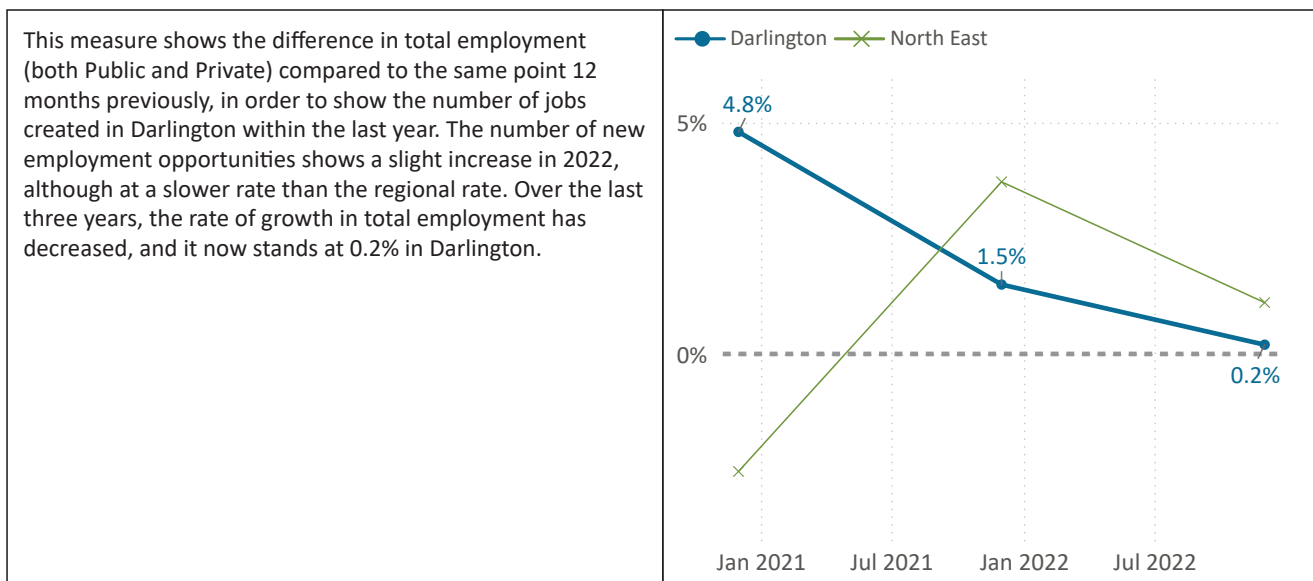


Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Ensure that the borough is safe, clean and maintained to levels that support the economy and encourage inward investment

## Change in total employment since previous year



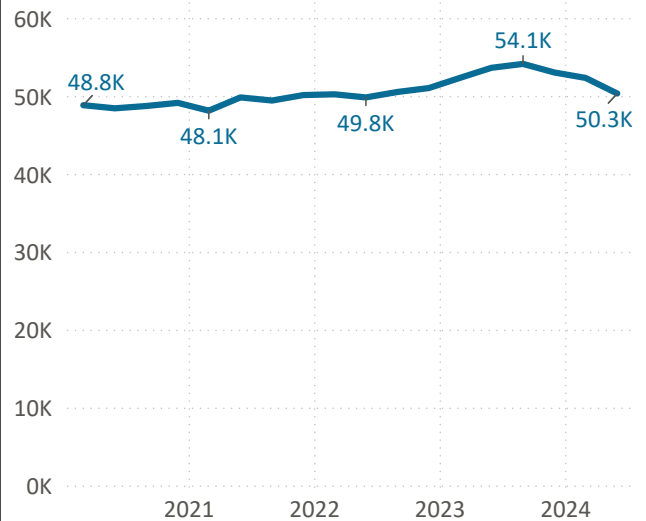
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Number of people employed including self-employed

As of June 2024, the total number of people employed (including both employees and self-employed individuals) now stands at 50,300. This is a decrease of 3,300 on the same time 12 months previously. There's no stand out reason for this decline, and it could be due to a variety of factors such as national economic challenges, shifts in local industries, or broader regional trends. Nevertheless, the long-term trendline demonstrates a gradual increase.



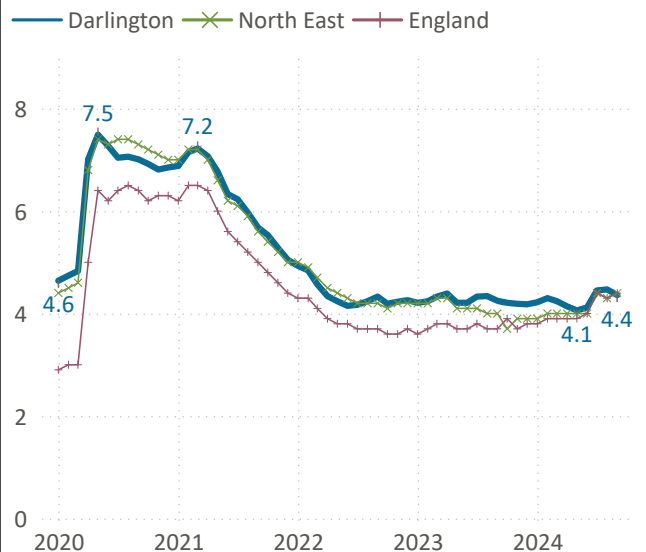
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Monthly unemployed claimant count (%)

Since mid-2022 to date, the monthly unemployed claimant count in Darlington has remained relatively static - a trend which is mirrored in national statistics. The claimant count in September 2024 now stands at 4.4%. The rate in Darlington (4.4) is identical to both the North East and England rates. The static nature of this measure can be attributed to several factors, including economic inactivity, post-pandemic labour market mismatches and economic uncertainty.

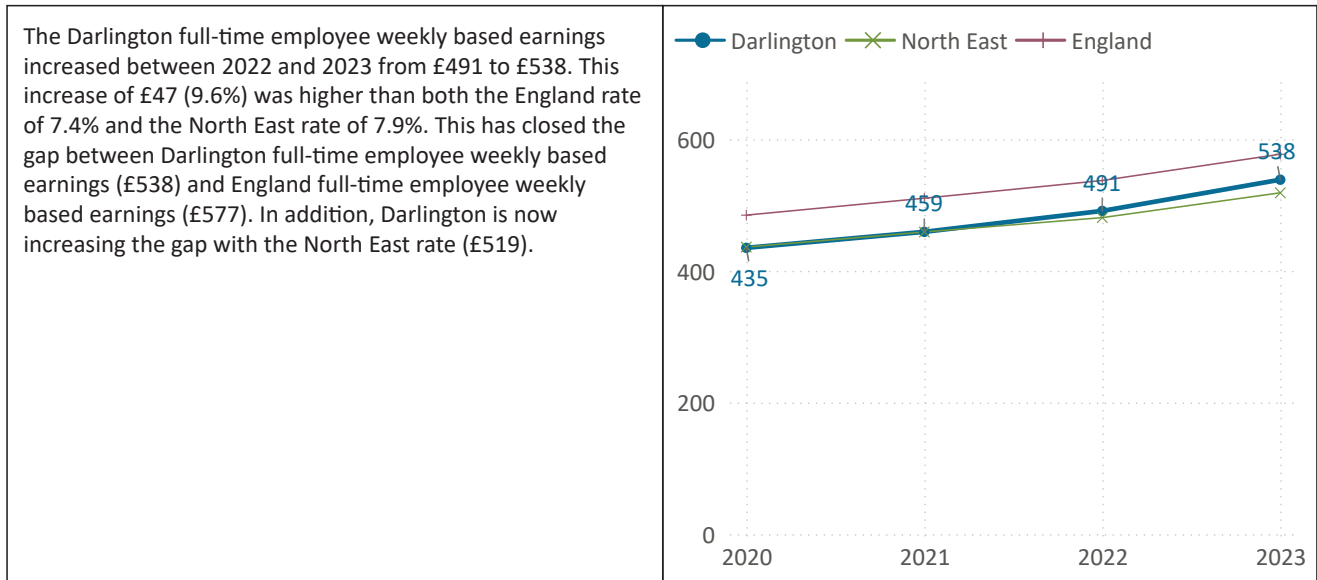


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Median weekly full-time employee based earnings



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Council Plan Priority: Homes

**Affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents**

**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**

A new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025-30 is currently being developed with our partners and stakeholders and is due for public consultation in November 2024. The strategy will then be considered by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2025, before approval by Cabinet and publication in February 2025. Our key priorities being proposed for the strategy will be:

- Working in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations, other social housing providers, Public Health and other statutory agencies to prevent homelessness.
- Tackling rough sleeping by implementing our agreed Rough Sleeper Plan.
- Increasing the amount and improving the quality of temporary accommodation.
- Addressing homelessness faced by particular groups of people, including those presenting with multiple or complex needs.
- Improving move on accommodation provision, including specialist housing and support provision.
- Securing funding to increase accommodation and resources.

Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Council Plan Priority: Homes

## Review our approach to empty homes across the borough so more quality homes are available

According to Council Tax data (October 2024) there were 1869 empty properties on the database. This equates to approximately 3% of all properties registered.

The Council does not have a dedicated resource to deal with empty homes, service requests are currently received from several sections of council using various pieces of legislation. While planning and environment legislation have been used on several occasions the complexity of the housing legislation has been less employed.

The use of legislation may address a particular problem in time it does not necessarily address the fundamental issue of the property being vacant.

A review of empty homes and the legislation used by each section of the Council will be carried out and a report will be produced to detail developing a council approach to empty homes and the resources required for recommended changes.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Homes

## Support the delivery of more social houses and supported accommodation by building more council homes and working with other social landlords and charities

Our Council housing new build site at Neasham Road will deliver 150 new homes, including 130 affordable rented properties, 19 rent to buy properties and one property for Children's Services. The first 22 homes have already been completed and tenants moved in, in September 2024. Further phases will be released during 2024 and 2025, with the site due for completion by the end of next year. The scheme has been partly funded by Homes England, with a grant of £7.35 million.

Our Council housing new build site at Sherborne Close (phase 2) commenced in July 2024 and will deliver 14 new homes, including 11 affordable rented properties, 2 rent to buy properties and one property for Children's Services. Completion of the site is due in August 2025. The scheme has been partly funded by Homes England, with a grant of £0.91 million.

Our Council housing site at Skinnergate is due to commence in 2025, following demolition of the existing commercial buildings. The site will deliver new shops and 16 new homes, all of which will be affordable rented properties, and is due to complete in 2026. A bid for Homes England funding is currently being made and we are expecting a grant of £1.12 million to help fund the project.

Further Council housing new build schemes are currently being worked up to increase the availability of social housing in Darlington to help meet additional demand, with over 2,000 households currently registered on our waiting list.

Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Council Plan Priority: Homes

**Develop and deliver a new homes strategy, to address housing need, including ensuring social and affordable homes across the borough, in accordance with the Local Plan**

Work is underway on a Housing Strategy, we are currently involved in engagement with various interested parties and there will be a meeting in the near future to update Members with progress. It was agreed to delay progress until the Council Plan was agreed.

The Housing Strategy will now be progressed in the coming months and will hopefully be in a position to present to Cabinet in the New Year.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Homes

**Continue to improve the quality of housing through healthy home design principles and ensuring developers create greater energy efficiency in new homes**

The Council is awaiting the Governments consideration on Future Homes Standards and changes to Building Regulations as it is still not clear how Planning Authorities can exceed Building Regulation requirements. The Council will continue to monitor Government announcements and advise Members when the situation is clear. The Council may be able to alter planning policy in a subsequent review of the Local Plan depending on Government advice.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Homes

**Continue investment in Council housing to ensure quality and greater energy efficiency**

Improving the energy efficiency of our Council homes is a key priority for Housing Services and work is ongoing to achieve the Government targets of all properties rated as Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C or above by 2030 and net zero carbon by 2050, as set out in our approved Housing Services Climate Change Strategy.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) wave 1 has already scheme delivered external and cavity wall insulation, Air Source Heat Pumps, loft insulation and solar panels to 23 Council homes using £0.24 million of Government funding and £0.28 million of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital expenditure.

SHDF wave 2 commenced in September 2024 and is due to complete in June 2025. The scheme will deliver external and cavity wall insulation, solar panels, loft insulation, double glazing, and low energy lighting to 130 Council homes using £1.27 million of Government funding and £1.27 million of HRA capital expenditure.

A bid for SHDF wave 3 is currently being prepared and is due to be submitted by the end of November 2024. If successful, the scheme will deliver upgrades to over 1,600 Council homes, over a three year period, using £8.9 million of Government funding and £10.3 million of HRA capital expenditure. Delivery of SHDF wave 3 is expected to significantly increase the percentage of Council homes rated as EPC C or above, which is currently 52%.

Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Council Plan Priority: Homes

**Ensure effective use of the Disabled Facilities Grant to enable people to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible.**

The Disabled Facilities Grant process has been reviewed this quarter. the process has been streamlined with management of the applications, communication and approvals transferred to Adult Services. The contract oversight with the HIA remains within the commissioning team. The process has been adaptable to include a risk prioritisation tool to ensure those in most urgent need of the grant due to risk are prioritised within the application process and timescales. This will be monitored through bi-monthly meetings. an EIA was completed with no adverse impacts as individuals waiting for grant applications will be provided with appropriate advice or support.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Homes



## Introduce additional licensing 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

Office of National Statistics data indicates that Darlington’s private rented stock is at 20.77%, higher than the national average and the highest in the Tees Valley region.

The regulation of rented properties and property management is carried out by several organisations. Following a review of existing and proposed legislation the following schemes will be investigated -

- A voluntary landlords charter
- The introduction of additional licensing for homes of multiple occupation
- Introduction of selective licencing in areas with a high number of private rented sector homes

A report will be produced to detail the development of the Council’s approach to its responsibilities for property management in line with the introduction of the Renters’ rights bill. This report will detail the resources required for the recommended changes.

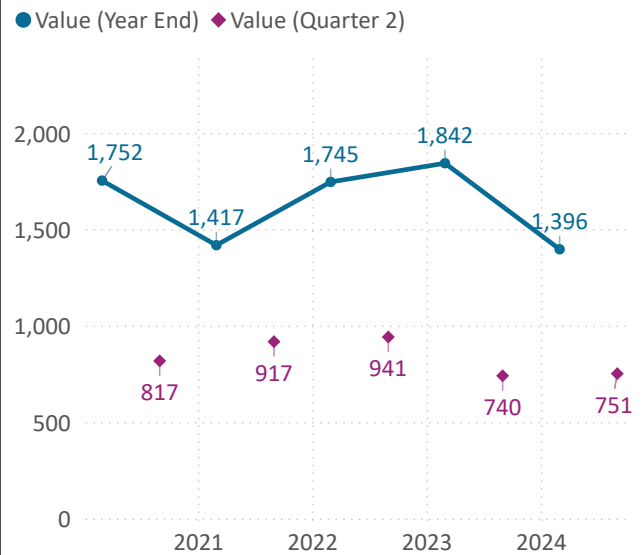
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Homes

## Number of people presented to Darlington Council's Homeless service

The number of homeless presentations to the Housing Options Service by quarter 2 of 2024-25 has increased slightly to 751 compared to 740 for the same period in 2023-24.

Additional staffing for the Housing Options Team, funded through The Rough Sleeper Initiative, has enabled a dedicated rough sleeper co-ordinator, a navigator, and an outreach worker, to be embedded within the team, delivering effective early intervention and prevention work. This enables referrals from other organisations to be managed and acted upon, to plan where applicants can go when released from hospital or prison. For those applicants served with eviction notices in the private rented sector, the team work with landlords and applicants to proactively look for accommodation before their tenancy comes to an end.

