



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee Agenda

10.00 am

Thursday, 10 April 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

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

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny held on 27 February 2025 (Pages 3 - 4)
4. Allotment Strategy Review – Report of the Assistant Director Environmental Services and Community Safety (Pages 5 - 58)
5. Management of Parks and Open Spaces (Pages 59 - 68)
6. Customer Relationship Management Systems – Report of the Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications (Pages 69 - 76)
7. Renters Rights Bill - Discussion Paper (Pages 77 - 86)
8. Consultation on the renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order and Introduction of a Borough Wide Public Space Protection Order – Report of the Assistant Director Environmental Services and Community Safety (Pages 87 - 104)

9. Residents Parking Zone Policy Update – Report of the Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects (Pages 105 - 120)
10. Work Programme – Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance (Pages 121 - 132)
11. 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 the meeting.
12. Questions



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

**Wednesday, 2 April 2025**

**Town Hall**  
**Darlington.**

**Membership**

Councillors Cossins, Coe, Mrs Culley, Keir, Mahmud, McGill, M Nicholson, Snedker, Walters and Dr. Riley

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Olivia Hugill, Democratic Officer, Resources and Governance, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays email: [olivia.hugill@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:olivia.hugill@darlington.gov.uk) or telephone 01325 405363

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 27 February 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors McGill (Chair), Coe, Mrs Culley, Keir, Mahmud, M Nicholson, Snedker and Dr. Riley

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Cossins and Walters,

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors McCollom

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Andrew Casey (Head of Highway Network Management ), Joanne Roberts (Interim Transport Planning Manager) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

### CLS23 INTRODUCTIONS/ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

### CLS24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### CLS25 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2025

**Submitted** – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2025.

**Resolved** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### CLS26 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN - DELIVERY REPORT 2025

The Executive Director of Environment, Highways and Community Services submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided members an annual update on the delivery of the Darlington Transport Plan which outlined the delivery, performance, and public satisfaction in 2024/25 and will outline the 2025/26 programme, including the release of funding.

The submitted report stated that the Tees Valley Region had secured significant funding from the Government, which included £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme and £6.851m Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The report stated that there has been good progress on the development and delivery of the Transport Capital Programme.

It was reported that in 2022/23 there was a new Transport Strategy for the borough; a Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy which were adopted by the Council where work continued. A progress report on the schemes delivered in 2024/25 and the proposed programme of schemes 2025/26 was detailed in the report. From the Autumn Budget 2024 additional highways funding was announced for 2025/26 with £4.873M allocated to the Tees

Valley, 25% had been held back due to unknown criteria that will follow.

The submitted report demonstrated the focus of the Department for Transport (DfT) on the switch to zero emission cars/vans, which would be the single biggest carbon saving measure in the UK's journey to Net Zero. The report explained that in December 2023, Government announced the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which requires 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold in the UK to be zero emission by 2035. In addition to this the Government would provide Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to support combined authorities and local authorities.

Reference was made to the Tees Valley region which had been allocated funding of £978m for the second round of CRSTS which would cover the period of 2027/28 to 2031/32, the report stated that good progress had been made on the development and delivery of the transport capital programme including the work in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to deliver elements of the strategic transport plan.

Discussion ensued around the TVCA and public transport, Members asked what relationship the Council had with TVCA. The Committee went on to discuss public transport within Darlington, Members questioned what would make public transportation easier for residents. Members suggested if QR codes or questionnaires could be utilised on bus journeys to receive feedback from users.

The Committee moved onto road maintenance, Members questioned if we share practices with other local authorities around road materials and maintenance of potholes. Further questions were raised with regards to when road maintenance has been completed, would this be regularly monitored and recorded.

Members scrutinised the accessibility and dropped curbs around John Street and Valley Street following on from Harrowgate Hill to get into town. The Committee also questioned when work would begin on the Cockerton Roundabout and what the first phase would entail.

Discussion ensued around 20mph limits in Darlington and if any further work is scheduled for this. Members scrutinised the difficulty of obtaining data from speed counters and how certain counters across the town seemed to be intermittent.

**RESOLVED** - That Members noted the report.

## **CLS27 WORK PROGRAMME**

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

**RESOLVED** – That Members note the Work Programme.

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
10 APRIL 2025**

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**ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update to Members on how Darlington Borough Council (DBC) manages Council owned allotment sites and those transferred to 'self managed' associations.

**Summary**

2. The Council developed an allotment strategy when the majority of allotments were in Council ownership. The lapsed allotment strategy is appended as Appendix 1.
3. The strategy was not renewed, as during the period of the strategy, 13 of the 16 allotment sites transferred to 'self-managed' associations. However, the principles in the strategy have continued to be used as management framework to manage allotments going forward.
4. The report provides an update on how allotments are managed, including:
  - (a) management of sites
  - (b) promotions and marketing
  - (c) methods of meeting demand
  - (d) resourcing
  - (e) on-site provisions at sites
  - (f) association forming

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that Members receive the update on allotment management

**Ben Grabham**  
**Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Community Safety**

**Background Papers**

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

Author: Brian Graham (EXT: 6607)

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The Allotment Strategy (2009-2019) expired 6 years ago. It was determined that renewal of this strategy was no longer necessary due to the large-scale transfer of these assets to 'self-managed' associations and the reduction in Council managed allotment sites.
7. Members of the Scrutiny Committee requested information on how Darlington Borough Council (DBC) currently manages those sites still in DBC ownership, and also what our responsibilities are regarding those sites transferred to 'self managed' associations.

### Management of Sites

8. There are a total of 16 allotment sites across the DBC area; 3 are operated by DBC whilst the remaining 13 are operated by 'self-managed' associations. There are in excess of 800 individual plots available across the Borough, both DBC and self-managed. There are also four privately owned allotments sites in the Borough.
9. The Council currently manages three allotments sites: Arnold Road, Honeypot Lane and Parkside. The remaining sites are self-managed associations and run by committees. In relation to the three sites, the Council are subject to the following responsibilities.
  - (a) Maintenance and repair of roads.
  - (b) Maintenance and repair of perimeter fencing.
  - (c) Maintenance and repair of standpipes.
  - (d) Cut back vegetation from paths (hedges/grass).
  - (e) Payment of monthly water bills.
  - (f) Regular inspections carried out every 4-6 weeks in the summer and every 6-8 weeks in the winter. An internal audit of the allotment service is also undertaken.
  - (g) Issuing of rental letters/collection of rent and contacting tenants if there are issues with rental payments.
  - (h) Rent vacant allotments (contacting people on waiting list).
  - (i) Deal with any complaints raised by tenants and or residents about the allotments.
  - (j) Deal with fly tipping issues.
  - (k) Deal with allotment waiting list applications (online system for application).  
Manage the waiting list spreadsheet for Arnold Road, Honeypot Lane and Parkside.
  - (l) Liaise with other companies who need access e.g. utility companies, such as pylons in Arnold Road allotments.
  - (m) Issue warning letters to tenants if plot has weeds, not cultivated.
  - (n) Issue termination letter (last resort) if not using plot or not paid rent.
  - (o) Tenancy agreements are given to each plot holder (full plot and half plot). Arnold Road is a livestock site so can have pigeons and hens. Honeypot Lane and Parkside are vegetables only.
  - (p) Full plot is approx. 250m<sup>2</sup> and half plot 125m<sup>2</sup> and some plots have sheds, polytunnels and pigeon lofts on, these stay with the plots.
  - (q) Issue keys/ replace main gate padlocks.
  - (r) Installing/ updating signage e.g. dog control signs.

10. The Association(s) responsible for self-managed allotment sites (13 in number) are subject to the following responsibilities, as outlined in the lease agreement.
  - (a) Repair and maintenance of all boundary fencing/hedges enclosing the site, except where otherwise indicated.
  - (b) Repair and maintenance of access tracks and pathways within the site.
  - (c) Repair and maintenance of water taps and pipes.
  - (d) Pruning/felling of trees and shrubs.
  - (e) Grass cutting
  - (f) Reinstatement after vandalism (clearance of all rubbish, lock/key replacement)
  - (g) Maintaining the site to the standards as recorded in the photographic Schedule of Conditions set out in Schedule 3 of the lease agreement.
  - (h) The Association shall ensure individual tenants of allotment plots comply with the Tenants Obligations set out in Schedule 2 of the lease agreement.
  - (i) The Association sets and collects the rent.
  - (j) The Association pays the water bills.
  - (k) The Association carries out inspections.
  - (l) The Associations sends warning letters if the plot is not cultivated.

### **Promotion and Marketing**

11. There is an allotments page on the Council website with the information regarding the various allotment sites in Darlington. There is information about the allotments together with contract details for the self-managed sites. There is also information and an online form to complete if you wish to go on the allotment waiting list.
12. Some self-managed associations have websites and also hold public events on their sites. DBC have placed articles in the One Darlington magazine and on social media about allotments e.g. on when best to grow/ plant seeds, seed exchange.

### **Demand**

13. The planning department encourages developers to create allotment space/ green living in the Local Plan for future developments.
14. For all major proposed developments there is the requirement to provide open space within them. For example, the adopted Local Plan 2016-2036 includes specific reference to providing for the green infrastructure needs of the new community at Skerningham. In Policy H10, the following wording is included: "the site will provide a pattern of well-integrated and interconnected green spaces (along with provision for their long term maintenance) across the site, providing for the green infrastructure needs of the local community, including wildlife friendly natural spaces, sport and recreation facilities and allotments, in accordance with policies ENV4, ENV5, ENV9.
15. Elsewhere in the Local Plan, allotments are treated as part of the green infrastructure network, as clarified in the glossary, to include locally important green spaces, green wedges, wildlife sites, allotments, urban fringe, trees, woodland, rights of way and countryside.

16. The waiting list for Council allotments is currently in excess of 300 applications. When a plot becomes available, the person at the top of the list is contacted (email, phone, letter) and they have 14 days to get in touch to arrange a viewing of the plot. After 14 days (if they haven't been in touch) they are removed from the waiting list and the next person on the waiting list is contacted.
17. Available land is a key consideration and areas of Council land that is available/suitable for allotments is earmarked for other types of development.
18. Whilst demand is high there are no funds available to create new Council allotments as the infrastructure for these sites can be expensive (roads, fences, water etc).

### **Resourcing Allotments**

19. In the 2025-2026 financial year, the Council subsidised the Allotment Service by circa. £21K. Rent accrued (£8,440) offsets those costs associated with management of the premises (i.e. water, minor R&M, electricity etc.) but does not cover costs associated with officer time, removal of fly tips, storm damage etc.

### **On Site Provision**

20. Council run sites all have water standpipes on site. Arnold Road, as it is a livestock site, has chicken coops, pigeon lofts and sheds. Some plots also have polytunnels. The vegetable plots at Honey Pot Lane have sheds.
21. Self-managed sites will vary depending on if it's a livestock site or vegetable only site. As these were former Council sites, they have water standpipes (for which the relevant committee pays the bill). They will have pigeon lofts, sheds and coops and some may have polytunnels and greenhouses.

### **Association Forming**

22. The majority of Council allotment sites transferred to self-managed associations in 2017. The process was undertaken in partnership between the Council and Groundwork NE and consulted all the tenants at each allotment site to form a committee. Procedures were put into place by the committees, and these are based on the Council's own procedures, i.e. that there be elected members of the committee (chair, secretary, treasurer), an AGM, tenancy agreement, rules and regulations etc.
23. Of the 3 allotments sites that are still run by the Council, only Arnold Road has enquired about going self-managed. We provided the individual who registered the request and was interested in potentially setting up an association the necessary information, but there was little interest from the rest of the tenants on the idea.

### **Conclusion**

24. It is recommended that this report is received for information and discussion.





## **AN ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY FOR DARLINGTON 2009-2019**



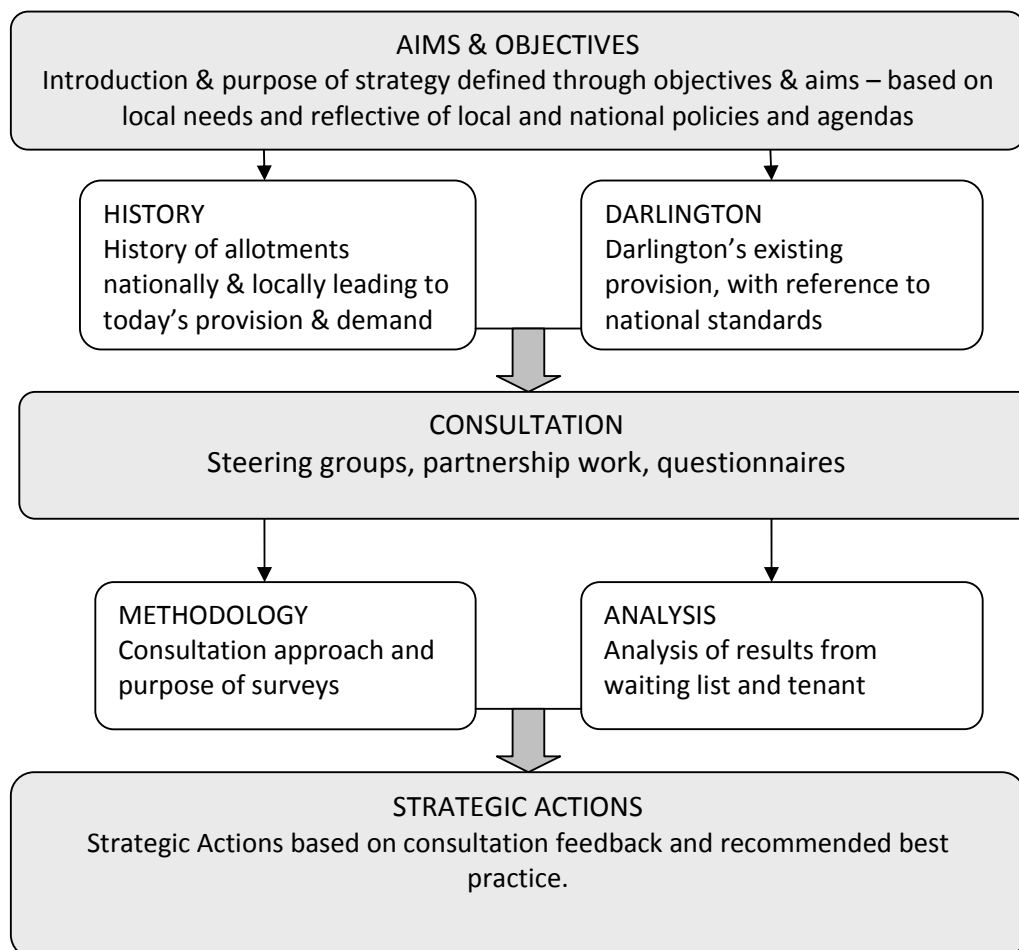
*“Local Growing, Healthy Living, Sustainable Lifestyles”*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Allotment gardens and spaces to grow food are an important part of the green space and leisure provision. They offer people across the UK the opportunity to strengthen their communities, achieve more sustainable lifestyles and maintain a better quality of life.
- 1.2 Growing your own food delivers many benefits, the most recognised of which is the provision of a better diet which in turn helps create an improved level of health and fitness. In addition, food grown on allotment gardens can act as a good resource for learning new skills, a better environment for wildlife, and a place for increased social connectivity.
- 1.3 Darlington Borough is home to a number of different kinds of allotment provision such as Council run sites, self-managed associations, and Parish or privately owned and/or managed allotments. This strategy has been developed for Darlington, and although inclusive of the Council's Service, it also takes into account other local allotment provision. By adopting a borough wide approach, and hence incorporating all identified allotment supply, it provides a more functional and connected Allotment Strategy for Darlington.
- 1.4 The production of a strategy for allotments in Darlington comes at a time when interest in the activity has seen a big increase. Only 10 years previous, the provision was under used with many semi derelict sites and vacant plots. The current situation is very different with a fast growing waiting list and the provision at full capacity.
- 1.5 What approach to take to this relatively new situation is the main reason for the production of this strategy. How do we address the new demand, is it likely to be a sustained trend? And what role do the various stakeholders have in the process are all questions that are looked at in the following pages.
- 1.6 The key partners involved in the production of this strategy are, Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Primary Care Trust (PCT), Friends of the Earth and Groundwork North East. The strategy has taken shape through continued support and discussion from a diverse steering group that has included representatives from the above as well as from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG), The Children's Trust, Parish Councils, Self-managed sites, and DBC managed sites, Darlington Borough Council (DBC) departments including: Allotments, Estates, Environmental Services, Planning Services, Education, Connecting Communities, Sustainable Development Services, Parks and Countryside, and Housing.

- 1.7 The strategy has been produced following a detailed consultation process which was aimed at assessing the current attitude with regards to the existing provision, as well as identifying the communities view towards opportunities for an alternative programme for growing food. This has been carried out through a range of surveys with the Darlington public (see consultation section), including questionnaires sent to those on waiting lists, council tenants already with allotment gardens and plot holders who are members of the self managed sites.
- 1.8 All recommendations made in the strategy will be considered in terms of the long term sustainability of the service.
- 1.9 The strategy is aimed at providing a vision for how allotments and local food will be catered for, in the borough of Darlington, for the next ten year period up until 2020.
- 1.10 The process that was adopted in order to develop the Allotment Strategy for Darlington is described in the following diagram:



## **2. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

### **2.1 The Aims of the Allotment Strategy**

2.1.1 In order to address the recent increase in demand, it is the aim of this strategy to look at delivering a more accessible and sustainable allotment service. To do this it is intended to firstly, increase the level of the provision by identifying where there is a shortage and where there are opportunities for new or enlarged sites, and, secondly, the quality of the provision, by helping existing or new allotment holders to access new resources. There is also a recognized need to publicise opportunities to grow food within the Borough of Darlington.

2.1.2 The strategy takes into account the different types of allotments provision within Darlington – namely, council run sites and self managed sites as well as non-council sites such as those run privately or by the parish councils. Any improvements to the existing allotment services, aimed at meeting the increased demand, should provide information that takes into account these different types of allotment provision.

2.1.3 Based on the overarching aims there are three strands that can be broken down as follows:

- Meeting Demand
  - Methods of Meeting Demand
  - Resourcing Allotments
  - On-site Provision
- Management of sites
  - Management of Allotment Sites
  - Association Forming
  - Monitoring systems
- Promotion and Marketing

2.1.4 Finally, the strategic vision is aimed at helping create greater levels of social inclusion for residents as the community engage in this relatively social activity. Alongside this, the movement encourages a healthy way of life for a variety of reasons associated with this activity as well as improving knowledge and awareness of natural processes.

## 2.2 Strategy and Guidance

2.2.1 The Allotment Strategy is a sub document of the Darlington Open Space Strategy 2007 -2017. It is identified as one of the actions of the Open Space Strategy.

2.2.2 In addition allotments are relevant to the health sector and have strong links with creating sustainable communities. There are therefore links with all the following strategies:

- Sustainable Community Strategy ‘One Darlington Perfectly Placed’
- Health Improvement Strategy
- Social Inclusion Strategy
- Climate Change Strategy
- Community Engagement Strategy

## 2.3 History of Allotments and National Recommendations

2.3.1 Allotment legislation has been altered and adapted over time to meet changing needs and demand. Land allocation, allotment provision, and a service to facilitate provision remain a fundamental right (under the Allotments Act, where there is demand) for the public to continue the tradition and pastime of sustainable self-sufficiency in growing food.

## 2.4 A Historical Context

<b>Historic Tradition of Allotment Gardening</b>	
•	Traditionally formed as areas of land to use for a sustainable supply of self-grown produce for consumption (and survival).
•	Divides between rich and poor and disproportionate land ownership effected food access. Thus, the General Enclosure Act of 1845 was formed which ‘required that the Commissioners should make provision for the landless poor in the form of “field gardens” limited to a quarter of an acre. This was really the beginning of allotments as we have today in the UK.’ <sup>1</sup>
•	Urban allotments plots also increased during the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century due to growth of high density housing with little or no garden area for planting or growing food.

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<sup>1</sup> Allotment Growing: Vegetable, Fruit and Herb Gardening  
<http://www.allotment.org.uk/articles/Allotment-History.php>

- The following figures<sup>2</sup> demonstrate the massive increase in allotment use and function during times of war:
  - First World War prompted a huge growth in the number of allotments from 600,000 to 1,500,000
  - The Second World War again increased the role for allotments and the 'Dig for Victory' campaign saw annual food production from allotments rise to 1,300,000 tonnes per year from around 1,400,000 plots.
- When food shortage threats ceased, the need and demand for allotment plots declined. Allotment provision and land allocation also reduced as land was required for new functions.

Following the peak of 1,400,000 allotment plots across the UK in 1943 there was a sharp decline in the provision to around 500,000 in the 1970s. The decline continued during the 1970s but at a much slower rate<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.5 Allotments, The Law and Recommendations

- Within allotment law, there are no national rules or recommendations with regards to quantity or time limits for meeting waiting list demand.
- The most widely acknowledged recommendation is the '1969 Thorpe Report which recommends a minimum provision equivalent to 15 per 1,000 households, but this is not legally binding' however....
- It is estimated that since 1969 some 30% of the then available allotments land has been lost irrevocably. Hence, the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardens (NCALG) recommends that the irreducible minimum provision today should be 20 standard (300 sq. yd) plots per 1,000 households.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs [Fifth Report](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56007.htm#a6) History & Legislation [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56007.htm#a6](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56007.htm#a6)

<sup>3</sup> Provision of Allotments: Environment, Transport & Regional Affairs Fifth Report <http://www.parliament.the-stationeryoffice.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56009.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Allot More Allotments. <http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/legislation.htm>

- *The Survey of Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms*, carried out by the University of Derby on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2006 showed that the national average provision was 7 plots per 1,000 population.

2.6 A summary of key Allotment Acts which have been passed until now are as follows:

Principal Allotments Legislation<sup>5</sup>

Act and Date	Relevance
Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908	Consolidated all previous legislation and laid down basis for all subsequent legislation. Placed duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments, according to demand. Also makes provision for local authorities to purchase compulsorily land to provide allotments.
Allotments Act 1922	Limited the size of an allotment to one-quarter of an acre and specified that it should be used mostly for growing fruit and vegetables. Also protected tenants by laying down periods of notice, ensuring compensation for termination of tenancies and compelled most allotment authorities to set up allotment committees.
Allotments Act 1925	Required local authorities to recognise the need for allotments in any town planning development. Established 'statutory' allotments which a local authority could not sell or convert to other purposes without Ministerial consent.
Allotments Act 1950	Followed on from the findings of the Allotments Advisory Committee Report of 1949. Made improved provisions for compensation and tenancy rights. Also confined local authorities' obligation to 'allotment gardens' only.

**3. Darlington's Existing Allotment Provision**

3.1 Darlington has a population of 97,838<sup>6</sup> and the number of households within the Borough is 46,000<sup>7</sup>. With an allotment tenancy rate of approximately 900, we can estimate that Darlington's provision currently runs at 20 plots per 1,000 households.

<sup>5</sup> Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Fifth Report History & Legislation <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56007.htm#a6>

<sup>6</sup> Census 2007. Darlington. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pyramids/pages/00EH.asp>

<sup>7</sup> Darlington Facts & Figures 2008: Number of Households 2008. [http://www.darlington.gov.uk/dar\\_public/documents/Chief%20Executive%20Office/DARLINGTON%20FACT%20CARD%202008.pdf](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/dar_public/documents/Chief%20Executive%20Office/DARLINGTON%20FACT%20CARD%202008.pdf)



- 3.2 Based on the provision guidelines, Darlington exceeds the Thorpe Report<sup>8</sup> recommendations of 15 plots per 1000 households and meets those of the NSALG of 20plots/1000 households. Darlington also surpasses the National Average calculated to be approximately 7 plots per 1,000 population.

The total number of allotment sites identified within the borough stands at 26 (plus two new community allotments projects which are in development). This figure may differ from other reports as some sites are divided into two or more sections thus depending whether the audit counted the sites individually or grouped together and hence counted as a single entity.

