



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 26 September 2024

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

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 18 July 2024 (Pages 7 - 10)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
 - (a) The Public; (Pages 11 - 14)
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
7. Council Reports.
 - (a) Review of Political Balance - Changes to Committee Membership – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 15 - 22)
8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Revision to the Council's Senior Management Structure – Report of the Chief Executive

(Pages 23 - 32)

- (b) Proposed Amendments to the Schedule of Charges 2024/25 – Report of the Group Director of Services (Pages 33 - 36)
 - (c) Climate Change Progress – Report of the Chief Executive (Pages 37 - 56)
 - (d) Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2023/24 – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 57 - 76)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 77 - 80)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 81 - 86)
 - (g) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 87 - 90)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 91 - 98)
 - (i) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 99 - 102)
 - (j) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 103 - 108)
 - (k) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 109 - 112)
 - (l) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 113 - 118)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 119 - 122)
 - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 123 - 124)
 - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 125 - 126)
 - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 127 - 130)
 - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 131 - 134)

10. Notice of Motion

- (a) To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor Dulston and seconded by Councillor Mrs. Scott –

Winter Fuel Payment

This Council notes:

- 1. the Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as

announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves and voted for by Darlington's Labour MP Lola McEvoy;

2. the significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Darlington and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health;
3. the criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change;
4. the additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship and health and well-being;
5. 16,341 pensioners will be severely impacted by the removal of this vital support;
6. that the Labour Government failed to carry out an impact assessment and has refused to supply the information pertaining to the fictitious £20 billion blackhole; and
7. latest figures show that more than £4,000,000 in Pension Credit is unclaimed in Darlington each year.

This Council believes:

1. that the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many pensioners across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship;
2. while some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Darlington sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance, indeed the Council's own data suggests the maximum number of new Pension credit claimants could be below five hundred;
3. the decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents. It will put additional strain on the NHS, Council resources and impact the wider Darlington economy; and
4. the government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. undertake an immediate review of data held by the Council on Pensioners in the Borough and bring forward, with urgency, a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit, which in some respects, will

help access for those most in need to the Winter Fuel Payment;

2. request the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging them to reverse the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment due to the inherent risk previously outlined. Also to ask the Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty;
 3. directs the Leader of the Council to write to Lola McEvoy MP expressing this Council's significant concern at her vote in support of the removal of Winter Fuel Payment;
 4. directs the Leader of the Council to write to Matt Vickers MP expressing the Council's thanks for standing up for pensioners;
 5. encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Darlington are supported in claiming their entitlement; and
 6. instructs Officers to carry out an impact assessment of the Government's decision on Council services, partners including the NHS and the wider Darlington economy.
11. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 18 September 2024

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Coe, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Dillon, Dulston, Durham, Garner, Harker, Haszeldine, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, Kane, Keir, Laing, Lawley, Layton, Lee, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Pease, Porter, Ray, Renton, Dr. Riley, Robinson, Roche, Mrs Scott, Snedker, Storr, Toms, Tostevin, Wallis and Walters.

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

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 18 July 2024

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Coe, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Dillon, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, Kane, Keir, Lawley, Layton, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Pease, Renton, Dr. Riley, Roche, Mrs Scott, Snedker, Storr, Toms, Tostevin, Wallis and Walters.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Garner, Haszeldine, Laing, Lee, Porter, Ray and Robinson.

10 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 16 MAY 2024 AND 23 MAY 2024**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Council held on 16 May 2024 and 23 May 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meetings of this Council held on 16 May 2024 and 23 May 2024, be approved as a correct record.

11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

12 **SEALING.**

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

13 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

UK Parliamentary (General) Election 2024 – The Mayor reported on the results of the UK Parliamentary (General) Election and advised of the new MPs for the Darlington and Stockton West Constituencies, namely Lola McEvoy and Matt Vickers respectively. The Mayor also paid tribute to the two former local MPs, Peter Gibson (Darlington Constituency) and Paul Howell (Sedgefield Constituency).

Srebrenica – The Mayor informed Members that it was the 29th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that Councils and elected representatives had been encouraged to remember and acknowledge both the victims and survivors of Srebrenica.

Members observed a period of silence and reflection to honour the victims and survivors of this terrible atrocity, and the ongoing atrocities in Ukraine and Gaza.

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

(1) **THE PUBLIC;**

There were six questions, with notice, from Members of the Public, who each received an answer thereon.

(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;

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

15 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE - CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Council of the outcome of a review of the political balance of the Authority resulting from a change to the membership of a political group.

The submitted report stated that since the last review of the political balance of the Council in May 2024, there had been a change to the political make-up of the Council, following Councillor Pease's resignation from the Conservative Group to sit as an Independent Member. It was highlighted that political groups are allocated seats on the committees in accordance with political balance rules, which were outlined within the submitted report.

Members were advised that as a result of the change to the political balance, the Council was required to review the allocation of seats to political groups.

RESOLVED – (a) That the change to the political balance of the Council be noted.

(b) That the allocation of seats, as set out in Paragraph 14 of the submitted report be approved.

(c) That the re-allocation of two additional seats to an Independent Member (one seat on the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Conservative Group) and one seat on the Members Standards Hearing Committee (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Conservative Group)) be agreed.

REASON - To reflect the changed political balance of the Council and to comply with legislation.

16 DARLINGTON COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2027

The Chief Officer's Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to present the outcome of the public consultation and a revised Council Plan for approval.

The submitted report stated that on 5 March 2024, Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on a draft Council Plan, and that the consultation ran from 6 March to 25 April 2024. It was highlighted that social media promotion reached over 20,000 people, an article on the consultation was included in the One Darlington magazine, Members were encouraged to promote the consultation within their wards, and all five scrutiny committees had considered

and supported the draft Council Plan.

Members were informed that 315 responses to the survey were received, and a summary report of the survey analysis was appended to the submitted report. A number of changes to the initial draft plan were outlined in the submitted report.

The submitted report stated that the draft plan was presented to Cabinet on 16 July 2024, and the Council Plan was recommended for referral to Council for consideration and adoption.

RESOLVED – (a) That the consultation be noted.

(b) That the revised Council Plan 2024-27 be approved.

REASONS - The Council Plan is the strategic document that sets out the Council's long term ambitions for Darlington and shorter-term priorities and actions. Approval of the plan is needed to provide guidance to the organisation, and clarity for the public and our partners on the Council's strategic priorities.

17 CABINET REPORTS.

The Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio during the previous cycle of meetings. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolios.

18 CABINET URGENT DECISIONS

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

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

REASON – To comply with the Council's Constitution.

19 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

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

20 MOTIONS OF NOTICE

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

The Motion was withdrawn by Councillor Snedker at the meeting.

21 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES,

SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES.

Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25 that:

- (a) That Councillor Cossins replace Councillor Haszeldine on the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee;
- (b) That Councillor Cossins replace Councillor Layton on the Planning Applications Committee;
- (c) That Councillor Cossins replace Councillor Layton on the Council Decision Making and Scrutiny Process Working Group; and
- (d) That Councillor Coe replace Councillor Allen on the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Questions submitted on Notice for the Ordinary Meeting of the Council – Thursday, 26 September 2024

Question No.	Questioner	Respondent	Question
1.	Elizabeth HODGSON	Councillor HARKER	“Why is the Skerningham Development being decided by delegated officers and not to the Cabinet and Full Council Members?”
2.	Michael WALKER	Councillor Dr. RILEY	<p>'On the 10th September, Darlington's Labour MP voted to ensure many pensioners lose their winter fuel allowance, an act the Labour MP, Jon Tricket described "as a matter of life and death" and a policy Labour's own research claimed could kill 4,000 pensioners. This cruel policy will harm 16,341 pensioners in Darlington</p> <p>At the 2023 local election, you and your fellow candidates promised to "cut the cost of living" and in your local manifesto, entitled "Build a Better Darlington: Fairer, Safer, Greener" the introduction by Cllr Harker states; "Our priorities reflect the issues that residents are talking about: the cost of living crisis, health, community safety, transport and housing." Cllr Harker goes on to state; "We want to deliver the best local services. Supporting residents who need the most help. Providing opportunities for all." The first promise in the manifesto was "Ensure no one needs to go cold next winter by creating Warm Hubs across the Borough"</p> <p>During July's General Election, the Labour Leader, Sir Keir Starmer told an emotional story about an 84-year old woman. He said "she had worked all her life obviously now a pensioner and she told me that she doesn't get out of bed till midday because she didn't want to turn the heating on. That's an awful position to put a pensioner in." Furthermore, the Labour chancellor, Rachel Reeves tweeted during the election campaign; "I'll never forget a woman in Leeds West I spoke to, who had purple fingers because her pension wasn't enough to pay for the heating." And a party political broadcast from the Labour party featured Gary, a pensioner who said "I have lived in this house all my life, and I have never struggled so much to keep this house warm. I got my pension coming in, and I just can't manage. I've just been heating this one room. I just can't afford to heat anywhere else."</p> <p>I have received numerous emails from residents absolutely terrified that they won't be able to survive this winter because of your party's decision to get rid of their winter fuel allowance.</p>

			Do you still stand by your local election promise that you will "ensure no one needs to go cold this winter" and can you tell me what financial support the council will provide for the elderly across the town who will have to choose between "heating and eating" this winter due to Labour's cruel policy to remove the winter fuel allowance lifeline?'
3.	Alan MACNAB	Councillor McEWAN	<p>'The Skerningham development will profoundly affect the lives and well-being of residents in north and north east Darlington and residents who live in the Skerningham and Ketton countryside who must be satisfied that their views and concerns have been respected and taken into consideration. There is deep opposition to the decision on the Skerningham Master Plan being taken by officers and the view is that on such an important issue the decision must be taken by Cabinet and Full Council.</p> <p>Will Councillor McEwan in the spirit of open government and as the listening Council please refer the Master Plan to Cabinet and Council for a decision? If not, why not?</p> <p>Darlington Borough Council own land in Skerningham. If the Council is intending to sell this land for development will he please assure me that the provisions of Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 will be fully complied with and the supplementary Section 111 of the same Act will not be used?</p> <p>Section 123(2A) states that intended sale of public land must be advertised in a local newspaper for two consecutive weeks and the Council must consider any objections that are made before taking a decision to proceed.'</p>
4.	Angela ALLAN	Councillor Dr. RILEY	<p>"This is not the statement I wanted to give today and these are not the decisions I wanted to make. But they are the right decisions in difficult circumstances. Around £1.5Bn will be saved per year by targeting the Winter Fuel Payments.</p> <p>This was Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves' announcement on 29th July 2024 after only 25 days in government.</p> <p>On the 25th March 2014, over ten years ago in a parliamentary debate the same Rachel Reeves made the following statement</p> <p>"We are the party who have said that we will cut the winter fuel allowance for the richest pensioners and</p>