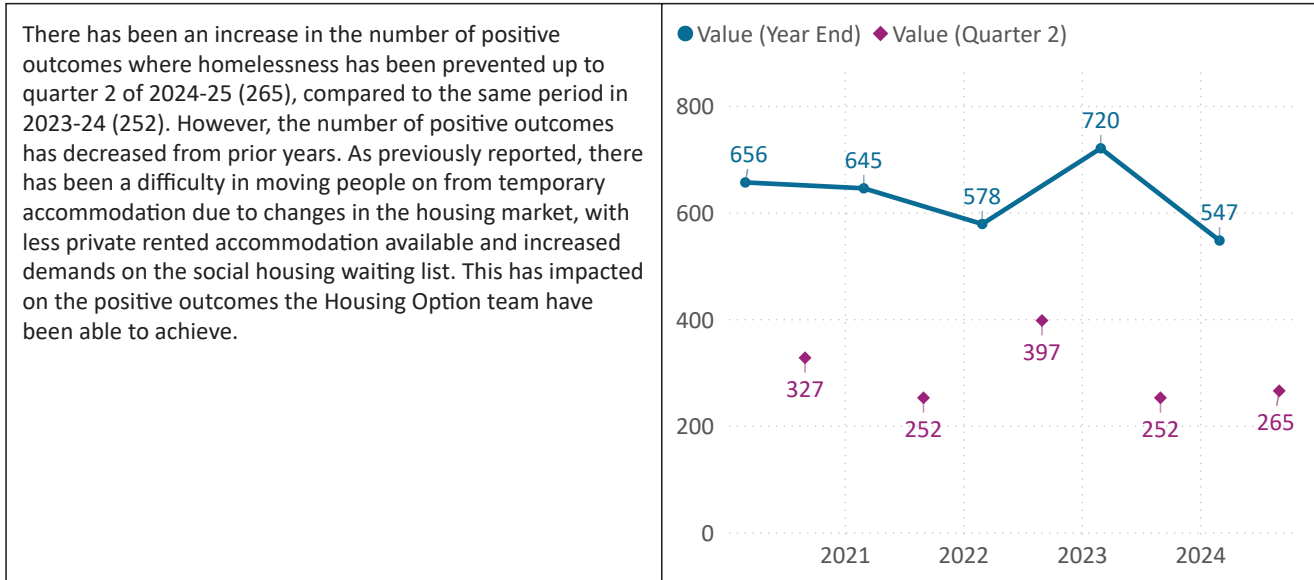


Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: 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

## Number of positive outcomes where homelessness has been prevented

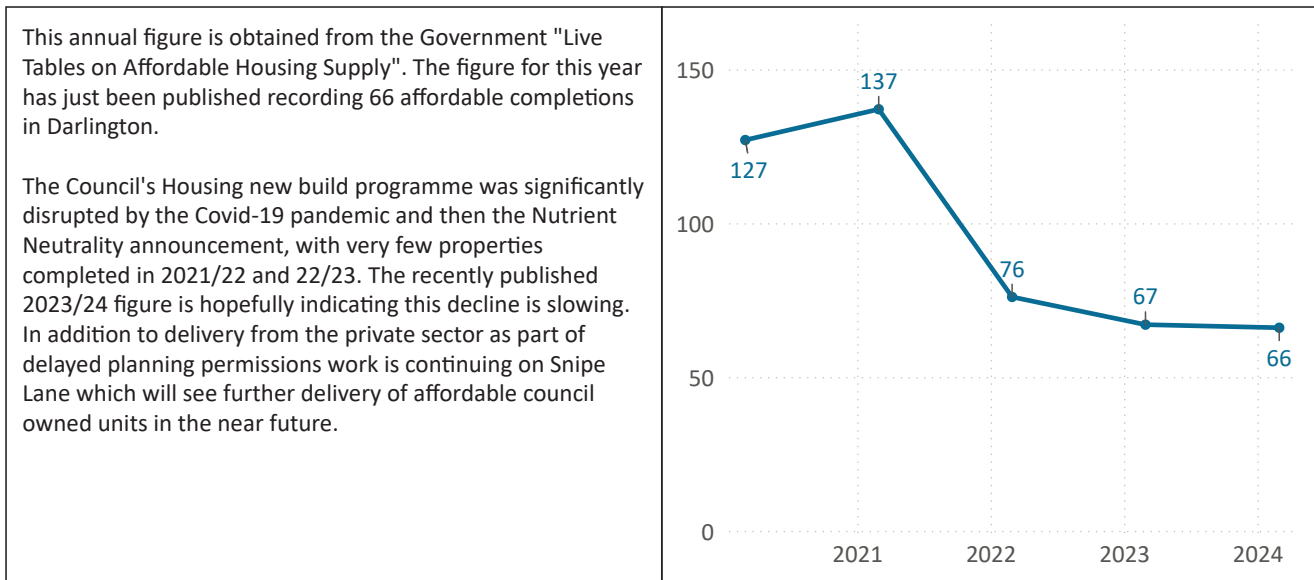


Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: 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

## Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: Develop and deliver a new homes strategy, to address housing need, including ensuring social and affordable homes across the borough, in accordance with the Local Plan

## Council Plan Priority: Living well

A healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most

### 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

Adults and Commissioning Teams continue to work with the Integrated Care Board and with the Foundation Trusts to develop, maintain and deliver joint approaches to health and social care for people with care and support needs in Darlington. In this quarter we have established a task and finish group to review the intermediate care offer. We have held the second quarterly collaboration meeting with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV).

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: 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**

The draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed and shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health and Housing OSC and other stakeholders. Feedback is being reviewed and a final version of the Strategy will be taken to the December meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Strategy takes a life course approach, underpinned by a number of thematic priorities.

Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

**Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity**

Progress continues to be made in developing the public health approach to tackling health inequalities, including through the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Physical Activity Strategy and Healthy Weight Plan, all of which are in draft form and at different stages of being agreed. Development of the strategies and plans have been informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which provides a summary of the local health needs in Darlington, including an understanding of health inequalities.

Strategic priorities and actions on domestic abuse and sexual violence continue to be driven through the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG), which is a partnership board. The Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy is currently being refreshed in partnership with Durham County Council. The review of the needs assessment is to be completed.

Local plans for drugs and alcohol are monitored through the governance arrangements of the Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership. The additional funding available through the Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant to support expansion of local service delivery is only in place until end of March 2025. A decision is awaited on any future funding allocation from April 2025 onwards.

Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

## Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

After significant structural works and refurbishment, the full pool complex reopened at the Dolphin Centre in August 2024. Visitor numbers have seen an increase with new toddler pool facilities proving very popular with families. New and returning partners have accessed the site, such as the Canoe Club and Dinkies, who provide swimming lessons for 0-4 years. Dolphin Centre swimming lessons are currently accommodating over 900 children to swim, the highest number since 2019.

Memberships are currently at an all time high and the partnership with Darlington College is encouraging real growth in student memberships. A student discount card has proven to be popular with nearly 600 active accounts using the facilities (gym, pool, sports hall, bowling) during off peak times. The relationship with Darlington College has proven successful, with another year of funding from the college for students to use the pool and gym for free during term time for their curricular activity.

Events and hospitality have welcomed significant footfall, thanks to new and returning events such as the prestigious BBC Make a Difference Awards in Central Hall with over 200 people from all over the region attending and United Dance Organisation Dance Competition in the main hall with over 600 spectators attending from all over the country.

Eastbourne Sports Complex capital project is now complete, and the new state of the art facilities and investment has seen a significant increase in visits to the site with new partner clubs, and substantial growth in women and girls participation. The team are now exploring potential football foundation applications for a new clubhouse on the new artificial grass pitch and funding to improve the wider grass pitches that would support a further increase of visits to the site.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Living well

## 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.

The work of the transformation plan is ongoing. In this quarter Adult Services have introduced Netcall within the Adult Contact team to ensure timely, effective and efficient referral pathways for people contacting Adult Services. It also enables calls to be recorded and ensure complaints/issues are resolved in a timely way. The new Support Plan review process has been implemented within the teams and will be monitored through next quarter. The purpose of the new process is to undertake a proportionate review of support plan and needs, ensuring a timely review process.

Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

**Shape a sustainable and accountable care market which delivers support focussed on promoting, regaining and maintaining people’s independence and wellbeing**

The Commissioning, Contract and Brokerage team are responsible for shaping and sustaining the local care market. They have worked with operational colleagues and partners across health, housing and the VCSE sector to develop a Market Position Statement and Commissioning Strategy with an associated Accommodation with Care and Support Needs Strategy (Adults) and a Sufficiency Statement (Children). These documents provide information about the care market in Darlington which will enable providers to understand the local context, how this is likely to change over the next couple of years and where development opportunities might arise in the future particularly those which support us to prevent, reduce, and delay care and support needs. The documents are for both existing and prospective providers and will support the delivery of both the Council Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Government grant funding has been allocated to care and support providers with the aim of addressing key pressures and challenges.

Outcome based contracts have been relet or retendered across key areas of service provision including homecare, residential care and supported living.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Living well

**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**

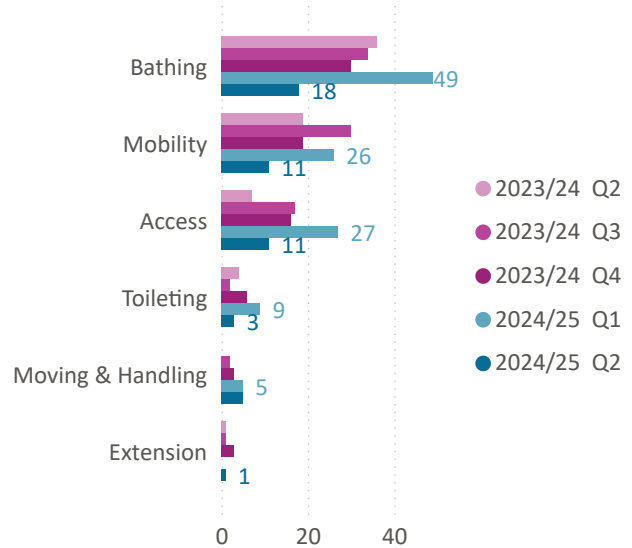
Adult Services have developed the engagement and co-production strategy. This strategy has been shared with local groups including Disability Action Darlington, with an agreement to develop co-produced activities and specific plans. The first project will establish a revised direct payments guidance document, with a co-produced training plan for social work teams. In addition the Quality Assurance Team have delivered awareness training workshops on co-production and engagement with teams and further training on asset based community development is in train for November and December 2024.

Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

## Major adaptations by type (quarterly)

There has been a significant increase in referrals for major adaptations in 2024. Currently for the first 2 quarters there has been 165 major works completed. Due to the increase in requests, we have introduced a risk prioritisation approach to support assess the urgency of need. This may result in a delay for some applications but this will be closely monitored.



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

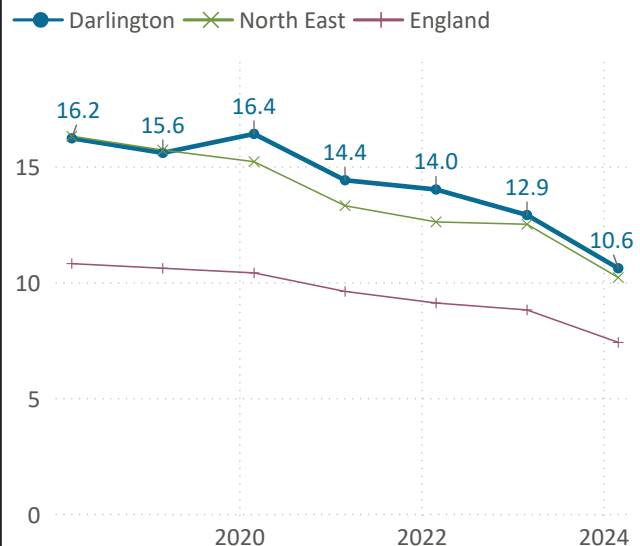
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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

## Percentage of women who smoke at time of delivery

The data (from 2023/24) shows that 10.6% of mothers are known to be smokers at time of delivery, the recent trend is decreasing and getting better. Darlington is statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England. The gap between Darlington and the North East and England has narrowed since 2020.

The NHS provides stop smoking support through local maternity services. The Local Authority commissions a specialist stop smoking service that supports women to stop smoking before and after being pregnant. The authority works with partners to encourage all residents, including pregnant mothers, to quit smoking at every opportunity.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

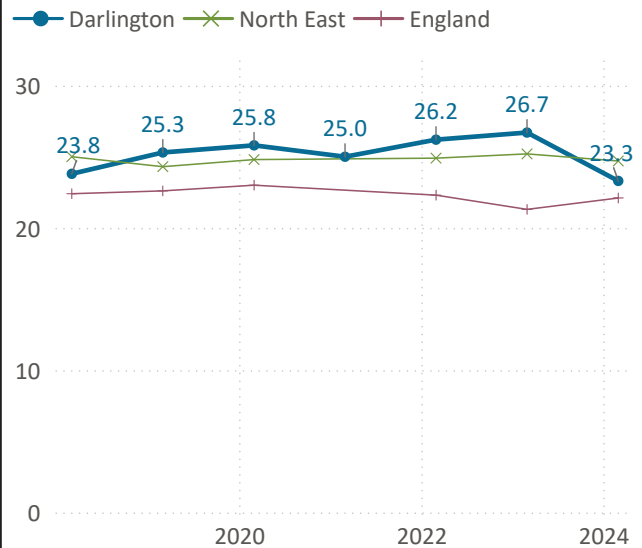
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Excess weight among Reception pupils (%)

This data (from 2023/24) shows a reduction in the rate for Reception prevalence of overweight (including obesity). 23.3% of reception children aged 4-5 years were classified as overweight or obese. Darlington is now statistically similar to the North East and England.

The Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan identified evidence-based interventions delivered with partners to address underlying causes of obesity in children and young people. Work includes activity with schools and local commercial food premises to develop a healthy catering standard for a healthy food offer.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

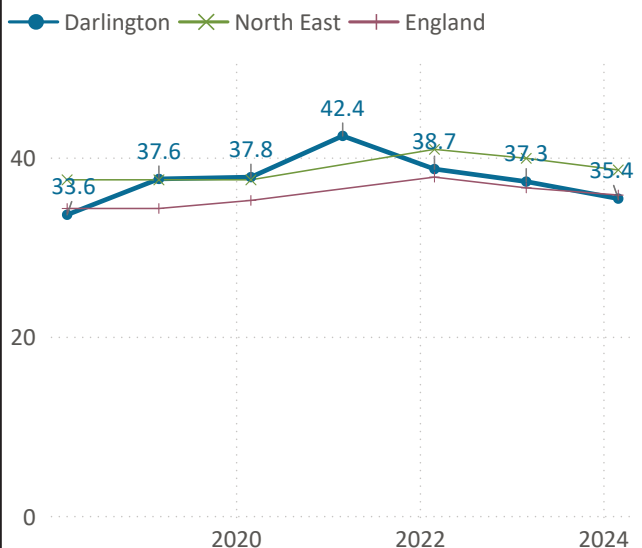
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Excess weight among Year 6 pupils (%)

This data (from 2023/24) shows that 35.4% of year 6 children aged 10-11 years were classified as overweight or obese and is trending down since 2021 Darlington is statistically better than the North East and statistically similar to England.

The Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan identified evidence-based interventions delivered with partners to address underlying causes of obesity in children and young people. Work includes activity with schools and local commercial food premises to develop a healthy catering standard for a healthy food offer.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

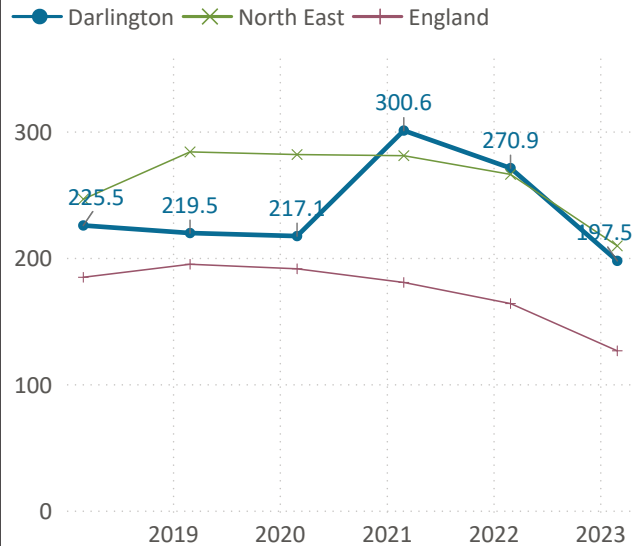
Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity



## Emergency Hospital Admissions for Intentional Self-Harm (per 100,000 population)

The latest data shows a decreasing trend for Darlington at 197.5 per 100,000 which is statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England. The Darlington trend now mirrors the North East and England.

Self harm is a complex and poorly understood act with varied reasons for a person to harm themselves irrespective of the purpose of the act. There is a significant and persistent risk of future suicide following an episode of self harm. This indicator is a measure of intentional self harm events severe enough to warrant hospital admission and not a measure of the actual prevalence of severe self harm.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

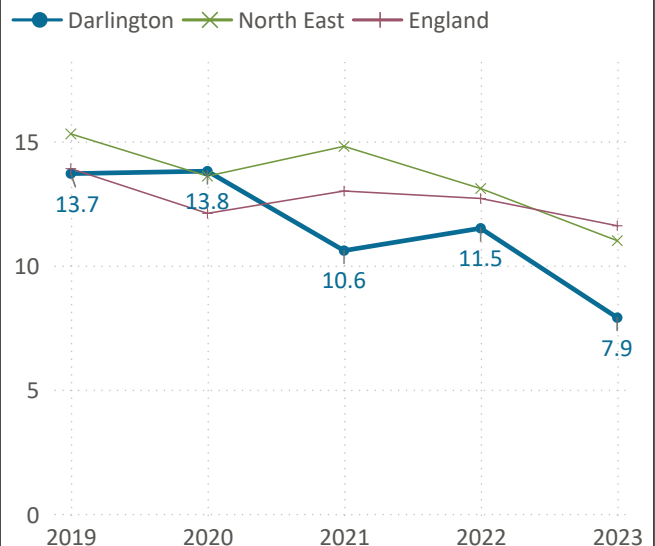
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Prevalence of smoking among persons aged 18+ years

This latest data from the 2023 Annual Population Survey (APS) shows that 7.9% of those who responded aged 18+ self-reported themselves as smokers in Darlington. This is the 4th year with a reduction from a peak of 13.8% in 2020. Darlington is statistically better than the North East and England.

There is now an established downward trend with fewer people in Darlington identifying themselves as smokers. It is expected that this reduction will be sustained due to the impact of new and existing measures to reduce smoking in the community including new legislation and extra funding to increase access to stop smoking interventions.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

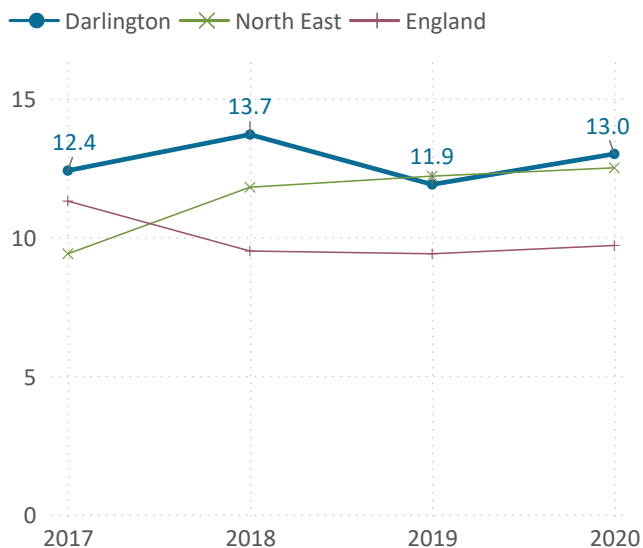
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Inequality in life expectancy at birth (male)

Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males in Darlington has widened in 2020, from 11.9 (2019) to 13.0 years, and is worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to with the North East average.

Life expectancy at birth is a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. This graph shows that a baby boy born in the most deprived area on average can expect to live 13 years less than a boy born into the least deprived area of Darlington. For England this would be a difference of 9.7 years.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

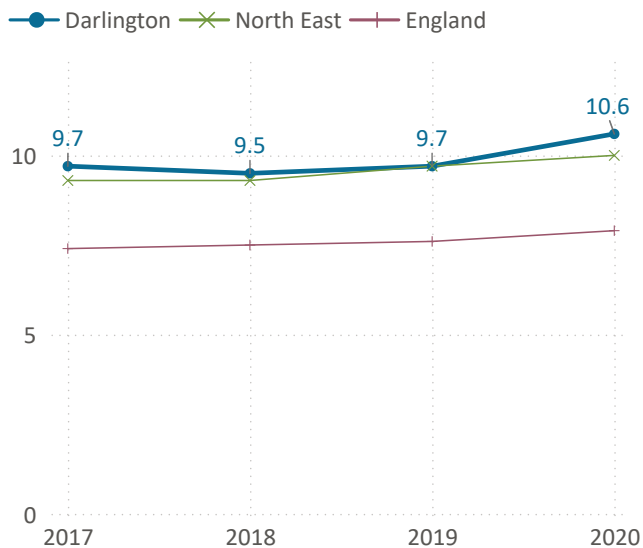
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Inequality in life expectancy at birth (female)

Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington widened in 2020, from 9.7 (2019) to 10.6 years, and is statistically worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to the North East average.

Life expectancy at birth is a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. This graph shows that a baby girl born in the most deprived area on average can expect to live 10.6 years less than a girl born into the least deprived area of Darlington. For England this would be a difference of 7.9 years.



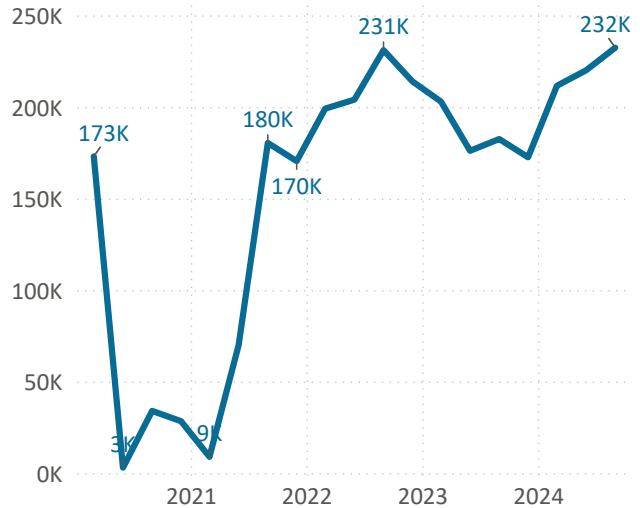
Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

## Total number of visits to the Dolphin Centre (quarterly)

The Dolphin Centre has seen a substantial increase in visits compared to the same quarter in 23/24, this is a reflection of the popularity of the swimming pool following the reopening of all facilities. The main pool reopened in January 2024 with the slides and toddler pool reopening in August 2024. In the first week of the full pool facilities being opened the complex experienced the equal highest number of swimmers in the history of the Centre. Hospitality continues to attract high numbers and memberships continue to break our own record numbers. Swimming lessons and classes again are welcoming higher number than the same quarter last year.



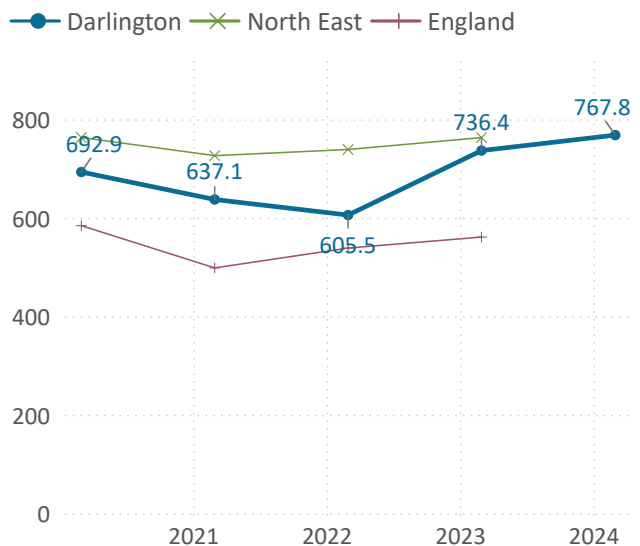
Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

## Older people admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care, per 100,000 of the 65+ population

The Council acknowledge that there is an increase in residential care by older people. Demand, complexity and need are the contributory factors for this increase. The Council are actively working to reduce reliance on residential care through our strength based practice approach and where possible ensuring a home first approach for people being discharged from hospital. The Council will continue to monitor this trend.



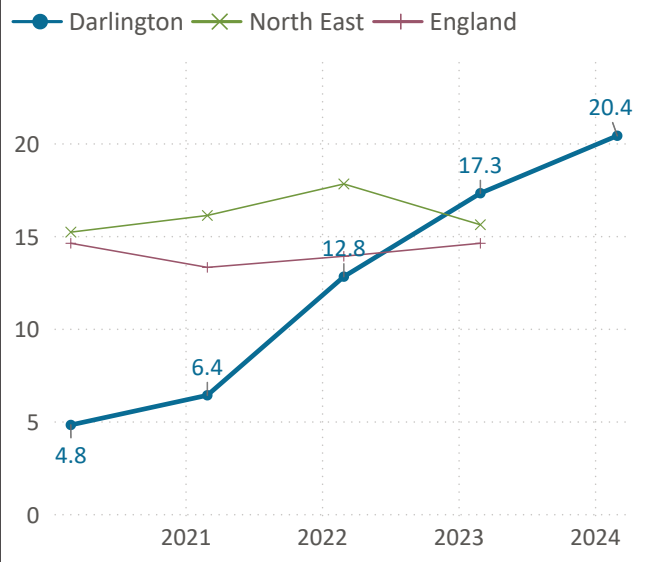
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Adults aged 18 - 64 admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care homes, per 100,000 population

Where a community placement would have been appropriate all options were explored, however due to market capacity it was not possible to find suitable placements. Market development has been a key issue and has been identified as a key objective for development with commissioning colleagues. Operational staff are working with commissioning to address the issue of capacity in the provider market and explore market development.



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

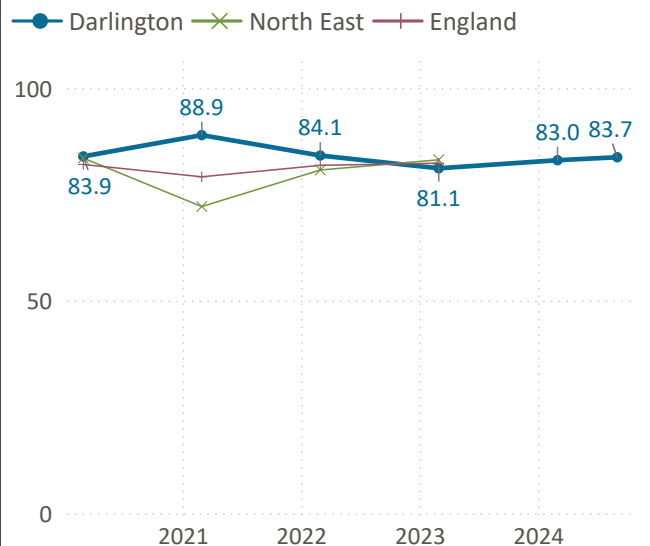
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement or rehabilitation services

This data indicated the service provides to support people to return home following discharge from hospital, through assessment, support planning and short term reablement offer.

This graph illustrates that at the end of September 2024, the proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services was 83.7%. This indicator has slightly increased since 2023 and remained fairly static throughout 2024.

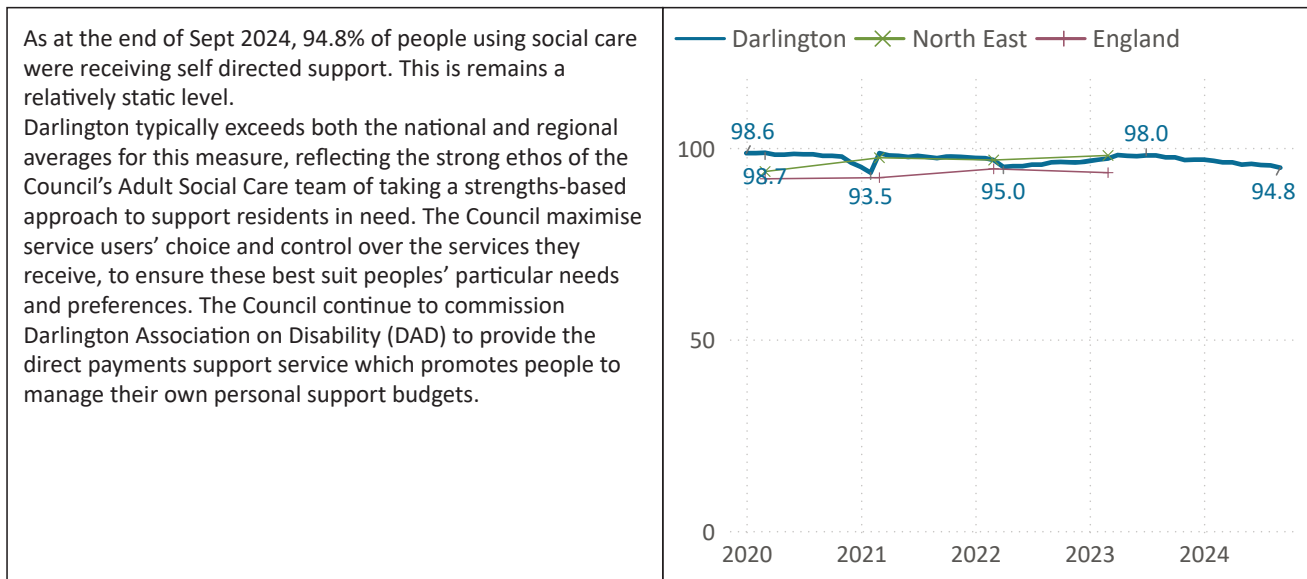


Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Percentage of people using social care who receive self-directed support

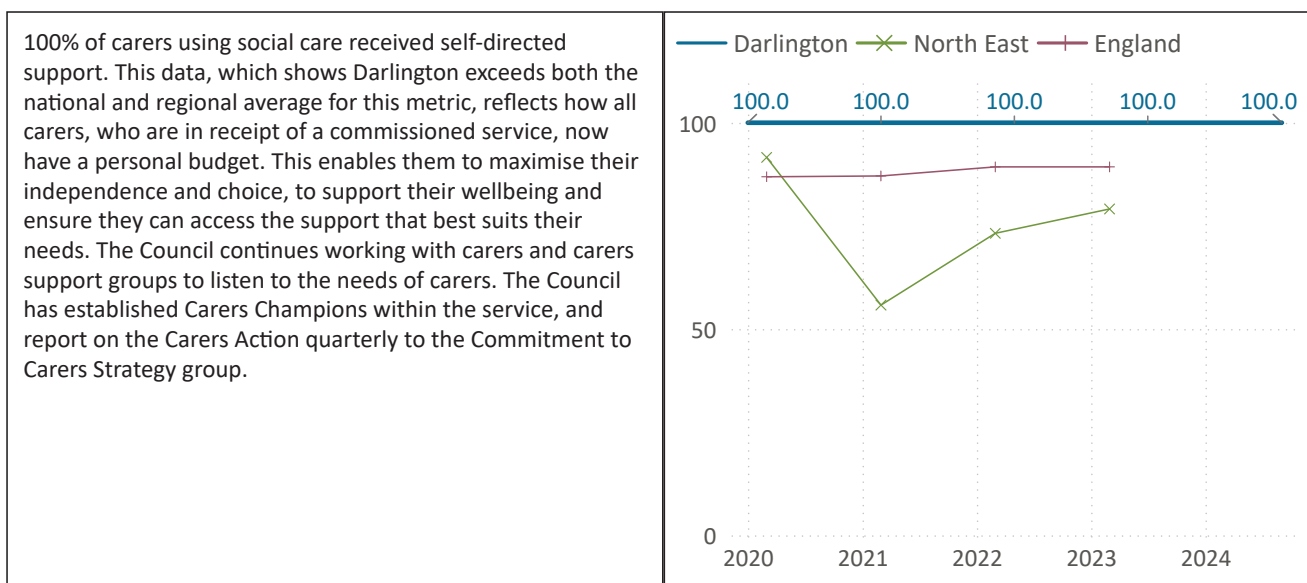


Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Percentage of carers using social care who receive self-directed support



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: 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.

## Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations

**Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.**

There are currently 64 approved Foster Carer Households, which is an increase from 50 Foster Carer households at the same period in 2023.

This has resulted in 19.9% of Children in Care being cared for by Local Authority Foster Carers, compared with 15.5% at the same period in 2023.

Short term placement instability has reduced to 9.2%, compared with 15.5% in the same period in 2023.

**Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington**

In line with the Council Plan priorities on inclusion in schools the Education Strategy Group has developed the Darlington Inclusion Charter which was launched at an all-schools event on 21st June 2024. To support the delivery of the Inclusion Charter Darlington Local Authority (LA) has submitted a successful proposal to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to set up an Evidence Exploration Partnership. This Partnership will be facilitated by the EEF, a Research School based in the North East and the LA. Senior school leaders will be involved via the Darlington Education Strategy Group (ESG). It offers a structured and collaborative approach to data gathering and analysis, identifying potential priorities and solutions. The Inclusion Charter exemplifies key characteristics of inclusive practice that all schools in Darlington can sign up to. This was informed by shared challenges relating to attendance, suspensions and more complex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The ESG has carefully considered the potential of an Evidence Exploration Partnership to support its work over the coming year. It is anticipated that the Inclusion Charter will provide a helpful starting point for the Evidence Exploration Partnership which will support the LA and schools to develop evidence-informed practices and strategies to embed this commitment to inclusion.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**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**

To complement our existing provision, the Council have identified the need for a secondary provision for those pupils with a primary need of Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The new special free school will provide 48 full time places for pupils aged 11-19 with autism, who would benefit from a specific environment and staff dedicated to a holistic approach. The capital funding for the new school will be provided from the Government’s Free School Programme. Our local specialist provider Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) have been confirmed as the preferred sponsor and the Council are working closely with the Department for Education and the Trust to ensure the earliest possible opening. A local governing board has been established to ensure local planning and estates issues are identified and addressed at the earliest point.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**Develop more meaningful services by ensuring children and young people are involved in service development and commissioning activity**

A number of projects/groups undertake work which enable young people to be involved in service development and commissioning activity, for example Darlington Youth Partnership, Darlo Care Crew, the Care Leavers Forum Youth Healthwatch, HumanKind and the YMCA.

A Young Darlington Advisors (YDA) project has been established to bring this work together and to enable it to happen on a wider scale. YDA aims to capture the voice and experience of children and use this to shape future services/projects. Local children aged 13 - 19 years (or up to 25 for care leavers or those with an EHCP/SEN plan) can express an interest to join the YDA Board. Also invited to attend the YDA Board, will be young people who are part of existing youth groups with specific knowledge or experience in relation to a service or support already being provided by the Council or partner organisations. Members of the Board receive training which includes:

- Understanding the role of a commissioner
- Communication skills
- Boundaries and confidentiality
- Evaluation and assessment skills

YDA could be engaged by a Service/Team/Organisation to work on the following areas;

- Training
- Commissioning
- Consultation
- Recruitment

Once engaged by a Service, a selection of young people from the YDA Board or partner organisations with a specific interest in that Service area, would be selected to work on the project.

To date 6 children have been identified to form the YDA Board and training is currently underway.

Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**Widen access of eligible children to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme which focusses on health, wellbeing and raising aspirations**

HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) programme provides free holiday club places to primary and secondary aged children on benefits-related free school meals, as well as other vulnerable children, giving them a chance to enjoy extracurricular activities and healthy meals during the school holidays. The Move More Team deliver activity weeks at numerous community venues with a wide geographical spread across the town, so children are given the greatest opportunity to participate in the programme in their relative local ward and community. In the summer holidays, over 5,000 places were booked for children aged 5-16 years of age, 1,032 free school meal children attended with 21% SEND children. Future funding will see further development to engage more eligible children into the programme.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people



**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**

The announcement of expansion of the national childcare offer in the Spring 2023 budget signalled significant reforms to childcare which aim to remove barriers to work for parents with a child under 3. The phased changes are as follows:

- (a) From April 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of free childcare for working parents of 2-year-olds
- (b) From September 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of free childcare for working parents of babies from 9 months up to 2 years old
- (c) From September 2025, the introduction of 30 hours of free childcare for working parents of babies from 9 months up to 3 years old (where eligibility will match the existing 3-4 year-old 30 Hours offer)

The April 2024 and September 2024 roll out of expanded entitlement has progressed well in Darlington with no current evidence of unmet demand.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**Refresh and deliver the Children and Young People’s Plan working with services across the council, key stakeholders, and children and young people in Darlington**

The Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is the key delivery plan for children within the Council Plan. It identifies what key actions will be taken to deliver the agreed priority for children – the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations. It is a partnership plan which shows how organisations and agencies in Darlington will work together to improve outcomes for children. The plan for 2024 – 2027 takes the form of a video and poster which have been designed and produced by local children. Extensive data analysis and engagement activity with children, young people and key stakeholders identified five priorities which will form the basis of the plan: Health; Education; Family and Carers; Employment, and Community. The CYPP will be launched in November 2024 with updates on progress being posted on the Council website every six months.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**Continue the successful management of the Safety Valve plan for the education budget to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, eliminate the historic deficit on funding and deliver a financially sustainable system**

The Department for Education (DfE) as part of its wider Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms, initiated the 'Safety Valve' intervention programme. The DfE recognises that over recent years, pressures on high needs budgets have contributed to many local authorities accruing deficits on their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Darlington, in common with many areas, built up a deficit on the high needs block element of the DSG. If a local authority can demonstrate sufficiently that their DSG management plan creates lasting sustainability, including reaching an in-year balance as quickly as possible, then the department will enter into an agreement with the authority (subject to Ministerial approval). Darlington entered into an agreement in March 2023.

The plan has been progressing well with Darlington achieving an in year balance on the high needs block in 2022/23 and 2023/24. The combined deficit reduction work along with the contributions through the Safety Valve Agreement has reduced the deficit to circa 1.8million and the council is currently on track to have eliminated the deficit within the terms of the agreement which is due to end in 2026/27. This will enable the council and partners to proceed with driving improvements in a financially sustainable way.

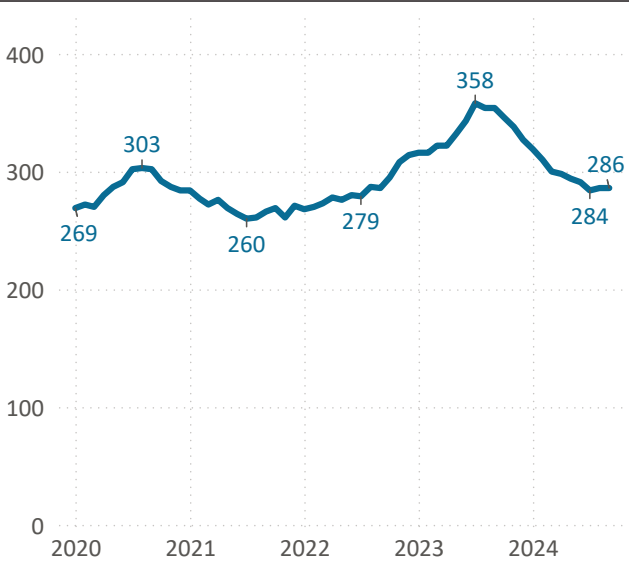
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

**Total number of looked after children (LAC)**

286 children are being supported in the Council's care at the end of September 2024, 6.3% of which have come into the Council's care after being accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child).

This equates to a 20% reduction in the number of children (excluding those needing care as UASC) that were in the Council's care when compared to the end of September last year.

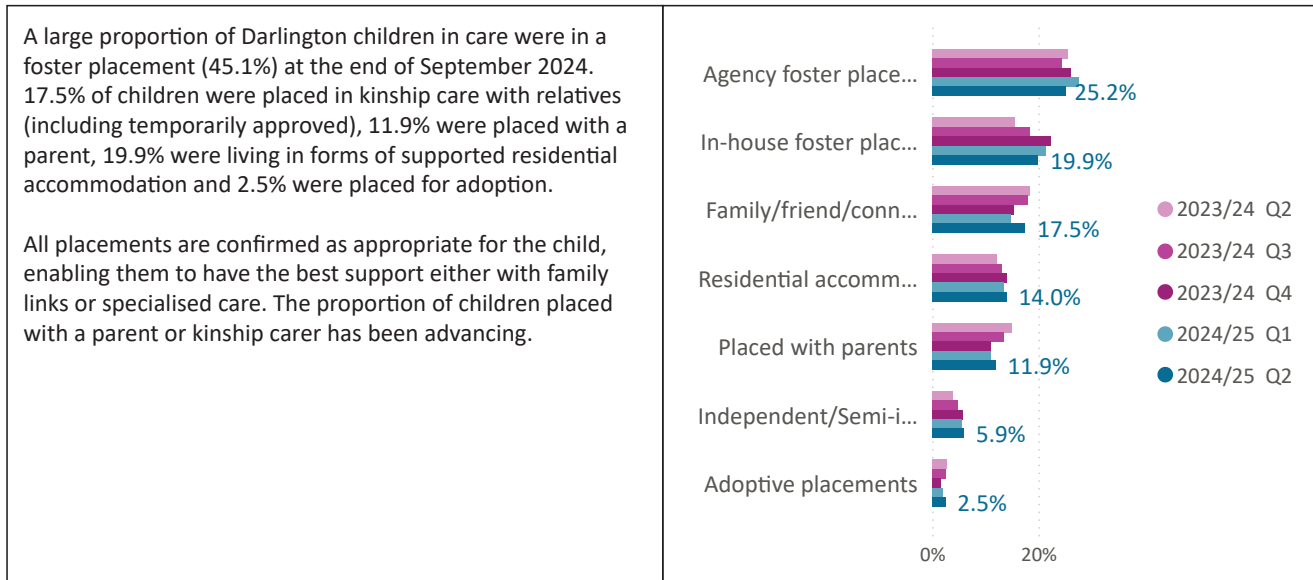


Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

## Percentage of looked after children by placement type

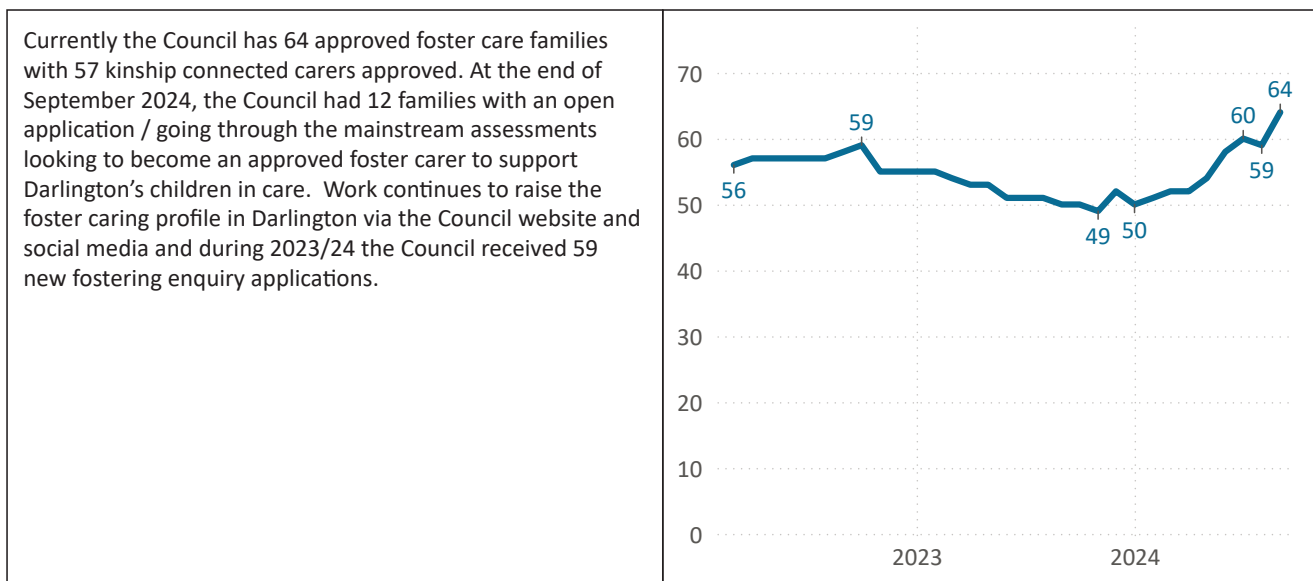


Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

## Total number of approved foster carers

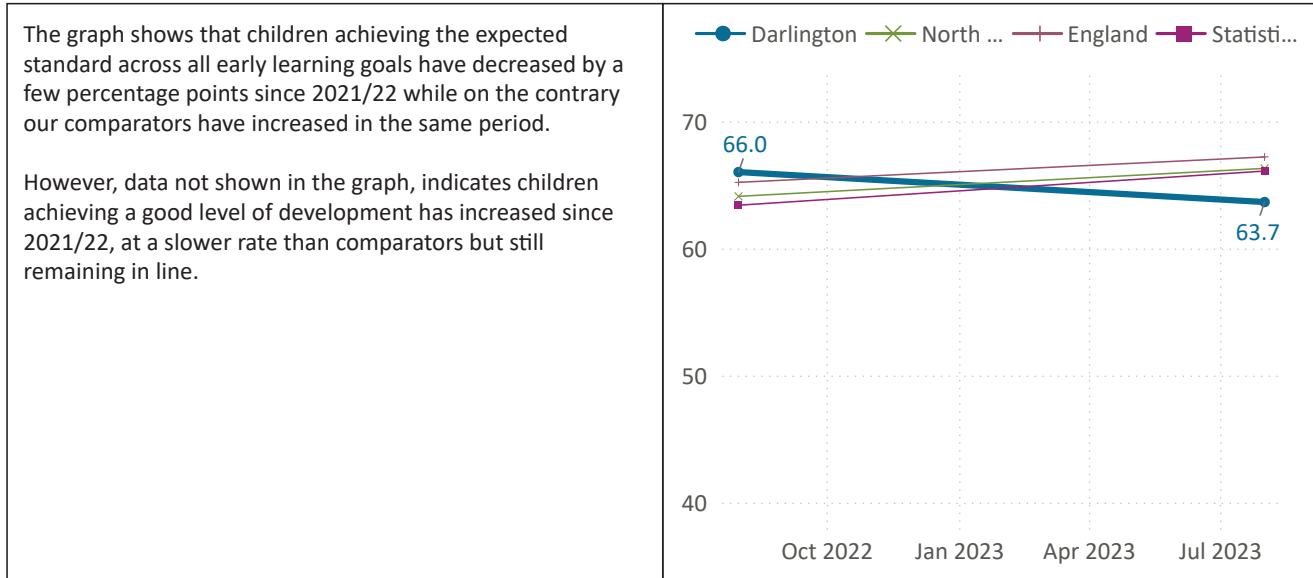


Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

## School Readiness: all children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception as a percentage of all eligible children (Early Years Foundation Stage profile)