- 3.3 The following table shows identified allotment plots within the Darlington Borough, the management and/or ownership of each:

	Name	Ownership	Ward	Ha	Full Plots	Half Plots
1	Arnold Road	DBC	Lingfield	2.52	40	15
2	Sugar Hill	DBC	Cockerton East	2.2	85	3
3	Drury Street	DBC	Northgate	0.1	4	-
4	Field Street	DBC	North Road	0.93	34	-
5	Honeypot Lane	DBC	Faverdale	0.65	18	-
6	Lascelles	DBC	Lascelles	1.38	29	4
7	Salter's Lane North	DBC	Haughton West	1.55	46	10
8	Salter's Lane South	DBC	Harrowgate Hill	0.28	15	-
9	Springwell Terrace	DBC	Haughton West	0.15	7	-
10	Parkside	DBC	Park East	0.06	2	
11	Barmpton Lane	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Haughton North	2.42	89	27
12	Bellburn Lane	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Cockerton East	3.21	85	29
13	Dodmire	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Bank Top	1.7	48	-
14	Glebe Road	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Harrowgate Hill	1.8	47	-
15	Smithfield Road	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Park East	0.57	15	10
16	West Cemetery / Pondfield Close	DBC/Self-managed - Association	Hummersknott	3.51	115	15
17	Killinghall Row	Middleton St George Parish Council	Middleton St George	2.57	6	10
18	Sadberge Road	Middleton St George Parish Council	Middleton St George	0.86	20	5

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/legislation.htm>

	Name	Ownership	Ward	Ha	Full Plots	Half Plots
19	Belle Vue	Middleton St George Parish Council	Middleton St George	0.42	20	7
20	High Side Road / Batt Lane	Heighington Parish Council	Heighington	0.98	70	-
21	Emerson Road	Hurworth Parish Council	Hurworth	0.57	45	
22	Hurworth Grange Strait Lane	Hurworth Parish Council	Hurworth	0.25	9	
23	Nunnery Lane	Privately Owned	Hummersknott	1.69	70	-
24	Bedford Street / Chatsworth Terrace	Privately Owned	Park East	0.6		
25	Bridge Road, Blackwell	Privately Owned	Hurworth	0.98		
26	Harrowgate Club	Privately Owned	Harrowgate HILL	0.12		
27	Bowen Rd	Privately Owned	Cockerton East	0		
<b>Notes</b>						
1. Allotment gardens may vary in size and shape (may be larger or smaller than standard full or half plots).						
2. Been unable to get all the information for every site						

- 3.4 Open Space Strategy<sup>9</sup> states that although there is only 0.34 ha of allotments per 1000 people in the urban area in Darlington, almost all the urban population is within 15 minutes walk (1000m) of an allotment site, with exceptions being the urban fringe ends of Red Hall, Lingfield, Branksome and High Grange and parts of College and Park West wards.

*Darlington allotment Provision Standards to be maintained and improved: 95% population within 15 minutes walk (1000m) of at least one allotment site.*

(Open Spaces Strategy. Policy 18)

- 3.5 In addition to growing food, a number of allotments within the UK are used (partially) for livestock, for example: bee-keeping, hens, ducks and geese, pigeons and rabbits. Darlington Council has permitted livestock to be kept on five of its sites. Livestock has been restricted to predominantly chickens, pigeons, ducks, rabbits and one site where horses are allowed.

<sup>9</sup> Darlington Open Space Strategy 2007-2017. April 2007. (p21)

3.6 Existing site that permit livestock are:

1	Arnold Road	Livestock is currently only permitted within allotments away from residential housing.
2	Cockerton	
3	Field Street	
4	Salter's lane	
5	Smithfield Road	

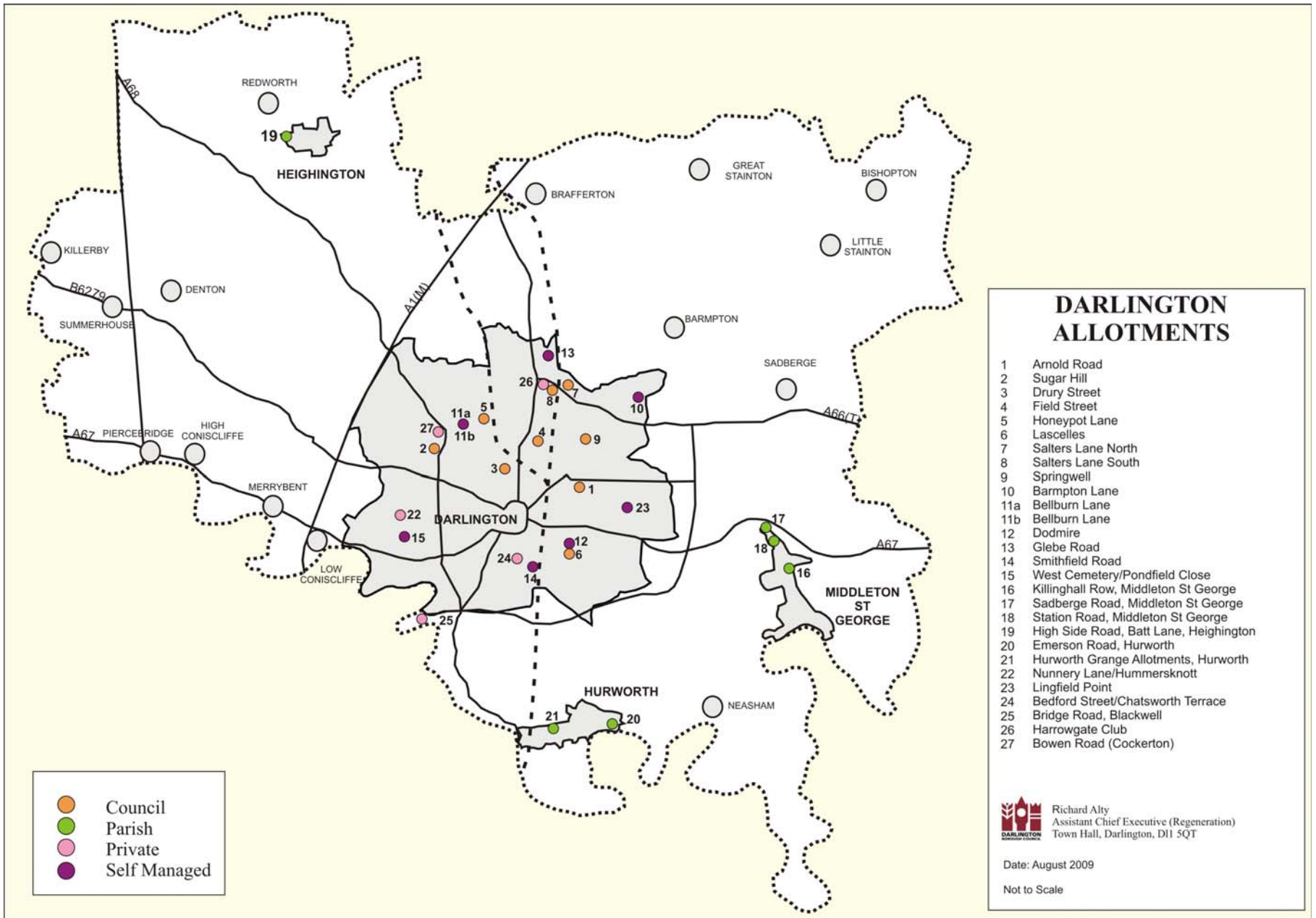
3.7 There are currently allotments present in 15 out of the 24 Darlington wards, the majority concentrated around the more urban and more densely populated areas where more demand exists.

DARLINGTON BOROUGH WARDS ( <i>U = urban, R = rural</i> )	
<b>With Allotments</b>	Park East (U)
Bank Top (U)	Hurworth (R)
Cockerton East (U)	Lascelles (U)
Faverdale (U)	<b>Without Allotments</b>
Harrowgate Hill (U)	Central (U)
Haughton North (U)	Cockerton West (U)
Haughton West (U)	College (U)
Heighington & Coniscliffe (R)	Eastbourne (U)
Middleton St George (R)	Haughton East (U)
Hummersknott (U)	Mowden (U)
Lingfield (U)	Park West (U)
Northgate (U)	Pierremont (U)
North Road (U)	Sadberge & Whessoe (R)

DBC Sites (C) Self-managed sites (SM)	Waiting List by Ward (2010)	Plots		Site
		Full	Half	
Wards		Full	Half	
Bank Top	16	48	-	Dodmire (SM)
Central	20	-	-	
Cockerton East	13	85	3	Sugar Hill (C)
		85	29	Bellburn Lane (SM)
Cockerton West	15	-	-	
College	8	-	-	
Eastbourne	22	-	-	
Faverdale	7	18		Honeypot Lane(C)
Harrowgate Hill	20	15		Salters Lane South
		48		Glebe Road (SM)
Haughton East	12	-	-	
Haughton North	6	89	27	Barmpton Lane (SM)
Haughton West	20	46	10	Salters Lane North (C)
		6	2	Springwell Terrace (C)
Hummersknott	2	115	15	West Cemetary (SM)
Lascelles	23	29	4	Lascelles (C)
Lingfield	16	40	15	Arnold Road (C)
Mowden	2	-	-	
Northgate	18	4		Drury Street (C)
North Road	26	34		Field Street (C)
Park East	22	2		Parkside (C)
		15	10	Smithfield Road (SM)
Park West	1	-	-	
Pierremont	13	-	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>115</b>	

Self Managed Sites	Rent	Concession
Barmpton Lane	30.00	Yes
Bellburn Lane	45.00	Yes
Dodmire	45.00	Yes
Glebe Road	30.00	Yes
Smithfield Road	40.00	No
West Cemetery	22.00	Yes

- 3.8 Out of the 26 allotment sites in Darlington, the Council's allotments provision consists of 15 sites, all of which can be found within the main urban area of Darlington, with just under 800 plots tenanted. The sites range from quite large with in excess of 150 plots down to very small sites with as few as 2 plots.
- 3.9 Some of these plots are let to the same people with as many as 3 plots under the same tenancy in some places. There are a few sites where plots are not let due to their unsuitability, mainly as a result of poor drainage.



- 3.10 The actual plot sizes vary to some extent across the provision although the standard 25 metres by 10 metres or 250 sq metres can be used as a guideline for the average plot size. There are also some ½ plots tenanted at some of the sites which are offered to people who say they cannot manage a full plot.
- 3.11 In 2004 Darlington Borough Council contracted Groundwork West Durham and Darlington to work with them to set up self managed sites. To date six sites have become self managed. All these sites have their own committee, lease the site from DBC and have secured additional funds to improve their site.
- 3.12 The decision to develop self managed sites has proved very successful. It is widely agreed that the sites are very well managed, with external grants significant improvements that users have wanted have been made and they have a greater sense of community spirit.
- 3.13 Darlington Borough Council wants to continue to create more self managed sites if the conditions are appropriate.
- 3.14 Darlington Borough Council set the rent of plots for sites they manage and in 2010/11 this will be £45.70. The self managed sites set their own rent these range from £22 - £43.
- 3.15 Until recently the combination of Council run, parish run and privately run sites has been sufficient to cater for demand with most sites having a surplus of plots or only a small and temporary waiting list.
- 3.16 Over the past few years there has been a huge increase in the interest of growing food locally and now the Council's waiting list (which varies from site to site), currently stands at over 400 people in total and continues to grow at the same rate. The rate of turnover is very low with someone joining the waiting list, likely having to wait for as much as five years to get an allotment.
- 3.17 As part of the open spaces audit all the allotment sites were audited during the summer of 2009 and the following analysis of the provision was made.

Allotments provide sustainable opportunities for the community to grow their own food as well as promoting outdoor exercise and community interaction. 'Grow your own food' is becoming increasingly popular; the Council currently has approximately 300 people on its waiting list for an allotment site.

All of the allotments adjoin other large areas of open space; valuable connections are made with the rest of the infrastructure network allowing species like bees, newts, birds and insects to move around the Borough more easily.

Management and maintenance responsibilities vary; nine spaces are owned by the Council including Arnold Road and Lascelles, a further six like Glebe Road and Smithfield Road are owned by the Council and a self management association who take care of the day to day management of the spaces. All of the spaces in the villages are owned and managed by their respective Parish Councils. Others retain close associations with working men’s clubs and private organisations. All are only accessible to allotment holders but as a valuable, unique type of open space the ongoing quantity, quality and value must be monitored.

### Quantity and Type

27 allotment spaces (28.2ha) exist; twenty in the urban area and seven in the main villages. Provision remains constant across the Borough but is unevenly distributed partly reflecting historic associations with working men’s clubs, railway and industrial buildings and land like Harrowgate Club, Smithfield Road and Killinghall Row, Middleton St George. The majority of provision (23%) is in the South West locality, in contrast the Central locality has the lowest provision (9%). At a more detailed level, there are no allotments in the Central, Cockerton West, College, Eastbourne, Haughton East, Mowden, Park West and Pierremont wards, including some of the more densely populated parts of the urban area.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	-	-
Local	22	27.74
Doorstep	5	0.46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28.2</b>

### Local allotments

81% are local spaces but site size and the corresponding number of plots varies significantly; West Cemetery Allotments cover 3.51ha while Lascelles Allotments covers 0.32ha. Allotments within the villages may be smaller but are classified as local spaces as a result of their village catchment.

### Doorstep allotments

Five doorstep spaces exist in the urban area, all are very small spaces (less than 0.2ha); Bowen Road (0.06ha) and Parkside are the smallest (0.06ha) providing 2 plots but are still an important resource for the local community.

### Standards of provision

#### OSS Policy 18 Provision Standards By Open Space Type



By 2017, within the main urban area, the overall provision of specific types of open space will be maintained and improved to achieve the following standards:

- Allotments: 95% population within 15 minutes walk (1000m) of at least 1 allotment site

In 2007 quantity and quality standards of provision were not considered appropriate for allotments as the factors that controlled appropriate provision varied across the urban area. But since then the waiting lists of the Council and other providers has grown significantly. To actively meet this demand the Council intends to use a new standard of provision:

### New OSS Policy 23

The Council and its partners will work towards a standard of allotment provision of 0.45ha per 1000 population so that 95% of the urban population is within 15 minutes (1000m) walk of at least one allotment site. The quality of allotment sites will be so that all sites are 4\* quality or above.

Currently provision is 0.26ha per 1000 people, well below this standard. The Council will continue to work with partners particularly the self management associations and Parish Councils to increase demand where possible to meet the needs of those on the waiting list. This may include changing management to encourage better use of existing stock as well as identifying new spaces for allotment provision.

### Quality and Value

Area	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	4	4*: 2 3*: 1 1*: 1	High
Darlington Central	5	4*: 4 3*: 1	High
Darlington South West	5	4*: 4 3*: 1	High
Darlington South East	3	4*: 2 3*: 1	High
Darlington North East	3	4*: 2 3*: 1	High
Villages	7	4*: 2 3*: 4 2*: 1	High

By nature, allotments are managed more intensively than other spaces, but their overall quality contributes to the Borough's landscape and 'sense of place'. So, new quality surveys were specifically designed to assess the qualities important to creating a high quality allotment space. 74% of spaces were classified as 4\* quality including the largest West Cemetery and the smallest Bowen Road as well as several in the villages like Hurworth Grange. Only two spaces are below average quality; Station Road, Middleton St George as a result of limited parking and difficult access and Honeypot Lane because of its poor overall condition resulting from anti social behaviour. All of the allotment spaces are high value reflecting the high demand for plots and the limited allotment spaces within the Borough.

### Actions

To help meet the 2017 standards of provision the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Investigations will continue to help provide a new allotment at **The Ridgeway, Harrowgate Hill;**

In the long term

- Opportunities will be taken to increase the number of spaces and/or to extend existing spaces to enhance provision;
- The management of Honeypot Lane will be reassessed;
- By 2026 a new allotments space may be incorporated into the new development at Lingfield Point.

3.18 In recent years, a number of initiatives have taken place that explore greater involvement for Darlington schools in the growing of food and in some cases this has led to them actually leasing plots at local allotment sites. The success of this process often depends on one or two keen individual teachers but there have been some very good examples of plots being used in this way, recently and opportunities for this to continue as well as for schools to explore creating plots on their own land in the future are to be encouraged by those partners involved in this strategy.

3.19 Other local food initiatives are also being encouraged by the partners involved in the strategy such as community allotment gardens. This is a situation where, what is usually a larger plot, located at a new or existing site, is managed by one or more organisations in order to deliver a selection of outputs, from training, outreach work or simply to involve a group of people collectively in the local food movement.

3.20 Other methods being explored of producing food locally include the Darlington DiG project (Darlington its Growing) which is looking at providing an umbrella organisation, the purpose of which is to add value to the initiatives that are already taking place, making sure that people involved are aware of the opportunities in Darlington, learn from each other, introduce consumers to producers and bring in extra resources through combining efforts. The initiatives that fall under this banner are the Grow Zone approach, similar to those that have been successfully created in Middlebrough's back alleys, community supported agriculture, a process that has been trialled successfully elsewhere in the country and community propaganda using raised beds in more urban settings.

### **Darlington Borough Councils Management Policy**

**In the management of Council owned sites, DBC aims to maintain an efficient and effective service for the letting and re- letting of allotments.**

**In order to achieve this the Council will aim to:-**

- (1) Provide an efficient and effective lettings service, setting the rent in line with Council policy and collecting rents on an annual basis.
- (2) Aim to let a newly vacant plot within 1 month of the termination date.
- (3) Provide a basic maintenance service for the sites including grass cutting of the main paths, repairs to the perimeter fences, payment of the water bills and the repair of the water supply infrastructure if present.
- (4) Survey the sites at least once every 4 months in order to identify severely underused (uncultivated), neglected plots.

Definition of an uncultivated plot, (less than half of the plot is cultivated for 1 year, or all the plot lies uncultivated for 6 months). The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners recommend that 75% of a plot should be cultivated.

- (5) Contact the tenants listed as occupiers of severely underused (uncultivated) or neglected plots during the year of the tenancy and ensure action is taken by the tenant to cultivate the plot. If no action is taken within 28 days then the Council can either reclaim or re let the plot. The tenant could retain the plot under the existing tenancy for no more than 1 full year if an acceptable reason for the underuse is provided.

These are:-

- (i) Ill health. In these cases, a tenant needs to tell us in writing that they are unable to garden their plot until a specified time and this time

- needs to be not greater than 1 year. Otherwise, the Council will be entitled to re let the plot.
- (ii) An extended vacation. In these circumstances it would be expected that the plot holder will make arrangements to ensure that the plot is kept in a reasonable state by another party.
- (6) Allow the joint running of plots to a registered 'buddy'. The Council is now introducing a 'buddy scheme' whereby people helping on plots can formally register themselves as co-workers. Only one 'buddy' per plot. The 'buddy' will also be entered onto the waiting list.
  - (7) Ensure that the current vegetable only sites have tenancy agreements that identifies this restricted use.
  - (8) Protect and promote the use of existing Council allotments for vegetable growing and show a preference for the re letting of livestock plots for vegetable growing.
  - (9) Where plots are used for livestock purposes and the remainder of the plot is vacant or under utilised, the plot holder will be asked to either cultivate the remainder or subdivide the plot.
  - (10) Hens will be allowed on vegetable plots providing they occupy no more than 1/5 of the plot.
  - (11) A tenant that has had repeated complainants made against them by neighbouring tenants with regards to general behaviour, their attitude towards other plot holders, the management of their plot including the use of fires, the control of weeds, the control of pests, their conduct in the shared areas, and any other relevant matter, in these circumstances the Council will investigate the complaints and if upheld, will serve notice on the tenant to vacate the plot giving two weeks to leave the premises and hand in the key if appropriate.
  - (12) Ensure that tenants keep their structures/sheds in good order and to be in keeping with their surroundings.

#### Managing the Waiting List

- (13) The Council agrees to keep a waiting list of those wishing to become an allotment holder and to make this list available to the public when asked.
- (14) To ensure that when plots become available, people at the top of the list are given first refusal.
- (15) Give people on top of the list two weeks to assess the offer and if they fail to respond, offer the plot to the next person on the list.

- (16) If available, a choice of more than one plot will be made available if no specific request has been made.

**The Council's role in facilitating new self managed associations.**

It has been the intention for some time for the Council to extend the principle of self management. This means, handing over the day to day governance of the individual site to a management committee with the rents passing from the Council to the committee and hence most of the other functions following the same path. The Council maintains ownership of the site itself but for all other purposes, the site becomes independent.

It is the intention of the Council to further pursue this approach, aiming to extend self management to other sites including, Cockerton east and west, Salters Lane, Field Street, Lascelles and Arnold Road.

The benefits of this form of governance have been well established and include:

- Better access to external funding
- Better long term vision
- Better control over lettings and re- lettings
- More projects initiated
- Higher quality of sites shared facilities
- Able to turn run down allotments into high quality facilities

The Council's present role in facilitating existing and future self managed associations can be summarised thus:-

- Work in partnership with associations in accordance with procedures set out in the Darlington Compact.
- Works to facilitate the creation of new association's by setting out the principles of how this can be achieved. Namely, the setting up of the committee. Running the committee. Entering into a lease agreement. The Council's role as freeholder. See below.
- Provide or through a third party, provide an appropriate service to look at appeals from tenants who feel they have been treated unfairly by their association.
- Provide support for funding bids that the associations may make for the improvements of their sites.

- Try to be a help in negotiations on border issues with adjacent landowners.
- Provide support on governance issues.
- Work in partnership to look at ways of addressing the increase in interest in allotment gardening.
- The Council will continue to facilitate an association's forum.
- The Council will continue to require associations to receive approval for any major changes in association's constitutions if requested.

### **The Council's Role as Freeholder of the Land**

The Council retains a role in helping the association address a number of issues.

These are:-

- (1) Drainage. The drainage of allotment land is the responsibility of the lease holder but the Council will attempt to facilitate finding solutions to problems associated with poor drainage if and when they arise.
- (2) Exterior security fencing. The Council has in the past helped associations erect perimeter fencing using external funding and will continue to lend support to this process.
- (3) The Council will continue to help associations access external funding for other schemes that help develop the facilities further.
- (4) Large mature trees that lie in the perimeter of the association sites will remain the responsibility of the Council and will be identified within the lease agreement.

### **4. Consultation and Engagement**

4.1 In developing the strategy the consultation was carried out via two questionnaires targeted at the waiting list and existing users. The engagement was achieved via a steering group made up of a variety of interested parties that included:

- Various DBC departments
- Friends of the Earth
- Groundwork North East
- Primary Care Trust

- National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardens
- Representatives from self managed sites
- Representative from non self managed sites
- Parish Councils

Plus a short presentation on progress was made to the Greener Theme group in September 2009.

4.2 The major strength of this strategy is the identification of current trends through gathering qualitative and quantitative primary research ascertaining the reality of today's needs and demands in Darlington.

4.3 To achieve a clear picture of allotment perception and demand within Darlington, 2 questionnaires were developed and shared among all stakeholders prior to final agreement and distribution.

- PHASE 1: WAITING LIST QUESTIONNAIRES
- PHASE 2: EXISTING ALLOTMENT HOLDERS QUESTIONNAIRES

4.4 The questions for both the waiting list and tenant surveys were largely aimed at assessing the level of demand that exists at present and whether this is likely to be a lasting trend; the degree of satisfaction with the existing service; the amount people are willing to travel to a provision; level of experience with gardening; and principal benefits they feel they get from gardening. The surveys are aimed at building up a picture of what the service needs to do to address this enormous increase in demand.

#### 4.5 **Waiting List Questionnaire – Key Outcomes**

4.5.1 400 questionnaires were sent out May 2009 requesting returns by the end of June 2009. 145 questionnaires were returned. The following points highlight some of headlines. A full summary can be found in Appendix 1

4.5.2 **When asked:** 'How long have you been on allotment waiting list(s)?' the majority (29.4%) had been waiting for over a year.

4.5.3 **When asked:** 'How would you use an allotment?' over 90% of responses were to grow food. 22.8% of responses wanted to keep hens too. Other uses for space within their plot included: Bee Keeping, Compost Bins, Educational space for children, Flowers and special plants, Greenhouse and space to relax.

4.5.4 **When asked:** 'What are the key reasons you would like to hold an allotment?' (And rate importance)' the results showed that:

(Key reasons: Health benefits, exercise, food cost savings, leisure, relaxation, socialising and family activity, education/learning, sustainable living, environment, fun/hobby, rewarding project)

- ✓ Rewarding Project: highest overall response and rated 'Very Important' (64.7%)
- ✓ Health, Food Cost Savings & The Environment also had high ratings as 'Very Important'
- Socialising & family activity & Education: lowest ratings in the 'Very Important' category, and the highest in the 'least important' category.

4.5.5 **When asked about:** Learning, sharing knowledge and sharing growing space:

82.6% will share the use of their plot with friends or family.  
60.4% have never managed an allotment before.  
83.9% have experience of growing food.  
66.4% of those with experience are willing to share knowledge to help others.  
79.3% of those without experience would welcome advice and help.

4.5.6 **When asked:** 'How far are you willing to travel?' the majority (44.8%) of responses showed a willingness to travel up to 1 mile, with only 8.3% willing to travel over 3 miles.

4.5.7 **When asked:** 'What mode of travel would you prefer to use to get to your allotment?' the majority would prefer to walk (72.2%). Driving to an allotment plot was the next highest response (40.7%), closely followed by cycling (37.9%), with taking the bus being the least favourable option.