			<p>means-test that benefit to save money,” (source Hansard 25th March 2014)</p> <p>It seems the means testing of the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA) has been on the agenda for over ten years by Rachel Reeves. This fact was omitted from the Labour Party manifesto prior to the 2024 General Election. It is therefore not surprising that Labour ministers also failed to publish an impact statement prior to the vote on the WFA. Perhaps the newly elected Labour MP for Darlington could have requested this prior to her voting in favour of condemning Darlington pensioners to a miserable and cold winter.</p> <p>It is a shameful policy and creates fear and anxiety amongst some of the most vulnerable within our society. It would seem the very people that should be offering protection are leading the attack. There is no sliding scale on the entitlement to WFA. If your pension income is £218.15 you qualify if it is £219 you don't.</p> <p>The very first pledge in Darlington Labour's 2023 local manifesto promised that "Labour will ensure no one needs to go cold next winter by creating Warm Hubs across the Borough".</p> <p>I wrote to the Leader of the Council recently on this subject as there will be extra demand for warm hubs this year owing to Labour Party policy to means test the winter fuel allowance. I also asked whether the warm hubs would be extended to the villages. The response relating to the warm hubs was that there were three warm hubs in the town centre.</p> <p>Can the Council confirm their commitment that no one will “go cold” this winter and outline their plan to keep all pensioners in Darlington and the villages warm in three warm hubs?”</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>David CLARK</p>	<p>Councillor McEWAN</p>	<p>Regarding Skerningham garden village phase 1 hybrid full planning application.</p> <p>William Fieldhouse the government planning inspector who examined the draft local plan.</p> <p>In his final report which includes his recommendations to allow the local plan to be classed as sound in principle and be allowed to be adopted stated:</p> <p>'A comprehensive master plan would then be prepared by the developers, with community engagement, in the context of the Council's design code. Any planning applications would be required to adhere to the masterplan</p>

		<p>and design code.'</p> <p>Our adopted local plan on page 58 states:</p> <p>'A comprehensive master plan including an infrastructure phasing plan shall be prepared in consultation with the community PRIOR to the submission of any planning application relating to this site'</p> <p>In the Skerningham design code it states :</p> <p>The finalised comprehensive master plan including infrastructure phasing plan is to be prepared by the applicant(s) in consultation with the community and is to be agreed with the Council in advance of any planning application being submitted for the Skerningham allocation site, either as a whole or in part.</p> <p>The developer of the site has decided not to adhere to these recommendations/ requirements and submit their hybrid planning application before the public consultation on the masterplan has concluded and the masterplan has been agreed by the council .</p> <p>Officially Local Planning Authorities do not have to validate and accept a Hybrid planning application's as are not defined in statute and as such LPA's can use their discretion whether to accept such an application</p> <p>In our case this should not have happened, until the public had access to the revised masterplan to allow them to make properly informed comments about the developers application against their revised masterplan.</p> <p>So my question is:-</p> <p>Members of the public have so far not been given access to the amended master plan but are being asked to submit their comments without the full facts on this full planning application within a deadline that has now expired.</p> <p>Why is this and will the deadline be extended or better still ,restarted once the revised master plan is in the public domain and they have been given the time to read through it to then check to see whether the masterplan adheres to both the adopted local plan and Skerningham design code, If not, why not?</p>
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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE – CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader

Responsible Director -
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Council of the outcome of a review to the political balance of the Authority resulting from a change to the membership of a political group.

Summary

2. Since the last review of the political balance of the Council in July 2024 there has been a change to the political make-up of the Council, following Councillor Coe's resignation from the Liberal Democrats Group to sit as an Independent Member.
3. Political Groups are allocated seats on the committees in accordance with political balance rules, which are set out in the report.
4. As a result of the change to the political balance the Council is now required to review the allocation of seats to political groups.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Council :-
 - (a) Notes the change to the political balance of the Council.
 - (b) Agrees to the re-allocation of three additional seats to an Independent Members:
 - (i) One seat on the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Coe) (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Liberal Democrats Group).
 - (ii) One seat on the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Coe) (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Liberal Democrats Group).
 - (ii) One seat on the Climate Change Working Group (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Liberal Democrats Group).

Reason

6. To reflect the changed political balance of the Council and to comply with legislation.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

Council Report, 18 July 2024 – Review of Political Balance

Shirley Wright Extension 5998

Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in the work of those Committees
Addressing inequalities	The appointment of Councillors, will enable any inequality issues to be considered through the involvement of Councillors in the work of those Committees
Tackling Climate Change	The appointment of Councillors will enable any carbon impact issues to be considered through the involvement of Councillors in the work of those Committees
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council’s Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	The appointment of Councillors to the various Committees will enable the health and well-being of the people of the Borough to be highlighted through the work, policies and decisions of those Committees
S17 Crime and Disorder	The report contributes to the prevention of crime and disorder, in a number of ways, through the involvement of Councillors in the work of those Committees.
Wards Affected	This report does not immediately affect any wards within the Borough.
Groups Affected	This report does not have any direct impact on the various community groups, however, the work of the Committee may have an affect on those groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	The appointment of Councillors will enable any Budget and Policy Framework issues to be considered when making decisions.
Key Decision	This is a non-Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The Council must allocate seats on committees to political groups in accordance with political balance rules. The rules for the allocation of seats are set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.
8. Section 15(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out the principles as follows :-
 - (a) not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority in full council;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority; and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

Political Balance

9. The Committees to which the political balance rules apply are sometimes referred to as Counting Committees. The process for allocation is to count up the aggregate number of seats across all the counting committees and then work out then overall number of seats to be allocated to particular groups according to their strength and also to Independent Members. Individual Committees are then considered by overall size and the number of seats is calculated by reference to the percentage representation individual groups/independent Members. Seats are then allocated to individual committees.
10. Allocating seats in a proportionate way on individual committee to reflect the group/political distribution of members as a whole is more problematic the smaller committees become in size but also by the greater number of differing groups. This will mean that it may not be possible to reflect the political balance on every committee, particularly for members of smaller groups, but balance will be sought as far as is reasonably practicable.

11. In respect of this Council, the number of Counting seats available is 104 as follows :-

Table 1

Counting Committees	Seats
Human Resources Committee	11
Members Standards Hearing Committee	5
Audit Committee	6
LEA Governors Committee	4
Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	10
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	10
Adults Scrutiny Committee	10
Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	10
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	10
Planning Committee	14
Licensing Committee	14
TOTAL	104

12. Using 104 as the total number of seats across the counting committees and, following the resignation of Councillor Coe as a member of the Liberal Democrats Group, the total number of seats each Group is entitled to is shown in the table below.

Table 2

GROUP	NO. OF MEMBERS	%	% OF SEATS	SEATS ALLOCATED (ROUNDED)
Conservatives	13	26	27.04	27
Labour	24	48	49.92	50
Green	7	14	14.56	15
Liberal Democrats	2	4	4.16	4
Independent (non-aligned)	4	8	8.32	8

13. The 104 seats are currently (as agreed by Annual Council in May 2024, and as amended following July 2024 changes) allocated as follows :-

Table 3

COMMITTEE	LAB	CON	GREENS	LIB DEM	IND (Non-aligned)	TOTAL
Human Resources Committee	5	3	1	1	1	11
Members Standards Hearing Committee	2	1	1		1	5
Audit Committee	3	2	1			6
LEA Governors Committee	2	1	1			4
Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	1		10
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	5	2	1	1	1	10
Adults Scrutiny Committee	5	2	2		1	10
Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	1		10
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	5	2	2		1	10
Planning Committee	7	4	2	1		14
Licensing Committee	6	4	2	1	1	14
TOTAL	50	27	15	6	6	104

Revised Composition

14. As Members will see from table 2 and 3 above, that the Liberal Democrats Group are currently overrepresented by two seats and these two seats need to be re-allocated to an Independent Member to ensure the overall political balance of the Council is maintained.

Review

15. In reviewing the political make up of Committees, it is suggested that the two Independent seats should be allocated as follows:
- (a) One on the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee, and
 - (b) One on the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
16. In both cases the Liberal Democrats Group will have one seat less on each of these committees.
17. The revised table of committees is as follows:

Table 4

COMMITTEE	LAB	CON	GREENS	LIB DEM	IND (Non-aligned)	TOTAL
Human Resources Committee	5	3	1	1	1	11
Members Standards Hearing Committee	2	1	1		1	5
Audit Committee	3	2	1			6
LEA Governors Committee	2	1	1			4
Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	0	1	10
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	5	2	1	1	1	10
Adults Scrutiny Committee	5	2	2		1	10
Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	0	1	10
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	5	2	2		1	10
Planning Committee	7	4	2	1		14
Licensing Committee	6	4	2	1	1	14
TOTAL	50	27	15	4	8	104

Working Groups

18. The Council has established two Working Groups, the Climate Change Working Group and the Council Decision-Making and Scrutiny Working Group and whilst these are not formal Committees, the terms of reference for these groups do require the allocation of seats to be calculated in accordance with the political balance calculation.
19. Table 4 sets out the current political balance of these Working Groups.

Table 4

GROUP NAME	NO OF SEATS	LAB	CONS	GREENS	LIB DEMS	IND (NON-ALIGNED)
Climate Change Working Group	5	2	1	1	1	0
Council Decision Making and the Scrutiny Process	10	5	3	1	1	0

20. Having reviewed the political balance on the Working Groups – in totality (15 seats) the Liberal Democrats should lose one seat and a seat reallocated to an Independent member. The suggestion is that on the Climate Change Working Group that the Liberal Democrats seat is re allocated to an Independent member.

Outcome of Consultation

21. No formal consultation has taken place on the report other than with the relevant Group Leaders

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

REVISION TO THE COUNCIL'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

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

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present a revised Senior Management Structure for the Council and to seek approval to advertise for a new Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection post.

Summary

2. The report presents a revised senior structure which has been developed with input from Cabinet and responds to the recently announced retirement of the Chief Executive Officer and forthcoming planned retirements of the Assistant Director of Community Services, and the Assistant Director of Economic Growth.
3. The proposal is to replace the retiring Chief Executive (CEX), to replace the retiring Assistant Director of Community Services, with an Assistant Director for Environmental Services and Community Safety and to create the role of Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection following deletion of the Assistant Director Economy role. All three posts will be advertised and follow the normal Council approval process. The revised structure aligns to the Council's priorities.
4. It is proposed that the post of Assistant Director (AD) of Economy is to be redesignated Executive Director. Functions include current activity on Economic Growth, and Civil Contingencies along with additional Public Protection functions that had temporarily moved following an interim restructure of Community Safety in July 2024. Those additional functions being Licensing, Trading Standards, and Private Sector Housing. This redesignation reflects that the proposed CEX does not manage the economic portfolio.
5. For clarity with partners and to assist our external engagement work it is proposed that the Group Director titles are amended - for Operations be redesignated as Executive Director – Resources and Governance, for Services redesignated Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services, and for People redesignated Executive Director of People.

6. Whilst the changes do incur additional cost, it is felt the structure is right to move the Council forward at this juncture.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Council notes that on 10 September 2024, Cabinet approved the Senior Management Restructure set out in **Appendix A** with an implementation date of Spring 2025, subject to the views of Council on 7(b).
 - (b) Council approve the new post of Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection.
 - (c) The Assistant Director Law and Governance is delegated to make any consequential changes to the Constitution that are needed.