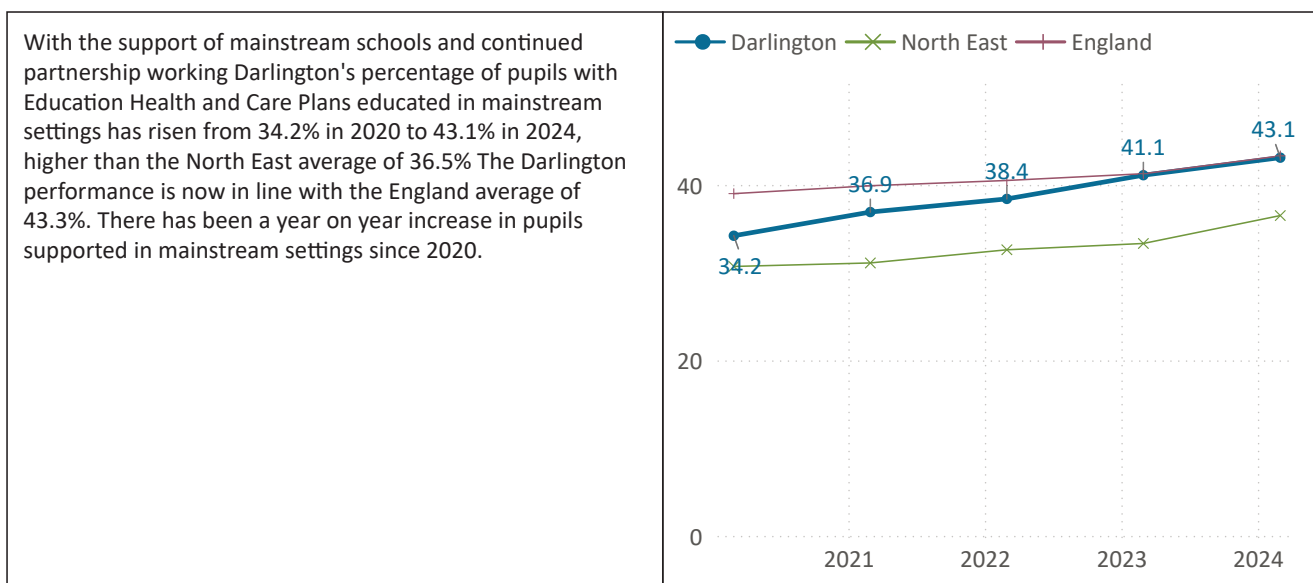


Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: 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

## Percentage of pupils with an EHCP educated in mainstream schools



Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Continue the successful management of the Safety Valve plan for the education budget to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, eliminate the historic deficit on funding and deliver a financially sustainable system

## Council Plan Priority: Communities

Working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities

### 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

Since the last reporting period officers have continued to tackle problems associated with fly-tipping and waste in back lanes, the figures below provide an overview of activity:

118 environmental crime cases were received (of which 102 closed). A range of actions were taken including:-

- a) 3 Fixed Penalty Notices issued (all for S34 waste duty of care offences).
- b) 10 Prosecutions environment offences, totalling £4300 fines.
- c) One prosecution for breach of a Community Protection Notice, £458 fines, costs and victim surcharge.

Number Forty supports anybody who needs assistance during an evening in Darlington. It has been open for more than 1300 hours with a total of 1197 people coming through it for various reasons and support during the night. Volunteers do a great job in providing support at No.40.

The Shopwatch network continue to exchange information and intelligence. There are currently 167 members. There is work ongoing to ensure all retail/businesses in the town have a means of communication outside of the 'shopwatch membership'. The Council contributes to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner 'Safer Businesses Group'.

The begging figures for July – September 2024 shows a 36% decrease, when compared to same period last year. There is a cohort of around 16 people continuing to beg with partners constantly engaging with them offering all available support mechanisms.

Lead Officer: Darren Ellis: Acting Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

**Work with partners to reduce the burden of the cost of living, with a focus on food and fuel insecurity**

Household Support Fund (HSF) Round 6 is being delivered through voluntary and community organisations and will provide:

- Vouchers during holiday period for children currently in receipt of Free School Meals
- Support for Care Leavers
- 1000 households identified by the Low Income Family Tracker as living in food and fuel poverty will be contacted directly and offered a one off payment of £175.00
- 550 pensioners identified by the Low Income Family Tracker as eligible but not claiming pension credit or those who miss out on pension credit by up to £1000 annually will be contacted directly and offered a one off payment of £175.00
- Elderly residents will be offered support in energy proofing their homes via Age UK
- Darlington based foodbanks will be supported with food provision

A new element this year is an online application for those experiencing financial crisis. Residents can apply for up to £100 via Citizens Advice. This is open to anyone but residents do need to meet set criteria to be eligible.

A further round of HSF has been announced for 2025/26. A continued focus will be given to supporting benefit take up which has a sustained positive impact on household's income.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: 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**

Largely as a result of the strong relationships with the voluntary sector that have emerged through the work of the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group (VCSE), the Household Support Fund programme is being delivered through the sector as third party providers.

The group has established three working groups looking at social exclusion, financial exclusion and children and families. It has recently supported the establishment of a Youth Partnership which held it's inaugural meeting on September 26th.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Communities

**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**

Hate Crime incidents for September (18) show a level lower than previous levels following the summer disorder. There were twelve race related incidents; five involved behaviour towards emergency services staff, with single reported incidents within a licensed premises, a retail outlet and a restaurant.

As part of the recovery phase following the summer disorder Future Pathways have held the first of three community events in Eastbourne Community arena where sporting and intergenerational activities between DBC staff, Police and young people were well received.

'North Road and North Gate Community Cohesion Panel' has been set-up focusing upon geographical areas and behaviours in the area. Partner, and particularly resident uptake is encouraging and financial support is in place to support locally driven community based initiatives, which will address issues negatively affecting those communities. Problem Solving techniques and co-ordinated partner approaches to those initiatives will be evaluated with lessons learned and best practice helping future work Borough wide.

Safer-streets (Rural Crime) initiative is progressing with equipment bought, rural crime co-ordinators appointed and support offered to Darlington's rural areas. More drones have been purchased and pilots trained.

Lead Officer: Darren Ellis: Acting Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

**Ensuring business activity is regulated, licensed and enforced effectively to protect the health and wellbeing of residents, visitors and businesses.**

Environmental Health is responsible for the enforcement of Government regulations relating to commercial businesses in the Borough. The Environmental Health team works hard to protect and improve the public's safety and health, safeguarding where you work, what you eat and the environment around you. The Council do this by carrying out routine inspections, checking on employee safety, food hygiene, allergen labelling and the sampling of food which has the primary purpose of protecting the public from ill health. A programme of inspections based on risk is carried out to identify non-compliance with hygiene and safety laws. Additional visits will also be carried out to deal with complaints, investigations and sampling as well as advice and promoting good practice. Last year the Council carried out 533 routine inspections of food premises and investigated 776 complaints.

Multiple purchases are made from shops and businesses in Darlington every day. Officers from Trading Standards ensure that trading is safe and fair to consumers and businesses by seizing or recalling products that are deemed to be unsafe, preventing sale of counterfeit goods and carrying out test purchases of age restricted products. The wellbeing of residents and visitors to pubs and clubs are protected by the licensing of premises for the sale of alcohol and entertainment preventing crime, disorder and public nuisance whilst maintaining public safety.

Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Communities

**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**

A draft strategy framework has been produced for internal consultation in advance of a discussion at the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group. It proposes a focus on:

- structured volunteering
- employer supported volunteering
- community volunteering.

After describing the positive messages to be promoted to encourage volunteering, it then outlines a series of action that the Council could take to positively support the growth of each type of volunteering.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

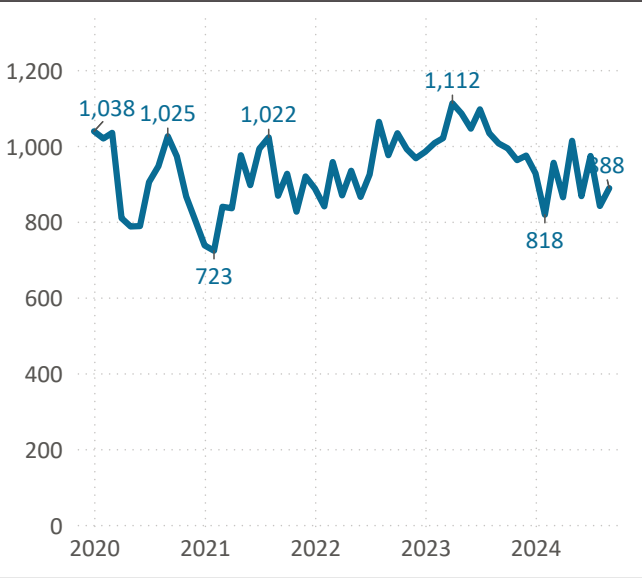
Council Plan Priority: Communities

**Total Crime (monthly)**

The combined total of incidents for second quarter, crime down by 16% and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) up by 13%, has reduced by a total of 505 incidents when compared to the previous quarter. Whilst crime figures have declined burglary, vehicle crime and shoplifting are areas being monitored and targeted.

The ASB trailblazer project focuses activity across the eight hotspot areas. From the 1 July 2024 until 22 October 2024, 575 patrols were undertaken.

There were reductions in the North Road (-34%) and Cockerton/East (-33%). However, the Town Centre increased (+35%), this increase is linked to a gathering of youths in Tommy Crooks Park moving into the Town Centre.



Lead Officer: Darren Ellis: Acting Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: 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



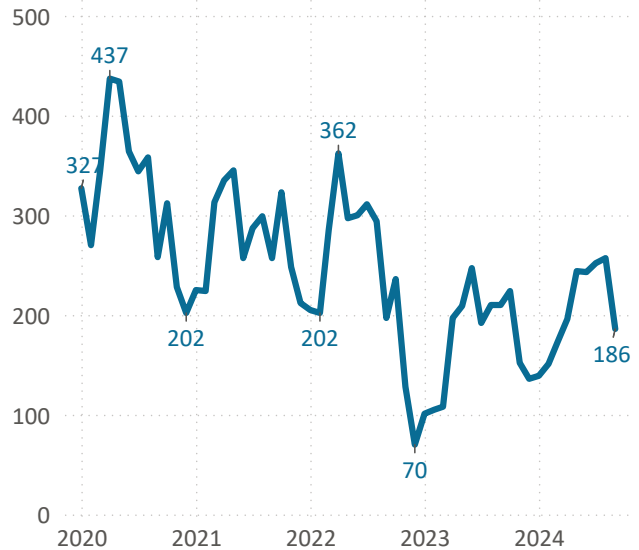
## ASB Incidents (monthly, excludes duplicates)

During the reporting period the Young People’s Engagement & Justice Service have received 27 referrals into the Early Intervention & Prevention Pathway from the Civic Enforcement Team.

Future Pathways Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) evening sessions have completed the 2nd Cohort with a total of 26 young people referred and 17 active referrals successfully completing the programme.

Following the summer disorder Future Pathways have held the first of three community events in Eastbourne Community arena where sporting and intergenerational activities between DBC staff, Police and young people were well received.

In the reporting period 17 young people received first warnings for ASB/21 young people received acceptable behaviour agreements.



Lead Officer: Darren Ellis: Acting Head of Community Safety

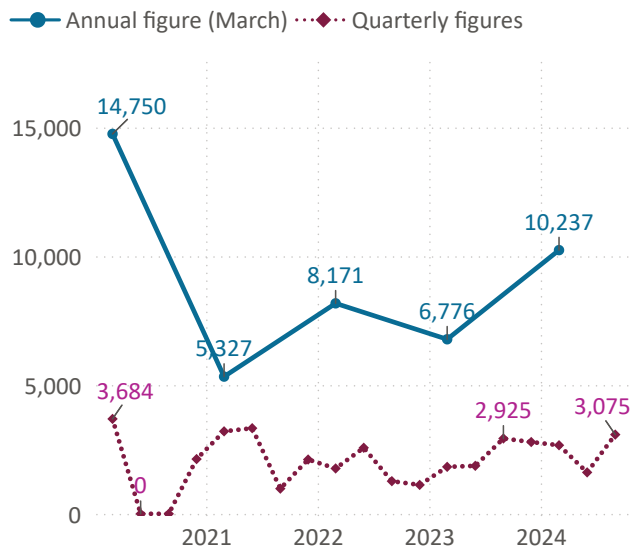
Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: 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

## Number of Darlington Cares volunteer hours

Darlington Cares volunteering continues to grow as does its membership. The programme of activities delivered under the three areas of focus, environment, education and social justice, attract growing numbers of company volunteers.

The Darlington Cares Board at its last meeting considered how it could increase its impact and contribution of its members to Darlington with a particular interest in the ambitions of young people. Proposals are to be considered at its next meeting.



Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: 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

## Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough

### **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**

Work is progressing on the delivery of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme across the Tees Valley. In Darlington this means investment in the Bank Top station project, development of walking and cycling schemes and improvements to key bus corridors. The walking and cycling and bus corridor schemes are currently at feasibility stage and will move to detailed design in early 2025. Construction works will commence later in 2025 subject to business cases demonstrating value for money.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

**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**

The town centre partnership team works closely with the high street businesses to ensure a programme of events is planned to encourage movement around the town centre to increase dwell time in Darlington. The annual events are designed to attract visitors into the town centre to visit, enjoy and revisit. There is a variety of types of events, ranging from specialist events e.g. Misfits Market organised by a local independent retailer, animation days like a Dinosaur Day for families to explore the town, to smaller trails and large scale music events like the Rhythm and Tunes Weekend.