4.5.8 **When asked:** 'What size plot would you prefer or consider managing?' results showed that the majority either wants or wouldn't object being allocated a small half-size plot (70%), and only 30% wanted a full sized plot.

4.5.9 The majority of persons applying for an allotment plot are:

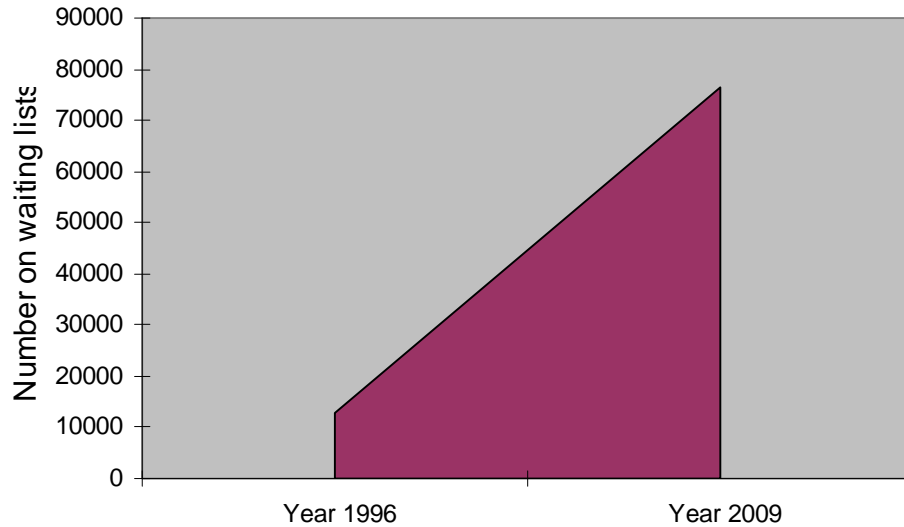
- ❖ Between 35 - 44 years of age (29.5%)
- ❖ Male (67.3%)
- ❖ In full-time employment (47.9%)
- ❖ White British (95.2%)

4.5.10 The results from the consultation showed that peoples renewed interest in renting allotments largely reflects the widespread desire to grow your own food locally. People are keen to avoid eating food that they are unsure of, they recognise the health benefits of being



involved in gardening and they feel more secure having their own food supply that they can afford.

### National Waiting List Increase



4.5.11 Figures show that in 1996, the total waiting lists for England totalled 12,950, compared to 2009 which shows a massive increase to 76,330<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4.6 Tenants Questionnaire – Key Outcomes

4.6.1 A total of 550 questionnaires were sent out with the support of some associations. Returns were requested and received in July 2009. The final survey results were generated in August 2009. 268 surveys were returned for analysis.

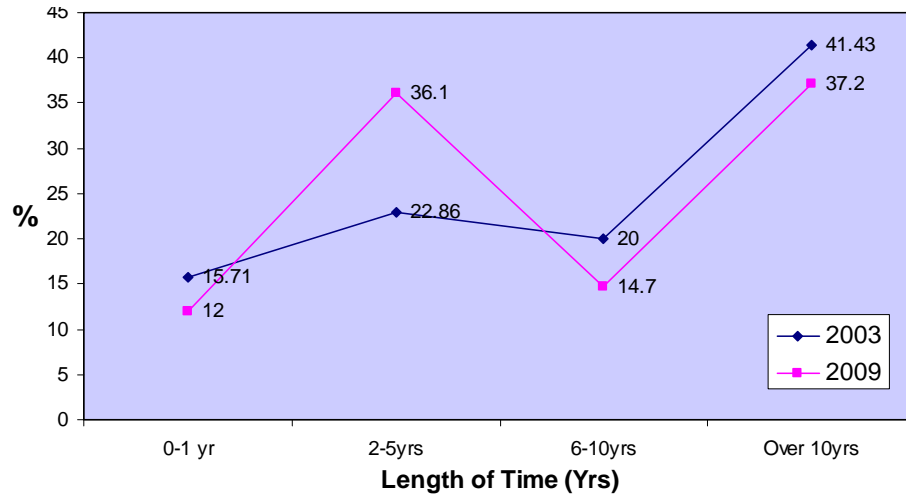
4.6.2 5 of the questions asked within this survey are replicas of those asked in a previous survey developed and circulated by Darlington Borough Council in February 2003. These questions are identifiable with this symbol: ➔ and can be used to compare how responses have altered over the last 6 years.

4.6.3 **When asked:** ‘How long have you had an allotment for?’ The majority (37.2%) had managed their plot for over 10years. 36.1% had theirs for 2-5yrs, 14.7% had theirs for 6-10yrs, and only 12% have had their allotment for up to 1 year.

➔ In 2003, the response showed that the majority (41.43%) had their plot for over 10 years. 22.86% have had theirs for 2-5yrs, 20%

<sup>10</sup> A Survey of Allotment Waiting Lists in England. June 2009. p4. NSALG & Transition Town West England. [http://www.transitiontownwestkirby.org.uk/files/ttwk\\_nsalg\\_survey\\_09.pdf](http://www.transitiontownwestkirby.org.uk/files/ttwk_nsalg_survey_09.pdf)  
Allotments Strategy for Darlington 2009-2019

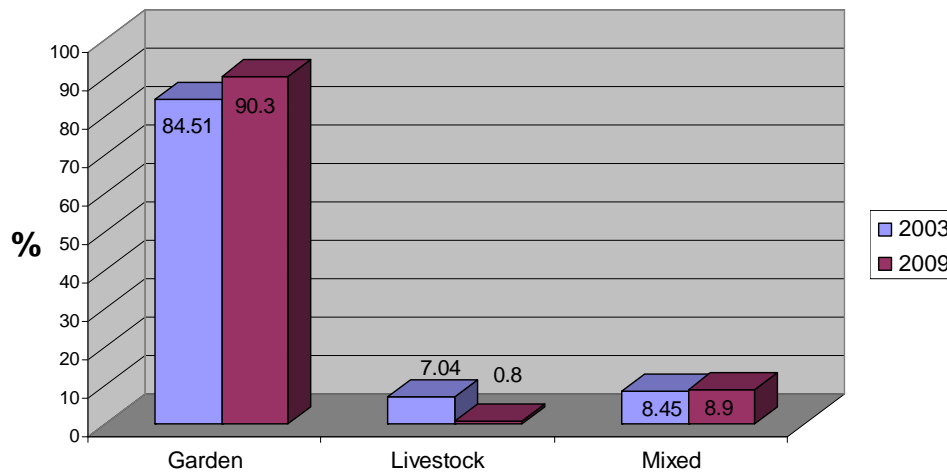
had theirs for 6-10yrs, and 15.71% were new allotment holders having had theirs for up to 1 year.



4.6.4 **When asked:** ‘What type of allotment do you hold?’

The response showed that 90.3% held a ‘garden’ only allotment, 0.8% had only livestock on their plots, and 8.9% had a mixture of both.

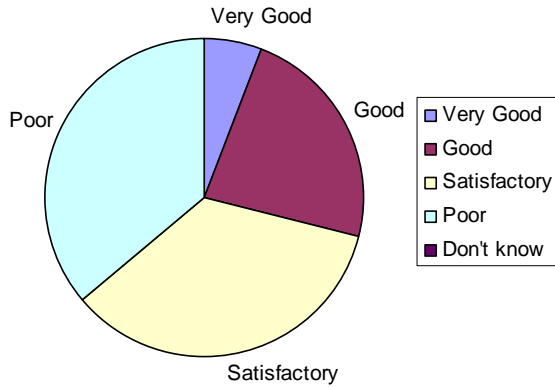
➔ In 2003, the response showed that 84.51% held a ‘garden’ only allotment only, 7.04% kept livestock on their plots, and 8.45% had a mixture of both.



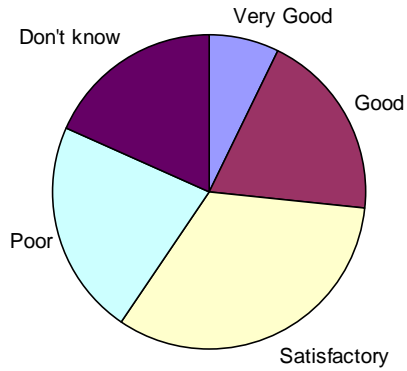
4.6.5 **When asked:** ‘What is your general view of the current service which the Council provides in respect of allotments?’ The response showed that only 7.1% had a very good perception, and 19.5% had a good perception. The majority however sees the service as either satisfactory (32.8%) or poor (22.4%).

→ In 2003, only 5.8% had a very good perception of the existing service and 23.19% had a good perception. The majority however saw the council service as either satisfactory (34.78%) or poor (36.23%)

**COUNCIL SERVICE - 2003**



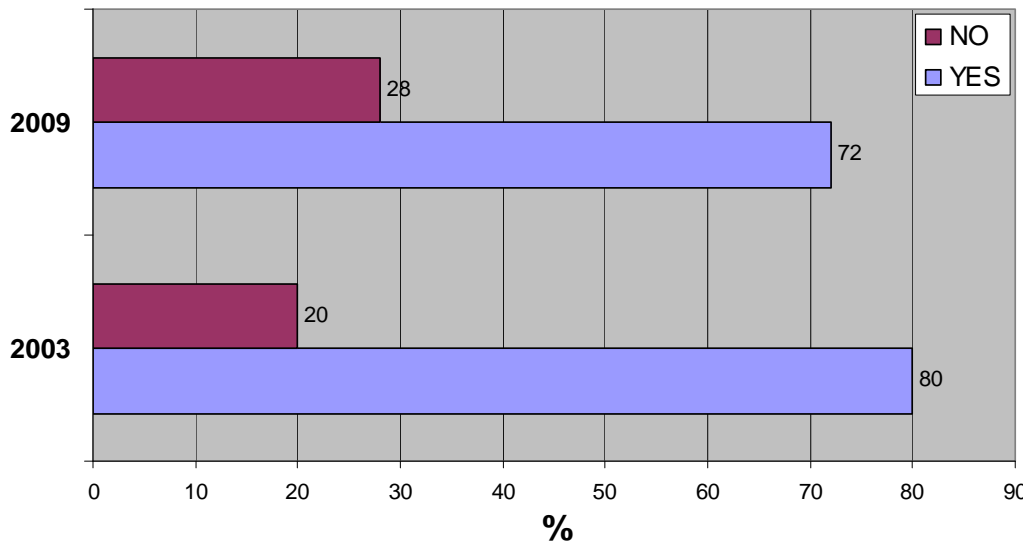
**COUNCIL SERVICE - 2009**



4.6.6 In both cases, the Council’s service is perceived by the majority as poor or satisfactory, with less than a third of responses seeing the service as good or very good. This could be due to a number of factors which may include communications between council and tenants, response from council towards complaints, issues and queries, and clarity of information available including allotment service promotion and publicity.

4.6.7 **When asked:** ‘would you like to see more information being made available – e.g. newsletter, allotment helpline, information on the Council’s website etc?’ The response showed that 72% replied yes.

→ In 2003, 80% replied ‘yes’



4.6.8 **When asked:** 'Are you currently a member of an allotment association?' the majority (68.3%) said yes. Of those in an association, the majority rated this system of management as satisfactory (49%), excellent (28.1%), good (10.4%). Only 6.8% viewed associations as poor.

- ✓ 85.7% think that more allotment associations should be formed  
➔ In 2003, 71.88% said yes, more associations should be formed.
- ✓ 28.5% would be willing to be a Committee Member on an Association (if not already)
- ✓ 80% would be willing to share their knowledge to help others
- ✓ 69.8% who are new to their plot would want or welcome advice and help from others
- ✓ 38.7% would be interested in providing support in community allotments if they were developed across Darlington.
- ✓ 50.6% currently shares a plot with family and/or friends

4.6.9 **When asked:** On what (location) factors did (or would) you base your allotment site/s choice? The majority of responses rated the safety and security of site as Very Important (74.6%), followed by travel distance and accessibility.

4.6.10 **When asked:** 'How far do you travel to your allotment?' the biggest number (40.6%) travels up to half a mile to their site. 2.4% travel more than 3 miles.

4.6.11 **When asked:** 'what size plot do you manage?' 76.7% manage a full plot, and 23.3% manage a half plot. (12.4% managed more than one full plot)

4.6.12 The majority of tenants are:

- ❖ Between 55 – 64 years of age (29.1%)
- ❖ Male (74.5%)
- ❖ Retired (49.8%)
- ❖ White British (99.6%) (0.4% = white other)

4.6.13 **When asked:** 'Do you, or anyone in the group of friends or family that would use your allotment, have any long-term illness, health problems or impairments?' 29.8% said yes.

#### 4.7 Steering Group and Other Engagement

4.7.1 Two meetings of the steering group took place. These meetings considered the questionnaire before it was sent out, the results,

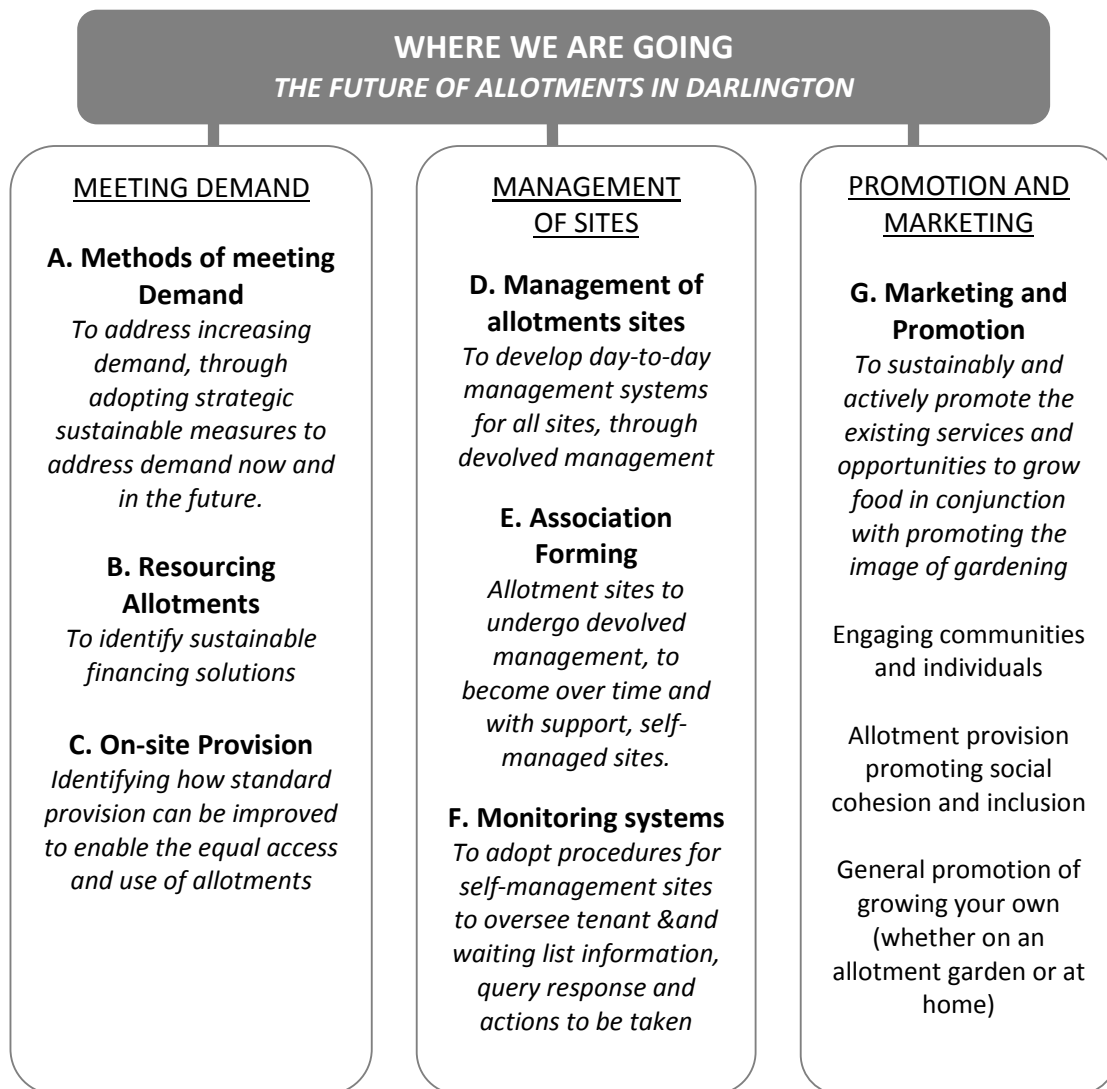
broad discussions about allotments and local food and debating the actions that needed to be included in this strategy.

- 4.7.2 In September 2009 a progress report was given to the Greener Theme Group regarding the allotment strategy and alongside this the theme group has been considering its role in the local food agenda. As a result a task and finish group was established to look into developing a plan to move forward the interest in local food and what its focus should be.
- 4.7.3 The questionnaires were used to promote a new project between Friends of the Earth and Lingfield Point which is about creating a temporary growing space for people.
- 4.7.4 With input from DBC's housing team the idea of supporting tenants to use their gardens to grow produce was raised. This is being pursued as an idea with the housing team.

## 5. STRATEGIC ACTIONS -

### The Future of Allotments in Darlington

- 5.1 Based on both the consultation results, partner engagement and existing provision within Darlington, the following actions have been developed to move the current allotment provision forward. These have been grouped under the main headings as identified in the early part of the report.



# ACTION PLAN

*Note: Short term= 1-2 years*

*Medium term = 3-5 years*

*Long term = 6-10 years*

<b>A. Methods of meeting demand:</b> To address increasing demand, through adopting strategic sustainable measures to address demand now and in the future.				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
1. To consider what land DBC own and if any of this would be suitable to be used for growing produce. Either as allotment extensions or new sites.	Short term	Possible land identified	DBC	DBC estates
2. If in action 1 land is identified, agree how it could be developed and used for growing produce.	Short term	Action plan for any proposals	DBC	DBC Parks and Countryside Manager
3. Identify further opportunities for land allocation for new allotments through negotiations with developers.	Short,medium term		DBC	DBC Planning Policy
4. Where there is currently a lack of provision identify if there is suitable land to meet the local need.	Short term	Possible land identified	DBC	DBC Estates
5. Include a clause on allotments to protect and enhance current and future provision within the Local Development Framework.	Short term	Included within the LDF	DBC	DBC Planning Policy
6. Develop a policy for the creation of half plots	Short term	Policy produced		DBC Allotment Assoc's
7. Pursue and support other projects such as Grow Zone, the Community Allotment, school allotments that enable a wide range of opportunities for people to grow produce locally	Short,medium term	Projects established	External	DBC Groundwork Friends of the Earth Greener Theme Group

<b>B. Resourcing Allotments:</b> <i>To identify sustainable financing solutions for resourcing Darlington allotments, through measures such as: land acquisition, upgrading and improvement of allotment sites, and sustainable management systems</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
8. Increase the number of self managed sites (see D. Management of Allotment Sites).	Short term	Timetable to implement	DBC and external	DBC Groundwork
9. Increase communications and form partnerships between allotment sites	Short term	Continue 6 monthly review and widen engagement	DBC	DBC Groundwork
10. Review current tenancy rates for all sites and compare against national averages	Short term	Review carried out	DBC	DBC Allotments Officer
11. Support allotments and associations to secure additional funding	Short,medium term	Monitor on an annual basis	External Funding	DBC Allotments Officer Groundwork
12. Consider if water bills can be reduced by promoting appropriate water storage facilities	Short,medium term	Reduced water bills	External	DBC Allotments Officer
<b>C. On-Site Provision:</b> <i>For all stakeholders to look at how standard provision can be improved to enable the equal access and use of allotments to satisfy the increasing demand</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
13. Agree what the minimum level of provision on any new sites should be	Medium term	Produce statement on minimum levels	DBC	DBC Parks and Countryside Manger
14. Develop an access statement for each site	Medium term	Access statements for each site produced	Partners	DBC Allotment Assoc Other site owners
15. Review site audit and identify improvements required to achieve a minimum standard for existing sites	Short term	Plan of improvements	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer
16. Allotment Associations to source funding for improvements on their site.	Short to Long	Annual list of improvements	Allotment committees	Allotment Assoc's DBC Allotments Officer



<b>D. Management of Allotment Sites:</b> <i>To have a functional day-to-day management system of allotment sites, facilitated through devolved management systems and fed back centrally to the Council for monitoring and evaluation</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
17. DBC to review its current management practices and identify areas for improvement	Short term	Review carried out and actions agreed	DBC	DBC Parks and Countryside Manger
18. DBC to produce clear guidance on their approach to managing their sites and what they can offer the self managed sites	Short term	Guidance produced	DBC	DBC Allotments Officer
19 DBC to share their guidance with others who may want to adopt	Short term	Guidance shared	DBC	DBC Allotments Officer
<b>E: Association Forming:</b> <i>For all allotment sites to undergo devolved management to become, over time and with support, self-managed sites.</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
20. Identify sites that would be suitable to become self managed	Short term	List produced with rationale	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer
21. Agree a timetable for the development of more self managed sites	Short term	Timetable produced	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer
<b>F: Monitoring Systems:</b> <i>To adopt systems and processes for accurate management of tenant and waiting list information, query response and actions.</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
22. DBC to put in place systems for monitoring waiting lists and keeping those on the lists informed.	Short term	Systems in place	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer
23. DBC to ensure that regular site inspections carried out and appropriate actions taken to ensure that plots are fully utilised.	Short term	Records of site inspections	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer

24. DBC to collect all waiting list information on a six monthly basis to give an indication of waiting list numbers across the Borough.	Short term	Waiting list figures collected every 6 months	DBC	DBC Allotments Officer
<b>G: Marketing &amp; Promotion:</b> <i>To sustainably and actively promote the existing services and opportunities to grow food in conjunction with promoting the image of gardening.</i>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Lead Officer / Agency</b>
25. To provide more information about DBC's allotment service and what it offers.	Short,medium	A range of information available	DBC	DBC Allotment Officer
26. Increase public awareness of new local food growing opportunities as they develop.	Short,medium	Opportunities taken through new projects and ideas	Greener theme group members	Greener theme group Friends of the Earth Groundwork DBC PCT
27. Increase public awareness of the practice and benefits of 'local growing', and increase awareness of existing local food providers.	Short, medium	New projects successful	Greener theme group members	Greener theme group Friends of the Earth Groundwork DBC PCT

## **6. Equalities Impact Assessment Statement**

### **Council Sites**

The lettings process for allotments is open to any individual or group of people. The demand for allotments exceeds the number of plots that become available for new tenancies by a considerable margin, and a waiting list system is in operation (see lettings policy).

The Council manages the waiting list to ensure fairness to everybody on the list. It recognises that this may include treating disabled people who are near the top of the waiting list more favourably, as a reasonable adjustment, where a suitable plot meeting their needs in terms of location, accessibility and manageability becomes available. Each case will be treated on its merits.

Council-run allotment sites have varying degrees of accessibility, as can be seen from the information below. In addition to appropriate reasonable adjustment, in accordance with equalities legislation, in managing the waiting list the Council will consider other ways of helping disabled people to obtain and maintain a plot.

If more than one plot is available, the allocation process will allow a disabled person to choose the plot most suitable for their needs. Help will also be given to disabled tenants with the management of their plots, for example with help in clearing away vegetation or detritus left over from the previous tenant. Whilst it is under no obligation to do so, the Council will endeavour to provide support and advice to tenants to adapt plots, for example through the installation of raised beds, to make them more usable by disabled tenants.

For existing tenants who are unable to tend their plot through ill-health or disability, the Council will relax the usual requirement to cultivate at least 75% of the ground in any one year for a set period. Alternatively, tenants can choose to downsize to a half plot. The 'buddy' system is designed to enable people who are unable to fully manage their plot for an extended period or indefinitely to bring in a friend to help them. The policy allows the 'buddy' to take over the tenancy. This is subject to checks and provision of information before a 'buddy' can be included in the tenancy agreement, to ensure fairness to other people on the waiting list.

Groups with particular cultural or faith-related needs may wish to develop gardening projects in ways that cannot be accommodated satisfactorily through the allotments waiting list or the allocation of plots to individuals within existing allotment sites. If such circumstances arise the Council is under no statutory obligation to meet those needs but will endeavour to support such groups to identify potential locations and secure the resources needed to achieve their objectives.