Reason

8. The recommendations are supported to amend the structure.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive Officer

Background Papers

September 2024 Cabinet Report- Revision of the Council's Senior Management Structure

Ian Williams
IW/TAB

Council Plan	Senior Structure to help deliver Plan
Addressing Inequalities	Increased focus from Senior Team
Tackling Climate Change	No direct impact as a result of this report
Efficient and Effective Use of resources	The structure aims to increase efficiency
Health and Wellbeing	No direct impact as a result of this report
S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impact as a result of this report
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally
Budget and Policy Framework	The recommendations can be accommodated within the existing MTFP
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive 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

9. The Council's existing Senior Management Structure was approved by Council in January 2021. Recently the CEX has announced his intended retirement for the spring of 2025 and Members should note the planned retirement of two Assistant Directors - Community Services and Economy. Therefore, the opportunity has been taken to work with Cabinet to review the structure acknowledging Cabinet's priorities for the future.
10. The existing structure is set out at **Appendix B** and Members will see this structure is based around four groups, with one of the Groups led by the CEX:-
 - (a) Head of Paid Service & Economic Growth – Led by the existing CEX.
 - (b) Operations – Led by the Group Director.
 - (c) People – Led by the Group Director.
 - (d) Services – Led by the Group Director.
11. The structure was established following the deletion of the Managing Director role and importantly created a Chief Executive post that combined the Head of Paid Service role with the Economy role. The CEX also leads on Partnerships and Civil Contingencies. All of the Director roles carry significant portfolio responsibility not often seen in other Local Authority (LA) structures. To illustrate:-
 - (a) Operations includes Finance, Law & Governance, Council Housing and Homelessness, Policy, Performance, , Human Resources, ICT and Systems, Communications and Revenues & Benefits
 - (b) People include social care for Children and Adults, Education and Public Health
 - (c) Services includes Capital Projects, Environmental Services, Highways & Transport, Leisure, Culture, Community Safety, Corporate Landlord and Building Services.
12. Senior Statutory roles within the structure are allocated as below :-
 - (a) Head of Paid Service – CEX
 - (b) Monitoring Officer – Assistant Director Law & Governance
 - (c) Chief Financial Officer – Group Director (Operations)
 - (d) Statutory Director of Children Services and Statutory Director of Adults Services – Group Director (People)
 - (e) Director of Public Health
13. It is widely acknowledged by the Local Government Association and amongst LA network that Darlington Council has a very lean and lower cost senior management structure, having reduced Senior Management costs by circa £2.4m per annum in the last two restructures. Attracting new talent to join the Council is required as set out in this proposal but equally the Council needs to nurture and retaining talent across all levels of

the Council. Appropriate succession is always a key component of having a stable and effective wider management team going forward.

14. Further senior management reduction is not recommended, and the review of the existing structure has not therefore sought to deliver savings. It is believed that any further reductions would seriously undermine the ability to manage and deliver for the Council, at a time when demand and pressures have been increasing, and when Government has renewed expectation of delivery. The restructure has therefore concentrated on replacing retirees, provide senior capacity in priority areas, and improving service alignment. Importantly it does free up some capacity at a senior level to drive the MTFP, further efficiencies, new service delivery and more in-depth partnership working.
15. Generally across the board, our salary levels tend to be benchmarked in the lower quartile of equivalents but in the round this needs to be considered along with the positive culture and environment at the Council. This enables us to perform well, delivering good outcomes with the resources at our disposal and has helped us to retain staff at all levels. Attracting the right talent in the competitive marketplace is vital as is getting the balance of new recruitment to seamlessly integrate alongside the retention of our talented people. The embedding and further development of the right culture in the organisation is a key role of the incoming CEX and Executive Team.
16. The Council's recently agreed Council Plan highlights a strong focus on Partnerships and Economic Growth. The efficient use of resources and increasing focus on collaboration to address inequality are the key aspects addressed in the proposed restructure.
17. Set out in the next section of the report is the proposed structure.

Proposed Structure

18. The structure has been developed with Cabinet input and takes into account that Council wants to foster increased collaboration and strengthened partnership working coupled with strong and sustainable economic growth. It is felt that recruitment for a CEX, who will be the Head of Paid Service without a specific portfolio, will give the Council the best opportunity to recruit at the calibre required and expands the field and breadth of potential candidates, but importantly also provides some CEX capacity to concentrate on increasing partnership working to reduce inequality and to support the Council's journey on balancing the MTFP. This approach will enable the postholder to take a strategic lead on ensuring the Council priorities permeate throughout the Council and its partners. The CEX role will also assume the role of Returning Officer and will be the designated Electoral Registration Officer.
19. With the retirement of the existing Assistant Director of Economy, the proposal is to replace with an Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection. This provides Director level capacity to continue Darlington's growth journey and acknowledges that the new CEX post may not necessarily have a regeneration background. It is proposed the CEX will not be the designated lead for the Economic Growth portfolio. It is also felt that recruiting someone at Director level to work on economy is appropriate given the above, and importantly that liaising with Tees Valley Combined Authority and Government over future growth strategy for the Tees Valley will play an increasing part in both Darlington and the Government's growth agenda.

20. The existing Assistant Director – Community Services role has responsibility for Environmental Services, Leisure and Culture which has come together based on the experience of the existing postholder, however it is unlikely that there would be a successful recruitment campaign for this heavy mix of areas. In order to have the best opportunity to recruit, the post to be advertised will be Assistant Director – Environmental Services & Community Safety with the Head of Culture and Head of Leisure reporting into the Executive Director.
21. It is also proposed that job titles are amended with the Group Director for Operations be redesignated Executive Director – Resources and Governance and the Group Director for Services be redesignated Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services, and Group Director of People be redesignated Executive Director -People.
22. The revised structure of Joint National Committee Chief Officer roles is set out at Appendix A with the structure showing all direct reportees to Executive Directors at **Appendix C**.

Human Resource Implications

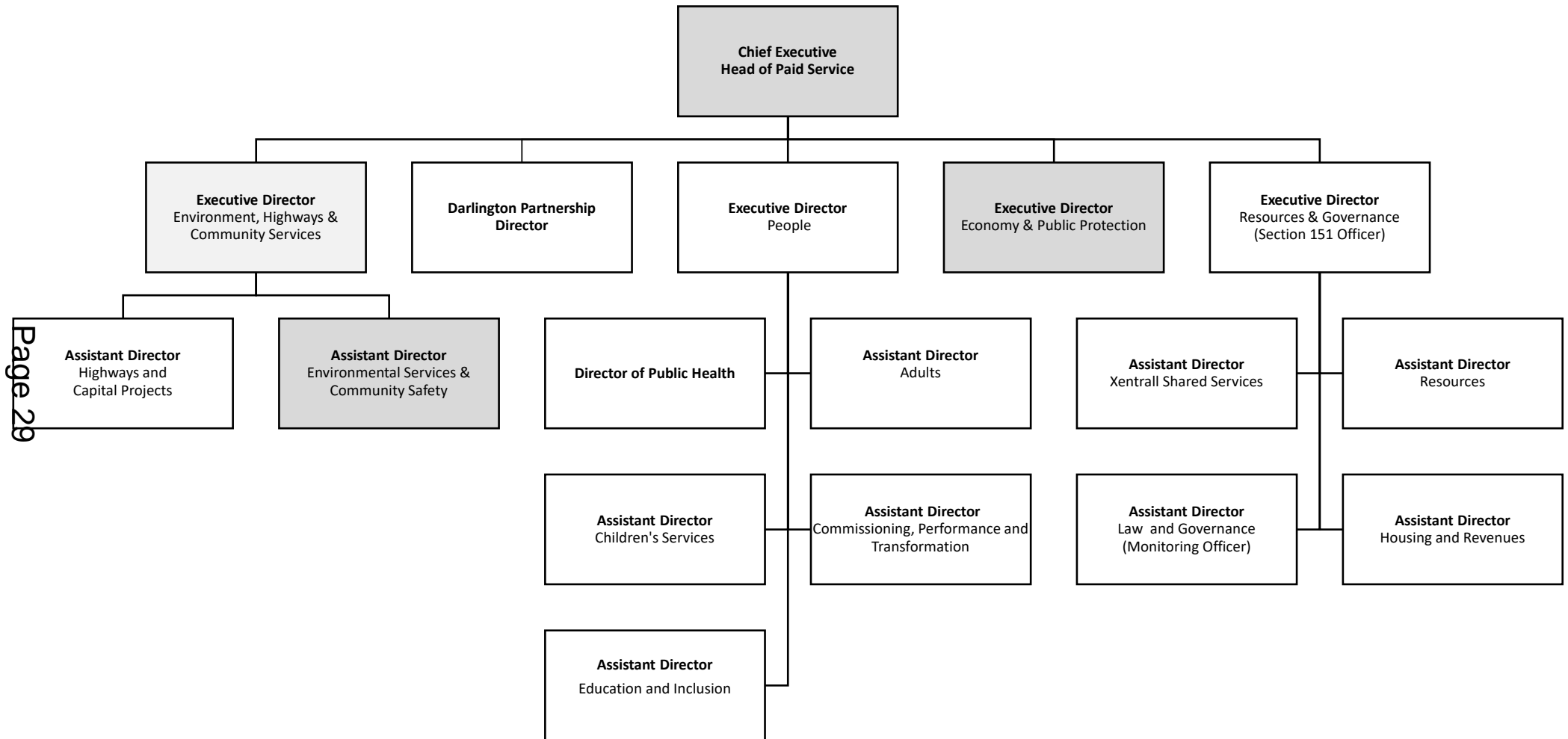
23. It is proposed that adverts go out for the CEX, the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection and the Assistant Director of Environmental Services and Community Safety roles for a start in the Spring of 2025.
24. The proposals set out in this report have been discussed with the Chief Officers Executive and the Chief Officers Board who are supportive of the proposal.
25. There is a requirement in the constitution that Council will approve the advertising of a new post where the salary package exceeds £100k. This applies to the proposed post of Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection. Council is asked to approve the recruitment to this role.

Financial Implications

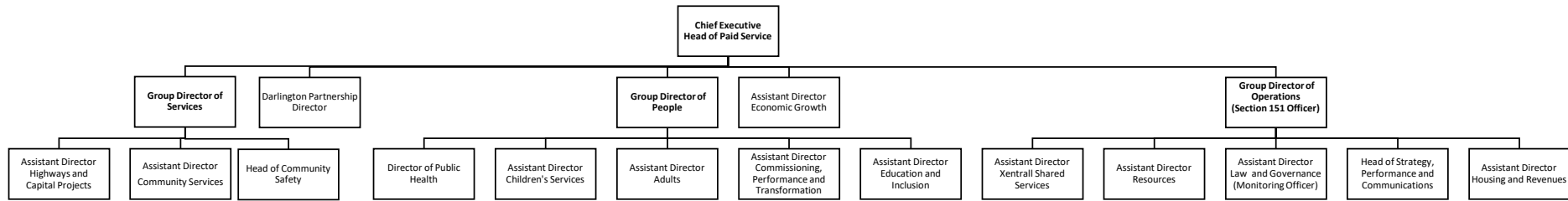
26. The Executive Director role is proposed at Director 1 level which has an incremental progression banding based on satisfactory performance. The table below show the annual cost over the next four years. The cost assume the post holder joins the Local Government Pension Scheme, there would be a reduced cost if this wasn't the case.
27. At the maximum of the grade the additional cost for this proposal is £33,739. An average cost of £23,390 pa over the period.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	£	£	£	£
AD Economic Growth - current salary	112,370	112,370	112,370	112,370
Executive Director Economy and Public Protection	122,247	127,478	132,704	137,930
Sub total	9,877	15,108	20,334	25,560
plus NIC and Pension contributions	3,161	4,835	6,507	8,179
Total increase	13,038	19,943	26,841	33,739