The quantity and variety of events ensures the attraction of visitors from across the region by offering free, welcoming activity for people to enjoy. The events team listen and adapt events to develop and improve the results and help ensure businesses in the town centre also benefit from the programme.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

**Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average**

The Council has been working with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) on various options to introduce weekly food waste collections, from simply adding a food waste service to existing arrangements, to also introducing a weekly dry recycling service alongside weekly food waste, to improve overall recycling rates. The challenge the Council has regardless of the option implemented, is the capital received from government through new burdens funding is currently insufficient and therefore the assumption is that the transitional and operational funding from government will also be insufficient, therefore it is extremely difficult for the Council to make a decision when the level of funding is unknown. The Council, via the Chief Executive, has written to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for clarification on the matter and the Member of Parliament for Darlington has also written to the Minister for clarification.

Work continues to finalise the options developed and subject to a favourable response from DEFRA, Cabinet will consider implementation of a weekly food waste collection service in late 2024/early 2025.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local 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**

Hopetown Darlington, the North's newest visitor attraction, opened to the public on 16 July 2024 and welcomed more than 55,000 visitors in the first 10 week period. A carnival style programme throughout the summer holidays ensured broad engagement from residents across Darlington and a much broader reach throughout the UK and beyond. The wonderful site was officially opened by the The Worshipful the Mayor of Darlington, Councillor Bob Donoghue on 27 September, the 199th birthday of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR).

The Autumn season has a strong focus on Halloween and Christmas festivals as key engagement points for visitors, with a bespoke schools offer during the term time. The arrival of the restored Locomotion No.1 replica will provide a standout centrepiece for a five week Christmas programme in the 1853 Carriage Works building.

The S&DR 200 Festival was launched to the national media at Darlington Hippodrome on 19 September. The 9-month international festival will get underway in March 2025 and Hopetown will be central to a number of key events, including two major exhibitions and an international piece of outdoor theatre that will parade from the town centre through Northgate to arrive at Hopetown on 20 September. The pinnacle of the festival year will be focussed on the 27 September, the 200th birthday of the S&DR, when the working replica of Locomotion No.1 will cross Darlington's Skerne Bridge to recreate the first day journey.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

**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.**

Strong partnerships and project teams are in place, developing two studies that will inform and assist future planning, investment and bidding opportunities. The two studies that are taking place are:

\* The Darlington Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP) study. The initial study is complete and a priority scheme has been identified which covers the West Beck and Cocker Beck watercourses, including Cockerton area. The current outline programme is for the stage 1/2 report to be complete by the end of 2025, development of the business case for Government Grant in Aid (GiA) funding to take place in 2026-27, with construction from 2028 onwards (subject to successful business case and support from NRFCC).

\* Flood Asset Risk Study. This is looking at the risks and impact associated with the possible failure of blockage of key assets such as bridges and culverts to determine investment and maintenance strategies to minimise the risk of flooding. A high level study identified a number of locations where further investigation was warranted due to the impact that a blockage or partial blockage of the Chanel or culvert would cause to properties. The main scheme identified was on West Beck , which was incorporated into the NIDP scheme. Another scheme has been identified at Killerby and costed options have been drawn up. The Council are continuing to assess the business case for this scheme.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

## Deliver revised supplementary planning documents that guide better design in new developments and contribute to a sense of pride in place

Whilst the Council has Design Codes adopted for Burtree Garden Village and Skerningham Garden Village, the Council is also looking at reviewing the Design Supplementary Guidance. The Government is currently out for consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework, which will advise the work. It is expected that the revised National Planning Policy Framework will be issued prior to Christmas. The Council will update it's Members in due course.

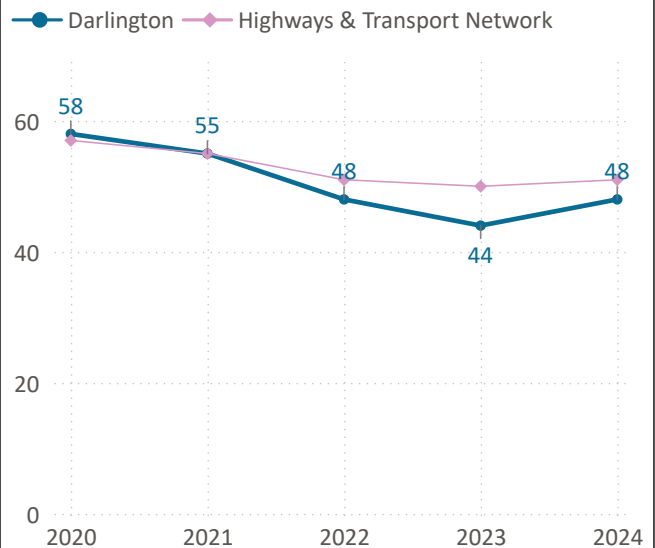
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

## Overall Public Satisfaction with Public Transport Theme (National Highways and Transport Survey)

The satisfaction survey results are taken from a survey conducted by the National Highways and Transport Network, an organisation who provide a range of benchmarking services to Local Authorities. The overall public satisfaction with public transport has increased from 44% in 2023 to 48% in 2024. This is below the Highways and Transport Network average of all the authorities taking part of 51%.

Tees Valley Combined Authority are the Local Transport Authority responsible for public transport and the Council will continue to work in partnership to steer investment into public transport in Darlington to improve satisfaction levels.



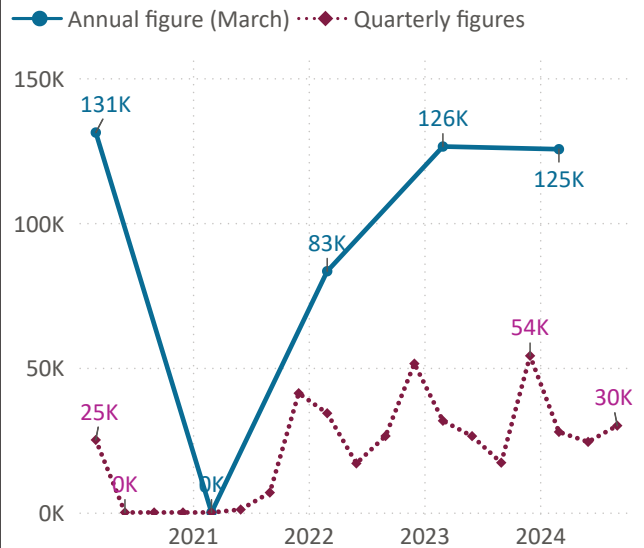
Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: 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

## Number of individual attendances at theatre shows

At the same time last year there had been a total of 43,541 attendances at theatre shows. This year there have been 54,340 attendances; performance to date shows a strong improvement when compared to the same time last year.



Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

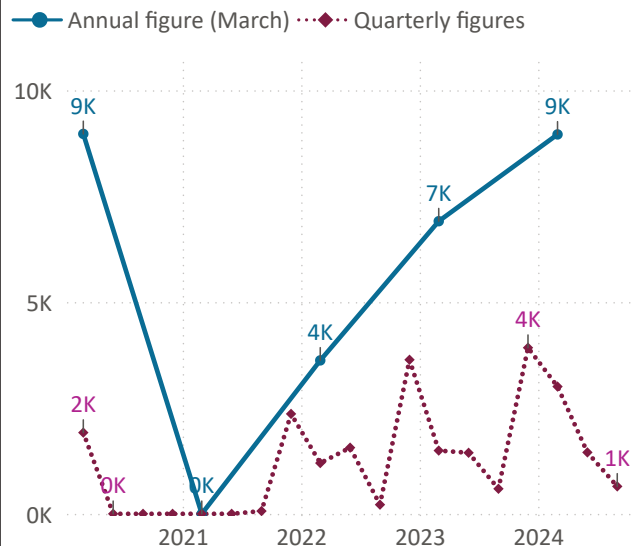
Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: 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

## Number of individual attendances at Hullabaloo shows

Total attendance for this period is at 2,097, with average attendance at over 100 per performance at Hip @ The Hullabaloo shows, it is clear that the content of the programme is attracting good sized audiences. Comedians during this period have attracted the largest audiences supporting the venue to also meet the secondary spend targets.

Broadening the Hipp @ the Hullabaloo programme over the next 6 months will attract new attendance and increase the average occupancy.



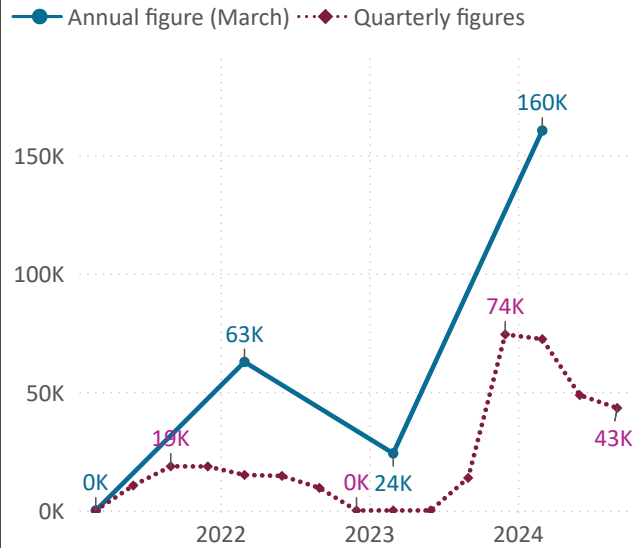
Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: 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

## Number of physical visits to Darlington Library (door count)

After the reopening, many people visited to view the new spaces and facilities, without dwelling as they do now. The library also had increased activity (including out-of-hours) funded by Arts Council England. Visitor numbers remain above those we saw pre-closures, averaging 15,300 visitors each month this year. Due to closures for the pandemic/restoration, it is unsurprising to see footfall is higher than previous years. There is a slight reduction in visitor numbers this quarter, however it is noted that visitors are dwelling longer in the spaces, with The Study being frequently used by a variety of audiences for computer-use, reading, and working. More adults are taking part in activities within the library than before, with The Hive being a place for all ages to learn and explore.



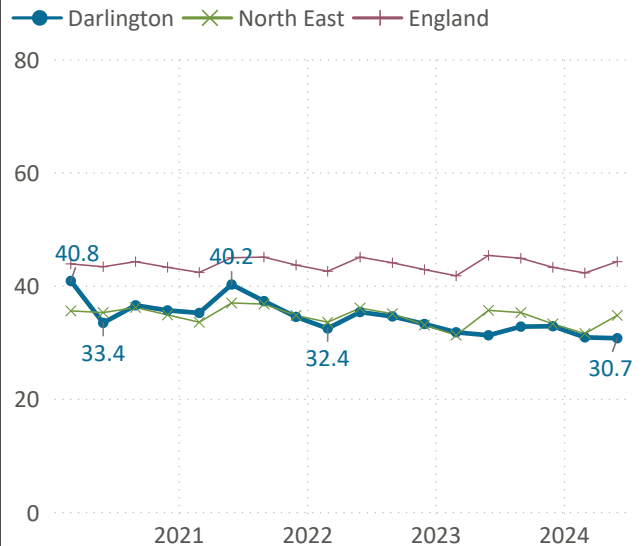
Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: 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

## Percentage of household waste that is collected that is either reused, recycled or composted

The amount of waste that is recycled, composted or reused has fallen in recent years, the Council's performance up to the end of June (30.7%) and is currently slightly below with the North East (34.7%) average, but below the England (44.2%) average. Work continues to be undertaken by Street Scene and communication teams to increase recycling and reduce contamination. Cabinet will consider a report in the new year with regard to options to introduce a food waste collection services which will increase overall recycling rates



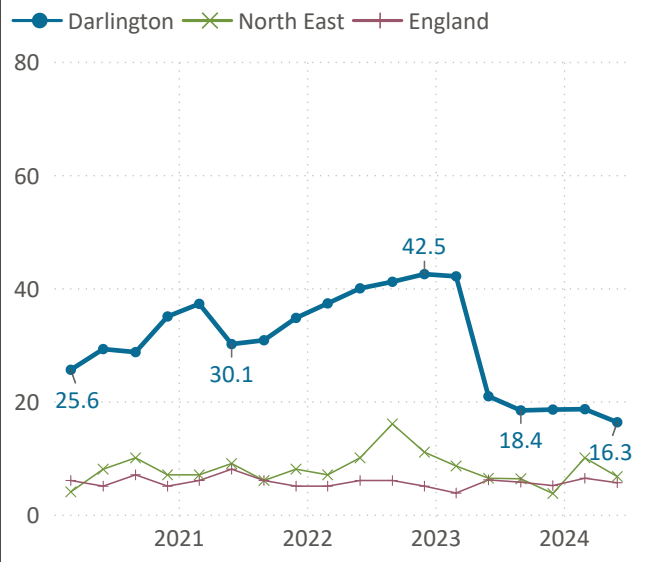
Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average

## Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is landfilled

Data is only available up to June 2024 due to the lag in data verification through the national system. The percentage of household waste sent to landfill has fallen to its lowest level to only 16.3%. This is as a result of more waste being sent to energy recovery, which is higher up the waste hierarchy, causing less environmental impact than landfill. The Council is above the North East average for landfill, as the majority of other North East Councils have primary contracts with energy recovery facilities.



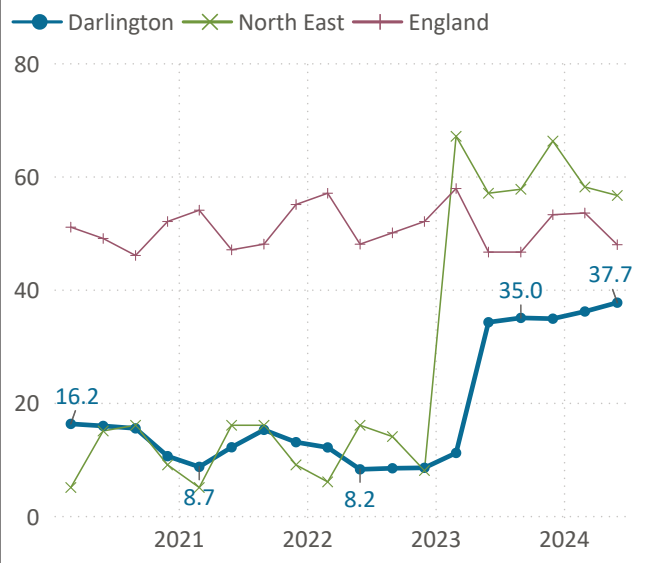
Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average

## Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is used for energy recovery

Data is only available up to June 2024 due to the lag in the national verification process. The percentage of household waste sent to energy recovery is up to the highest level now at 37.7%. The increase is as a result of available markets to accept the material from the Mechanical Biological Treatment process at affordable cost. Ultimately, the more waste after recycling that is sent to energy recovery reduces the amount of waste landfilled. Darlington Borough Council is below the North East average, as in most cases their primary contract is through energy recovery facilities.



Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average



**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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**CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy Portfolio**

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

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Summary**

2. As agreed in the Climate Emergency Declaration, this report is the six-month interim report. The emissions data we gather is available annually, so there is no update on current emissions.
3. A climate change seminar for the Council's members was held on 19 September 2024.
4. The Darlington Eco Fair was held in June 2024. More than 5,000 people passed through the marquee.
5. The Highway Asset Management team annual maintenance programme for 2023/24 demonstrated a total reduction of over 348 tonnes in CO2 emissions.
6. In December, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer submitted our report to Defra as part of a trial project for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power.
7. Councillor McEwan, Portfolio Holder for the climate change work, has met with all the Assistant Directors to receive feedback and progress on actions.
8. Following these meetings, we have reviewed some of the delivery dates of actions, to allow for resources (staff and financial) to be managed.
9. The Housing Service is bidding for Wave 3 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, through the Tees Valley Combined Authority. Should that bid be successful, Wave 3 will see a further 1600 of our homes below EPC C by 2028.
10. The Head of Environmental Services and Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer have worked together to commission a piece of work to calculate the carbon

sequestration potential of council land. We are the first local authority in the UK to do this work in this way. The report has been received and shows a positive result. However, it does not override the need to continue to decarbonise our buildings and service delivery.