### **Non-Council Run Sites**

Private sites have their own tenancy agreements and the Council does not have a role in their lettings processes. If contacted by concerned tenants or people wanting to be tenants about unfair or discriminatory practices or behaviours, the Council may be able to help by reminding associations of their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Council maintains a watching brief on allotment association sites that were formerly Council sites, and it can ensure that associations adhere to principles of equality and fairness in the way it manages its members and those on the waiting list. An association taking over and running a Council owned site becomes subject in law to the Council's public sector equality duty, and the Council will require the duty to be upheld in the management of the site. The model tenancy agreement that associations are required to use incorporates principles of equality and fairness, and this can only be changed through agreement with the Council. Association tenants can complain to the Council about equality and fairness concerns or other issues, and these will be investigated. The Council will seek to resolve issues through negotiation and agreement, but may take formal action if this is deemed necessary.

### **Council-Run Allotment Sites**

Arnold Road: can drive to and park next to plot; loose stones may be a problem for wheelchair access

Brankin Road: can drive to and park next to plot

Cockerton: can drive to only 16 plots to off-load, but cannot park outside plots; narrow paths, access would be difficult for a motor scooter/wheelchair access for plots behind West Auckland Road; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Drury Street: cannot drive to plots, cars must be left on-street; narrow paths, access would be difficult for a motor scooter/wheelchair access; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Field Street: can drive into site to off load but cannot drive to individual plots; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Honeypot Lane: can drive into site to off load and park outside 6 plots; pot holes in access track

Lascalles: can park next to plot

Parkside: gate next to road; narrow paths, access would be difficult for a motor scooter/wheelchair access; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Salters Lane North: can drive into site to off load and some cars would be able to park outside plots; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Salters Lane South: can drive through park to site but cannot drive into site; narrow paths, access would be difficult for a motor scooter/wheelchair; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

Springwell Terrace: park on street and walk to site, cannot drive to offload; narrow paths, access would be difficult for a motor scooter/wheelchair access; unmade up surfaces could make access difficult after prolonged periods of wet weather.

### **Sites Managed By Associations**

Barmpton Lane: can drive into site, have car parks within the site; would be able to off load/park outside some plots

Bellburn Lane: can drive into site, have car parks within the site; would be able to off load/park outside some plots

Dodmire: can drive into site, have car parks within the site; would be able to off load/park outside some plots

Glebe Road: can drive into site, have car park within the site; would be able to off load/park outside plots

Smithfield Road: can drive into site, but cannot off load at plots

West Cemetery: can drive into site, have car parks within the site; would be able to off load at most plots

### FULL CONSULTATION RESULTS

1.1 To achieve a clear picture of allotment perception and demand within Darlington, 2 questionnaires were developed and shared among all stakeholders prior to final agreement and distribution.

- PHASE 1: WAITING LIST QUESTIONNAIRES
- PHASE 2: EXISTING ALLOTMENT HOLDERS QUESTIONNAIRES

1.2 The questions for both the waiting list and tenant surveys were largely aimed at assessing the level of demand that exists at present and whether this is likely to be a lasting trend; the degree of satisfaction with the existing service; the amount people are willing to travel to a provision; level of experience with gardening; and principal benefits they feel they get from gardening. The surveys are aimed at building up a picture of what the service needs to do to address this enormous increase in demand.

#### 1.3 Waiting List Questionnaire – Key Outcomes

1.3.1 Returns were requested and received in June 2009. The final survey results were generated in July 2009. 145 surveys were returned for analysis.

1.3.2 **When asked:** ‘How long have you been on allotment waiting list(s)?’ the majority (29.4%) had been waiting for over a year.

1.3.3 **When asked:** ‘How would you use an allotment?’ over 90% of responses were to grow food. 22.8% of responses wanted to keep hens too. Other uses for space within their plot included: Bee Keeping, Compost Bins, Educational space for children, Flowers and special plants, Greenhouse and space to relax.

1.3.4 **When asked:** ‘What are the key reasons you would like to hold an allotment?’ (And rate importance)’ the results showed that:

(Key reasons: Health benefits, exercise, food cost savings, leisure, relaxation, socialising and family activity, education/learning, sustainable living, environment, fun/hobby, rewarding project)

- ✓ Rewarding Project: highest overall response and rated ‘Very Important’ (64.7%)
- ✓ Health, Food Cost Savings & The Environment also had high ratings as ‘Very Important’
- Socialising & family activity & Education: lowest ratings in the ‘Very Important’ category, and the highest in the ‘least important’ category.

1.3.5 **When asked about: Learning, sharing knowledge and sharing growing space:**

82.6% will share the use of their plot with friends or family.

60.4% have never managed an allotment before.

83.9% have experience of growing food.

66.4% of those with experience are willing to share knowledge to help others.

**79.3% of those without experience would welcome advice and help.**

1.3.6 **When asked: ‘How far are you willing to travel?’ the majority (44.8%) of responses showed a willingness to travel up to 1 mile, with only 8.3% willing to travel over 3 miles.**

1.3.7 **When asked:** ‘What mode of travel would you prefer to use to get to your allotment?’ the majority would prefer to walk (72.2%). Driving to an allotment plot was the next highest response (40.7%), closely followed by cycling (37.9%), with taking the bus being the least favourable option.

1.3.8 **When asked:** ‘What size plot would you prefer or consider managing?’ results showed that the majority either wants or wouldn’t object being allocated a small half-size plot (70%), and only 30% wanted a full sized plot.

1.3.9 **When asked:** about the Friends of the Earth ‘Grow Your Own’ network, to gauge interest in local projects to grow food, 70% of those on the waiting list said they would like to be contacted about new food growing opportunities.

1.3.10 The majority of persons applying for an allotment plot are:

❖ Between 35 - 44 years of age (29.5%)

❖ Male (67.3%)

❖ In full-time employment (47.9%)

❖ White British (95.2%)

1.3.11 **When asked:** ‘Do you, or anyone in the group of friends or family that would use your allotment, have any long-term illness, health problems or impairments?’ 13% said yes.

1.3.12 Examples given of health issues linked to allotment gardening included: age-related problems, depression, diabetes, weight (fitness-exercise), stress, and physical problems (e.g. back and leg pain) – thus affecting distance able to travel.

1.3.13 **Choosing an Allotment Site:** Qualitative feedback - factors of importance

Those waiting for an allotment garden were asked which other factors (aside from those named: travel distance, safety and security of site, accessibility, parking, facilities and onsite amenities, appearance and upkeep, and

management and ownership) they see as important for choosing an allotment site. The following table shows a breakdown of responses:

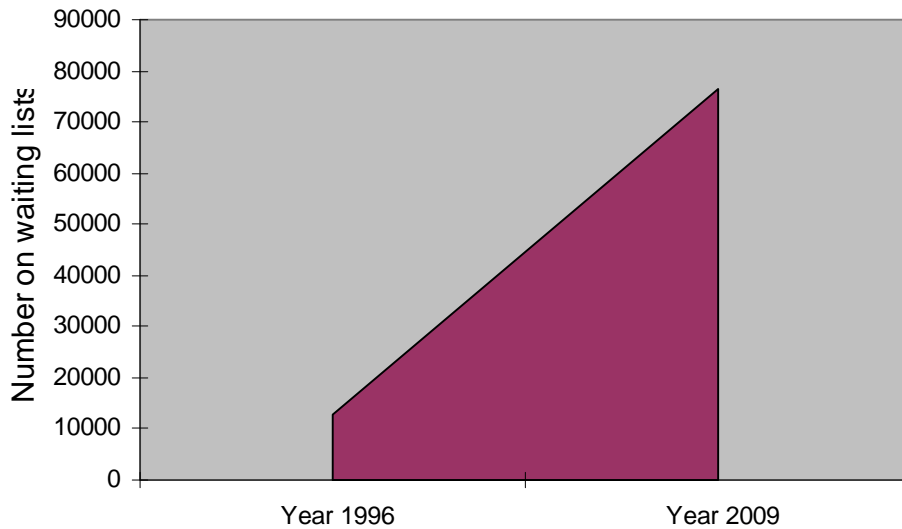
<p><u>WALKING</u>  <b>Preference for sites to be at walking distance from home address</b></p>	<p><u>WATER</u>  Water Access / supply / more taps  <b>Ground Water Level</b></p>
<p><u>COMMUNITY</u>  Community Space / Social Meetings  <b>Collaboration of Holders</b></p>	<p><u>PREPAREDNESS</u>  <b>Tenants making regular ongoing effort/ realization of work involved</b></p>
<p><u>LAND</u>  Free from land contamination,  Quality of soil,  Suitability of land,  drainage  <b>weed control, pest free</b></p>	<p><u>AMENITIES</u>  <b>Shelter &amp; toilet facility , composting area, electricity, smart allotment plot fencing (or rules for smart presentation of plots), disability friendly amenities</b></p>
<p><u>PETS</u>  Mixed opinions:  No pets,  <b>Dogs to be allowed on plot</b></p>	<p><u>FAMILY &amp; CHILDREN</u>  Family safety  Child friendly  <b>Activity / hobby for children</b></p>
<p><u>TENANTS</u>  <b>Neighbouring allotment holders to be friendly (polite, respectful, amicable and diplomatic). Similar age groups important to some.</b></p>	<p><u>ENVIRONMENT</u>  No weed-killers, no pollution, wildlife, rainwa  Location for sunshine, not too much shade.  location &amp; surrounding environment</p>
<p><u>COST</u>  <b>Costs of allotment rent should be affordable, and estimated ongoing costs of gardening (e.g. tools, seeds, equipment etc) should be made known.</b></p>	<p><u>CLEANLINESS</u>  Clean &amp; tidy – existing &amp; new tenants  Rubbish Removal.  <b>tidiness &amp; to stop fires)</b></p>
<p><u>STORAGE</u>  Greenhouse Sheds  <b>On site storage for tools</b></p>	<p><u>SECURITY</u>  <b>Secure fencing around the site to prevent vandalism internally.</b></p>
<p><u>EVENTS</u>  Annual competitions  Open days for sponsored charity  <b>National Allotments Week</b></p>	<p><u>PUBLIC TRANSPORT</u>  <b>Bus service &amp; transport routes should be available nearby all allotment sites</b></p>



Out of all responses received, 'Quality of Soil' was the most frequently mentioned factor of importance – making location a key issue.

1.3.14 The results from the consultation showed that peoples renewed interest in renting allotments largely reflects the widespread desire to grow your own food locally. People are keen to avoid eating food that they are unsure of, they recognise the health benefits of being involved in gardening and they feel more secure having their own food supply that they can afford.

### National Waiting List Increase



1.3.15 Figures show that in 1996, the total waiting lists for England totalled 12,950, compared to 2009 which shows a massive increase to 76,330<sup>11</sup>.

#### 1.4 Tenants Questionnaire – Key Outcomes

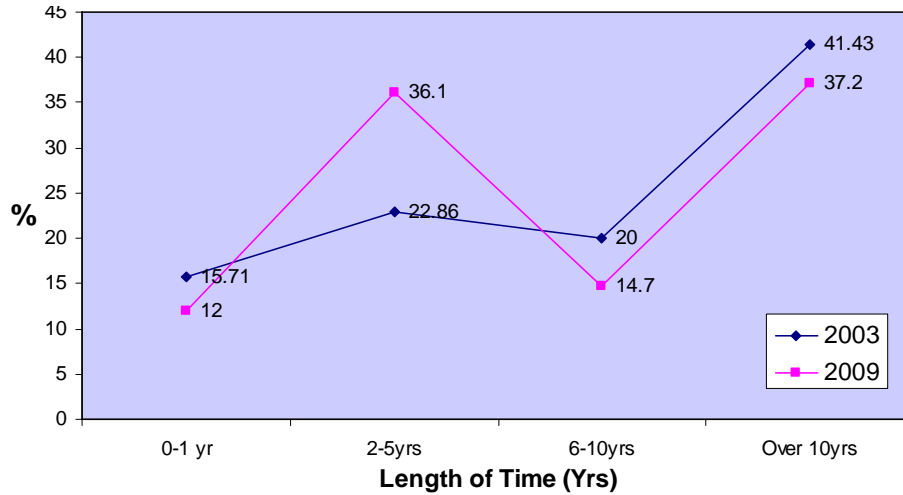
1.4.1 Returns were requested and received in July 2009. The final survey results were generated in August 2009. 268 surveys were returned for analysis.

1.4.2 5 of the questions asked within this survey are replicas of those asked in a previous survey developed and circulated by Darlington Borough Council in February 2003. These questions are identifiable with this symbol: ➔ and can be used to compare how responses have altered over the last 6 years.

1.4.3 **When asked:** 'How long have you had an allotment for?' The majority (37.2%) had managed their plot for over 10years. 36.1% had theirs for 2-5yrs, 14.7% had theirs for 6-10yrs, and only 12% have had their allotment for up to 1 year.

<sup>11</sup> A Survey of Allotment Waiting Lists in England. June 2009. p4. NSALG & Transition Town West England. [http://www.transitiontownwestkirby.org.uk/files/ttwk\\_nsalg\\_survey\\_09.pdf](http://www.transitiontownwestkirby.org.uk/files/ttwk_nsalg_survey_09.pdf)

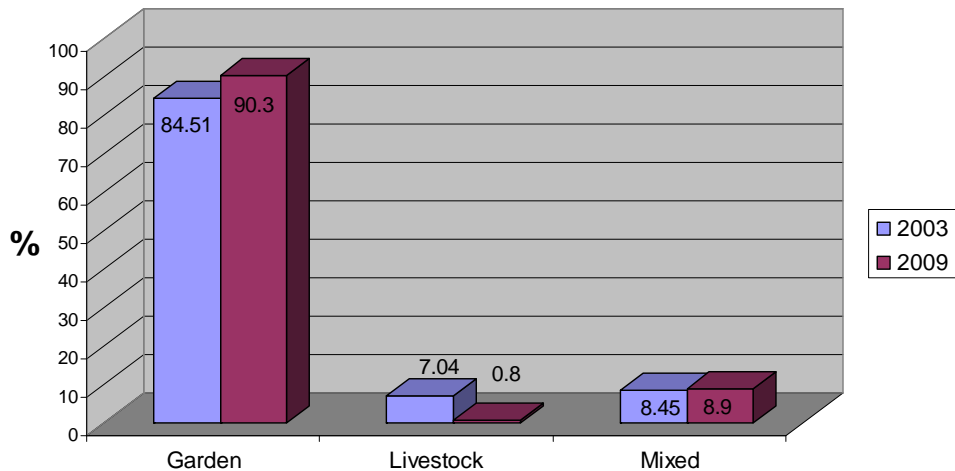
➔ In 2003, the response showed that the majority (41.43%) had their plot for over 10 years. 22.86% have had theirs for 2-5yrs, 20% had theirs for 6-10yrs, and 15.71% were new allotment holders having had theirs for up to 1 year.



1.4.4 **When asked:** ‘What type of allotment do you hold?’

The response showed that 90.3% held a ‘garden’ only allotment, 0.8% had only livestock on their plots, and 8.9% had a mixture of both.

➔ In 2003, the response showed that 84.51% held a ‘garden’ only allotment only, 7.04% kept livestock on their plots, and 8.45% had a mixture of both.

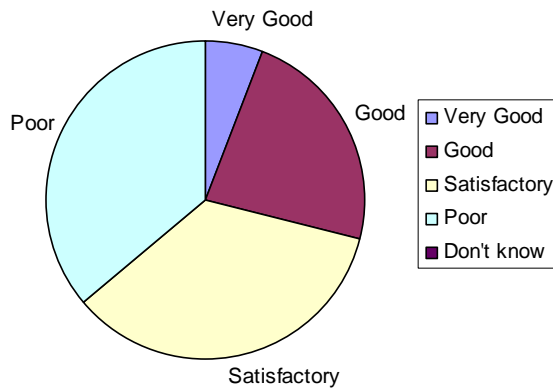


1.4.5 **When asked:** ‘What is your general view of the current service which the Council provides in respect of allotments?’ The response showed that only 7.1% had a very good perception, and 19.5% had a good perception. The majority however

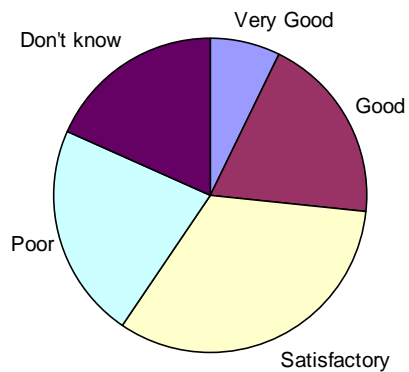
sees the service as either satisfactory (32.8%) or poor (22.4%). 18.3% didn't know about the council service.

→ In 2003, only 5.8% had a very good perception of the existing service and 23.19% had a good perception. The majority however saw the council service as either satisfactory (34.78%) or poor (36.23%)

**COUNCIL SERVICE - 2003**



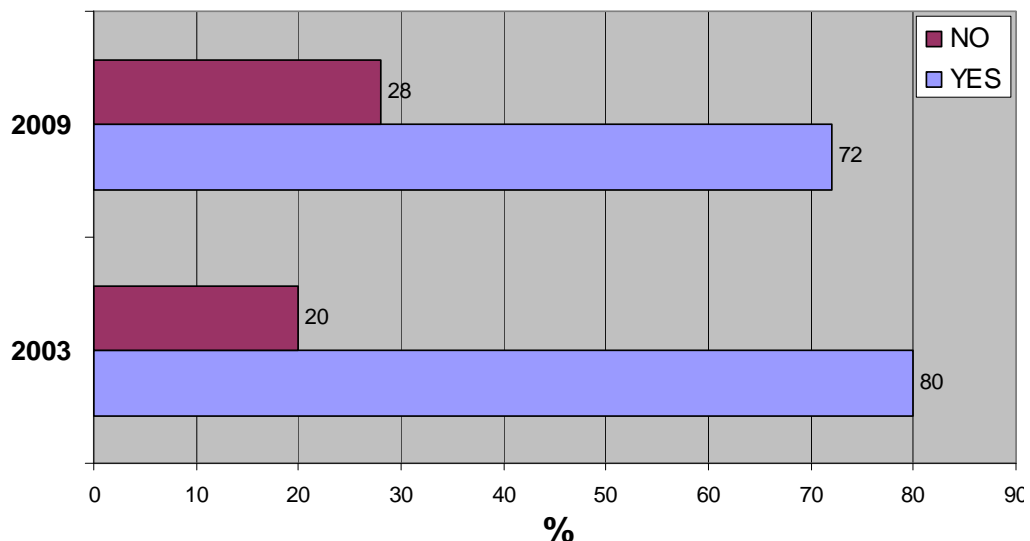
**COUNCIL SERVICE - 2009**



1.4.5.1 In both cases, the Council's service is perceived by the majority as poor or satisfactory, with less than a third of responses seeing the service as good or very good. This could be due to a number of factors which may include communications between council and tenants, response from council towards complaints, issues and queries, and clarity of information available including allotment service promotion and publicity.

1.4.6 **When asked:** 'would you like to see more information being made available – e.g. newsletter, allotment helpline, information on the Council's website etc?' The response showed that 72% replied yes.

→ In 2003, 80% replied 'yes'



1.4.7 **When asked:** 'Are you currently a member of an allotment association?' the majority (68.3%) said yes. Of those in an association, the majority rated this system of management as satisfactory (49%), excellent (28.1%), good (10.4%). Only 6.8% viewed associations as poor.

- ✓ 85.7% think that more allotment associations should be formed  
→ In 2003, 71.88% said yes, more associations should be formed.
- ✓ 28.5% would be willing to be a Committee Member on an Association (if not already)
- ✓ 80% would be willing to share their knowledge to help others
- ✓ 69.8% who are new to their plot would want or welcome advice and help from others
- ✓ 38.7% would be interested in providing support in community allotments if they were developed across Darlington.
- ✓ 50.6% currently shares a plot with family and/or friends

1.4.8 **When asked:** 'What are the key reasons you hold an allotment?' (And rate importance)' the results showed that:

(Key reasons: Health benefits, exercise, food cost savings, leisure, relaxation, socialising and family activity, education/learning, sustainable living, environment, fun/hobby, rewarding project, growing food)

- ✓ Growing Food: received the highest overall response and rated 'very important' response (62.1%)
- ✓ Health benefits (53.7%) and rewarding project (51.7%) also had high ratings as 'Very Important'
- 'Education & Learning' received the lowest ratings of importance followed by 'Socialising & family activity'

1.4.9 **When asked:** 'Were you able to choose your allotment location within Darlington?' the majority (57.3%) responded 'yes, I could apply for a specific allotment site'. 31.1% had their allotment allocated to them, and 11.7% received theirs through a long-standing arrangement.

1.4.10 **When asked:** On what (location) factors did (or would) you base your allotment site/s choice? The majority of responses rated the safety and security of site as Very Important (74.6%), followed by travel distance and accessibility.

1.4.11 **Other factors considered important included:**

<u>INSPECTIONS</u> Regular inspections, and audits/ reviews of management systems	<u>FENCING</u> Vandal proof, Rabbit proof, Improved security, possible key access
<u>INFORMATION</u> Knowledge sharing Help and advise from others	<u>TOILET FACILITIES</u> Accessible for all allotment users on daily basis
<u>DISABILITY</u> Disability friendly Disability infrastructure	<u>SOIL</u> – Good drainage, pest control, Quality of soil and good maintenance of plots (used/unused) – no weeds.
<u>WASTE</u> Removal of garden waste Skips on site and/or collections	<u>AMENITIES</u> Water provision: More taps located around sites. Electricity – with meter.
<u>STORAGE</u> Availability of Sheds on plots or on site for storage of equipment/tools	<u>COMPOSTING</u> Communal composting facility to be provided on all sites
<u>TENANTS</u> - Background checks, council to respond to anti-social behaviour for pleasant environment	<u>LIVESTOCK</u> - Tenants to be allowed hens on site – rules to be made clear prior to agreement.
<u>ADVISOR</u> – New tenant advice, Present at meetings to act as referee, assist in decisions, & monitor problems	<u>ORGANIC</u> Desire to garden on a purely ‘organic’ allotment site
<u>CHILDREN</u> Children friendly – resource for children to play and garden	<u>PARTNERSHIP</u> With local garden centres for reduced costs of seeds and equipment
<u>MAINTENANCE</u> Within and externally to site Tidiness, no litter – good appearance	<u>PATHS</u> Suitable paths to plots; management of overhanging bushes/trees
<u>ISSUES</u> – e.g. noise, vandalism Response and response system to manage & follow up complaints	<u>DISTANCE</u> Distance and access from home to plot – cycle, walkways
<u>EVENTS</u> Autumn or summer produce sales and open days	<u>PLOT</u> Plot size appropriate to manage – offer of either half or full size plot

Out of all comments received, water provision, toilet facilities and security were the most frequently mentioned factors of importance.

1.4.12 **When asked:** 'How far do you travel to your allotment?' the majority (40.6%) travels up to half a mile to their site. 2.4% travel more than 3 miles.

1.4.13 **When asked:** 'what mode of travel do you use to get to your allotment?' the majority travel to their allotment site by car (54.5%), 53% walk, 24.3% cycle, and only 3% take the bus. The percentages differ as some may have selected more than one option as their form of travel.

1.4.14 **When asked:** 'what size plot do you manage?' 76.7% manage a full plot, and 23.3% manage a half plot. (12.4% managed more than one full plot)

1.4.15 **When asked:** about the Friends of the Earth 'Grow Your Own' network, to gauge interest in local projects to grow food, 44.4% of tenants said they would like to be contacted about new food growing opportunities.

1.4.16 The majority of tenants are:

- ❖ Between 55 – 64 years of age (29.1%)
- ❖ Male (74.5%)
- ❖ Retired (49.8%)
- ❖ White British (99.6%) (0.4% = white other)

1.4.17 **When asked:** 'Do you, or anyone in the group of friends or family that would use your allotment, have any long-term illness, health problems or impairments?' 29.8% said yes.

1.4.18 **When asked:** Do you or anyone in your group use a wheelchair? 1.8% said yes.

**GOOD PRACTICE**



The residents of Darlington have a responsibility towards preserving and respecting their local environment. The benefits of doing so include increasing the quality of life for Darlington’s population, creating a sense of pride and sense of place through the quality of open space and provision, encouraging diversity of wildlife and flora, and through contributing globally to limiting climate change and its effects.

Allotment gardens can be as diverse and valuable as nature reserves, and can act as accessible ‘rural feel’ green spaces predominantly within urban surroundings, available as a resource for hands on gardening/growing, play, education, and community activities.

The following tables identify the benefits to the local environment, community and economy through following an allotment strategy based on best practice, awareness of current needs and resource capacity.

<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>BIODIVERSITY RICH SITES</b>	Ongoing progress and monitoring of all existing sites to improve wildlife interest.
	<b>ORGANIC ALLOTMENT GARDENS</b>	Organic gardening practices promoted to maximize biodiversity value, negating chemical uses.
	<b>WASTE MANAGEMENT</b>	Clarity of waste management services and waste protocol to all gardeners with regards to re-use & recycling of garden waste.
	<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	Renewable energy opportunities on site for electricity supply for lighting, tools and equipment. Collection and use of rainwater, using water saver barrels, composting and recycling Promotion and increased local growing to reduce food miles and CO2 emissions.