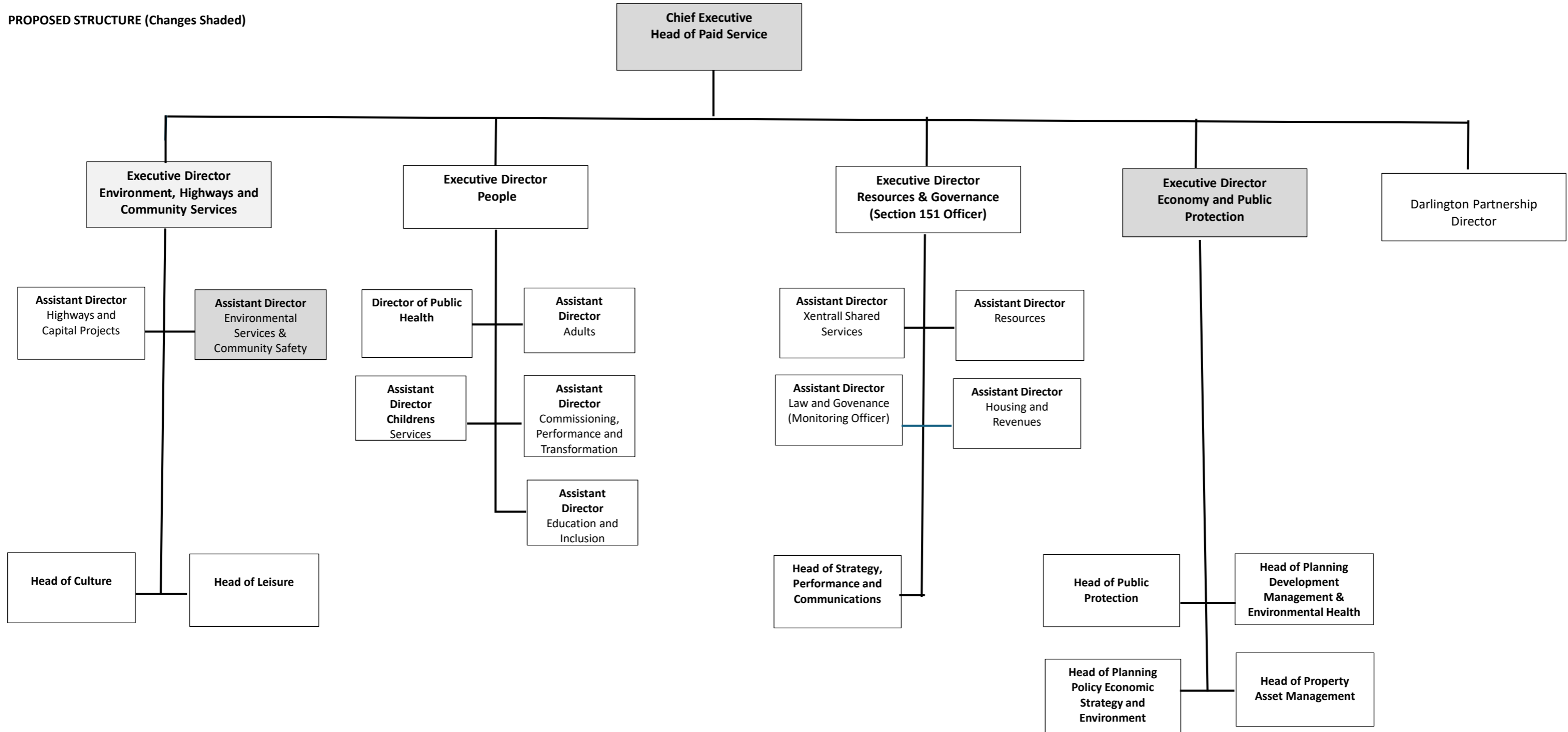
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PROPOSED STRUCTURE (Changes Shaded)



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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEDULE OF CHARGES 2024/25

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

**Responsible Director –
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider a proposed amendment to the Schedule of Charges 2024/25 as agreed at the meeting of Cabinet on 10 September 2024.

Summary

2. Reviews have been undertaken in relation to the fees and charges that are associated with Highway Agreement charges between the Council and developers.
3. A number of amendments are proposed to the Schedule of Charges and these are set out in **Appendix 1**. The rationale and reasons for the proposed changes are outlined in the main report. The increases proposed are based on the cost of providing the services and take account of inflation and market conditions and are anticipated to support the provision of the services.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Council agrees the changes to the Schedule of Charges as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Reason

5. The recommendation supports the financial costs of providing the services.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Dave Winstanley: Extension 6618

Council Plan	Highway Agreements with developers contribute to the Local Environment priority of ensuring development provides a well-connected, clean and sustainable Borough.
Addressing inequalities	There are no implications.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The reviews undertaken seek to consider best value principles and the Council Plan principle of efficient and effective use of monies by ensuring the financial cost of providing the services are supported by the appropriate level of charges.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no implications.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications.
Wards Affected	All Wards.
Groups Affected	Developers undertaking developments and projects within the Borough.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report proposes changes to the Schedule of Charges approved within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
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

Highway Agreement Charges

6. When new houses are built the developer will enter into agreements with the Council either to amend the existing highway arrangements (by a Section 278 Agreement) or enter into an agreement that the Council adopt highways once they are built to an agreed standard and arrangement (a Section 38 agreement).
7. The Council presently charges a fee of 6% of the estimated cost of the work to review and inspect Section 38 and Section 278 agreements with developers.
8. The increase in house building across the Borough has resulted in more schemes being put forward for review, inspection and ultimate adoption by the Council, with some that are larger and more complex than normal.
9. The roles involved in reviewing designs and inspecting the works are difficult to recruit and agency support and specialist advice on some of the more complex schemes has been required, which has increased the costs of this service.

10. The 6% rate has not changed for numerous years and in that time staff salary costs have also increased, more significantly in recent years with inflation. Staff and specialist advice cost increases for our work necessitated the need to review the costs and charges for these services.
11. A review has been undertaken of the market rates across a number of local authorities and some have already increased rates to address the change in market conditions, and some are reviewing the current charges. Darlington is presently at the lower end of the charging range when compared across the region as outlined in the table below. This report seeks to increase the charge from 6% to 8% for both Section 278 agreements and Section 38 Agreements to reflect market conditions and support the costs of providing the services.

	Section 278 Agreement	Section 38 Agreement
Northumberland	10%	7.50%
Sunderland	10%	7.50%
Gateshead	9%	9%
Redcar	8%	8%
Middlesbrough	8%	8%
Stockton	8%	At cost
Durham	8%	8%
North Tyneside	7.50%	7.50%
Newcastle	7.50%	7.50%
Hartlepool	6%	6%
Darlington	6%	6%

Financial Implications

12. The proposed fees and charges of the Council are set out in Appendix 1. The increases proposed are based on the cost of providing the services and take account of inflation and market conditions. Overall, the proposed increases are anticipated to support the provision of the services.

Legal Implications

13. The Schedule of Charges requires approval by Council. The highway legal agreements will need to be amended to reflect the new charges if approved.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULE OF CHARGES 2024/25				
Description	Type	Existing Charge £	New Charge £	Financial Effect £
Highways				
Section 278 Highway Works Agreement	L	6% of estimated works cost plus legal fees if delivered by developer.	8% of estimated works cost plus any relevant fees.	It is difficult to predict the financial impact given the projects and developments originate from the private sector on a sporadic basis. However, the increased percentage will support the increased costs of providing the service to developers.
Section 38 Road Adoption Agreement	L	6% of estimated works cost plus legal fees if delivered by developer	8% of estimated works cost plus any relevant fees.	

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

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

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. Following Council elections in 2023, the Climate Emergency Declaration was re-affirmed, and the Council's carbon neutral target was brought forward to 2040. Further aims to increase engagement with residents and businesses were included with the intention of reducing wider borough emissions.
3. The Council's emission reduction trajectory has been amended to 40% reduction every five years. Council emissions for 2023/24 were 6,190 tonnes/CO₂. The emissions we report are made up of the energy use in council buildings; business mileage; fleet emissions, and streetlighting and signs. We do not currently measure emissions from our supply chain or from waste.
4. Our carbon emissions for 2023/24 have reduced by almost 53% compared to our baseline emissions of 2010/11.
5. In 2023, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer was invited to take part in a project to develop guidance for local authorities to report to Defra on adaptation progress. We are taking part in a subsequent trial for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power.
6. Of the 109 actions reporting at the end of 2023/24, 91 are on track and 5 have been completed (see Appendix A)

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Council acknowledges the report.

Reason

8. The recommendation is supported by the increasing public pressure to act on climate change. We run the risk of significant damage to our reputation if we do not deliver on our stated commitment to dealing with the Council’s contribution to climate change.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in producing this report.

Margaret Enstone : Extension 6229

Council Plan	<p>This report reflects the Council Plan Core Principle in Tackling Climate Change.</p> <p>In turn, actions that we take for climate change impact on our Council priorities. For example, as we improve our council stock, we improve the quality of life for our residents, leading to better health outcomes, which in turns means fewer days of school (or work), improved educational attainment and better work opportunities.</p>
Addressing inequalities	Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. This report demonstrates how we are addressing our own carbon emissions and resilience, giving us the ability to demonstrate through good practice what other people can do themselves
Tackling Climate Change	The Council has recognised the need to consider the carbon impact of the decisions it makes. This report is a progress report of our journey to reducing our carbon emissions and adapting our services to the unavoidable effects of climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Our approach to reducing emissions will mean that resources are used more efficiently.
Health and Wellbeing	According to the WHO, climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. This report is a progress report of our journey to becoming a carbon neutral council.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no expected impact on Crime and Disorder in Darlington.
Wards Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular ward.
Groups Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No

Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers
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MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

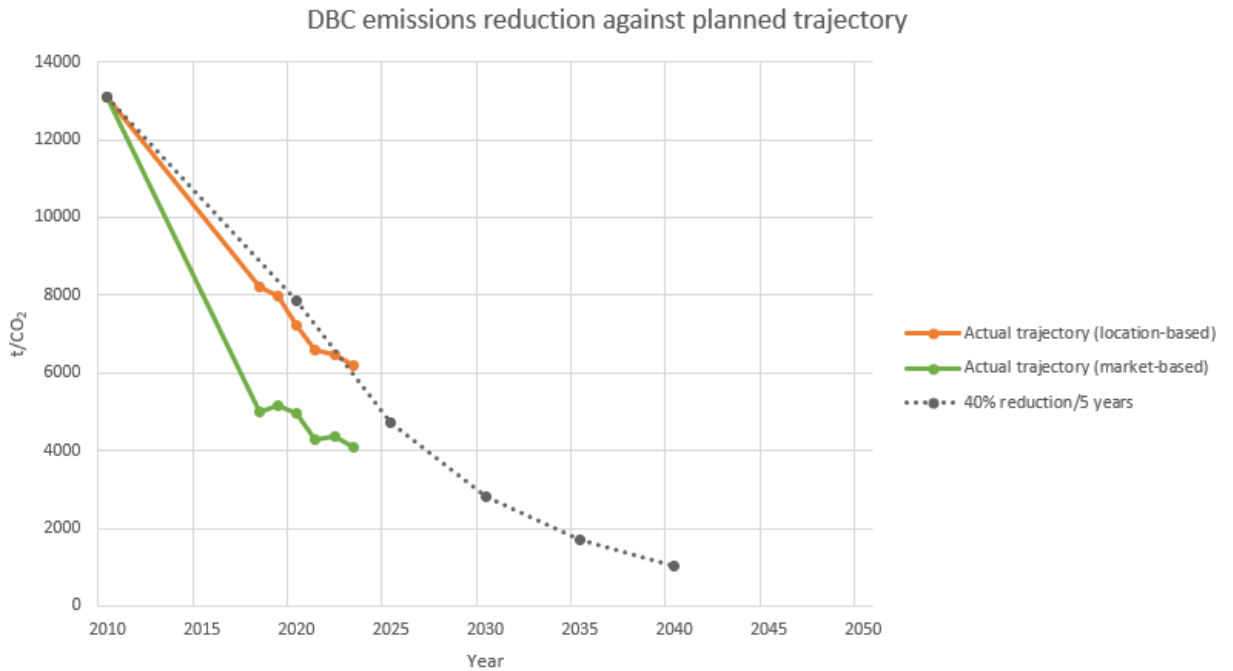
9. Following Council elections in 2023, the Climate Emergency Declaration was re-affirmed, and the Council’s carbon neutral target was brought forward to 2040. Further aims to increase engagement with residents and businesses were included with the intention of reducing wider borough emissions. A further commitment to monitor the Council’s supply chain emissions was also added.
10. A new Climate Change Officer was recruited and joined the Council in January 2024. His focus is internal, working with teams to develop new carbon reduction projects and guiding existing actions in the climate change action plan to fruition.
11. The Council’s emission reduction trajectory has been amended to 40% reduction every five years. This trajectory will leave approximately 1000 tonnes of emissions to be offset. An offset strategy will be presented to Cabinet in October.
12. Emissions to date:

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

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

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

14. Trajectory:

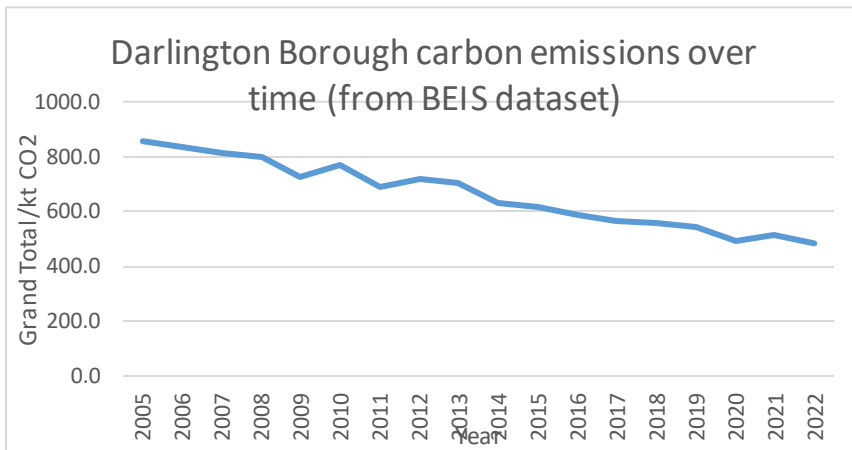


15. We report emissions as recommended by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and show both location-based emissions, which use the average grid emissions that reflect the energy that we are using and market-based emissions, which take into account the zero carbon tariff that we have chosen. The emissions we report are made up of the energy use in council buildings (not including council homes as we do not control how residents use the energy); business mileage; fleet emissions, and streetlighting and signs.
16. Reporting emissions from our supply chain is optional under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and we do not currently measure these emissions. However, we have identified the suppliers within the highest carbon intensive industries and will be contacting them to find out what actions they are already taking to reduce their emissions.
17. Our carbon emissions for 2023/24 have gone down by almost 53% compared to our baseline emissions of 2010/11. Our emissions have lowered by 4% in 2023/24 from 2022/23.
18. Electricity consumption of streetlights has gone down by approximately 5%, saving 94,197 kWh and electricity consumption of council’s corporate estate has lowered by approximately 4%, saving 289,843 kWh in 2023/24 as compared to 2022/23.
19. In past years, we have benefitted from a favourable conversion factor, converting kWh of electricity to carbon emissions. However, 2023/24 saw a greater proportion of natural gas used to generate electricity, so our electricity emissions (using the average grid emissions) are higher than last year.
20. There has been a 10% decline in our emissions from Business Travel. This is mainly due to an ongoing trial of HVO in some of our corporate fleet which has reduced the diesel consumption in this year, hence lowering the carbon emissions.

- 21. A 6% decrease in the carbon emissions from gas consumption in the corporate estate has been observed. This may be due to the pool closure at the Dolphin Centre for maintenance work, so we will watch to see if this is a temporary drop.
- 22. In 2023, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer was invited to take part in a project to develop guidance for local authorities to report to Defra on adaptation progress. This work has culminated in a trial for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act’s Adaptation Reporting Power.
- 23. The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer is working with teams to complete the required risk assessment, against risks identified by the Climate Change Committee. This risk assessment and report must be submitted to Defra by December 2024.

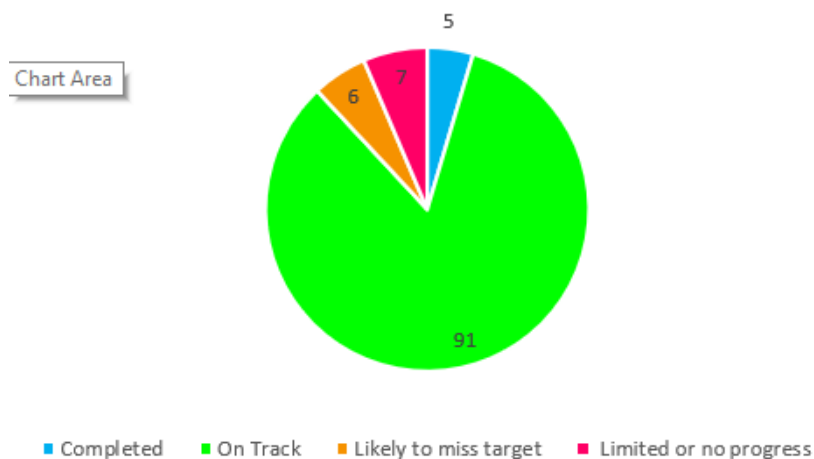
Borough wide emissions

- 24. We monitor Borough emissions using government published figures. These are two-years in arrears, so the latest data relates to 2022. These show that Darlington is on a par with both the north-east average and the England average.



Climate change action plan

25. The Climate Change Officer has collated information on progress of actions in the climate change action plan.
26. At March 2024, 91 actions were on track, with five completed (see Appendix A). Thirteen actions were either likely to miss the target or have no progress. This is mostly due to capacity issues, with actions for the Dolphin Centre waiting on external assessment.



27. Highlights include:

- (a) A trial project using hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) to replace diesel in six of our refuse vehicles. HVO is a direct replacement for diesel, requiring no adjustments to vehicles, but producing significantly lower CO₂ emissions. In 2023/24, 70,640 litres of HVO fuel were purchased, producing carbon emissions of 3 tonnes. If we had used diesel in these trucks, the emissions would have been 175 tonnes.
- (b) Around £3.3m of funding received across schemes for retrofit projects on council homes. Funding was matched with approximately £2.4m from the Housing Revenue Account. Further funding has been obtained through the Tees Valley Combined Authority to work with private landlords. Declarations have been provided for the government scheme ECO4FLEX for 178 properties.
- (c) Measures include:
- (i) Loft Insulation
 - (ii) Double Glazing
 - (iii) External Wall Insulation
 - (iv) Solar PV
 - (v) Cavity Wall Insulation
 - (vi) ASHP
 - (vii) Heating Controls
 - (viii) Low Energy Lighting
 - (ix) High Retention Storage Heaters
 - (x) Solar Thermal

- (d) Climate change adaptation has formally been incorporated in the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and as mentioned previously, a risk assessment of all services is underway.
- (e) The Housing Services Climate Change Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2024.
- (f) A seed swap station was successfully set up in the Crown Street Library, enabling residents to pick up seeds for free.
- (g) We have been invited and are taking part in a government trial for reporting on our actions to adapt to climate change.

Climate change fund

- 28. £100k was allocated in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to help fund projects that will help us meet our target. All funds are now spent or committed.
- 29. This year, we have provided and committed funding to:
 - (a) Thermal imaging cameras to aid in maintaining council homes.
 - (b) Supported a schools' competition as part of Northumbria in Bloom.
 - (c) Provided carbon literacy training for a Climate Champion
 - (d) Supported the sustainability event held in June 2024.
 - (e) Cover the difference in cost between the usual diesel to fuel the refuse vehicles and the HVO for use in an extended trial.
 - (f) Funded a trial using solar panels on refuse trucks to reduce fuel use.
 - (g) Committed funding for an audit of the carbon sequestration potential of council land.

Communications

- 30. We have improved changed the name of the web pages from Sustainable Darlington to Climate Change and Sustainability. We have also moved it up the hierarchy so that it appears on the front page of the Council's website.
- 31. We continue to include a sustainability article in every One Darlington.
- 32. Our social media messaging across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn has reached more than 500,000.
- 33. Regular blogs are also published on the website.

Financial Implications

34. A reserve fund allowing savings from projects to be set aside for investment in climate projects has been set up.

Legal Implications

35. There are no legal implications, but with increasing public pressure to act on the threat of climate change, we must demonstrate how we will deliver on the motion commitments and protect the Council from future legal challenge.

HR Implications

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

Estates & Property Advice

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

Procurement Advice

38. The report does not involve any purchase over £100k

Equalities Considerations

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

Consultation

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

APPENDIX A

The tables below show progress on actions to the end of 2024. Of the 109 actions reporting at the end of 2023/24, 91 are on track and 5 have been completed. The remainder are showing limited progress, for the most part due to capacity or resourcing issues or waiting for external assessments. It should also be noted that the action plan is an organic document and actions may need to be amended or removed due to changes in government policy or factors beyond our control.

PRINCIPLE 1: REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
E01	Continue to utilise sustainable road maintenance materials	Highway Asset Management	Ongoing	On track
E02	New build- Ensure that the prioritisation of carbon reduction is maintained throughout the design and build process.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	On track
E03	New build - Ensure new corporate buildings reflect and deliver the processes within the climate change strategy.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	On track
E04	New build - Reduce use of brick and blockwork in designs for our house building and increase the use of more sustainable processes and materials.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	On track
E05	New build - Require and analyse whole life costing during the building design process.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	Limited or no progress
E06	New build - Investigate the implementation of a set carbon intensity parameters for construction of new council buildings (e.g. KgCO ₂ e/m ²).	Capital Projects	Apr-24	Limited or no progress
E07	Global initiatives - Review how building fabric air tightness could be improved through sealing, draught stripping and closing off unused ventilation openings.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E08	Global initiatives - Consider introducing and improving loft insulation.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
E09	Global initiatives - Review hot water wastage.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E10	Global initiatives- Insulate all pipework, valves and fittings throughout.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E11	Global initiatives- Review opportunities for solar panels.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E12	Global initiatives- Review combined heat and power opportunity.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E13	Global initiatives- Review solar water heating.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On Track
E14	Global initiatives- Introduce draught lobbies to reduce unwanted air infiltration.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track

APPENDIX A

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
E15	Global initiatives- Review building lighting strategies with particular focus to luminaires, control systems and daylighting provision. Install occupancy sensor controls to lighting in all rooms, wc's and corridors. Setting time delays to minimum practical levels.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E16	Corporate Buildings - Undertake a rationalisation of the office portfolio to reflect the reduced occupancy levels following the COVID-19 pandemic and the numbers of staff working from home.	Corporate Landlord	Dec-24	Not due to be reported
E17	Town Hall - Consider introducing or improving wall insulation (internal lining) to solid single skin structures.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
E18	Town Hall- Consider replacing or improving glazing (single glazed integral windows).	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E19	Town Hall- Consider introducing or improving insulation of flat roofs.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E20	Dolphin Centre - Consider variable speed drives for fans, pumps, and compressors.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-24	Progress made but likely to miss target
E21	Dolphin Centre - Review BMS installation and submetering monitoring.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-24	Progress made but likely to miss target
E22	Dolphin Centre - Consider fitting secondary glazing and under glaze sky lights where appropriate.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E23	Dolphin Centre - Consider how the pool complex air tightness can be improved and sealed better.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-24	Progress made but likely to miss target
E24	Dolphin Centre - Review condition of fabric for measures to improve energy performance i.e. building pressure tests for air tightness and thermography tests for insulation continuity.	Corporate Landlord	Ongoing	On track
E25	Dolphin Centre - Consider replacing any legacy sodium-based lighting with LED.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-24	Progress made but likely to miss target
E27	Deliver on Housing Services Climate Change Strategy	Housing Services	Ongoing	On track
E28	Dolphin Centre- Review use of pool covers.	Leisure Services	Mar-24	On Track
E29	Dolphin centre - investigate solar panel options	Leisure Services	Sep-24	On Track
E30	Dolphin centre - New Windows for front of house - plans to be in place Sept 2024	Leisure Services	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
E31	Dolphin Centre - triple glazed windows around pool hall	Leisure Services	Jan-24	On Track