### **Recommendation**

11. It is recommended that Cabinet acknowledges the report.

### **Reasons**

12. The recommendations are supported by the increasing public pressure to act on climate change; we run the risk of significant damage to our reputation if we do not deliver on our stated commitment to dealing with the Council's contribution to climate change.

**Ian Williams**  
**Chief Executive**

### **Background Papers**

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

Margaret Enstone : Extension 6229

Council Plan	<p>This report reflects the Council Plan Core Principle in Tackling Climate Change.</p> <p>In turn, actions that we take for climate change impact on our Council priorities. For example, as we improve our council stock, we improve the quality of life for our residents, leading to better health outcomes, which in turns means fewer days of school (or work), improved educational attainment and better work opportunities.</p>
Addressing inequalities	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
Tackling 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.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Our approach to reducing emissions will mean that resources are used more efficiently.
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.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no expected impact on Crime and Disorder in Darlington.
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 recommend a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No.
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

13. As agreed in the Climate Emergency Declaration, this report is the six-month interim report. The emissions data we gather is available annually, so there is no update on current emissions.

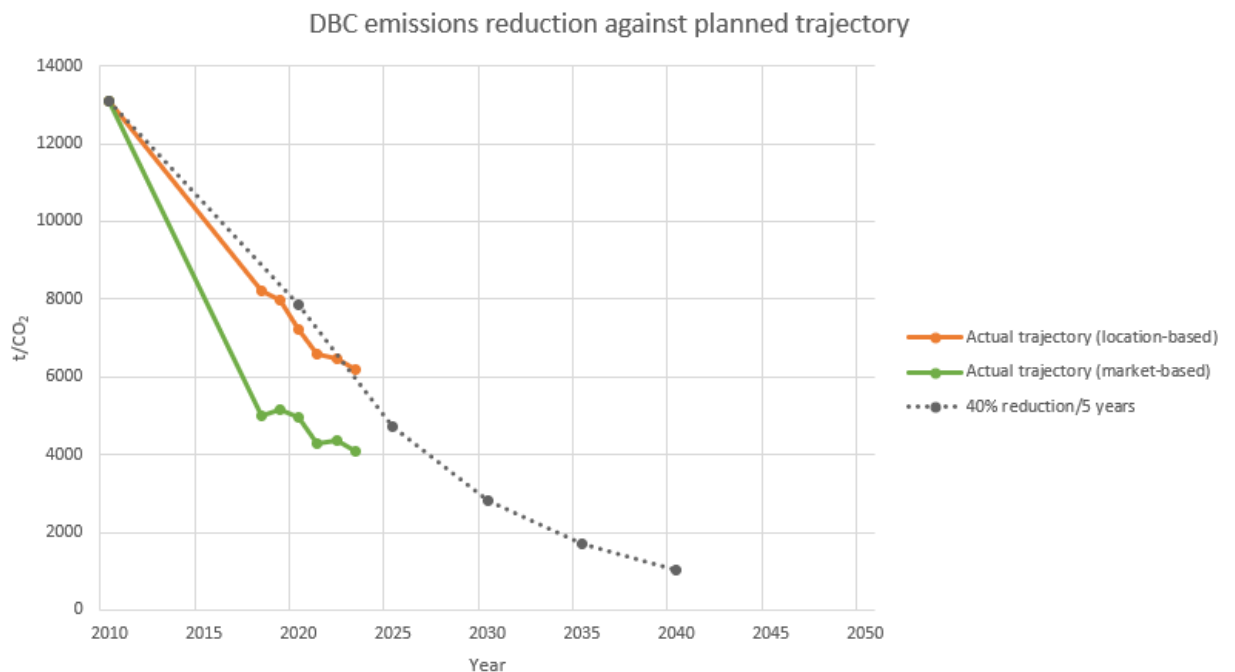
14. At the end of March 2024, our emissions were as follows:

	2010/11	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>	t/CO <sub>2</sub>
Streetlighting	3,487	759	596	515	458	412	418
Corporate Estate	7,564	5,928	5,907	5,014	4,864	4,709	4,579
Business Travel	2,050	1,509	1,482	1,426	1,270	1,328	1,192
Total estimated working from home emissions/tCO <sub>2</sub> e during lockdown				125			
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,101</b>	<b>8,196</b>	<b>7,985</b>	<b>7,080</b>	<b>6,592</b>	<b>6,449</b>	<b>6,190</b>

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

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation
	kWh*	kWh	kWh	kWh	kWh	kWh
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>7,846</b>	<b>8,597</b>	<b>9,015</b>	<b>9,028</b>	<b>12,720</b>

16. Trajectory:



17. We report emissions as recommended by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and show both location-based emissions, which use the average grid emissions that reflect the energy that we are using and market-based emissions, which take into account the zero carbon tariff that we have chosen. The emissions we report are made up of the energy use in council buildings (not including council homes as we do not control how residents use the energy); business mileage; fleet emissions, and streetlighting and signs.

18. A climate change seminar for the Council members was held on 19 September 2024. The seminar was attended by the Head of Local Energy from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Phil Brennan from the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE). Members also heard updates from three of the teams with the greatest impact on our carbon neutral target.

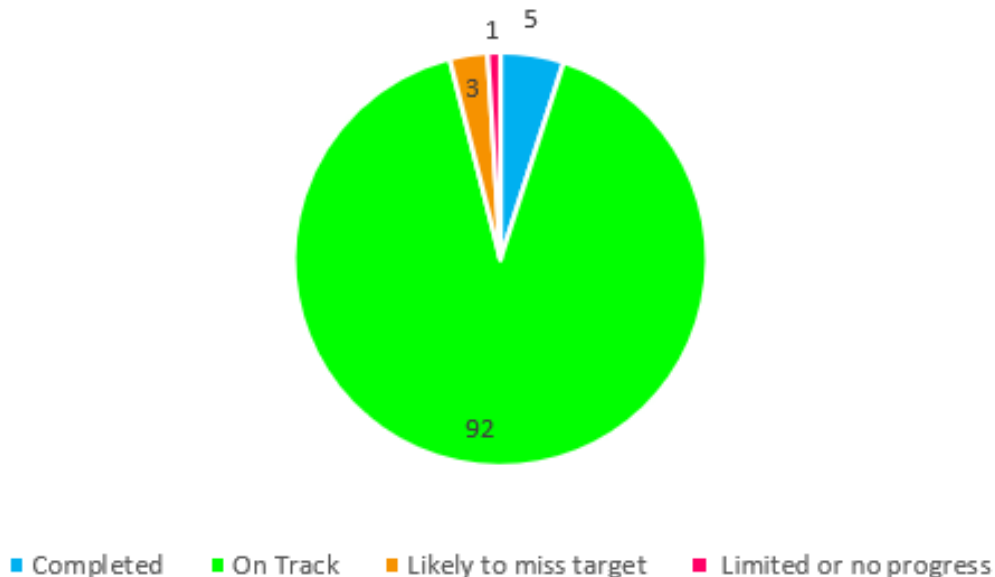
19. The Darlington Eco Fair was held in June 2024. More than 5,000 people passed through the marquee, participating in hands-on crafts, science demonstrations, and interactive theatre shows, while also exploring various eco-friendly products and services.

20. The Highway Asset Management team recently shared a report on total CO<sub>2</sub> reductions achieved through their annual maintenance programme. The report highlights a total reduction of over 348 tonnes in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during the reporting year 2023-24 (23% more than the last reporting year 2022-23). The Highway Asset Management team's use of low carbon materials and adopting sustainable practices during their maintenance program has resulted in carbon savings as well as financial savings.
21. In December, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer submitted our report to Defra as part of a trial project for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power. We are awaiting any feedback from the Department and any report on whether these reports will become mandatory in future. If they do, we expect them to be on the same five-year cycle as the government's climate change risk assessments.

### Climate change action plan

22. Councillor McEwan, Portfolio Holder for the climate change work, has met with all the Assistant Directors to receive feedback and progress on actions.
23. Following these meetings we have reviewed some of the delivery dates of actions, to allow for resources (staff and financial) to be managed. The mid-year status of projects is below:

Climate Action Points Status Q3 2024 (Total 101)



24. Highlights include that the Housing Service is currently delivering Wave 2 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, due to be delivered by June 2025 and is bidding for Wave 3, through the Tees Valley Combined Authority. Should that bid be successful, Wave 3 will see a further 1600 of our homes below EPC C by 2028.
25. The Head of Environmental Services and Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer have worked together to commission a piece of work to calculate the carbon sequestration potential of council land. We are the first local authority in the UK to do this work in this way.

26. The report has been received and shows a positive result. There is still more work to be done to ensure that tree cover data is correct. Also, the data for soil sequestration needs to be redone in two years to get an accurate result. However, we cannot be complacent and must continue with our efforts to reduce carbon emissions as far as possible.

### **Communications**

27. We continue to include a dedicated page in each issue of One Darlington.
28. Our social media messaging across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn from April to November 2024 reached more than 400,000.

### **Financial Implications**

29. Work continues to identify savings from projects across the Council for inclusion in the reserve fund set aside for investment in future climate projects.

### **Legal Implications**

30. There are no legal implications, but with increasing public pressure to act on the threat of climate change, we must demonstrate how we will deliver on the motion commitments and protect the Council from future legal challenge.

### **HR Implications**

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

### **Estates & Property Advice**

32. 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**

33. The report does not involve any purchase over £100k.

### **Equalities Considerations**

34. 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, we ensure that we will be able to continue providing services to all residents

### **Consultation**

35. 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.

**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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## **MAINTAINED SCHOOLS CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMER 2025**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Nick Wallis, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
James Stroyan, Executive Director of People**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Members' agreement to:
  - (a) Release the 2024/25 school condition allocation for the schools' summer works programme 2025.
  - (b) Release the 2024/25 devolved formula capital to the maintained schools.

#### **Summary**

2. This report seeks Cabinet approval for the release of the 2024/25 School Condition Allocation (SCA) funding of £72,042 to undertake a programme of works across the maintained schools in Darlington during summer 2025. Works will include condition, electrical and mechanical surveys, works identified as a priority and any urgent works arising.
3. The report also seeks the release of the 2024/25 Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) of £32,425. This funding is a formula-based grant provided to all maintained schools to help support their ongoing capital needs.

#### **Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that Members:-
  - (a) Agree to formally release the 2024/25 School Condition Allocation of £72,042 to support the 2024 maintained schools' summer works programme.
  - (b) Agree to formally release the 2024/25 Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) of £32,425.

## Reason

- The recommendations are supported in order to release the School Condition Allocation and Devolved Formula Capital will enable capital investment to be undertaken in the areas identified with the greatest need, in terms of asset management priorities.

**James Stroyan,  
Executive Director of People**

## Background Papers

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

Paul Richardson: 0794 724 7224

Council Plan	These capital works will ensure children are learning in a safe high-quality environment to make sure they have the best start in life.
Addressing inequalities	This programme has no specific impact on protected groups.
Tackling Climate Change	All work undertaken will be designed and constructed with sustainability in mind and aim to reduce the carbon footprint, and re-use energy and environmental resources.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Defective materials and plant will be replaced with more efficient products e.g. increasing 'u' value on windows, insulation and modern highly efficiency boilers.
Health and Wellbeing	The capital strategy outlined in this report will continue the Council's drive to provide buildings that enhance children's life chances and opportunities to thrive.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Capital investment to improve facilities and provide better building maintenance will contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	Schools located in: Park East (Borough Road Nursery), Pierremont (George Dent Nursery), North Road (Rise Carr College)
Groups Affected	Children and young people (Aged 2-10) in Darlington.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is an executive decision.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The proposed projects have no specific impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.



## MAIN REPORT

6. The Authority funds the capital maintenance and improvement of maintained schools from a variety of sources including capital allocations received from the Department for Education (DfE), bid-based submissions for Central Government funding programmes (compiled and submitted by Officers or individual schools) and Section 106 agreements.

### School Condition Allocation (SCA)

7. The Department for Education (DfE) has allocated the local authority £72,042 of School Condition funding for 2024/25 to address capital maintenance needs across the borough's remaining maintained schools. The Education and Inclusion Service within the People Group is responsible for ensuring all funding is targeted to meet strategic priorities and the highest priority needs across maintained schools and nurseries.
8. Once a school has converted to an Academy it is no longer eligible to be considered for capital maintenance funding allocated to the LA but can apply direct to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for funding as required.
9. The annual summer works programme is compiled using the information from local authority commissioned surveys covering building condition and electrical and mechanical services. A list of the highest priority works that fits within the available funding envelope is developed in conjunction with Building Design and Building Services. That list is then agreed between the local authority and the maintained schools in the spring prior to the works.

### Asset Management Costs

10. An amount equivalent to 13.0% of the SCA is set aside to cover survey and design fees as part of the asset management process. This will be monitored as the projects progress and, if possible, funding released for other schemes.

### Contingency / Urgent Works

11. The summer works programme retains a 17.0% contingency within the estimated value of the works. This is used to cover any unexpected costs or emergency works. This will be monitored as the projects progress and, if possible, funding released for other schemes.

### Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)

12. The Department for Education (DfE) has allocated £32,425 to Darlington-maintained schools for 2024/25 on a formula-led basis. Local authorities are required to distribute DFC to their schools in accordance with the DfE-published allocations. Schools will be encouraged to manage spend in line with agreed priorities.

### Financial Implications

13. The School Condition Allocation and Devolved Formula Capital are all grants from the Department for Education (DfE). There is no impact on Council funds.

14. All funds must be spent in accordance with the DfE's 'condition grants spend guidance', the latest edition being from March 2024.
15. Future allocations for DfE capital funds are currently under review by the new government. However, even if they remain at the same level, the local authority is receiving less and less as schools academise. This means less flexibility to undertake any serious condition issues at the remaining settings and a higher likelihood that Council funds would be required to supplement the DfE grant.

### **Consultation**

16. Any capital works will be undertaken in consultation with the schools concerned and in line with the priorities identified as part of the school's surveys.

**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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## **RELEASE OF CAPITAL FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA – WEST PARK**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Libby McCollom, Local Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Dave Winstanley, Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to request the release of capital from the Section 106 Mount Pleasant and Stag House Farm agreement for a children's play area as part of the West Park development.

#### **Summary**

2. Through the Section 106 agreement for the West Park Development, a capital allocation of £333,565 has been received for a new children's play area.

#### **Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the £333,565 capital allocation for West Park play area be released.

#### **Reason**

4. The recommendation is supported to enable the section 106 funding to be spent on the provision of a new play area.

**Dave Winstanley  
Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services**

#### **Background Papers**

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

Ian Thompson: Extension 6628

Council Plan	The provision of a new play area has a positive impact on a number of the Council's priorities.
Addressing inequalities	The play area will be open to all residents, therefore contributing to inclusivity.
Tackling Climate Change	There is no impact on Climate Change
Efficient and effective use of resources	The funding for the play area is from Section 106 funding from the West Park Development.
Health and Wellbeing	Provision of play areas has a positive impact on young people's health and wellbeing.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Ensuring play areas are well maintained provides opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities.
Wards Affected	Brinkburn and Faverdale
Groups Affected	Young people will benefit from improved play areas.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
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. As part of a Section 106 agreement for the Mount Pleasant and Stag House Farm development 15/00450OUT the capital funding agreed for a Children's play area on the West Park Development at Cow Green has now been received by the Council.
6. The funds were provided jointly by the developers West Park Joint Venture Ltd and Bussey and Armstrong Projects Ltd (BAPL). The site is approximately 1.55 hectares between Edward Pease Way (east) and Mortimer Wheeler Drive (west) as detailed on the attached plan at **Appendix 1**. The land is currently owned by BAPL and will be transferred to the Council free of charge.
7. The play area will be a mixture of landscaping and play equipment that will fit into the overall design and landscaping strategy for the development. Planning permission has already been approved under ref 22/00256/RM1, dated 12 September 2022.
8. Subject to Cabinet approval to release the capital, work will commence on finalising the design and tender documentation prior to going out to tender in early 2025. With work starting on site in spring 2025, it is anticipated that the play area could be completed and ready for the summer holidays in 2025.