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	ALLOTMENTS FOR ALL	Improve community access & increase opportunities through: Increased provision where feasible and maximising use potential of existing sites
	EDUCATION	Use allotment sites as a resource for academic learning as well as community group education, horticulture training and promote knowledge sharing.
	HEALTH	Strengthen healthy communities priorities through joint cooperation with the Darlington PCT.
	DISABILITIES	On site access, amenities and facilities to be developed to meet the needs and requirements of those with disabilities, impairments, or health problems
	COMMUNITY GARDENS	Allotment gardens available for shared community use to support and encourage community participation, community cohesion and social inclusion and interaction.
	SECURITY & CRIME REDUCTION	Onsite measures for reduction in theft and vandalism. Widespread benefits of community allotments through offering 'growing opportunities' as a means to reduce anti-social behaviour.

<b>ECONOMY</b>	SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUPPLIES	With economic uncertainties and health concerns gaining increasing media attention – the value of self-sufficiency and the local ability to create our own healthy and sustainable food supplies becomes more apparent. Aims are to increase growing food locally as a way of life for all (in allotments, in schools, at home or in gardens)
	LOCAL MARKETS	Promote local produce: As popularity increases for locally grown produce, it is expected that sales will also increase, thus benefiting local producers and local markets.
	FOOD COSTS	Promote growing as a sustainable means to save money in this currently unstable economic climate. Growing food is a more satisfying and affordable way to obtain supplies of fruit, vegetables and herbs.
	LAND/LOCAL AREA VALUE	Promoting and developing allotment sites into quality open green spaces: can increase the value of land and in turn the value of property within the vicinity.
	EMPLOYMENT / VOLUNTEERING	Allotment plots and food growing schemes can provide employment, training and voluntary work positions. Based on over 1000 existing plots, it may be possible to accommodate up to 2,000 individuals, and at 500hrs per person, this could equate to up to 1,000,000hrs per year.
	SALE OF PRODUCE	The use of allotments for trade or business is prohibited but the government has acknowledged that some small scale sale of produce is allowable: "The present legislation already enables some limited commercial activity to take place on allotments, but primary legislation would be required to allow commercial use to be greater than ancillary use" (Growing in the Community, 2008, p58, LGA)



**USEFUL INFORMATION**

IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF GUIDANCE & GOOD PRACTICE

The NSALG have a selection of forms<sup>12</sup> which may be useful for Darlington Borough Council to use at least as a framework for delivering a more functional and effective community allotment service.

Useful NSALG forms include:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Clearing an Overgrown Plot                | Bees on Allotment Sites        |
| Hens and Rabbits on Allotment Plots       | Creating a New Allotment Site  |
| Save Money - Save Water                   | Allotment Site Facilities      |
| Expert Advice                             | Handy Hints for New Gardeners  |
| First Steps to Allotment Gardening        | Easy Vegetables to Grow        |
| Manures and Fertilizers                   | Composting and Recycling       |
| Provision of Allotment Gardens            | Tenancy Agreement - Individual |
| How to form & run a Gardening Association | Tenancy Agreement – Self M.    |

This strategy reflects aspirations for an innovative service for local food and growing, developed through partnerships and with up-to-date consultation and stakeholder feedback, looking for the best and most functional way to deliver this.

Rather than reinvent the wheel when developing the renewed allotment service, partnerships can be developed with those with specific Allotment expertise. The above NSALG forms list is an example of existing expert knowledge based fact sheets and forms for all people participating or interested in allotment gardening.

<b>USEFUL WEBSITES</b>	Darlington Borough Council <a href="http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Environment/Countryside+and+Rights+of+Way/Allotments.htm">http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Environment/Countryside+and+Rights+of+Way/Allotments.htm</a>
	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) <a href="http://www.nsalg.org.uk/">http://www.nsalg.org.uk/</a>
	Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI) – Sharing best practice <a href="http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/allotment-officer-forums/">http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/allotment-officer-forums/</a>
	Allotment Growing – Vegetable, Herb and Fruit Gardening <a href="http://www.allotment.org.uk/">http://www.allotment.org.uk/</a>
	Groundwork North East <a href="http://www.groundwork-northeast.org.uk/">http://www.groundwork-northeast.org.uk/</a>

<sup>12</sup> National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Limited.  
<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/page.php?article=459&name=useful+information>

<b>FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Future Jobs Fund <a href="http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns/futurejobsfund/index.asp">http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns/futurejobsfund/index.asp</a>
	Lottery's Local Food Programme <a href="http://www.localfoodgrants.org">www.localfoodgrants.org</a>
	Esmee Fairbairn Foundation <a href="http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk">www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk</a>
	Big Lottery Fund <a href="http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk">www.biglotteryfund.org.uk</a>
	Awards for All <a href="http://www.awardsforall.org.uk">www.awardsforall.org.uk</a>
	B&Q One Living Planet Grant Scheme – Grow Your Own <a href="http://www.diy.com/diy/jsp/bq/templates/content_lookup.jsp?content=/aboutbandq/social_responsibility_2007/better_neighbourhood.jsp&amp;menu=aboutbandq">http://www.diy.com/diy/jsp/bq/templates/content_lookup.jsp?content=/aboutbandq/social_responsibility_2007/better_neighbourhood.jsp&amp;menu=aboutbandq</a>
	Tudor Trust <a href="http://www.tudortrust.org.uk/">http://www.tudortrust.org.uk/</a>
	Sheila Mckechnie Award <a href="http://www.sheilamckechnie.org.uk/showSub.php?id=116&amp;page=3">http://www.sheilamckechnie.org.uk/showSub.php?id=116&amp;page=3</a>
	GRANTfinder <a href="http://www.grantfinder.co.uk">www.grantfinder.co.uk</a>
	Funderfinder <a href="http://www.funderfinder.org.uk">www.funderfinder.org.uk</a>

<b>NATIONAL GROWING CAMPAIGNS</b>	ALLOT MORE ALLOTMENTS – campaign for more allotments <a href="http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/index.htm">http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/index.htm</a>
	SHOOT – The National Trust is creating 1,000 allotments for people to grow their own fruit and vegetables <a href="http://www.shootgardening.co.uk/siteArticle.php?articleid=268&amp;name=national-trust-land-for-allotments">http://www.shootgardening.co.uk/siteArticle.php?articleid=268&amp;name=national-trust-land-for-allotments</a>
	LANDSHARE - Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall <a href="http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/01/land-sharing-is-trend.php">http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/01/land-sharing-is-trend.php</a>
	DIG IN - BBC Food Growing Campaign <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/digin/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/digin/</a> <a href="http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/415-bbc-food-growing-campaign">http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/415-bbc-food-growing-campaign</a>
	GROW YOUR OWN - BBC <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/grow_your_own">http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/grow_your_own</a>
	GROW YOUR OWN – Friends of the Earth <a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/grow_food.html">http://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/grow_food.html</a> <a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/groups/darlington/">http://www.foe.co.uk/groups/darlington/</a>

# Management of Parks and Open Spaces

## Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10 April 2025

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**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

Agenda Item 5



## Presentation Summary

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- Types of Open Space
- Resources
- Volunteer/Volunteer Groups
- Support
- Other Agencies
- Inspections/Health and Safety
- Other Undertakings



# Types of Open Space

- Formal manicured park i.e. South Park
- Other formal parks i.e. North Lodge Park, North Park, The Denes etc.
- Designated Local Nature Reserves i.e. Maidendale, Brankin Moor
- Nature Reserves i.e. Snipe Pond
- Managed Spaces i.e. Friars Field
- Unmanaged Spaces i.e. Mill Lane, Toy Top etc.
- Open Spaces in Council Estates
- Grass Verges etc.



# Resources

- 665 hectares across the Borough (2014 survey)
- 2 x Officers
- 2 x Countryside Rangers
- 3 x Gardeners (South Park)
- 3 x Sheltered Housing Team
- 2 x Garden Tidy Team
- 16 x Grounds Maintenance Operatives
- Budget - £932,988

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# Volunteers/Volunteer Groups

- 17 x Friends Groups
- 738 Street Champions
- Darlington Forest Project
- South Park Foundation
- DOVES

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# Support

- Attend Friends' Groups meetings
- Provide advice on conservation issues (Countryside Ranger is an Ecologist)
- Organise events on behalf of Friends' Groups etc., and/or help organise events.
- Support projects by procuring contractors
- Provide equipment
- Consult with other departments/organisations (i.e. Groundwork NE&C, Tees Rivers Trust etc.)
- Task volunteers with jobs
- Work with Environment Agency in relation to the filling of ponds with fish.
- PESAG



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# Other Agencies

- Darlington Cares
- Other businesses
- Schools
- Durham Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- Northumbrian Water

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# Inspections/Health and Safety

- Inspect named parks twice per week (South Park, The Denes and West Park)
- Inspect other parks weekly
- Inspect nature reserves monthly
- Safety at tourist areas i.e. Broken Scar
- River cleanses
- Invasive species i.e. Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed
- Work with Police/Fire Service and other agencies
- Multi-agency exercise



# Other Undertakings

- Wildflowers - 22 meadow areas across the Borough (24405.39m<sup>2</sup>)
  - 'Carbon 4 Grass' trial to be undertaken in 6 areas
- Allotments - 13 self-managed sites -
  - 3 DBC sites (Arnold Road, Honeypot Lane and Parkside)
- Sports pitches - maintenance of
- Bowling greens
- Play areas
- Trees



# Questions



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**10 April 2025**

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**CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CRM)**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide members with information about the capabilities of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems.

**Summary**

1. Members asked if it was possible to configure existing systems spanning several service areas into a single point of access to accept reports from the public and from councillors, and automatically provide updates to both groups of people that include job numbers, job allocation status, date started, and date completed.
2. The council uses over 17 commercial systems to meet different service needs. Each system performs different functions. Some have customer facing interfaces, some have back office workflow functions, and some integrate with external functions such as payment providers and mapping.
3. For the purpose of this report, and based on the scope of the request, it is assumed the systems of interest to members are those that enable people to report issues. The report therefore focuses on the systems used to report antisocial behaviour issues, environmental issues, highways issues, and housing repair requests.
4. There are four CRM type systems used by the council to capture the issues highlighted above, with more details about the individual systems available throughout the report. At present, most of the systems are not capable of being integrated with other systems such as My Darlington which is an in-house product built to combine system access where possible. Systems are not regularly replaced due to the cost and staff resources required to do so, but when they are replaced, a factor taken into consideration is their ability to integrate with other systems.
5. Due to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) sharing some case information with councillors is not permitted, however there are some instances whereby details of reported issues are anonymised and published via online maps. Details of these are available in the main report.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Members note the content of the report.

**Neil Bowerbank**  
**Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications**

Council Plan	The use of corporate ICT systems supports the Council Plan's core principle of efficient and effective use of resources.
Addressing inequalities	N/A
Tackling Climate Change	N/A
Efficient and effective use of resources	Effective use of ICT systems can help reduce the cost of providing council services through automation and other efficiencies.
Health and Wellbeing	N/A
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	N/A
Groups Affected	N/A
Budget and Policy Framework	N/A
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	N/A

**MAIN REPORT**

**Information and Analysis**

2. Members asked if it was possible to configure existing systems spanning several service areas into a single point of access to accept reports from the public and from councillors, and automatically provide updates to both groups of people that include job numbers, job allocation status, date started, and date completed.
3. Members were of the view that this is possible, not too complicated to achieve, not expensive to implement, not groundbreaking, and has been achieved by most companies. It was also suggested that this is the way that most local authorities monitor casework, and so there should be plenty of examples.
4. A request was made for a briefing on how jobs are captured and monitored, and how feedback to residents is managed. There is a specific interest on how councillors can understand what is happening without having to email and chase for updates.
5. It was proposed that an efficient management system where everyone is aware of the status of any jobs could mean less time for officers having to check back and respond to councillors and the public if the system were to be automated.

**Overview of systems, their functionality, and supplier development plans**

6. The Digital Darlington Strategy 2025-30 contains a workstream that aims to maximise the benefits of our existing ICT systems, both customer facing and back office elements. This is

not a new ambition, rather it has been ongoing for many years, but is now formally captured as a key priority for the council within the strategy.

7. The council has over 17 corporate ICT systems, some of which have case management features. These systems offer access to a very broad range of services from reporting fly tips through to applying for school places and managing gym memberships. There is a page on the Darlington Borough Council website that lists most of the online functions currently provided by the council [www.darlington.gov.uk/reportit](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/reportit) (link correct at the time of writing this report). For the purpose of this report, it is assumed the interest is on, antisocial behaviour, environmental services, highways, and housing services.
8. Case management systems can offer a suite of functionality. A public facing **online portal** provides the customer with the ability to report an issue and in some cases the choice to set up an account so case progress can be tracked. Once an issue has been reported, the CRM provides a **workflow** through which the different stages of resolving the problem are progressed. In some cases, workflows are **integrated with external applications** such as mapping, asset management, and payment systems. Depending upon the nature of the issues being reported, some systems provide a **publicly visible report**, often in map format, of the cases and their current status.
9. The council has limited influence over system supplier development roadmaps. We can and do request new features such as improvements to customer portal functionality, but we have little control as to if and when they are introduced. Typically, the market is dominated by a handful of systems providers and subsequently the lack of competition limits our ability to force new features and drive down costs. Furthermore, there are significant costs and resources needed to switch systems so strong business cases are needed for any major changes.
10. Some systems offer more options than others when it comes to the ways in which people can report issues, the type and frequency of progress updates that customers can receive, and the ways in which customer accounts work. Ideally, we would like to be able to offer one account that would enable customers to access all council services but unfortunately given the hundreds of services provided by the council that rely on different systems this isn't currently possible.
11. Following research, a software solution has not been identified that can either (1) provide a single system for all the different reporting needs, or (2) can combine the four systems used by the council for this purpose. Each of the systems used by the council has bespoke functionality and, in some cases, bespoke integrations with other products.
12. Some system suppliers allow their customer portals to connect with other 3<sup>rd</sup> party portals therefore reducing the number of online accounts customers need to access council services. Where this is possible, our in-house team has already developed the integrations. For example, a **MyDarlington** account provides access to **VERINT** online forms which link to several environmental services, information about waste collections days, and bookings for bowling at the Dolphin Centre. At present, **SYMOLOGY** which is used to report highways related issues, and **MRI Repairs** which is used for housing repairs cannot be integrated with MyDarlington. Systems are not regularly replaced due to the cost and resources involved, but when they are, one of the features considered as part of the options appraisal include the capability to integrate accounts. If any systems are upgraded

and have the capability of integrating with MyDarlington, this is something we would look to implement.

13. Where systems are capable of providing customers with progress reports relating to the issues they have raised, business processes need to be aligned to make this work. Some progress reports are sent privately to the customer, while others are available publicly such as via online maps. **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the systems related to this request from members.
14. The GDPR governs what we can do with the personal data that we hold about customers, including details of reports that we have received. The regulations do not permit the council to share personal data with councillors.
15. In some cases, personal data within the reports can be removed allowing for some of the reported information to be shared publicly. Examples of this includes the following. *Note – links correct at time of writing the report.*
  - (a) 12 highways related issues <https://highwaysreporting.darlington.gov.uk/>
  - (b) Smashed glass - [https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses\\_glass](https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses_glass)
  - (c) Dead animals - [https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses\\_dead\\_animals](https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses_dead_animals)
  - (d) Fly tips - [https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses\\_flytip\\_report](https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses_flytip_report)
  - (e) Public bins - [https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses\\_public\\_bins](https://selfserve.darlington.gov.uk/form/auto/sses_public_bins)

## Conclusion

16. Ideally, from the perspective of our customers there would be a single CRM system linked with all our services. Unfortunately, given the wide ranging services provided by the council and the different workflows and integrations associated with our services there isn't currently a technical solution that integrates all of our services.

**Neil Bowerbank**  
**Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications**



**Appendix 1**

System	Functions	Account integration capability	Case progress updates	Features on developer roadmap
<p>VERINT</p>	<p><b>To report issues with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broken glass</li> <li>- Dead animals</li> <li>- Fly tipping</li> <li>- Public bins</li> <li>- Lost, stray, dangerous dogs</li> <li>- Needles</li> <li>- Planning breach</li> <li>- Noise complaint</li> </ul> <p><i>For reference, other functions within the VERINT system include.</i></p> <p><b>To apply for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assisted bin collections</li> <li>- Personal searches</li> <li>- Skip permits</li> <li>- Allotments</li> <li>- Blue badges</li> <li>- Garage tenancy</li> <li>- Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO)</li> <li>- Street Naming and Numbering</li> <li>- Section 50</li> <li>- Public Road Opening (PRO)</li> </ul>	<p>Yes – integrated with MyDarlington</p>	<p>Where an email address has been provided, acknowledgement is sent containing reference number and brief case details.</p> <p>Open cases will show on the map with the aim of avoiding duplicate reports. Closed cases are not shown on map to avoid it looking too busy. No personal information or free text is shown on map pin, only date raised, ref number and information from radio buttons or drop down lists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broken glass</li> <li>- Dead animals</li> <li>- Fly tips</li> <li>- Public bins</li> </ul> <p>Progress updates are not sent out as environmental reports are often resolved quickly.</p> <p>Case closure emails are not currently sent but work is ongoing to address this.</p>	<p>A process management module is in development to send automated emails (where a valid email address is provided as part of report) to inform customers the case has been closed / resolved.</p> <p>A risk of homelessness referral form is in development with Housing Options.</p>

	<p>Freedom of Information (FOI) requests</p> <p><b>To book:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bulky waste collections</li> </ul> <p><b>To order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garden waste subscriptions</li> <li>- Replacement refuse and recycling equipment</li> <li>- Replacement birth, death, and marriage certificates</li> <li>- Local authority land search</li> </ul> <p><b>To submit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wedding bookings</li> <li>- Wedding questionnaire</li> <li>- Corporate complaints</li> <li>- Building control applications</li> </ul>			
REACT	<p>To report issues with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>- Abandoned &amp; untaxed vehicles</li> <li>- Begging</li> <li>- Fly tipping</li> </ul>	<p>Partially integrates with My Darlington via web forms</p>	<p>Acknowledgement of cases added are sent out via mail or email (where provided). ReAct integrates with the ASB App (currently being trialled) which allows two-way communication with customers within ReAct and the ASB App.</p>	<p>We are waiting for Verint to roll out an API connector that can link to the ReAct system. This issue has been raised with Verint and is on the roadmap for future development, but no date has been supplied yet for its development.</p>
SYMOLOGY Insight	<p>To report issues with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bridges</li> <li>- Cycleways</li> </ul>	<p>Cannot currently be integrated with</p>	<p>An acknowledgement is automatically sent to the customer when the report submitted.</p>	<p>SYMOLOGY is replacing Insight with a new product called</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obstructions</li> <li>- Pavements</li> <li>- Public rights of way</li> <li>- Roads</li> <li>- Roadworks</li> <li>- Signs</li> <li>- Streetlights</li> <li>- Traffic signals</li> <li>- Vehicle access</li> <li>- Verges</li> </ul>	<p>MyDarlington or other 3<sup>rd</sup> party account systems.</p>	<p>Customer is notified via email once work on the issue has commenced.</p> <p>The current status of requests (for 12 report types) is displayed on an online map.</p> <p>Case closure emails are not currently sent due to system limitations. It is anticipated that future upgrade will address this constraint.</p>	<p>Aurora, which is expected to happen during Autumn 2025.</p> <p>New functionality is still to be confirmed, but it is anticipated there will be greater flexibility with the number of emails that can be sent to customers and the information contained within them.</p>
<p>MRI Repairs</p>	<p>Appointment booking system for repairs to our residential properties.</p>	<p>Cannot currently be integrated with MyDarlington or other 3<sup>rd</sup> party account systems.</p>	<p>System to request a repair. Requests are currently added to the MRI system by council staff following a phone call or email enquiry from the tenant.</p> <p>Text message reminders are sent to the tenant closer to the appointment date to ensure they are at home.</p>	<p>Building upon the text message reminders, future features are expected to enable the tenant to track the location of the repair engineer (similar to the principle of being able to track the location of a delivery driver).</p> <p>Darlington Home Online is a housing portal for tenants through which they can access account information. There are plans to expand this to allow tenants to be able to request minor repairs (linking in with MRI repairs) so tenants will have the option not to phone or email requests.</p>



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY  
10 APRIL 2025**

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**THE RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL – Discussion Paper**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the impact of the Renters Rights Bill on Darlington Borough Council.

**Current Position of the Private Rented Sector in Darlington**

2. The Private Rented Sector more than doubled size in the 15 years to 2021, this has now stabilised. Overall, 10.45% of households in Darlington are rented from the local authority, 5.76% are rented from a housing association and 18.47% are privately rented. The proportion of Privately rented properties is slightly above the national average of 18.24% and also that of the Northeast with a proportion of 15.08%.
3. The latest census data (2021) indicates that the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in Darlington is approximately 9035 properties.
4. The Council does not have details of all the individual properties, but the census data is broken down into Ward data. The Northgate Ward has the highest proportion of private rented with 1,118 (50%) of properties in the private rented sector. See **APPENDIX 1**.

**Interaction with other changes in the Private Sector Housing**

5. There is a potential for the private rented sector to contract. This has already been seen in the churn in the market due to the pressure of new regulations and the financial markets. Long-established large portfolio landlords have been leaving the market, in many cases these properties have been largely replaced by new landlords. Landlords with smaller portfolios or even single properties have also been leaving the market (these landlords make up approximately 60% of all landlords in Darlington) in these cases it is more likely that properties are going into the open market and not being retained in the PRS. This will therefore be reducing move on options further, and further increase demand and therefore rental prices.
6. A few landlords have recently switched their business model to that of short term lets. This can be in the holiday market for example AirBNB. Others have seen this as a model whereby tenants are not given Assured Shorthold Tenancies to avoid regulation. Landlords have been renting in this way to provide short term accommodation to Social Services and the Homelessness Team increasing costs. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 however introduced the registration of short term lets. The government propose to publish the consultation on how this will be delivered early this year.
7. Another model being adapted by some landlords is to provide exempt accommodation. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act however will require the licensing of

supported housing to improve control over this market. A government consultation on how this will be introduced is expected to be carried out in the Spring of 2025.

### **The [Renters' Rights Bill](#)**

8. The Renters Rights Bill, which may be enacted as early as Spring 2025, is expected to further strengthen the current enforcement options of the Local Authority and that of the tenants in the Private Sector tenure.
9. The Renters' Rights Bill aims to give private renters much greater security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer and avoid the risk of homelessness.
10. The new tenancy system will provide tenants with greater security and stability and empower them to challenge bad practice without fear of retaliatory eviction, the Private Sector Housing Team are therefore expecting the number of service requests for disrepair to increase by at least a third.
11. The main provisions within the bill are to reform tenancies, providing additional protection to both tenants and landlords. It creates a landlord redress scheme and a landlord's registration scheme, creates a decent homes standard for the first time in the private rented sector and to strengthens enforcement powers available to local authorities to enforce each of these provisions.

### **Reform tenancies**

12. The Renters' Rights Bill will end the threat of arbitrary section 21 evictions, as it will abolish assured shorthold tenancies and with them, section 21 'no fault' evictions.
13. Existing fixed terms will be converted to periodic tenancies, landlords will no longer be able to serve new section 21 or old-style section 8 notices to evict their tenants.
14. Private rented sector tenancies would be periodic assured tenancies with no end date – providing more security for tenants. Tenants would need to provide two months' notice to end the tenancy. This will end the injustice of tenants being trapped paying rent for substandard properties and offer more flexibility to both parties to respond to changing circumstances.
15. Tenants will benefit from a 12-month protected period at the beginning of a tenancy, during which landlords cannot evict them to move in or sell the property.
16. Landlords will also benefit, with more straightforward regulation, and clearer and expanded possession grounds. It will expand the grounds for possession to enable landlords to reclaim their properties, when necessary, whilst ensuring appropriate safeguards for tenants.
17. There will also be new protections for tenants who temporarily fall into rent arrears, supporting both parties by preventing tenancies which are otherwise viable from ending. The mandatory threshold for eviction will increase from 2 to 3 months' arrears and increase the notice period from 2 weeks to 4. This will allow tenants more time to repay arrears and remain in their homes.