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
E32	M&E phase 3 works	Leisure Services	Jul-25	Not due to be reported
E33	Hippodrome - Introduce expandable entrance collars to connect the rear of the delivery vehicles to loading areas to reduce heat losses.	Corporate Landlord	Mar-24	Progress made but likely to miss target
E33	New CHP plant	Leisure Services	Jul-25	Not due to be reported
E34	Variable speed fan for AHU1	Leisure Services	Jul-25	Not due to be reported
E35	Enforce private rented and non-domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulations.	Private Sector Housing	ongoing	On track
E36	Develop pipeline of projects ready for future funding streams	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Dec-24	Not due to be reported
E37	Developing the net zero business sector.	Business Growth & Investment	Ongoing	On track
E38	Planning- Include a request in planning applications for expected carbon impact of developments.	Development Management	Sep-24	Not due to be reported
E39	Council maintained school premises - ensure all maintenance, upgrades and refurbishment consider environmentally friendly options and adhere to the new guidance	Skills and Employability	Ongoing	On track
E40	Reduce paper across both site, digitalising historical information and promoting this with staff.	Library Service	Ongoing	On track
E41	To evaluate how efficient the heating system is at Cockerton and explore the option of more efficient fans.	Library Service	Sep-24	On track
E42	Food & beverage will be locally sourced where possible.	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E43	No single use plastic will be used. Food and drink packaging will be from sustainable materials.	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E44	Leftover packaged food will be offered to the local food bank	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E45	Left over fresh food will be offered to the Too Good to Go scheme	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E46	Waste packaging to landfill will be reduced through recycling & composting	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E47	Where possible retail stock will be locally sourced	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E48	Toys & other items sold will not be made from plastic unless it has been recycled first	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
E49	Events will recycle and reuse material as much as possible	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E50	Hire equipment will be from local companies to reduce road mileage	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E51	Event retail, food & beverage will be from sustainable sources	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E52	Exhibitions will recycle and reuse material as much as possible	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E53	Hire equipment will be from local companies to reduce road mileage	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E54	When hiring in exhibitions the mode of transport and distance travelled will be taken into consideration	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E55	Retail sold will be from sustainable sources	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E56	Single use presentation materials such as foamboard will be avoided.	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E57	For collections management, a clean hand policy will be introduced to reduce amount of single use gloves	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E58	Nitrile gloves and acid free paper will be recycled when they can no longer be used	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E59	Climate control methods such as dehumidifiers will only be used when essential	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E60	Digital marketing rather than paper will be used wherever possible	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E61	Local photographers, videographers and drone operators will be used for professional footage to reduce mileage	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E62	All internal advertising screens, donation points etc will be switched off during closing hours	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E63	Colouring sheets or trails will not be printed unless for a specific purpose or need	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E64	Materials for workshops will be sourced locally where possible	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E65	The sustainability of materials used in formal and informal workshops/activities will be considered	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
E66	Delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation (wave 2) project by March 2025	Housing Services	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
E67	All Council Homes to achieve EPC band C by 2030	Housing Services	Apr-25	Not due to be reported

PRINCIPLE 2: REDUCE DEMAND FOR FOSSIL FUELS

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
F01	DBC to assist with TVCA's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which seeks to decarbonise the Tees Valley bus fleet. Reinforce Darlington voluntary agreement of switching off bus engines after 2 minutes in the town centre (if bus is not fitted with automatic cut off.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
F02	Staff travel- Include questions in staff survey to establish travel habits pre, during and post lockdown.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	Limited or no progress
F03	Staff travel- Include questions in staff survey regarding current and potential cycling incentives schemes.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	Limited or no progress
F04	Staff travel- Have a pool of low emission/hybrid/electric cars for staff to use for work related travel to try and encourage staff members to travel to and from work more sustainably.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	Limited or no progress
F05	Staff travel- Investigate setting up a car club for travel to, from and during work.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	Limited or no progress
F06	Staff travel - Following survey; support Active Travel Hub in Darlington, delivered by Sustrans through TVCA contract.	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
F07	Active Travel - Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
F08	Rollout of additional Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs)	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
F09	Implementation of a package of safety measures around schools including - 20mph zones / safe routes to school / waiting restrictions / schools streets / school crossing patrol service / pedestrian and cycle training	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
F10	Council fleet- Identify infrastructure needs for fleet transition.	Waste & Transport Services	Ongoing	On Track
F11	Council fleet- Identify sources of funding for fleet transition.	Waste & Transport Services	Ongoing	On Track
F12	Continue to encourage taxi drivers to switch to electric by offering reduced licence fee as part of taxi policy	Licensing	ongoing	On Track
F14	New build- Incorporate low carbon heating system considerations into developments.	Development Management	Ongoing	On track
F15	Sustainable travel options will be promoted to visitors	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
F16	Sustainable travel options will be promoted to schools	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track

PRINCIPLE 3: CONTRIBUTE TO A GREENER GRID

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
G01	We adopt a presumption in favour of renewables and batteries across our whole estate, integrating these technologies as standard in all capital projects.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	On track
G02	Our building design process takes a whole system approach to low carbon technologies, exploring all options for energy standards, such as Passivhaus standards.	Capital Projects	Ongoing	On track
G03	Public Transport - CRSTS infrastructure schemes	Transport Planning	Ongoing	On track
G03	Revisit heat network feasibility	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported

PRINCIPLE 4: SEQUESTER CARBON

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
S01	Explore opportunities for enhancing roadside verges and open space.	Countryside Services	ongoing	On Track
S02	Plant 20,000 new trees.	Countryside Services	Mar-24	Completed
S03	Food waste collection - Implement food waste collection service	Waste & Transport Services	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
S04	Council in joint project to develop a carbon neutral waste to energy plant	Waste & Transport Services	Mar-28	Not due to be reported
S05	Develop plan for offsetting emissions, including how it would be funded.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported

GOVERNANCE

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
Go01	All cabinet reports, scrutiny reports, plans and policies will include a climate change impact assessment.	Democratic Services	Mar-24	Limited Progress

PROCUREMENT

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
P01	Work with procurement to reduce our supply chain emissions and influence suppliers' climate change practices	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Dec-24	Not due to be reported

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
P02	Review the current criteria and encourage school transport drivers to switch off engines when stationary and move to electric vehicles.	Procurement	Ongoing	On track

FINANCING

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
Fi01	Lobby government for funding to be available, for example, the long-awaited UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and allocated on a fair basis.	Finance	Ongoing	On track
Fi02	Investigate the practicality of issuing bonds.	Finance	Dec-24	
Fi03	Explore risk/scrutiny of using financing from specialist climate/carbon reduction schemes offering interest free loans (i.e. Salix Finance, etc.)	Finance	Ongoing	On track
Fi04	Investigate a system to ring-fence (all or proportion of) savings achieved as a direct result of council climate change policies which can be used to support further investment.	Finance	Mar-24	Completed
Fi05	Use of S106 to fund transport & infrastructure linked to climate change objectives.	Finance	Dec-24	Not due to be reported
Fi07	Explore legal and practicality of building in environmental goals into relevant procurement and if not achieved supplier to pay a climate rebate which can be retained to fund future climate change actions.	Procurement	Mar-30	Not due to be reported
Fi07	Explore legal/statutory powers to add a climate levy to schemes/projects.	Legal	Mar-30	Not due to be reported

ADAPTATION

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
A01	Monitor impact of climate change on rivers and potential water safety issues	Community Resilience	ongoing	On Track
A02	Maintain links with voluntary and community sectors to ensure continued service delivery with changing weather patterns	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
A03	Adjust rotas if changing climate affects staff ability to safely work	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track
A04	Consider flexible hours for staff during extreme weather periods	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track
A05	Ensure staff recognise and deal with signs of heat exhaustion/heat stroke	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track
A06	Review ability to deal with increased numbers of vulnerable people through risk management.	Adult Social Care	ongoing	Completed
A07	Review contingency plans to ensure they take account of climate change	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track
A08	Identify and understand critical and local infrastructure.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A09	Embed climate change in local flood risk management strategies.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A10	Work with local resilience forums to collect and share data on resource impacts of severe weather events.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A11	Include possible health impacts from weather events and future climate risks in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A12	Use local data on population and health to consider social vulnerability to climate change impacts.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A13	Include adaptation in health and wellbeing plans.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-24	Completed
A14	Assess the range of social care assets and key routes used by staff at risk of flooding.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A15	Support commissioners to embed consideration of future climate change into the commissioning processes of care providers.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Dec-24	Not due to be reported
A16	Assess flood risk of residents (particularly vulnerable adults and children) who have care provided at home.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-24	Completed
A17	Ensure biodiversity net-gain proposals in new development are screened to ensure they are suitable under future climate scenarios.	Ecologist	Ongoing	On track
A18	Use green infrastructure to providing shading and cooling for buildings or to protect walking and cycling routes.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer/Ecologist	Ongoing	On track

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
A19	Undertake a local climate change risk assessment for most vulnerable services (eg education and social care).	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Dec-24	Not due to be reported
A20	Integrate adaptation measures in statutory plans, strategies and functions.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
A21	Map longer-term decisions and investments across service areas to determine opportunities to build in resilience.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
A22	Embed contractual requirements for climate resilience or adaptation into key contracts and services.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
A23	Engage with infrastructure providers to understand impact on local authority infrastructure assets and develop plans to reduce risks.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
A24	Work across infrastructure providers and agencies to understand interdependent risks.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A25	Investigate requirement of the BREEAM adaptation credit in new build and refurbishments.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A26	Implement local responses to the Heatwave Plan for England.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A27	Identify the most vulnerable groups to climate change risks.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Jun-24	Not due to be reported
A28	Identify critical at-risk businesses and infrastructure.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A29	Review Adaptation Reporting Power reports of local organisations to understand key infrastructure issues.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A30	Engage key partners such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, neighbouring authorities and Tees Valley Nature Partnership to develop adaptation actions for natural capital.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A31	Use green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions to provide resilience.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
A32	Strategy and action plan formally reviewed every three years, with an ongoing watching brief.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
A34	Use the ADEPT guidance to determine next steps needed to reach 'maturing adaptation' level.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
A35	Identify key contacts in other organisations and to understand shared priorities for climate resilience in key statutory areas.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Ongoing	On track
A36	Collaborative working through local government networks and other key partners to increase efforts to embed adaptation.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Ongoing	On track
A37	Promote sign up to the Environment Agency's flood warning service.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Ongoing	On track
A38	Promote water, energy efficiency and flood resistance and resilience measures.	Sustainability & Climate Change Lead Officer	Ongoing	On track
A39	Raise awareness of relevant climate risks with local businesses	Business Growth & Investment	Ongoing	On track
A40	Review local biodiversity action plans and species action plans to develop actions for particular species vulnerable to future climate	Ecologist	Ongoing	On track

INFLUENCING

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
I01	Form a climate change working group with young people	Youth Participation	Mar-26	Not due to be reported
I02	Use existing meetings with young people to look at climate change actions	Youth Participation	Mar-25	Not due to be reported
I03	Work with Climate Change team to develop appropriate tools for sharing with vulnerable customers	Adult Social Care	ongoing	Progress made but likely to miss target
I04	Continue to support and encourage staff to consider reducing carbon footprint e.g electric cars take up, walking, cycling, personal and professional responsibilities (energy efficiency etc)	Adult Social Care	ongoing	On track
I05	Promote Good "carbon-neutral" practice to local businesses – supporting awareness raising, promoting smarter working and resource efficiency and encouraging better understanding of carbon footprints	Business Growth & Investment	Ongoing	On track
I06	Promoting sustainable inward investment	Business Growth & Investment	Ongoing	On track

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Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
I07	To hold quarterly events about sustainability, recycling, climate change etc. at both Libraries	Library Service	Ongoing	On track
I08	To work with the sustainability and climate change lead officer to develop a school climate change conference.	Library Service	Dec-24	On track
I09	Customers will be encouraged to join in with actions both on and off site	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
I10	Visitors will be encouraged to take photographs of trails and activities or to download resources	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track
I11	Participants will be encouraged to recycle materials they do not wish to take home	Hopetown Darlington	Ongoing	On track

COMMUNICATIONS

Ref	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
C01	Internal communications plan delivered	Communications Team	Ongoing	On track
C02	External communications plan delivered	Communications Team	Ongoing	On track

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND OUTTURN
PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2023/24

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director – Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides important information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash-flow. It is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures and by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review that covers treasury activity for 2023/24. The report also seeks approval of the Prudential Indicators results for 2023/24 in accordance with the Prudential Code.