### Financial Implications

9. A capital allocation of £333,565 has been paid to the Council as part of the Section 106 agreement for Mount Pleasant, which is allocated to the play area on West Park as detailed above.
10. Future maintenance and inspections will be covered by existing budgets and arrangements on West Park.

### Legal Implications

11. The funding is part of the wider development and is included in the Section 106 agreement for Mount Pleasant 15/00450OUT.

### Estates and Property Advice

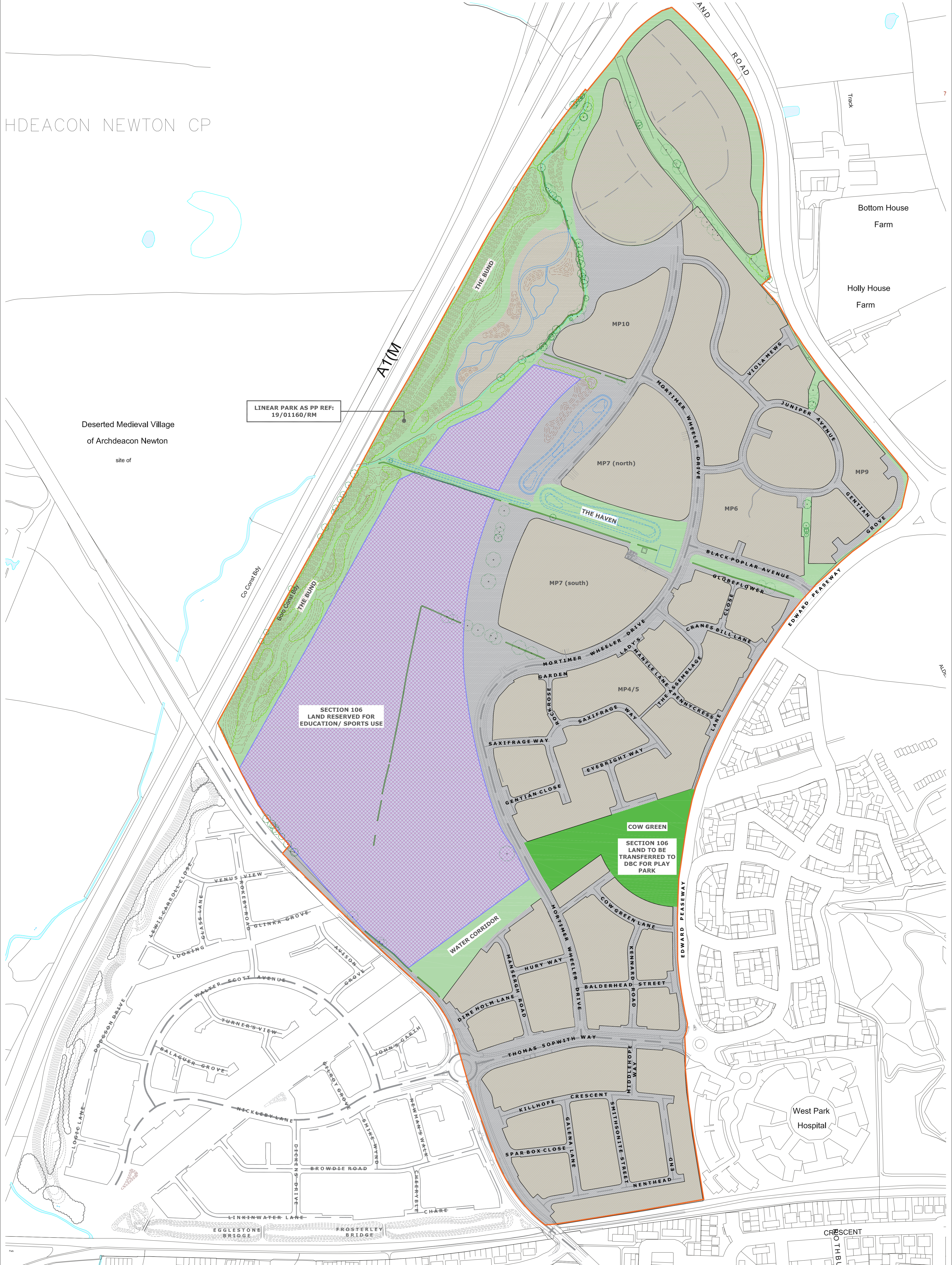
12. The site for the play area as detailed above will be transferred to the Council free of charge from BAPL.

### Procurement Advice

13. Any procurement activity will be carried out in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and current Procurement Legislation.

## **Consultation**

14. It is anticipated a consultation process with local residents and school children will commence in March 2025.



LINEAR PARK AS PP REF:  
19/01160/RM

Deserted Medieval Village  
of Archdeacon Newton  
site of

SECTION 106  
LAND RESERVED FOR  
EDUCATION/ SPORTS USE

COW GREEN

SECTION 106  
LAND TO BE  
TRANSFERRED TO  
DBC FOR PLAY  
PARK

WATER CORRIDOR

Rev	Description	By	Chk	Date
--	Draft Issue	DH/SL	SL	25.09.24
--	Second draft Issue	DH/SL	SL	15.10.24
--	Third draft Issue	DH/SL	SL	16.10.24
--	Amendments to Cow Green area	DH/SL	SL	28.10.24

**NOTES - IF IN DOUBT, ASK**

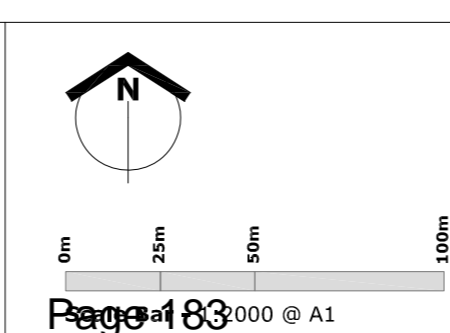
- Do not scale directly from this drawing.
- All dimensions are in metres.
- All levels are shown in metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- All levels and dimensions are to be checked on site by the site manager/contractor prior to commencing any works or ordering any materials.
- This drawing is to be viewed in conjunction with all other detailed drawings and specifications from all members of the design team.
- Any conflicts/discrepancies are to be highlighted to Southern Green prior to commencing works or ordering any materials.

**CDM - SAFETY, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION**  
Principal Designer: **TBC**

In addition to the hazards/ risks normally associated with the types of work detailed on this drawing, note the following project specific risks which require attention/ mitigation by the contractor undertaking the works:

**Construction/ Maintenance/ Cleaning/ Decommissioning/ Demolition:** none identified at this time

It is assumed that all works will be carried out by a competent contractor, working where appropriate, to their own approved method statement. This is not an exhaustive list and reference must be made to the Construction Phase Plan or Health and Safety File and any additional Risk Assessment documents available.



**855 WEST PARK GARDEN VILLAGE**

Bussey & Armstrong  
Open Space Plan

855_WPGV_51	Rev -
1:2000 @ A1	Sept 24
	DL3

Drawing Issue Status	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comment/ Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Contract
<input type="checkbox"/> Costing	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Record Dwg
<input type="checkbox"/> Tender	<input type="checkbox"/> BM

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**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

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## **COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2025/26**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Mandy Porter,  
Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Elizabeth Davison,  
Executive Director - Resources and Governance**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To determine the Council's tax base for 2025/26.

#### **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**.

#### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) The report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2025/26 be approved.
  - (b) The tax base for the Council of 35,904.5 and the individual tax base for the parishes as set out at Appendix 2 be approved.

#### **Reason**

4. The recommendations are supported to comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2025/26 to be set by Council in February 2025.

**Elizabeth Davison  
Executive Director of Resources and Governance**

**Background Papers**

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

Judith Murray: Extension 5401

Council Plan	This report has no implications for the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to inequalities
Tackling Climate Change	There are no climate change implications
Efficient and effective use of resources	The reports does not have any efficiency implications
Health and Well Being	There are no health and well being issues
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
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 Urgent decision.
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 eight 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 and second homes.
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 eight valuation bands as shown in the Council's Valuation List submitted by the Listing Officer (HM Revenue and Customs) on 30 November 2024 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 2026. 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 2025/26 are shown in **Appendix 1**. Members will see that the calculations produce a total Band D equivalent of 36,235.1 (line 18) which, when combined with an estimated collection rate of 99.0% and contributions in lieu, results in an overall tax base figure of 35,904.5 which is a 1.71% increase on 2024/25.
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 2025/26

	Band	A (-)	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	Dwellings per Valuation List	0	23,159	11,162	7,779	5,919	3,562	1,396	683	54	53,714
2	Disabled Band Relief	0	(62)	(45)	(45)	(56)	(40)	(21)	(7)	(13)	(289)
3	Disabled Band Relief (Chargeable)	62	45	45	56	40	21	7	13	0	289
4	Disabled Band Relief (Adjusted)	62	(17)	0	11	(16)	(19)	(14)	6	(13)	0
5	Exemptions	0	(765)	(188)	(133)	(70)	(44)	(14)	(7)	0	(1,221)
6	Single discount (25%)	(27)	(11,035)	(4,298)	(2,569)	(1,422)	(652)	(255)	(88)	(2)	(20,348)
7	Double discount (50%)	(1)	(20)	(6)	(14)	(16)	(14)	(4)	(19)	(8)	(102)
8	Equated discounts	(7.25)	(2,768.75)	(1,077.50)	(649.25)	(363.50)	(170.00)	(65.75)	(31.50)	(4.50)	(5,138.00)
9	Empty Homes Premium 1 Yr (100%)	0	142	31	21	11	12	3	0	1	221
10	Empty Homes Premium (100%)	0	58	13	5	1	2	2	1	0	82
11	Empty Homes Premium (200%)	0	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
12	Empty Homes Premium (300%)	0	10	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	13
13	<b>Chargeable Dwellings</b>	<b>54.75</b>	<b>19,860.25</b>	<b>9,945.50</b>	<b>7,033.75</b>	<b>5,484.50</b>	<b>3,346.00</b>	<b>1,307.25</b>	<b>651.50</b>	<b>39.50</b>	<b>47,723.00</b>
14	Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	(17.16)	(4,295.88)	(943.19)	(354.23)	(107.04)	(31.92)	(11.68)	(3.70)	(0)	(5,764.80)
15	<b>Chargeable Dwellings after CTRS</b>	<b>37.59</b>	<b>15,564.37</b>	<b>9,002.31</b>	<b>6,679.52</b>	<b>5,377.46</b>	<b>3,314.08</b>	<b>1,295.57</b>	<b>647.80</b>	<b>39.50</b>	<b>41,958.20</b>
16	Estimated Changes					441					441
17	Band D Multiplier	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
18	Band D Equivalent (Relevant Amount)	20.9	10,376.2	7,001.8	5,937.3	5,818.2	4,050.5	1,871.4	1,079.7	79.0	36,235.1
19	Estimated Collection Rate										99.0%
20	Contributions in Lieu					31.8					31.8
21	<b>Council Tax Base</b>										<b>35,904.5</b>

## ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2025/26 – 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.
<b>Lines</b>	
Line 1	The number of dwellings in each Council Tax band as per the Valuation List, as at 30/11/2024.
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 between one and two years which attract a 100% Premium.
Line 10	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period between two and five years and which attract a 100% Premium.
Line 11	The number of properties that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for a period between five and ten years and which attract a 200% Premium.
Line 12	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 13	The equivalent number of chargeable dwellings before the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 14	The equivalent number of properties in receipt of council tax benefit in each band
Line 15	The equivalent number of properties after the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Line 16	The estimated number of additional band D equivalent dwellings that will be included in the tax base during 2025/26
Line 17	The band D multiplier that is applied to the number of chargeable dwellings in each band (this multiplier is prescribed in law)
Line 18	The adjusted number of chargeable dwellings in each band after applying the multiplier (Line 15 + Line 16) x Line 17
Line 19	The estimated percentage collection rate
Line 20	The estimated number of band D equivalent dwellings for contributions in lieu. (Armed Forces Accommodation)
Line 21	The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 (Line 18 x Line 19) + Line 20

**PARISH COUNCILS – ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2025/26**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Current Parish Tax Base (1)</b>	<b>Adjusted Band D Equivalent 25/26 (2)</b>	<b>Collection Rate</b>	<b>Parish Tax Base</b>
Bishopton	178.1	182.3	99.0%	180.5
Heighington	1,116.1	1,132.9	99.0%	1,121.6
High Coniscliffe	111.1	113.6	99.0%	112.4
Hurworth	1,544.3	1,617.9	99.0%	1,601.7
Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	349.7	352.2	99.0%	348.7
Middleton St. George	2,080.6	2,135.5	99.0%	2,114.1
Neasham	246.0	251.8	99.0%	249.3
Piercebridge	63.3	62.5	99.0%	61.9
Sadberge	307.2	312.0	99.0%	308.9
Whessoe	582.8	668.7	99.0%	662.0

**PARISH COUNCILS ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2025/26 – EXPLANATION OF TERMS**

<b>Columns</b>	
Current Parish Tax Base (1)	The current Council Tax base for each Parish, using the methodology set out in Appendix 1, for 2024/25
Adjusted Band D Equivalent 25/26 (2)	The calculated Council Tax base for each Parish, using the same methodology set out in Appendix 1, and after the estimated changes for 2025/26 have been applied
Collection Rate	The estimated percentage collection rate
Parish Tax Base	The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 for each Parish

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**CABINET  
7 JANUARY 2025**

**SCHEDULE OF TRANSACTIONS**

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Mandy Porter  
Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams  
Chief Executive**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider and to seek approval of the terms negotiated in respect of the Schedule of Transactions as set out below.

TRANSACTION	PURPOSE OF TRANSACTION	MINUTE REF
Acquisitions 1-4 Park Lane & 1 Waverley Terrace.	Compensation payment following vesting of property in the Council under the Darlington Station Gateway Compulsory Purchase Order	C103(2)(e)/Feb 2020

**Summary**

2. It is necessary for Cabinet to approve terms negotiated by the officers within the Chief Executive and Economic Growth Group on behalf of the Council to enable contractually binding contracts to be completed. The Part III **Appendix 1** details the terms negotiated for consideration and approval.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the schedule (Appendix 1) be approved, and the transactions completed on the terms and conditions detailed therein.

**Reasons**

4. Terms negotiated require approval by Cabinet before binding itself contractually to a transaction.

**Ian Williams  
Chief Executive**

## Background Papers

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

Guy Metcalfe : Extension 6725

Council Plan	Growing the local economy, encouraging new investment in the Borough and maximising employment opportunities.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to inequalities which this report needs to address.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no impacts on climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Any additional costs will be met from within existing budgets.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues relating to Health & Wellbeing which this report needs to address.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime & Disorder.
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 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.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	There are no issues in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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