### **Strengthening of tenants' rights**

18. Rent increases will be limited to no more than once per year, requiring landlords to serve a statutory (section 13) rent increase notice and give at least two months' notice. Tenants would be able to challenge above-market rent increases through the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). This will prevent unscrupulous landlords using rent increases as a backdoor means of eviction, while ensuring rents can be increased to reflect market rates.
19. Landlords and letting agents would be required to publish an asking rent for their property. Prohibit the practice of 'rental bidding'. They would then be prohibited from inviting, encouraging or accepting offers of rent above the asking price.
20. It will give tenants the right to request a pet, which landlords must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse. Landlords would be able to require insurance to cover potential damage from pets.
21. It will make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants who receive benefits or who have children when letting their property.
22. Closing potential loopholes in rent repayment orders (RROs), ensuring superior landlords can be liable for RROs if an offence has been committed even if the rent was not paid directly to them, but through an agent or intermediate landlord.

### **Creation of a private rented sector database**

23. The new private rented sector database will provide local councils with more data about private rented sector properties.
24. The Bill has a section to create a private rented sector database which would bring together key information for landlords, tenants and local authorities. This would enable:
  - a) tenants to access key information to inform their choices when entering new tenancies and throughout their tenancy;
  - b) landlords to understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance; and
  - c) councils to target enforcement activity where it is most needed.
25. One of the biggest and most time-consuming barriers faced by local councils is identifying poor quality and non-compliant private rented sector properties and who owns them.
26. The database will provide a trusted and consistent intelligence source which will remove unnecessary, frustrating administration, meaning officers will be able to focus on enforcement against criminal landlords.
27. In addition, councils will be able to use the database to target enforcement where it is needed most, against the minority of unscrupulous landlords



### **Creation of a landlord redress scheme**

28. The bill introduces a new ombudsman service for the private rented sector, which all private landlords would be required to join.
29. Fees paid by landlords will directly fund the creation and work of the private rented sector Ombudsman, providing renters and landlords with access to an effective and fair dispute resolution service.
30. The service would provide fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord. It would have powers to compel landlords to issue an apology, provide information, take remedial action, and/or pay compensation.

### **Decent Homes Standard - Creation a legal standard for property conditions**

31. This bill introduces a decent homes standard to the private rented sector and would also apply [Awaab's Law](#) to the sector, which would set timescales within which landlords must make homes safe when they contain serious hazards and empower tenants to challenge unsafe conditions.
32. This section of the bill is however expected to be introduced at a later date through secondary legislation.

### **Expand enforcement powers**

33. The bill strengthens local authorities' enforcement powers, expand financial penalties and introduce a new requirement for authorities to report on enforcement activity.
34. Local councils will be able to take enforcement action against private landlords that fail to join the private rented sector database.
  - (a) If a landlord lets or advertises a property without it first being registered on the database, they can be issued with a civil penalty of up to £7,000 by the local council.
  - (b) If a landlord repeatedly breaches the requirement, or if they commit a serious offence such as providing fraudulent information to the database, they may be issued with a civil penalty of up to £40,000 or could face criminal prosecution.
35. Local councils will be able to take action against landlords who fail to join the ombudsman service, or against anyone who markets a PRS property where the landlord is not registered.
  - (a) This will include civil penalties of up to £7,000 for initial breaches and up to £40,000 or criminal prosecution for continuing or repeated breaches.
  - (b) Tenants will be able to seek rent repayment orders against their landlord if the landlord commits an offence by persistently failing to join the ombudsman service.
36. The Renters' Rights Bill will allow regulations to be made setting out Decent Homes Standards requirements for private rented sector homes and will provide local councils with effective and proportionate enforcement powers.

- (a) For landlords who fail to take reasonably practicable steps to keep their properties free of serious hazards, local councils will also have a new power to issue civil penalties of up to £7,000. This will incentivise all landlords to proactively manage and maintain the safety and decency of their properties.
37. The Renters' Rights Bill will take direct action to address rental discriminatory practices and rental bidding in the private rented sector.
- (a) Local authorities powers to impose civil penalties on landlords and anyone acting directly or indirectly on their behalf up to £7,000 for breaches.
38. The bill would also give the Secretary of State the power to appoint a lead enforcement authority, whose role would include providing guidance and information to local authorities to ensure consistent enforcement.

### **Implications for the work carried out by the Council**

39. Prior to this Bill some pieces of legislation were designated as 'powers' to enforce rather than a duty. This Bill introduces a duty under section 107, for 'every local housing authority to enforce the landlord legislation in its area.' It also introduces a duty to report on enforcement action taken.
40. This landlord legislation includes –
- (a) Chapters 3 and 6 of Part 1 of the Renters Rights Act, relating to Tenancy Reform including anti-discrimination provisions specifically relating to children or to benefits status
  - (b) Part 2 of this Renters Rights Act
  - (c) sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 , relating to Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupier
  - (d) Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the 1988 Act , relating to the security of tenancies and the process of gaining possession.
41. Some of these duties are currently being carried out by the Private Sector Housing Team and the Homelessness Team however some of the duties introduced are additional.

### **Functions of the Private Sector Housing Team**

42. The Private Sector Housing team presently undertakes a range of activity to manage and regulate the private sector market relating to the health and safety of the tenants.
43. This bill is biggest change to the sector since the introduction of the Housing Act 2004. Part 2 of Renters Rights Bill introduces additional duties for the Private Sector Housing Team and changes existing enforcement provision.
44. The bill introduces a decent homes standard for which landlords will have to comply with throughout a tenancy. Currently the only provision is for a tenant to take civil action through the [Homes \(Fitness for Human Habitation\) Act 2018](#).

45. Tenants will therefore be empowered to be able make complaints about poor living conditions to the local authority. It is expected that demand for service will increase by 30% following the introduction of this bill.

### **Functions of the Homelessness Team**

46. Demand to this service has already begun to increase.
47. Prior to the introduction of the Act there has been an increase in Section 21 being served by landlords increasing demand for service.
48. Following the introduction of the Act there is a further potential changes to caseloads if homelessness law changes so duty is triggered for a 4-month notice as cases in this case would be open for longer.
49. *A further demand on the service comes from the duty to enforce [Chapter 1](#) of [Part 1](#) of [the 1988 Act](#)*, relating the enforcement of the security of tenancies and the process of gaining possession. This is currently dealt with informally or referred to the voluntary sector.
50. Properties which have been let or sublet where support is provided – 4 weeks’ notice is required when support has come to an end, where the support provider is no longer able to provide support or the tenant no longer needs the support.
51. Landlords can also serve 4 weeks’ notice when a tenant has unreasonably refused to co-operate with the person providing support services.
52. Deliberate or unreasonable failure to co-operate will no longer result in loss of ‘Main Duty’ and will still end the prevention or relief duty where this is owed. Further to this there is no replication of duty within two years following a PRS offer at main duty.
53. Reductions in service may however come from –
  - (a) Changes to tenancies - those currently threatened with homelessness within 56 days following a section 21 notice, under section 175 (5), will however will no longer apply.
  - (b) Offers of PRS to discharge relief or main duty will be periodic assured (non-shorthold) tenancies.
  - (c) A late amendment to the Bill will give the court the power to order a landlord to pay compensation to a tenant where possession was obtained under new ground 6A. This ground would enable landlords to regain possession of their property if they were subject to enforcement action and needed to regain possession to become compliant.

### **Private Sector Housing Tenancy relations**

54. The council currently do not have a dedicated Tenancy Relations Officer for the Private rented sector. Therefore, the enforcement of harassment and illegal eviction under the [Protection from Eviction Act 1977](#), is not routinely carried out beyond informal action.
55. *The council do not currently offer assistance with regards tenancy issues which could be extended to [Chapters 3](#) and [6](#) of [Part 1](#) of the Renters Rights Act*, relating to Tenancy

Reform including anti-discrimination provisions specifically relating to children or to benefits status.

### **Financial considerations**

56. There are insufficient suitably trained officers within the Council currently to be able to carry out the duties contained within the Renters Rights Bill. Further work however will need to be carried out to identify any skills shortages and how this can be addressed.
57. It is estimated that the Private Sector Housing Team would require 1:800 PRS properties to carry out the additional functions of the Renters Rights Act alone - it is currently 1:2,258. This would equate to a further seven officers.
58. Non-compliant landlords can be fined from £7,000 to over £40,000 depending on the type of breach, it is unlikely however to be self-funding.
59. There is an expectation that new burdens funding will be received to introduce the Act.
60. It has also been proposed that funds will be available to assist local authorities in proactively enforcing non-compliance of the new act through the registration fees levied.

## Appendix 1 - The Private Rented Sector in Darlington (Census 2021)

Area	Private rented in Ward % (2021)	Number	Percentage of Total across Borough
<b>England</b>	<b>18.24%</b>	<b>(4,273,689)</b>	
<b>Darlington</b>	<b>18.47%</b>	<b>(9,035)</b>	
Northgate Ward	50.13%	(1,118)	12%
Pierremont Ward	33.50%	(937)	10%
North Road Ward	28.06%	(874)	10%
Bank Top and Lascelles Ward	27.55%	(897)	10%
Park East Ward	26.82%	(929)	10%
Stephenson Ward	20.03%	(508)	6%
Eastbourne Ward	17.90%	(484)	5%
College Ward	17.23%	(332)	4%
Brinkburn and Faverdale Ward	15.74%	(444)	5%
Park West Ward	12.58%	(243)	3%
Harrowgate Hill Ward	12.32%	(326)	4%
Cockerton Ward	11.63%	(348)	4%
Hurworth Ward	11.52%	(217)	2%
Haughton and Springfield Ward	11.49%	(322)	4%
Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward	10.62%	(293)	3%
Whinfield Ward	10.56%	(190)	2%
Heighington and Coniscliffe Ward	10.08%	(201)	2%
Red Hall and Lingfield Ward	9.30%	(176)	2%
Mowden Ward	7.54%	(133)	1%
Hummersknott Ward	3.90%	(63)	1%

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## **COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY 10 APRIL 2025**

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### **CONSULTATION ON THE RENEWAL OF THE TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF A BOROUGH WIDE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER**

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#### **SUMMARY REPORT**

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

1. This report is presented to Scrutiny members as part of the consultation period on the renewal of a revised Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and Borough wide PSPO. The enclosed content was presented to Cabinet on 4 March 2025.
2. The period of public consultation commenced on 6 March 2025 and will close on 16 April 2025. At the time of compiling this report, the following number of responses had been received:
  - (a) Town Centre PSPO: 54 responses
  - (b) Boroughwide PSPO: 7 responses
3. The information contained in this report is presented for information only. A final report will be presented to Cabinet on 10 June 2025 to consider the consultation responses and make a decision on the Town Centre PSPO order and the introduction of a Borough Wide PSPO.

##### **Summary**

##### **Public Space Protection Orders**

4. Local partners have a range of tools and powers at their disposal to respond and manage concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB), from measures aimed at tackling the causes of ASB, awareness-raising, signposting for support, through to enforcement. Used proportionately and only in the right circumstances, PSPOs allow local areas to try and counter unreasonable and persistent behaviour that affects the quality of life of its residents and business. Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) will only generally be considered when other means of addressing behaviour have not been successful.

##### **Town Centre Public Space Protection Order**

5. The town centre PSPO has been in place since 2019, and it was last renewed in 2022. The order lasts for three years, and a review must be undertaken if it is to be renewed. The order has been reviewed and it is proposed to consult on renewal as it is considered necessary to retain the powers in the PSPO to assist managing antisocial behaviour, when it occurs.

As part of the renewal process the defined area that the PSPO covers and some of the wording of the existing powers are proposed to be amended to improve the effectiveness of the order and these changes are explained in the main report.

6. It is also proposed to consult on some new powers that could be included in the order. These relate to feeding of wild birds in the town centre that has created multiple issues for users of the town centre and businesses; and the anti-social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards that can cause issues for the public and businesses. More detail on the proposed powers and the application of them are in the main report.

### **Borough-wide PSPO**

7. It is also proposed to consult on the introduction of a new Borough wide PSPO. It is proposed to consult on additional powers across the Borough where there is evidence to justify the introduction of a PSPO to deal with Begging, where this is being displaced from the town centre, the management of side waste and the increasing issues associated with stray dogs. More detail on the proposed powers and the application of them are in the main report.

### **Recommendations**

8. It is recommended that Members approve consultation on:-
  - (a) The renewal of a revised Town Centre PSPO as outlined in this report.
  - (b) The introduction of a Borough wide PSPO as outlined in this report.

### **Reasons**

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
  - (a) To provide powers to officers, including Police, PCSOs and Civic Enforcement Officers, to manage various types of anti-social behaviour.
  - (b) To improve the quality of life of persons visiting and working in the area covered by the PSPO.

**Ben Grabham**  
**Assistant Director - Environmental Services and Community Safety**

### **Background Papers**

The Town Centre PSPO was last considered by Cabinet on 22 June 2022.

Scott Richardson: Extension 6753



Council Plan	The additional powers that a PSPO provides can have a positive influence on multiple priorities in the Council Plan and help deliver the ambition and vision.
Addressing inequalities	There are no impacts as a result of this report. An equality impact assessment is being undertaken during the consultation process, which may identify how the PSPO could address inequality.
Tackling Climate Change	The additional powers associated with dealing with side waste across the Borough could have a positive impact on the amount of waste collected and encourage more recycling.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The additional powers could have a positive impact on the demand for Council resources if behaviour is changed in a positive way.
Health and Wellbeing	Anti-social behaviour within the town centre and other locations around the Borough can impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of individuals.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There will be a positive impact on crime and disorder in the town centre and the borough if the PSPOs are approved following consultation.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	No particular group will be impacted differently as a result of this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	No impact on the Budget or 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

### The Existing Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)

10. The existing PSPO covers the town centre (extents shown at **Appendix 1**) and came into force on 2 July 2022 and will expire on 1 July 2025.
11. The current town centre PSPO provides the Council with powers to deal with the following:
  - (a) Persons acting in an anti-social manner who continue to drink alcohol in public places, which are not licensed premises, after they have been asked to stop.
  - (b) Persons acting in an anti-social manner who fail to surrender any alcohol in their possession in public places, which are not licensed premises, when asked to do so.
  - (c) Begging
  - (d) Threatening behaviour

## Consultation on the renewal of the Town Centre PSPO

12. The anti-social behaviour activities covered by the PSPO are still an issue within the town centre. In the past twelve months, there has been 204 reports of anti-social behaviour in the town centre. More recently, from 1 September 2024 to 20 December 2024, 94 reports of anti-social behaviour were made which again directly relate to that area.
13. The Council must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that certain conditions have been met to renew or introduce a PSPO. Officers have reviewed the evidence required and despite some improvements and initiatives they are satisfied that the required conditions have been met to consider renewal of the order and the current areas that it covers.
14. The council has continued to work closely with a range of partners to tackle these issues. Examples of initiatives include the PubWatch and ShopWatch schemes, Number Forty, and the monthly Cuppa with a Copper engagement events, which offer reassurance that ASB is being dealt with. Campaigns to encourage people to report ASB have also been run over a number of years. Preventing Begging in Darlington is a multi-agency group which works to reduce the number of people begging in the town and educate the public of the best way to help. PSPOs always work in conjunction with these other and other ongoing initiatives.
15. The key milestones and actions are outlined in **Appendix 2**.
16. Officers have also reviewed the effectiveness of the wording of the current PSPO and there are some amendments recommended relating to the alcohol use clauses to try and improve effectiveness of the order.
  - (a) ALCOHOL controls: It is proposed to remove the wording “acting in an anti-social manner” as this effectively allows drinking to occur until it becomes an issue. The suggested deletion enables proactive approaches to address drinking before it becomes a problem for the wider community.
17. This will result in proactive enforcement options in relation to alcohol consumption in public spaces and guidance will be developed to ensure an acceptable and proportionate approach is taken by Civic Enforcement Officers in relation to alcohol consumption.

## New considerations for the Town Centre PSPO

18. There are some new considerations that are to be consulted upon. It is proposed to extend the area covered by the PSPO to include Victoria Road from the Station entrance area to Feethams as shown at **Appendix A**. This is an important gateway to the town centre that has experienced issues of ASB covered by the PSPO.
19. There are also two activities that the Council receive complaints about in the town centre that cause issues to the public and businesses and it is recommended that the following matters are consulted upon for inclusion in the PSPO.

## Feeding Birds

20. Feeding birds in the town centre can cause issues for the public, businesses and potentially to birds and wildlife in the urban environment.

The majority of people do follow advice and guidance when asked to refrain from feeding pigeons, but some do not and hence it is recommended that a new condition is consulted upon for inclusion in the town centre PSPO that prevents the feeding of birds/pigeons.

21. There is a substantial bird population in the town centre and a number of initiatives have been tried to manage the situation. For example, physical measures on buildings, deterrents such as birds of prey being flown. However, ongoing feeding is an issue that contributes to multiple issues for the Council, residents and businesses to manage.
  - (a) Health concerns - Pigeons can carry diseases that affect humans, such as histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis, which can transmit to humans through inhalation of contaminated droppings. When people feed pigeons, they increase the likelihood of these birds congregating in large numbers, heightening disease transmission risks within the community.
  - (b) Public safety - Increased pigeon populations due to regular feeding can contribute to safety hazards. Large flocks may create unclean spaces and cause slip-and-fall incidents in heavily trafficked areas. Pigeon feeding can lead to significant environmental issues. Excess food often leads to waste accumulation, attracting pests such as rats and increasing the risk of contamination in our surroundings. This places demand on resources to keep the town clean.
  - (c) Risks to bird populations feeding can create potential hazards for their health. When people feed birds, their natural foraging behaviours are altered, leading to several adverse outcomes:
    - (i) Overpopulation: Regular feeding encourages birds to congregate in large numbers, which leads to increased competition for food and limited resources.
    - (ii) Nutritional Imbalance: Birds can often consume processed or human food that lacks essential nutrients, resulting in malnutrition and health issues.
    - (iii) Disease Transmission: Naturally occurring diseases spread easily in large groups, causing outbreaks that can weaken bird populations.
22. It is recommended that a new condition be consulted upon that would provide additional powers to deter the feeding of birds/pigeons within the Town Centre.

#### **Anti-social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards in the town centre**

23. Another activity that the Council received regular complaints about is the anti-social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards can cause issues for the public, businesses.
24. The responsible and legal use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards is not an issue. However, some use is not considered social and causes concern in terms of public safety and damage to Council property. For example, the use of street furniture and steps to perform stunts and tricks can cause damage and more importantly safety concerns to the public. The locations that this happens can often be in heavily trafficked. The locations where people gather to perform stunts are also taken out of legitimate use.

For example, if stunts are being performed on benches or steps, they are potentially out of use for the function they were installed. For example, a bench may not be available for a person who needs to sit down for health and mobility reasons.

25. It is recommended that a new condition is consulted upon for inclusion in the town centre PSPO and that would provide additional powers to try and deter Anti-social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards.
26. The condition is anticipated to cover any person entering the town centre PSPO area, identified as riding, cycling, skateboarding, riding a manual scooter or using an E-bike or E-scooter, within the restricted area must not ride in a dangerous careless or inconsiderate manner and/or in a manner that is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any pedestrian including but not limited to aggressive riding, riding at speed, weaving between pedestrians or performing stunts.
27. More detail on the proposals for consultation are included at **Appendix 3**.

### **Consultation on a new borough wide PSPO**

28. Other authorities have borough wide PSPOs for certain circumstances. Based on experience and evidence from the Civic Enforcement Team and issues that get raised with them a boroughwide PSPO could be considered for certain issues because of the impact on our communities, financially and on service delivery.
29. It is proposed that a borough wide PSPO is consulted upon that would provide the Council with powers to deter and assist manage the following:

#### **Begging**

30. Begging is an ongoing concern in the town centre but action being taken has reduced numbers and there is evidence of displacement from the town centre into other parts of the Borough.
31. It is recommended that powers in the town centre PSPO are consulted upon for inclusion in the Borough-wide PSPO.

#### **Side waste**

32. Side waste is an ongoing issue that the Council faces and has to manage. There have been 111 reported cases since April 2024. Waste must be placed for collection in a receptacle that is acceptable to the Council. The Council provides adequate receptacles to deal with normal volumes of waste from households. If residents also recycle correctly there is a potential over provision of capacity in the residual waste bin. It is in the interests of the Council and residents both financially and from an environmental perspective to reduce waste generated and recycle correctly.
33. The inclusion of this matter in a borough wide PSPO would provide additional options to staff and provide a more effective way to deter the issue. This would allow a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to be issued after the service of a s46 notice should the householder continue to comply.

This is potentially more effective and efficient than progressing matters through the current process, which requires a Community Protection Warning & Notice to be issued before enforcement action can commence through the Courts. The issue of side waste affects most areas of Darlington including the outlying villages. Members should note that if an FPN is issued under a PSPO and it is not paid it still requires court action, unlike parking fines which are civil contraventions.

34. It is recommended that additional powers to manage side waste are consulted upon for inclusion in the borough wide PSPO.

### **Stray Dogs**

35. Stray Dogs are increasing in number, and the Council has dealt with 231 dogs since April 2024. The increase is not just a Darlington issue but something that is being experienced across the region. This is placing pressure on organisations that previously worked charitably to support re-homing, but they have had to change their models to cover costs, which has been passed on the Councils. Therefore, we need to be able to try and encourage more responsible behaviour.
36. As mentioned previously officers will always try to encourage compliance. The inclusion of powers relating stray dogs would give enforcement officers another option in terms of how they try and manage the service. The Council would only consider the use of an FPN if engagement and warnings didn't work.
37. It is recommended that additional powers to manage stray dogs are consulted upon for inclusion in the borough wide PSPO.
38. More detail on the proposals for consultation are included at **Appendix 4**.

### **Guidance & Application of the PSPO powers**

39. The use of a PSPO and FPNS is an additional tool the Civic Enforcement Officers who will try and secure compliance by encouragement before enforcement. A draft guidance and application note is included at **Appendix 5** and this will be developed through the consultation and scrutiny process to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to the use and intention of the PSPO is developed.

### **Legal Implications**

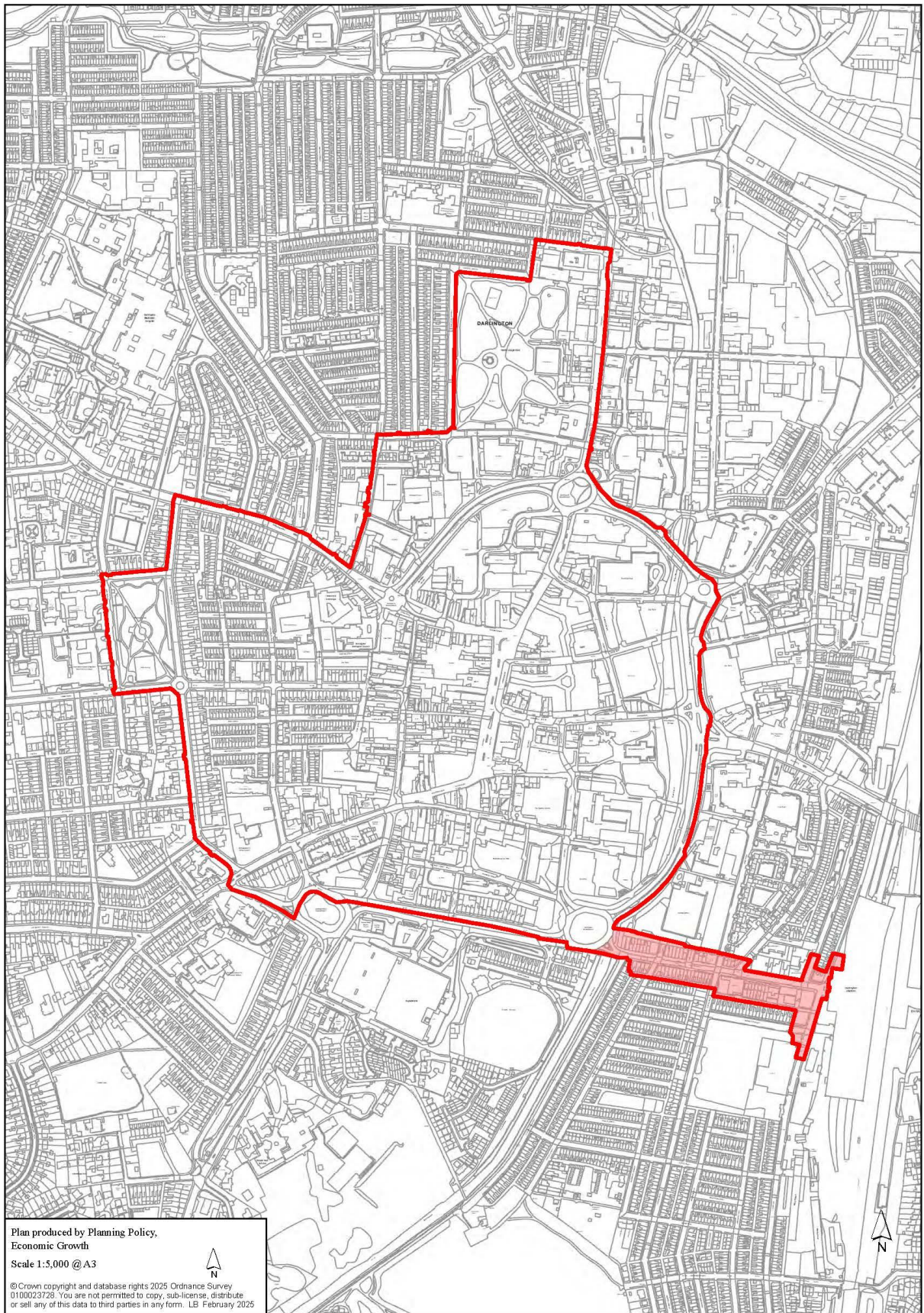
40. Under section 66 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 an individual who lives in the restricted area or who regularly works in or visits that area may apply to the High Court to question the validity of a PSPO. The grounds on which an application under this section may be made are either that the local authority did not have the power to make the order, or to include particular prohibitions or requirements imposed by the order; or that a requirement under the 2014 Act was not complied with.
41. If an application under this section the High Court is satisfied that - (a) the local authority did not have power to make the PSPO, or to include particular prohibitions or requirements imposed by it, or (b) the interests of the applicant have been substantially prejudiced by a failure to comply with a requirement under the 2014 Act, the Court may

quash the PSPO or any of the prohibitions or requirements imposed by it.