Summary

2. The financial year 2023/24 was yet another unprecedented year with regards to treasury management. With the Ukraine conflict continuing, events in the Middle East, cost of living increases and inflation taking time to recover, the markets have been quite cautious. The bank rate continued to rise steadily throughout the early part of the year starting the year at 4.25% before stabilising and finishing at 5.25%. This has led to borrowing rates increasing and to some significant financial challenges throughout the year. These challenges are expected to continue into 2024/25 with the cost of borrowing expected to remain high until at least September, possibly even later. Although the returns for cash investments have also increased due to higher interest rates they still remain below the cost of borrowing and these are declining at a much faster rate than the cost of borrowing.
3. During 2023/24 the Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The borrowing need (**Table 1**) was only increased for capital purposes.
4. At 31 March 2024 the Council's external debt was £152.878m which is £14.864m more than the previous year. This increase relates to the progression of various capital schemes and the rise in the costs of these schemes due to inflationary pressures. The average interest rate for borrowing increased from 2.41% in 2022/23 to 2.61% in 2023/24. Investments totalled £36.369m at 31 March 2024 (£40.044m at 31st March 2023) earning interest of 5.09% on short term cash investments and 0.72% on Property Fund units net of costs. As per table 7, the budgeted return on Property Funds was 0.54% so this is better than forecast.

5. Financing costs have been reduced during the year and a reduction of £0.735m has been achieved from the original MTFP and transferred to an IFRS9 reserve to manage any future fluctuations arising from the capital values of property funds. The reduction in budget is a mixture of reduced interest charges on debt as well as increased investment income.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The outturn 2023/24 Prudential Indicators within this report and those in **Appendix 1** be noted.
 - (b) The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2023/24 be noted.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.
 - (b) To inform members of the Performance of the Treasury Management function.
 - (c) To comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Accounting Records
- (ii) Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24
- (iii) Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy Report 2023/24

Judith Murray: Extension 5204

Council Plan	The Council's Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators activities contribute to all priorities outlined within the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	This report provides an update on the Council's Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Tackling Climate Change	This report provides an update on the Council's Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The report outlines movements in the national economic outlook that have enabled officers to take advantage of different types of Investments and changing interest rates to benefit the Revenue MTFP.
Health and Wellbeing	This report provides an update on the Council's Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	There is no anticipated impact on any one ward as a result of this report.
Groups Affected	There is no anticipated impact on any group as a result of this report.
Budget and Policy Framework	The report does not change the Council's budget or Policy framework but needs to be considered by Council.
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 does not impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. This report summarises:
 - (a) Capital expenditure and financing for 2023/24
 - (b) The Council's overall borrowing need
 - (c) Treasury position at 31st March 2024
 - (d) Prudential indicators and compliance issues
 - (e) The economic background for 2023/24
 - (f) A summary of the Treasury Management Strategy agreed for 2023/24
 - (g) Treasury Management activity during 2023/24
 - (h) Performance and risk benchmarking
9. Throughout this report a number of technical terms are used, a glossary of terms can be found at the end of this report.

The Council's Capital Expenditure and Financing 2023/24

10. The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long term assets, which is financed either:
 - (a) Immediately through capital receipts, capital grants, contributions and from revenue; or
 - (b) If insufficient financing is available, by borrowing.
11. Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address this borrowing need, either through borrowing from external bodies, or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council. The wider treasury activities also include managing the Council's cash flow, its previous borrowing activities and the investment of surplus funds. These activities are structured to manage risk foremost and then optimise performance.
12. Capital Expenditure forms one of the prudential indicators that are used to regulate treasury activity. Table 1 shows total capital expenditure and how this was financed, compared with what was expected to be spent and how this would have been financed. Actual expenditure was £20.732m less than planned, mostly down to slippage in the HRA, Station redevelopment, Railway Heritage and some Towns Fund initiatives. However, the mix of funding differs from that which was expected as some schemes progressed quicker than others. This impacted on the borrowing needed to fund expenditure which was £9.808m higher than initially anticipated.

Table 1 – Capital Expenditure and Financing

	2022/23	2023/24		
	Outturn £m	Revised Estimate £m	Outturn £m	Variance £m
General Fund Capital Expenditure	40.984	56.727	39.361	(17.366)
HRA Capital Expenditure	14.708	24.535	13.753	(10.782)
Loans to Joint Ventures etc	4.944	0.034	7.450	7.416
Total Capital Expenditure	60.636	81.296	60.564	(20.732)
Resourced by:				
Capital Receipts GF	0.623	5.158	2.491	(2.667)
Capital receipts Housing	0.433	0.433	0.00	(0.433)
JV Loans Repaid	5.073	1.000	0.500	(0.500)
Capital Grants	34.466	32.851	29.045	(3.806)
Capital Contributions	0.407	0.000	0.261	0.261
Revenue Contributions - GF	0.187	0.403	1.167	0.764
Investment Fund - Housing	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revenue Contributions - HRA	13.289	24.077	8.003	(16.074)
Self-Financing - GF	0.000	16.036	7.951	(8.085)
Total Resources	54.478	79.958	49.418	(30.540)
Borrowing needed to finance expenditure	6.158	1.338	11.146	9.808

The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

13. The Council's underlying need to borrow is called the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The figure is a gauge for the Council's debt position. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Council and resources used to pay for the capital spend. It represents 2023/24 and prior years' net capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.
14. Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies (such as the government, through Public Works Loan Board (PWLb), or the money markets) or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.
15. The Council's (non HRA) underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The Council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the non-Housing Revenue Account borrowing need, (there is no statutory requirement to reduce the HRA CFR). This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.

16. The total CFR can be reduced each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) or by the application of additional capital financing resources (such as unapplied capital receipts).
17. The Council’s CFR for the year is shown in Table 2 and represents a key prudential indicator. The CFR outturn for 2023/24 is £233.974m which is £0.325m higher than approved due to a decrease in estimated JV loan repayment and a decreased borrowing requirement for HRA resulting in less MRP being charged than originally anticipated.

Table 2 - Capital Financing Requirement

	2022/23	2023/24		
	Outturn £m	Approved Indicator £m	31 March Actual £m	Variance £m
Opening Balance	224.285	228.660	228.660	0.000
Add Capital Expenditure financed by borrowing	13.232	11.987	11.645	(0.342)
Less repayment of JV loans	(5.073)	(1.000)	(0.500)	0.500
Less MRP/VRP GF	(0.000)	(4.299)	(4.299)	(0.000)
Less MRP/VRP Housing	(2.669)	(0.593)	(0.426)	0.167
Less MRP/VRP PFI	(1.115)	(1.106)	(1.106)	0.000
Closing balance	228.660	233.649	233.974	0.325

Treasury Position at 31 March 2024

18. Whilst the measure of the Council’s underlying need to borrow is the CFR, the Group Director of Operations can manage the Council’s actual borrowing position by:
 - (a) Borrowing to the CFR level; or
 - (b) Choosing to utilise some temporary cash flows instead of borrowing (“under borrowing”); or
 - (c) Borrowing for future increases in CFR (borrowing in advance of need, the “over borrowed” amount can be invested).
19. The Council’s treasury management debt and investment position is organised by the treasury management service in order to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through member reporting and through officer activity detailed in the Council’s Treasury Management Practices.
20. The Council’s total debt outstanding at 31 March 2024 was £152.878m. In addition to this, a liability of £7.011m relating to the PFI scheme and Finance Leases brings the total to £159.889m. The Council’s revised CFR position was estimated to be £233.649m, however, the actual out turn position was £233.974m. When comparing this to our actual

borrowing of £159.889m this meant that the Council was “under borrowed” by £74.085m. This “under borrowed” amount was financed by internal borrowing which means that the amount that could have been invested externally was reduced to cover this. The reduced under borrowed position still has the dual effect of reducing costs to the MTFP because borrowing costs are generally greater than investment returns and it reduces counterparty risk by reducing our exposure to banks and other financial institutions.

21. The treasury position at 31 March 2024, including investments compared with the previous year, is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3 – Summary of Borrowing and Investments

Treasury Position	31 March 2023		31 March 2024	
	Principal £m	Average Rate %	Principal £m	Net Annualised Average Rate %
General Debt - Fixed Rate Debt, Market and Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)	113.014	2.53%	127.878	2.65%
Property Fund Borrowing	25.000	1.65%	25.000	2.60%
Total Debt	138.014	2.41%	152.878	2.61%
Cashflow Investments up to 6 months	10.045	2.88%	6.370	5.09%
Capital Investments over 6 months	0.000	0.00%	0.000	0.00%
Property Fund Investment - net of costs	29.999	1.99%	29.999	0.72%
Total Investments	40.044		36.369	
Net borrowing position	97.970		116.509	

Prudential Indicators and Compliance Issues

22. Some prudential indicators provide an overview while others are specific limits on treasury activity, as detailed below.
23. **Gross Borrowing and the CFR** – in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2022/23) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2023/24) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2023/24. The table below highlights the Council’s gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.

Table 4 – Gross Borrowing Compared with CFR

	31 March 2023 Actual £m	31 March 2024 Approved Indicator £m	31 March 2024 Actual £m
Gross Borrowing Position	138.014	141.014	152.878
PFI and Finance Lease Liability	8.117	7.011	7.011
Total	146.131	148.025	159.889
CFR	228.660	233.649	233.974
(Under)/over funding of CFR	(82.529)	(85.624)	(74.085)

24. **The Authorised Limit** – The Authorised Limit is the “Affordable Borrowing Limit” required by section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council does not have power to borrow above this level.
25. **The Operational Boundary** – The Operational Boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the Boundary are both acceptable, subject to the Authorised Limit not being breached.
26. **Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue expenditure** - This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue expenditure. The actual for this indicator has risen from the previous year due to an increase in the Financing costs outturn.