It is therefore important that a thorough consultation exercise is carried out in order to mitigate the risk of such a challenge should a decision ultimately be made to renew the town centre PSPO with the proposed changes and for a borough wide PSPO.

### Appendix 1 –Boundary of the Town Centre PSPO.

The shaded area shows the proposed extension to the area covered by the PSPO



## Appendix 2 – Key Milestones

Milestone	Dates	Action
<b>Cabinet</b>	4 Mar 2025	To seek approval to consult on proposals
<b>Consultation Period</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Consultation and Scrutiny</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">A 6 week period is proposed to commence 6 Mar - 16 Apr 2025 subject to Cabinet approval to consult.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The proposals will be considered by the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process on .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Equality Impact Assessment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This assessment will be undertaken during the period of consultation and considered as part of the report to Cabinet in June 2025.</p>	
<b>Cabinet</b>	10 June 2025	To consider consultation and make a decision on the Town Centre PSPO order and the introduction of a Borough Wide PSPO.
<b>If approved the PSPO could be introduced 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2025</b>		



### Appendix 3 Proposed Town Centre PSPO Modifications for consultation

The table below outlines the proposed Town Centre PSPO changes and the rationale for those changes to be consulted upon.

Proposed Terms and Prohibitions	Changes and Rationale
<p><b>Area Covered</b> Proposed change to the boundary of the area covered by the PSPO.</p>	<p>It is proposed to extend the area covered by the PSPO to include Victoria Road from the Station entrance area to Feethams as shown at <b>Appendix A</b>. This is an important gateway to the town centre that has experienced issues of ASB covered by the PSPO.</p>
<p><b>Alcohol</b> Persons who continue to drink alcohol in public places, which are not licensed premises, after they have been asked to stop.</p> <p>Any person who continues drinking alcohol in a public place, which is not a licenced premises, when asked to stop by a constable or a person authorised by the Council for this purpose commits an offence.</p>	<p><b>AMENDED WORDING:</b> It is proposed to remove the wording “acting in an anti-social manner”</p> <p>The wording was introduced upon the making of the last PSPO to tackle those persons acting in a disruptive manner within the Town Centre. However, this has posed challenges operationally with officers being unable to deal with groups of adults who congregate in various locations within the Town Centre to drink alcohol from 8am until their behaviour becomes disruptive.</p> <p>Complaints from local businesses regarding these adults gathering continue to be received, particularly from businesses in and around Tubwell Row and members of the public who walk through St Cuthberts churchyard. The proposed re-wording of the prohibition would allow officers to deal with the groups of adults drinking alcohol before any disruptive behaviour occurred.</p>
<p><b>Alcohol</b> Persons who fail to surrender any alcohol in their possession in public places, which are not licenced premises, when asked to do so.</p>	<p><b>AMENDED WORDING:</b> It is proposed to remove the wording “acting in an anti-social manner” for the same rationale as outlined above.</p>

Proposed Terms and Prohibitions	Changes and Rationale
<p>Any person who fails to surrender any alcohol in his possession in a public place, which is not a licenced premises, when asked to do so by a constable or a person authorised by the Council for this commits an offence.</p>	
<p><b>Birds/Pigeons</b> Continuing to feed Birds/pigeons after they have been asked to stop.</p> <p>No person at any time shall provide, or deposit food for the purpose of feeding or attracting birds/pigeons, within the Restricted Area save where the owner, occupier or other person, or authority having control of the land has consented (generally or specifically) to them doing so.</p>	<p><b>NEW PROHIBITION:</b> It is proposed to add a clause into the PSPO to prevent the feeding of birds/pigeons within the Town Centre.</p> <p>Currently enforcement of this falls under s87 of the Environment Protection Act 1990 (Littering Offences). For a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to be issued a person must be seen to deposit waste onto the ground and then leave the area. No offence is committed if a person feeds birds/pigeons and remains in the area until the food is consumed. The Town Centre continues have issues with the number of pigeons, which are attracted by persons feeding them on a daily basis and this prohibition will allow officers to prevent this from occurring.</p>
<p><b>Anti-social use of a skateboards, scooters, skates or bicycles</b> Anti-social use of a skateboard, scooter, skates or bicycle causing damage to property and/or nuisance or annoyance to other persons.</p> <p>No person shall ride upon a skateboard, scooter, skates or bicycle in a manner which could cause damage to property or nuisance or annoyance to one or more persons.</p>	<p><b>NEW PROHIBITION:</b> It is proposed to add a clause to prevent the anti-social use of bicycles, scooters, skates and skateboards in the Town Centre.</p> <p>This is to enable action to be taken against persons who act in an anti-social manner. For example, by riding these into shops, cycling in an aggressive manner towards members of the public before veering away at the last moment and by performing wheelies/stunts in public area. The proposed prohibitions would allow officers to effectively deal with these issues by the use of warnings and fines for young people aged 14 or over, and by issuing fixed penalty notices for adults.</p>
<p><b>Threatening behaviour</b> No person shall use threatening or intimidating behaviour towards any other person.</p>	<p><b>NO CHANGES</b></p>

Proposed Terms and Prohibitions	Changes and Rationale
<b>Begging</b>	<b>NO CHANGES.</b> If Members decide to progress a Borough Wide PSPO it is proposed begging would be included in both the Town Centre PSPO and included in the Borough Wide PSPO.

#### Appendix 4 Proposed Borough Wide PSPO for consultation

The table below outlines proposed inclusions to be consulted upon for a new Borough Wide PSPO.

Proposed Terms and Prohibitions	Changes and Rationale
<p><b>Begging</b>                      No person shall sit or loiter in any place for the purpose of begging. No person shall ask members of the public for money whether by placing an item before them for the receipt of money or otherwise.</p> <p>The guidance (page 8) states:                      “The activity restricted by an Order must be carried out in a public place, which is defined in the legislation as ‘any place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission.”</p> <p>In effect, FPNs can be issued for begging in these areas.</p>	<p><b>EXISTING PROHIBITION WIDENED FROM TOWN CENTRE PSPO TO BOROUGH WIDE PSPO:</b> As a result of the action taken in the Town Centre to deal with the issue of begging, the issue is being displaced to other areas with Darlington. Beggars now are active in areas such as Cockerton, Neasham Road retail park, North Road retail park and reports have been received from ASDA on Whinfield Road of beggars in that location. The extension of the prohibition would allow the enforcement element of our four-tier approach to deal with the issue into any area of Darlington where begging occurs.</p>
<p><b>Household waste presentation</b>                      In relation to household waste presentation, each Relevant Person is required to ensure that all household waste presented, or to be presented for collection from Relevant Premises shall be contained in receptacles of such kind and number as may be specified in any notice served by the Council under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and in accordance with any further requirements of such notice.</p> <p>Each Relevant Person shall have an equal and separate responsibility in relation to the requirement above, whether physically present at the Relevant Property or not.</p> <p>No person shall be in breach of these requirements if that person demonstrates that they have taken all reasonable steps available to that person to secure compliance,</p>	<p><b>NEW PROHIBITION:</b> This would allow a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to be issued after the service of a s46 notice should the householder continue to mispresent their waste. This is potentially more effective and efficient than progressing matters through the current process which requires a Community Protection Warning &amp; Notice to be issued before enforcement action can commence.</p> <p>The issue of side waste affects most areas of Darlington including the outlying villages.</p>

Proposed Terms and Prohibitions	Changes and Rationale
<p>provided that proof of the same will lie with that person.</p> <p><i>This applies to all persons (“the Relevant Person”) in a position to control residential premises located within the Restricted Area (“the Relevant Property”).</i></p> <p><i>For the purposes of this Order, Relevant Person means any person residing in, whether permanently, or temporarily, by legal right or simple occupation, any premises situated in the specified area and any owner or managing agent of any premises let on a periodic tenancy and situated within the Restricted Area.</i></p>	
<p><b>Allowing a dog to stray</b></p> <p>A person who is responsible for a dog must not permit, allow or fail to prevent the dog from being unaccompanied in the Restricted Area.</p> <p>Where a person who is responsible for a dog wishes to rely upon an exemption set out in this Order, they must demonstrate that they satisfy the requirements of the exemption.</p> <p>Shall not apply to a person who is on the Registered as blind or partially sighted and is responsible for an assistance dog. For the purposes of this Order an “Assistance Dog” is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A dog which has been trained to guide a blind or partially sighted person; or A dog which has been trained to assist a deaf person; or</li> <li>b) A dog which has been trained to assist a disabled person who has a disability that consists of epilepsy or otherwise affects the person’s mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination or ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>NEW PROHIBITION:</b> The introduction of this prohibition would allow officers to issue FPN’s to those persons who allow their dog to stray, with exemptions in place for assistance dogs.</p> <p>There is increasing demand on the service and need to kennel stray dogs. The PSPO is seen as an option to enable officer to encourage more responsible ownership.</p>

**Appendix 5 Draft Guidance and Application of PSPO powers**

**Town Centre**

Prohibition	Use
Alcohol prohibitions	<p>In areas frequented by known “street drinkers” (e.g. St Peters Churchyard &amp; Tubwell Row) officers will approach the individuals and advise them of the terms of the order and request that they either stop drinking and surrender any alcohol or move outside of the PSPO area. If persons do not comply with the instructions, their details will be obtained, and a fixed penalty notice (FPN) will be issued.</p> <p>The prohibition may also be used where events are taking place within the PSPO area and persons are becoming problematic but not committing public order offences.</p> <p>This will not be applied to responsible legal alcohol consumption. For example, a picnic or other event.</p>
Feeding wild birds	<p>Persons who are witnessed feeding wild birds in the PSPO area will be approached and advised of the terms within the PSPO and requested to stop.</p> <p>Where these persons continue to feed the wild birds, their details will be taken, and a FPN will be issued.</p>
Anti-social use of cycles etc.	<p>Where persons are witnessed riding/skating in an anti-social manner as outlined in the order they will be approached by officers and instructed to stop.</p> <p>If the person is identified as aged between 10 and 18 and carries out the instruction to stop, a verbal warning will be given, this being followed up in writing to both the young person and their parent/guardian. Where the behaviour continues despite this instruction the details will be taken and action taken as detailed below.</p> <p><b>Aged 18+ – A FPN will be issued</b></p> <p><b>Persons aged 16 &amp; 17 –</b> details will be taken, and consultation will take place with the Youth Justice &amp; Engagement Service as to whether a FPN should be issued. If a FPN is issued, the parent/guardian will be informed. Where a FPN is</p>

	<p>not considered to be the appropriate action, a referral into the youth justice &amp; engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p> <p><b>Persons aged 14 &amp; 15</b> - details will be taken, and consultation will take place with the Youth Justice &amp; Engagement Service as to whether a FPN should be issued. If a FPN is issued, the parent/guardian will be informed. Where a FPN is not considered to be the appropriate action, a referral into the youth justice &amp; engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p> <p><b>Persons aged between 10 &amp; 13</b> – a FPN will not be issued, a referral to the youth justice and engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p>
Threatening behaviour	<p>Persons engaging in threatening behaviour will initially be instructed to stop. If the behaviour continues, details will be obtained, and the appropriate action would be taken as detailed below;</p> <p><b>Aged 18+</b> – A FPN will be issued</p> <p><b>Persons aged 16 &amp; 17</b> – details will be taken, and consultation will take place with the Youth Justice &amp; Engagement Service as to whether a FPN should be issued. If a FPN is issued, the parent/guardian will be informed. Where a FPN is not considered to be the appropriate action, a referral into the youth justice &amp; engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p> <p><b>Persons aged 14 &amp; 15</b> - details will be taken, and consultation will take place with the Youth Justice &amp; Engagement Service as to whether a FPN should be issued. If a FPN is issued, the parent/guardian will be informed. Where a FPN is not considered to be the appropriate action, a referral into the youth justice &amp; engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p> <p><b>Persons aged between 10 &amp; 13</b> – a FPN will not be issued, a referral to the youth justice and engagement service will be made to work with the young person to prevent further offending.</p>

**Boroughwide**

Prohibition	Use
<p>Begging</p>	<p>The approach to dealing with those begging within the Town Centre will be continued boroughwide. Those persons who are found to be begging are offered support with finding accommodation, support to overcome any addictions they may have and encouraged to stop begging and move away from the location before any enforcement action is considered. Those persons found to be habitually begging are discussed at the bi-monthly multi-agency “Begging Group” with agreed targeted actions to support the individual to stop begging.</p> <p>Those individuals who continue to beg despite being offered all available support will be issued FPN’s. Further enforcement action to prevent the individual from carrying out the behaviour in the area will also be considered where the begging group consider it proportionate (e.g. injunctions or criminal behaviour orders).</p>
<p>Household Waste Presentation</p>	<p>Those individuals who are found to be presenting household waste incorrectly on the first instance will be issued with a warning letter and a notice under s46 of the Environment Act 1990 which specifies how waste must be presented in the future. Should any support needs be identified at this time, e.g. assisted bin collection, these will be actioned by the officer.</p> <p>Should an individual continue to present household waste incorrectly a FPN will be issued. Those individuals who habitually present waste incorrectly may be summonsed to Court for the offence.</p>
<p>Allowing a dog to stray</p>	<p>Where a dog is found straying for the first time a warning letter for breaching the PSPO will be issued to the owner stating that if the dog is found to be straying again then a FPN may be issued.</p> <p>A FPN could be issued for allowing dogs to stray and are non-microchipped or those with incorrect chip details. Where a dog is found straying on more than one occasion a FPN will be issued to the owner.</p> <p>Should an owner habitually allow their dog to stray, consideration will be given for a file to be presented to Court of prosecution.</p> <p>Assistance dogs are exempt from the PSPO.</p>



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
10 APRIL 2025**

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**RESIDENT'S PARKING ZONE POLICY UPDATE**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides an update on the Resident's Parking Policy that the Council operates to prioritise on-street parking for residents in areas where there can also be demand for visitor parking. The policy has been in place for a number of years and is subject to a current review.
2. In addition, members submitted a Quad of Aims to consider the implications of vehicles of different sizes and emissions parking within the zones. By considering individual vehicle circumstances, the Quad of Aims identified the following outcome:
  - (a) Provide an incentive to use and ownership of smaller, more sustainable vehicles. This will have a positive impact on:
    - (i) Greenhouse gas emissions
    - (ii) Road maintenance budget
    - (iii) Provide additional funding for transport policy objectives
    - (iv) Reduce severity of road collision injuries
    - (v) Inform any future review of on-street and council car park differential charging

**Summary**

3. This report has considered the Quad of Aims in relation to Resident's Parking and reports initial findings.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee considers and notes the attached initial findings report.
5. It is recommended that consultation with Members, residents and businesses where appropriate is undertaken.

**Background Papers**

None

Joanne Roberts ext 3187

Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan through the involvement of Members in contributing to the development of operational policy.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to inequalities which this report needs to address
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Efficient and effective use of resources	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Health and Wellbeing	This report has implications on the Health and Wellbeing of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	Park East, Northgate, Park West, Pierremont, College, Stephenson, Bank Top & Lascelles, Eastbourne
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	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

6. The Council operates Resident Parking Zones to prioritise on-street parking for residents in areas where there can also be demand for visitor parking. The current zones are indicated on the plan included at **Appendix 1**, except zone Z which is located in the vicinity of the Darlington Arena, in Eastbourne Ward and only operates when there is an event. The existing policy has been in place for a number of years and is subject to a review to ensure it meets current needs, as follows:
  - (a) Review the current resident parking policy to establish if it is fit for purpose. This would be in terms of appropriateness to the borough of Darlington and the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.
  - (b) Consider how the current policy aligns with other Local Authority's policies, particularly the 12 North East Authorities and learn best practice.
  - (c) Consider how the policy reflects and helps to deliver other national and local policies and priorities i.e. Climate Change Strategy, Net Zero, Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan, Darlington Transport Plan, Darlington Town Centre Strategy etc.
  - (d) Identify changes and any additional services for residents, businesses, and visitors.
  - (e) Seek the views of residents living in the residents parking zones on how the current RPZ policy works. Including whether there are any additional measures that they would consider appropriate. It is also critical that we capture the views of non-permit holders.
  - (f) Produce a revised policy and implement the changes.
7. In addition, members submitted a Quad of Aims to consider the implications of vehicles of different sizes and emissions within the RPZs. By considering individual vehicle circumstances, the Quad of Aims identified the following outcome:
  - (a) Provide an incentive to use and ownership of smaller, more sustainable vehicles. This will have a positive impact on:
    - (i) Greenhouse gas emissions;
    - (ii) Road maintenance budget;
    - (iii) Provide additional funding for transport policy objectives;
    - (iv) Reduce severity of road collision injuries;
    - (v) Inform any future review of on-street and Council car park differential charging.
8. This report presents the initial findings.

### Need for an RPZ

9. Residents parking schemes are required to ensure priority parking is available for residents in areas that would otherwise attract non-resident parking such as close to town centres to avoid parking charges.
10. There are currently 16 RPZ zones within the borough of Darlington. Parking is restricted to permit holders only during the hours of operation which are generally 8.00am to 6.00pm, seven days a week. Of the 16 zones, 13 are charged for permits at £40 per 12 months, £24 per six months and £12 for a temporary three-month permit.

11. An RPZ is introduced through an appropriate Traffic Regulation Order to restrict non permit holder parking in a specific area.

### **Current Policies influencing RPZ**

12. The Council has introduced a Council Plan that considers the core principles of addressing inequalities, tackling climate change and making efficient and effective use of resources. Transport is an enabler to jobs and economic growth and prioritising parking for residents in areas that attract commuter, and non-residential parking helps to address inequalities by focusing on resident needs as well as encouraging the use of public transport by implementing car parking policies that restrict parking for motorists.
13. RPZs contribute to the objectives of the Darlington Transport Plan by restricting parking for non-residents that encourages journeys to be made by other modes and complements the work being undertaken that is introducing cycling and public transport infrastructure to encourage journeys by alternative modes to private vehicles.
14. The Government’s priorities include decarbonising transport, and the Tees Valley Combined Authority’s (TVCA) Strategic Transport Plan has identified need and the Council is working with TVCA on rolling out electric vehicle charging infrastructure. To date this has been introduced in off-street car parks and LEVI funding will be used to deliver on-street charging.

### **Current Resident Parking Policy**

15. The current RPZ Policy sees zones operate seven days a week, during daytime hours (no evenings), except for the zone adjacent to Darlington Arena. There are 16 zones in total and of these, three zones offer free permits to residents.
16. The Policy does allow the purchase of trader permits so that work can be undertaken in residential properties. Businesses operating within the zones are also able to purchase permits.
17. Exemptions apply to blue badge holders, emergency services vehicles and observed loading/unloading.
18. The current policy does not provide visitor parking permits as within each zone ‘dual use’ bays are available that provide dedicated parking for residents or limited stay parking for visitors that discourages long stay non-resident parking.

<b><u>Current Policy</u></b>	<b><u>Advantages</u></b>	<b><u>Disadvantages</u></b>
Operating seven days a week	Consistent approach for delivering the service.	Public expectation of weekend enforcement if schemes aren’t self-enforcing.
Some schemes operate free	Local support from affected residents as parking policy is in their favour.	Reputational risk at a lack of consistency if charges were implemented, residents would likely object if

		enforcement is not increased. No discouragement for parking or reducing the number of vehicles in a household.
Current costs £40, £24, £12 (free)	Varying costs for different durations give residents options to pay.	Costs vary across the region with some local authority schemes costing less than the paid for permit.
Trader permits	Supports local businesses and economic growth.	Potentially reduces resident spaces.
Parking waivers	Supports local businesses and economic growth.	Potential for misuse as good value for money compared to some off-street parking locations.
E-Permits	No printing and postage costs	Possible user anxiety as no permit on display in vehicle.
Limited parking dual use bays	Maximises parking availability by allowing non-resident short term parking for visitors.	Requires enforcement to ensure turnover of parking spaces.
No visitor permit parking	Reduced chance of permit misuse.	Lack of parking opportunities for visitors to residents within the zone.
Business Permits	Supports local businesses and economic growth.	Reduces available space for priority resident parking or on-street pay and display.
Exemption for emergency vehicles	Supports emergency access needs.	
Exemption for observed loading/unloading	Supports residents by allowing deliveries etc.	
Blue Badge parking	Currently can park for free and without time limit.	Blue badge holders take up resident bays, majority are not residents (visitors).

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Free or Paid permits</b>	<b>Hours of operation</b>	<b>No of permits issued 23/24</b>
Zone A	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	66
Zone B	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	111
Zone C	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	138
Zone D	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	32
Zone E	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	204
Zone F	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	136
Zone G	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	77
Zone H	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	248
Zone I	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	65
Zone J	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	283
Zone K	FREE	All days, 8am to 6pm	96
Zone L	FREE	All days, 8am to 6pm	81

Zone M	FREE	All days, 8am to 6pm	36
Zone N	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	183
Zone O	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	32
Zone Z	PAID	All days, 8am to 6pm	41

## Current Schemes

### How the Darlington Scheme compares to other Local Authority RPZs

19. Benchmarking information is included in **Appendix 2** from all North East Local Authorities. This information demonstrates the differences between schemes operated by each Local Authority.
20. The hours of operation vary but tend to be daytime usually with some weekend operation.
21. The cost of permits widely varies from a free permit for every resident with a vehicle registered to the address to sliding scale charges that increase with each additional permit, such as Newcastle City Council, first permit is £25 and the second permit can cost £75 unless it is a low emission vehicle for vehicles emitting less than 120g/km CO<sub>2</sub> that sees reductions in cost to £12.50 and £62.50 for first and second permits respectively. Newcastle City Council is the only Council in the region that offers free permits for Electric Vehicles. Darlington Borough Council annually charges £40 for each permit excluding the free permit zones. South Tyneside Council also provides free permits for those with blue badges and those over 65.
22. Some schemes offer the opportunity for additional ‘visitor’ permits to be purchased that can either be assigned to vehicles for regular visitors or to households that means the resident provides the permit to the visitor on arrival. Darlington Borough Council does not provide visitor permits as there is limited stay and pay and display parking in close proximity to RPZs. Some authorities introduce a limit on visitor permits, either by introducing scratchcard books of a set number of visits for example ten or 20 visits or limiting the number of permits and/or visitor permits that can be issued.
23. Some local authorities introduce additional admin charges for replacement (lost) permits or for changing vehicles.
24. There are also different approaches to blue badge parking. In Darlington, blue badge holders can park unrestricted within resident parking zones. Some Local Authority areas will only allow blue badge parking if it is accompanied by either a resident or visitor permit.
25. Some schemes allow businesses that are located in the zone to have permits, but this is generally on a case-by-case basis. For example, it would not be feasible in town centre locations to allow all businesses access to permit parking as there would not be enough parking spaces available for residents in these areas as well and off-street car parks are designed for longer term parking. In other areas there can be smaller businesses operating that have operational parking needs that mean business permits can be accommodated, for example a local business such as a florist who regular undertakes deliveries to

customers.

### **Eligibility Criteria and process for implementing an RPZ**

26. Darlington Borough Council has not developed eligibility criteria for implementing an RPZ, it has been considered on an area wide basis depending on local circumstances.
27. Eligibility criteria could be considered to ensure requests are consistently considered; such criteria could include but not be limited to the following:
  - (a) Requests will be considered if there is a likelihood of high demand non-resident parking being attracted to an area that will occur throughout the day.
  - (b) Support from Ward Councillors can be demonstrated.
  - (c) Funding for a new scheme is identified.
  - (d) Surveys demonstrate demand – will need defining for the policy.
  - (e) % of residents agree with the scheme – will need defining for the policy.
  - (f) Consideration be given to dealing with new requests for residents parking schemes including extent of scheme and potential for displaced parking. There should be clear reasons for implementing a new scheme and not to deal with short term parking issues such as close to a school etc.

### **Costs of Permits Including Renewal**

28. Currently the cost of an RPZ permit is £40 with no maximum number in zones where permits are purchased.
29. Also, some RPZs in Darlington provide free permits to residents with no maximum number. These schemes have been implemented based on decisions to approve planning applications that are likely to attract non-resident parking.

### **Enforcement**

30. Enforcement has improved across the car parking service with the introduction of two dedicated parking officers that has seen an increase in issuing Penalty Charge Notices that will encourage compliance of parking restrictions. The Enforcement team operate across various areas and balancing priorities remains a challenge.

### **Consultation**

31. No consultation has been undertaken to date. Consultation with relevant Ward Members and eligible residents and businesses could be undertaken via questionnaire, a draft is included at **Appendix 3**. The proposals would be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

### **Response to Quad of Aims**

#### **The findings of other Local Authorities who have already implemented a similar scheme**

32. Other local authorities have successfully implemented schemes where permits are vehicle specific in relation to emissions. There is no evidence of any schemes that are operated

using the weight of vehicles from a road maintenance perspective.

33. Of the schemes implemented outside of London, Bath and North East Somerset Council base permit charges on CO2 emissions or engine capacity if CO2 information is not available. With higher engine emissions affecting air quality, the higher charges aim to reduce the use of more polluting vehicles thereby reducing public health risks from air pollution for pedestrians.
34. Newcastle City Council follow a similar arrangement with permits for Electric Vehicles free of charge. The take up of the free permit for EVs is however relatively low compared to the total number of resident permits issued, with less than 3% of permits for EVs. This could incentivise a switch from a petrol or diesel vehicle, however given the higher cost of electric vehicles it is potentially unlikely to encourage this switch in its own right.
35. It should be noted that both authorities do not allow cross pavement EV charging opportunities that would give residents access to cheaper home tariffs, EV owners are still expected to use public charging. They do not reserve areas of the highway for EV charging except at public charging locations that are available for all EV owners to use.

#### **Assess proposed differential charging and the likelihood of positive behaviour change**

36. The principle of proposed differential charging for less polluting vehicles could form one of a number of initiatives to encourage the switch to EVs. Introducing a maximum number of permits or a cost sliding scale whereby residents pay more if they have more permits could also encourage less car ownership.

#### **Assess the method and timescale of implementation**

37. The Council's back-office parking system can configure emissions-based permits; however, the system would require a lot of work to reconfigure it and this would be chargeable by the Host Company. The current system is contracted for a further four years until 2029.
38. The first on-street EV chargers to be installed in Darlington will be early 2026. Any changes to the TRO would be subject to the statutory process that typically takes six months. This would not commence until the RPZ Policy had been formally adopted and been through the process.

#### **Recommend to Cabinet the effectiveness of the proposed scheme**

39. The emission based scheme could be considered for implementation as it does incentivise the switch to lower emission vehicles and EVs albeit these vehicles are generally more expensive to purchase than petrol and diesel vehicles currently. The proposal needs to be considered alongside the tackling inequalities Council Plan theme. Transport is an enabler to jobs and economic growth and prioritising parking for residents in areas that attract commuter, and non-residential parking helps to address inequalities by focusing on resident needs as well as encouraging the use of public transport by implementing car parking policies that restrict parking for motorists. However, providing financial incentives for those who can afford an electric vehicle should be carefully considered to ensure that others are not disadvantaged.



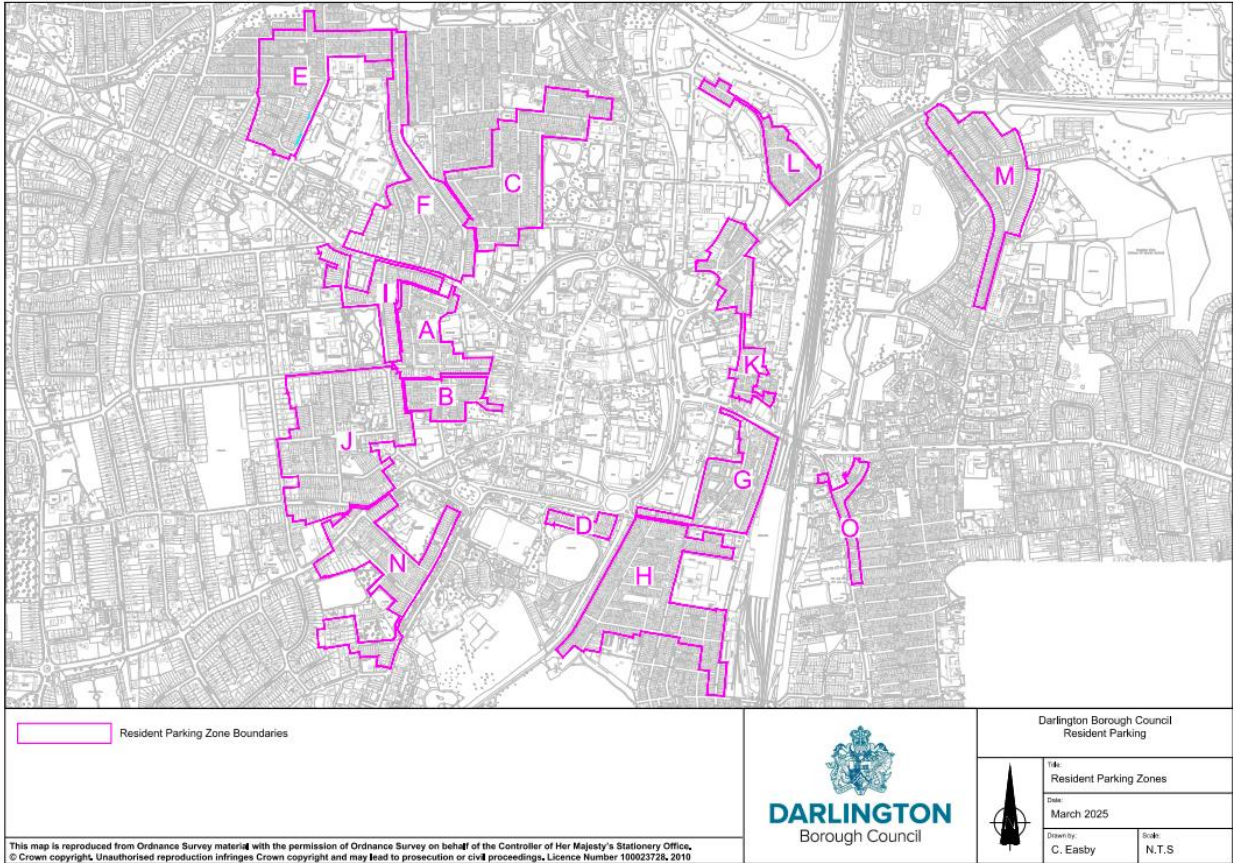
## Emerging Themes

40. There are opportunities to implement a restriction on the number of permits per household and to revise the cost of permits with a sliding scale per permit as other authorities have done. This would gradually increase the costs to a maximum amount to discourage multi permit holding households. Also, an approach to discourage more polluting vehicles in residential areas could be similar to the Government vehicle excise duty method with lower emission vehicles paying less, this has been implemented by Bath and North East Somerset Council as well as the London Boroughs who are also subject to ULEZ. Newcastle City Council also have a lower cost permit for vehicles emitting less than 120g/km of CO<sub>2</sub> as well as the free EV permit.
41. On-street Electric Vehicle charging is being rolled out utilising LEVI funding and it is anticipated that the first chargers will be introduced in early 2026. This will help encourage the switch to EVs and decarbonisation. For those residents, however, who don't have in curtilage parking and access to home charging facilities in RPZ areas, the cost of charging will still be higher. Reducing the cost of permits for EV owners in RPZs needs to be balanced against encouraging ownership in areas where charging opportunities are limited.
42. Residential parking areas are provided for properties that have no or very limited off-street parking. In accordance with the recently adopted EV Charging Policy, electric vehicle charging would need to be undertaken at public charge points, meaning residents in these areas are unable to take advantage of the financial benefits of home charging.
43. Some RPZ areas have been implemented because of planning decisions and therefore permits are offered free of charge. Charging for permits can help ensure long term viability of schemes, a consistent approach could be considered, particularly as there is a high turnover of residents in some of these areas because of rental properties.

## Next Steps

44. The Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee considers and notes the attached initial findings report.
45. It is recommended that consultation with Members, residents and businesses where appropriate is undertaken.
46. That Officers present the consultation outcome to scrutiny so that members have the opportunity to discuss the findings before a final Policy is agreed.

### Resident Parking Zone Locations (excluding Zone Z – Darlington Arena)



## Other Local Authority's Schemes

Local Authority	Cost of Permit	Hours of Operation	Local Variations
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	£10 per year per permit, limited to two per household.	Varies – 8am -6pm or 8am – 5pm, (some seven days, six days or five days)	Visitor permits can be purchased, in Yarm this is limited to scratchcards (20 uses per year). Eaglescliffe and Yarm also have dual use bays. No business permits in Yarm.
Middlesbrough Borough Council	Looks like it is currently free, but they are introducing fees.		Business permit Landlord permit Visitor permits
Hartlepool Borough Council	First permit £15 Second permit £25 Third permit £40 Subsequent permits £40 each per year	8am – 8pm Mon -Sat with one scheme Mon - Sun	Business Permits £350 per year.  Open (visitor) permits only one per household for short term visits (not assigned to vehicle). Visitor permits for regular visitors (assigned to vehicle). Costs apply whether resident of visitor permits purchased.
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	Free, but still require annual renewing	8am – 6pm Mon – Sat or Mon - Sun	Resident permits are available for vehicles registered at the address. Maximum of two visitor permits can be purchased. Blue badges must also display a valid permit.
Durham County Council	<b>Durham City</b> - £40 per year for first permit, £60 per year for second permit (limited to two per household).  Virtual parking permits can only be purchased at additional £5 admin cost.  <b>Framwellgate Moor, North</b>	<b>Durham City</b> 8am - 6pm, Mon to Sun including bank holidays (except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day)	<b>Durham City</b> – Business Permits £375 per year and limited to one per business address. Construction permits either £30 per week or £120 per four-week period. Carers permits - Permits for three, six or 12 month periods are available. Visitor permits - Households can choose to purchase either virtual vouchers or paper scratchcards.  <b>Framwellgate Moor, North End, Chester-le-Street and Bishop Auckland</b>

Local Authority	Cost of Permit	Hours of Operation	Local Variations
	<p><b><i>End, Chester-le-Bishop Auckland</i></b></p> <p>Households can have a maximum of three permits. Permits cost:                      £7.50 for three months                      £15 for six months                      £22.50 for nine months                      £30.00 for 12 months                      £45.00 for 18 months                      (They are not vehicle specific and can be transferred between vehicles).</p>	<p>Varies – not specified on the website.</p>	<p>Visitor permits – scratchcards can be purchased.                      Construction permits - £20 a week or £80 a month per vehicle.</p>
<p>Sunderland City Council</p>	<p><b><i>City Centre</i></b></p> <p>Permits £155 per quarter or £545 per annum</p> <p><b><i>Community Parking Management Scheme</i></b>                      First permit free</p>	<p><b><i>City Centre</i></b></p> <p>The council currently operate a city centre residents parking scheme which allows residents who live in the City Centre to purchase a permit that will allow parking at any time (subject to availability) in any of the council controlled multi storey and off-street car parks (except Prince/South Street car parks which are reserved for private permit holders).</p>	<p><b><i>City Centre</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Community Parking Management Scheme</i></b>                      Visitor permits – maximum of one - £40, scratchcards also available.                      Business permit – permit one - £50, permits two to five £50</p>

Local Authority	Cost of Permit	Hours of Operation	Local Variations
	Second permit £20 Third permit £40 Fourth permit £60 Fifth permit £80 Per year	<b>Community Parking Management Scheme</b> Varies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mon - Sat 9am - 10am and 2pm - 3pm.</li> <li>• Mon - Sat 9:30am - 10:30am and 2:30pm - 3:30pm.</li> <li>• Mon to Fri 10am - 11am and 2pm - 3pm.</li> <li>• All SAFC home fixtures and any other events held at the Stadium of Light.</li> <li>• Mon – Fri 11am – 12pm and 3pm – 4pm</li> <li>• Mon – Fri 10am – 11am and 4pm – 5pm</li> </ul>	
South Tyneside Council	Two permit limit per household £50 for your first year, then £20 per year to renew. Free if over 65 or Blue Badge.	Not specified	Visitors, each household can have up to eight visitor booklets (25 visitor permits per booklet).
Gateshead Council	Some zones limit one permit and some limit two permits. First permit £30 per year Second permit £50 per year	Not stated on website	Some zones offer visitor parking others do not. Scratchcards (book of 10 vouchers) £5.50 Landlord permit £50 Business permit £160 Health professionals' permit £110 Replacement permit £20 Change of vehicle fee £10 Trade permit £10 flat fee plus £2 per vehicle per day

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Cost of Permit</b>	<b>Hours of Operation</b>	<b>Local Variations</b>
Newcastle City Council	Two permit limit per household First permit £25 Second permit £75 Low emissions vehicles: First permit £12.50 Second permit £62.50 Electric vehicles are free	Various (not stated on website) including resident only all day every day.	Visitors permits – scratchcards available Change of vehicle fee £10 Replacement permit £10
North Tyneside Council	Maximum of three per household £25 per permit per year (virtual)	Not stated on website.	Visitor permit limited to one per household at a cost of £25. Business permit, limited to two per business, £250 each
Northumberland County Council	Two permits per property (one for a registered vehicle and one visitor permit) £30 per year You can make a request to be considered for a third permit.	Mon - Fri 9am - 5.30pm Mon - Sat 9am - 5.30pm All days, 9am - 5:30pm	Visitor permit £30 Permit replacement cost £30 Change of vehicle fee £30

## Questionnaire

The following is an indication of the types of questions to be asked as part of a consultation questionnaire for households within the RPZs. The questionnaire would require a short introduction then include a short summary on the operation of the scheme in their identified area so that any specific considerations for each area can be identified.

### Questions

1. Are there any vehicles registered or used by members of your household?
2. Do you have any off-street parking available?
3. If yes, how many off-street parking spaces are available?
4. Do you have any residents parking permits within your household?
5. If yes, how many?
6. If yes, how often are the parking permits used?
  - a. Daily
  - b. Most weekdays
  - c. Most weekends
  - d. Most weekdays and weekends
  - e. Occasionally
7. Is the current residents parking zone effective in addressing the following issues?
  - a. Prioritising resident parking, yes/no
  - b. Discouraging non-resident parking, yes/no
  - c. Removing commuter parking, yes/no
  - d. Providing sufficient opportunities for visitor parking yes/no
8. Do you experience parking issues in your area?
  - a. Lack of available on-street parking
  - b. Inconsiderate parking
  - c. Non-resident parking
  - d. Long stay commuter parking
  - e. Commercial vehicle parking
  - f. Lack of electric vehicle charging infrastructure
9. Is there a particular time of day that parking problems are experienced?
  - a. Weekdays
  - b. Evening
  - c. Weekends
  - d. Saturday
  - e. Sunday

10. Do you think the scheme benefits the area?

*Comments*.....

.....

11. Thinking about the cost of the permits, the Council incurs costs to implement and maintain signing and lining on site as well as undertaking enforcement and administering the scheme.

12. Do you think the cost of the permit is about right?



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
29 AUGUST 2024**

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**WORK PROGRAMME**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be added to the previously approved work programme.

**Summary**

2. Members are requested to consider the attached work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and recommendations previously agreed by this Scrutiny Committee.
3. Any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 2**).
4. Two Quads of Aims have been received by Members in relation to Customer Relationship System and Accessibility Review. In accordance with the agreed process, these items are still under discussion as to the most effective way to consider them and an update will be given at the next meeting.

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that Members note the current status of the Work Programme and consider any additional areas of work they would like to include.

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

**Background Papers**

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

Author: Olivia Hugill Ext:5363

Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan. The Work Programme contains items which enable Members to scrutinise those areas that contribute the priority of 'Communities' – Working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities and 'Local Environment' – A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and 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 individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
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

6. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.

### Forward Plan and Additional Items

7. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims.
8. A copy of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

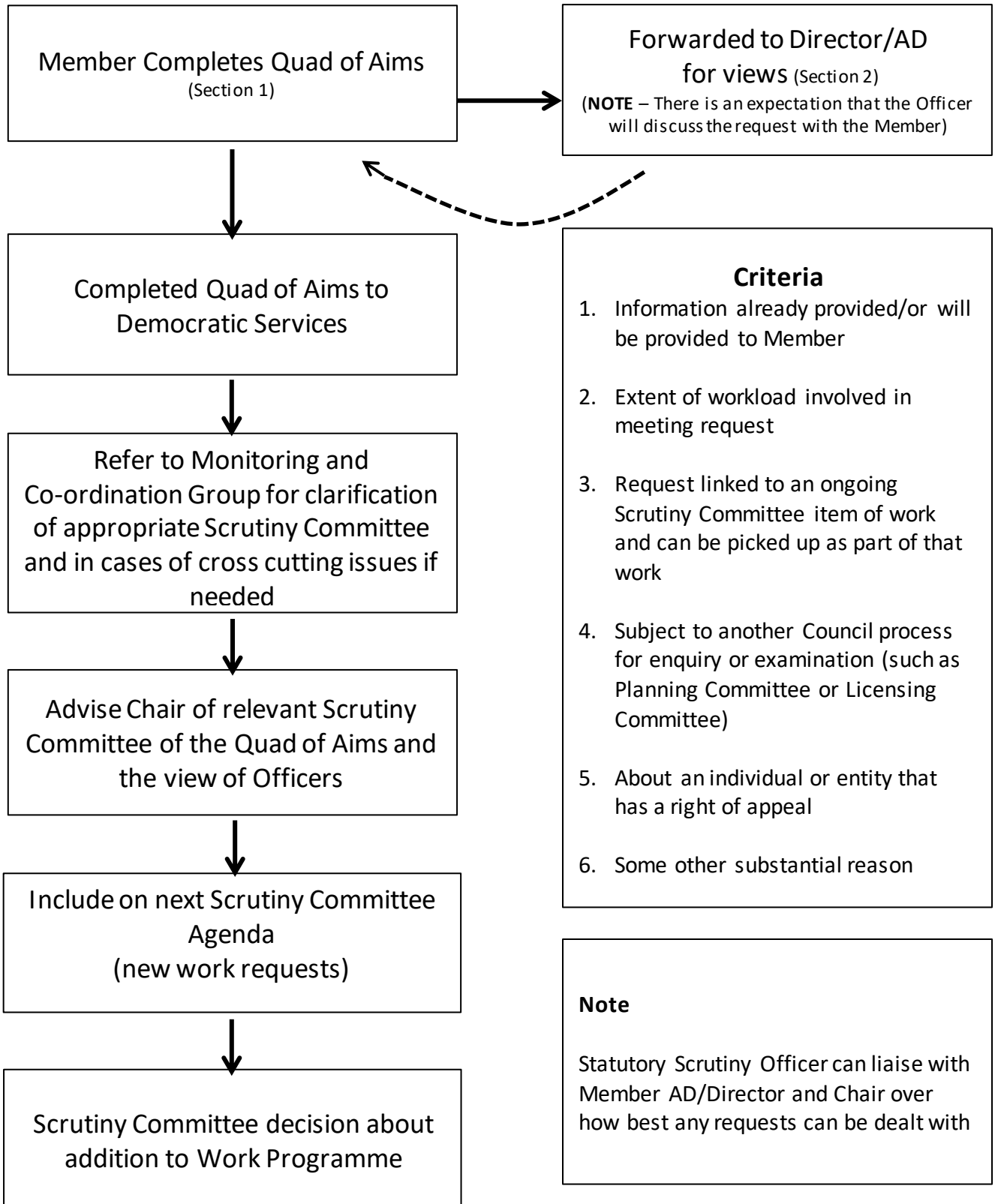
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved</b>	<b>Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)</b>	<b>Scrutiny's Role</b>
<b>Performance Management and Regulation/ Management of Change</b>  Regular Performance Reports to be Programmed  End of Year Performance (including Compliments Comments and Complaints)	16 January 2025 (Q2)  Year End August 2024	Relevant AD	Full Performance Management Framework suite of indicators.	To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary.
<b>Stronger Communities Fund Update</b>	Year End August 2024  January 2025	Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder		To update Scrutiny Members.
<b>Local Transport Plan</b>	27 February 2025  Last received 22 February 2024	Andy Casey/ Anthony Hewitt		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Public Sector Executive Group 6 Month Review</b>	16 January 2025  Last considered 22 February 2024	Seth Pearson		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved</b>	<b>Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)</b>	<b>Scrutiny's Role</b>
<b>Tree and Woodland Strategy</b>	June 2025  Last considered 18 April 2024	Brian Graham		To receive a yearly review of the strategy.
<b>Tees Valley Combined Authority Transport Committee</b>	Last received on 24 October 2024.  To be received when published.	Anthony Hewitt		To receive the Minutes from the Tees Valley Combined Authority Transport Committee
<b>Environment Act 2021 – Waste Management Arrangements</b>	24 October 2024 Last considered 21 October 2021	Ian Thompson		To give Scrutiny Members the opportunity to consider prior to Cabinet.
<b>Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan for 2024/25</b>	June 2025  Last considered 13 June 2024	Stephen Wiper		Annual update for Scrutiny Members.
<b>Residents' Parking Permits – Differential Charges</b>	10 April 2025	Anthony Hewitt		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Private Sector Housing</b>	10 April 2025	Christine Booth		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Allotment Strategy Review</b>	10 April 2025	Brian Graham		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Parks and Open Spaces</b>	10 April 2025	Brian Graham		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Customer Relationship Management System</b>	10 April 2025	Neil Bowerbank		To update Scrutiny Members.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved</b>	<b>Link to Performance Management Framework (metrics)</b>	<b>Scrutiny's Role</b>
<b>Town Centre Programme</b>	24 October 2024	Alex Nicholson		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.
<b>Waste Control Review - To look at fly tipping and back lane strategy/bins</b>	TBC	Brian Graham		To scrutinise and undertake any further work if necessary.

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



PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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

**SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS**

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

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

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Signed Councillor .....

Date .....



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

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

**Signed** ..... **Position** ..... **Date** .....

**PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLAN**



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

**FORWARD PLAN  
FOR THE PERIOD: 5 MARCH 2025 - 31 JULY 2025**

Title	Decision Maker and Date	Page
Annual Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	5
Annual Statement of Accounts 2023/24	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	6
Consultation on a Homes Strategy for the Borough	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	7
Household Support Fund	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	8
Long Term Plan for Towns	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	9
North East Smokefree Declaration	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	10
Physical Activity Strategy	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	11
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	12
Update to Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Part 1 – The Local Plan	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025	13
Adult Social Care Transport Policy 2024	Cabinet 6 May 2025	14
Dolphin Centre – Invest to Save Projects	Cabinet 6 May 2025	15
High Street Rental Auctions	Cabinet 6 May 2025	16
Schedule of Transactions	Cabinet 6 May 2025	17
Strategic Asset Plan	Cabinet 6 May 2025	18
To recommend to Council that they agree the Middleton St George Conservation Area Appraisal including the designation of a new Conservation Area	Cabinet 6 May 2025	19
Town Centre Regeneration	Cabinet 6 May 2025	20
Woodland Road Waiting Restrictions	Cabinet 6 May 2025	21
Consultation on the Renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order and	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025	22

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLAN**

Introduction of a Borough Wide Public Space Protection Order		
Representation on Other Bodies 2025/26	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025	23
Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Rent 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	24
Council Plan Performance Reporting Update - Quarter 4	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	25
Disabled Facilities Grant 2025/26	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	26
Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2025-2030	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	27
Housing Services Tenancy Policy 2025-2030	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	28
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	29
Revenue Budget Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	30
Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025	31
Adoption of Finalised Appraisal for the Stockton and Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Including Changes to its Boundary and Name	Cabinet 6 Jan 2026	32
To consider the Use of Land at Faverdale including the Former St Modwen Land for Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality Credits	Cabinet	33