Table 5 – Key Prudential Indicators

	Actual 2022/23 £m	Original Approved Limits 2023/24 £m	Revised Approved Limits 2023/24 £m	Actual Total Liabilities Borrowing + PFI/ leases 2023/24 Maximum £m
Approved Indicator – Authorised Limit	240.093	247.730	245.331	245.675
Approved Indicator – Operational Boundary	146.131	183.077	148.025	159.889
Financing costs as a percentage of net revenue expenditure	1.69%	3.82%	4.47%	4.47%

27. At 31 March 2023 the total liabilities were £152.878m which is below both the approved Authorised Limit and the approved Operational Boundary. The Operational Boundary is the point at which we expect borrowing to be, but it can be lower or higher. Borrowing cannot exceed the Authorised Limit.

28. A further four prudential indicators are detailed in Appendix 1.

Economic Background for 2023/24

29. A summary of the general economic conditions that have prevailed through 2023/24 provided by Link Asset Services, the Council's treasury management advisors is attached at **Appendix 2**.

Summary of the Treasury Management Strategy agreed for 2023/24

30. The revised Prudential Indicators anticipated that during 2023/24 the Council would need to borrow £1.338m to finance part of its capital programme, whereas the actual outturn figure was £9.808m. The main reason for the outturn variance is at the time of writing the revised (2023/24 mid-year) Prudential Indicator report, the Council had not received updated cashflows for the Joint Ventures confirming when further development was due to commence.
31. The Annual Investment Strategy stated that the use of specified (usually less than one year) and non-specified (usually more than one year) investments would be carefully balanced to ensure that the Council has appropriate liquidity for its operational needs. In the normal course of the Council's business it is expected that both specified and non-specified investments will be utilised for the control of liquidity as both categories allow for short term investments.
32. Longer term instruments (greater than one year from inception to repayment) will only be used where the Council's liquidity requirements are safeguarded. An estimate of long term investments (over 1 year) were included in the report on the Prudential Indicators update these were as follows £50m for 2022/23 and £50m for 2023/24. No other investments of over one year duration have been made during 2023/24.

Treasury Management Activity during 2023/24

Borrowing Strategy

33. During 2023/24, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the CFR), was not fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as investment returns were very low and minimising counterparty risk on placing investments also needed to be considered.
34. A cost of carry remained during the year on any new long-term borrowing that was not immediately used to finance capital expenditure, as it would have caused a temporary increase in cash balances; this would have incurred a revenue cost – the difference between (higher) borrowing costs and (lower) investment returns.
35. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served well over the last few years (see table 6 below). However, this was kept under review to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when this authority may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or the refinancing of maturing debt.

Table 6 – net borrowing

	Market Loans (incl. other Local Authorities)			Total
	Amount £m	Length of Loan	Interest Rate %	£m
New Loans Taken				
	5.000	2 months	4.60%	
	5.000	4 months	4.85%	
	5.000	1 year	5.25%	
	5.000	1 year	4.40%	
	2.000	3 months	5.65%	
	3.000	3 months	5.70%	
	5.000	1 month	4.65%	
	2.000	3 months	6.00%	
	2.000	3 months	6.50%	
	3.000	4 months	6.00%	
	5.000	3 months	6.75%	
	5.000	3 months	6.50%	
Total New Loans				47.000
Loans Repaid				
	(5.000)	1 year	1.25%	
	(5.000)	2 months	4.85%	
	(5.000)	5 years	1.82%	
	(5.000)	1 year	2.30%	
	(2.000)	1 year	3.00%	
	(5.000)	4 months	4.85%	
	(2.000)	3 months	5.65%	
	(3.000)	3 months	5.70%	
Total New Borrowing				15.000

36. **Summary of Debt Transactions** – The consolidated rate of interest increased from 2.41% to 2.61% due to increased interest rates in the market.

Investment Position

37. **Investment Policy** – the Council’s investment policy for 2023/24 is governed by the DLUHC Guidance which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy for 2023/24 approved by Special Council on 16 February 2023. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties, and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

38. The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved Strategy and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.
39. Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2023/24 as central banks, including the Bank of England, realised that inflationary pressures were not transitory, and that tighter monetary policy was called for. Starting April at 4.25%, Bank Rate moved up in stepped increases of either 0.25% or 0.5%, reaching 5.25% by the end of the financial year. It has remained at this level and is unlikely to decrease until later in 2024/25.
40. With bond markets selling off, equity valuations struggling to make progress as did property funds, although there have been some spirited, if temporary, market rallies from time to time, the more traditional investment options, such as specified investments (simple to understand, and less than a year in duration) became more actively used and Money Market Funds have also provided decent returns in close proximity to Bank Rate for liquidity purposes.
41. Throughout 2023/24 the Bank of England has maintained various monetary policy easing measures as required to ensure specific markets, the banking system and the economy had appropriate levels of liquidity at times of stress
42. While the Council has taken a cautious approach to investing, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the financial crisis. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.
43. Investment balances have been kept to a minimum through the agreed strategy of using reserves and balances to support internal borrowing, rather than borrowing externally from the financial markets. External borrowing would have incurred an additional cost, due to the differential between borrowing and investment rates. Such an approach has also provided benefits in terms of reducing counterparty risk exposure, by having fewer investments placed in the financial markets.
44. Investments held by the Council consist of temporary surplus balances, capital receipts and other funds. Cash balances are invested on a daily basis to maximise the benefit of temporary surplus funds. These include investments in Money Market Funds, the Government's Debt Management Office, other local authorities and bank short term notice accounts. Short term investments of up to a year earned interest of £602k on an average balance of £11.832m which equated to an annual average interest rate of 5.09%.
45. The Council also has longer term investments which consist of the property funds and the returns are shown below in **Table 7**.
46. Further to the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy report, where it was noted that the Lothbury Property Fund was exploring a potential merger with the UBS Triton Property Fund, unfortunately this proposal did not receive sufficient support from the membership and therefore the Lothbury Property Fund was terminated in the first quarter of 2024/25. The Council will receive its share of the distributions of funds from Lothbury as and when assets are sold. An initial distribution was received in June 2024 which the Council has

invested in the UBS Triton Property fund. The investment of future distributions will be decided as and when they are received, in consideration of the best investment opportunities and the Council’s financial position at the date of receipt.

Table 7 – Longer Term 6 months to 5 years - Property Funds

	Original Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24
Daily average level of Investments	£29.999m	£29.999m
Interest earned (gross)	1.038m	1.093m
Average Rate of Return on Investment Interest earned (gross)	3.46%	3.64%
Average Rate of Return on Investment (net of costs)	0.54%	0.72%

Performance and Risk Benchmarking

- 47. A regulatory development is the consideration and approval of security and liquidity benchmarks. Yield benchmarks are currently widely used to assess investment performance.
- 48. The following reports the current position against the benchmarks originally approved.
- 49. Security – The Council’s maximum security risk benchmarks for the current portfolio of investments, when compared to historic default tables was set as follows:

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

- 50. **Table 8** shows that there has been a fluctuation in the historic levels of default over the year although still well below the benchmark. This is mainly due to some longer term investments actually being made for shorter terms, i.e. up to six months rather than one year as these investments were better value than longer term investments and were also a better fit with how the Council was expecting to utilise investments. It also shows more emphasis being placed on counterparties with a higher credit rating.
- 51. The investment portfolio was maintained within this overall benchmark during this year as shown in **Table 8**.

Table 8

Maximum	Benchmark 2023/24	Actual June 2023	Actual October 2023	Actual December 2023	Actual March 2024
Year 1	0.077%	0.001%	0.000%	0.000%	0.000%

52. The counterparties that we use are all high rated therefore our actual risk of default based on the ratings attached to counterparties is virtually nil.
53. Liquidity – In respect of this area the Council set liquidity facilities/benchmark to maintain:
- (a) Bank Overdraft £0.100M.
 - (b) Liquid short term deposits of at least £3.000M available within a week’s notice.
 - (c) Weighted Average Life benchmark is expected to be 146 days with a maximum of one year.
54. Liquidity arrangements have been adequate for the year to date as shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9

	Benchmark	Actual June 2023	Actual October 2023	Actual December 2023	Actual March 2024
Weighted Average life	146 days to 1 year	113 days	118 days	0 days	0 days

55. The figures are for the whole portfolio of cash flow investments deposited with Money Market funds on a call basis, (i.e. can be drawn on without notice) as well as call accounts that include a certain amount of notice required to recall the funds.
56. Money Market Funds do not have a Weighted Average Life as they are on a call basis. During the latter part of the year the Council held its surplus cash in Money Market Funds as the rates for these were on par (sometimes even better) than short term investments, hence there is no Weighted Average Life in December 2023 and March 2024.
57. Yield - In respect of this area performance indicators relating to interest rates for borrowing and investments were set with reference to comparative interest rates. For borrowing, the indicator is the average rate paid during the year compared with the previous year. Investment rates are compared with a representative set of comparative rates.

Risk

58. The Council’s treasury management activities are regulated by a variety of professional codes, statutes and guidance:-
- (a) The Local Government Act 2003(the Act), which provides the powers to borrow and invest as well as providing controls and limits on this activity.
 - (b) The Act permits the Secretary of State to set limits either on the Council or nationally on all local authorities restricting the amount of borrowing which may be undertaken (although no restrictions were made in 2023/24).
 - (c) Statutory Instrument (SI) 3146 2003, as amended, develops the controls and powers within the Act.

- (d) The SI requires the Council to undertake any borrowing activity with regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.
 - (e) The SI also requires the Council to operate the overall treasury function with regard to the CIPFA code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.
 - (f) Under the Act the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has issued Investment Guidance to structure and regulate the Council's investment activities.
 - (g) Under section 238(2) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the Secretary of State has taken powers to issue guidance on accounting practices. Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision was issued under this section on 8 November 2007.
59. The Council's Treasury Management function has complied with all of the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements, which limit the levels of risk associated with its treasury management activities. In particular its adoption and implementation of both the Prudential Code and the code of Practice for Treasury Management means both that its capital expenditure is prudent, affordable and sustainable and its treasury practices demonstrate a low risk approach.
60. Officers of the Council are aware of the risks of passive management of the treasury portfolio and, with the support of Link Group, the Council's advisers, have proactively managed the debt and investments over the year.

Treasury Management Budget

61. There are three main elements within the Treasury Management Budget:-
- (a) Long Term capital investments including Property Funds which earns interest and dividends, this comprises of the Council's revenue and capital balances, unused capital receipts, reserves and provisions.
 - (b) Cash flow interest earned – The authority has consistently had positive cash flow. Unlike long term capital investments it does not represent any particular sum but it is the consequence of many different influences such as receipts of grants, the relationship between debtors and creditors, cashing of cheques and payments to suppliers.
 - (c) Debt servicing costs – This is the principal and interest costs on the Council's long term debt to finance the capital programme.

Table 10 - Changes to the Treasury Management Budget 2023/24

	£m	£m
Original Treasury Management Budget		3.477
Debt		
Reduced interest payable on debt	(0.428)	
Investments		
Increase in investment income including property funds etc	(0.320)	
Other Costs		
Increased brokerage charges	0.013	
Transfer to IFRS 9 Reserve	0.735	
Outturn Treasury Management Budget 2023/24		3.477

62. There has been a reduction in the interest payable on debt due to reduced debt levels as well as an increase in the interest received on investments due to the cashflow levels. An MRP charge was also necessary to correct previous years under-provision.
63. These reductions in interest payable and additional interest income have been transferred into the IFRS9 reserve to manage any future fluctuations within the capital values of the property funds.

Conclusion

64. The Council's treasury management activity during 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with Council Policy and within legal limits. Financing costs have been reduced during the year and the reduction achieved from the original MTFP has been added to the existing IFRS9 reserve to manage any future fluctuation in the capital values of property funds.

Outcome of Consultation

65. No formal consultation has been undertaken regarding this report.

Additional Prudential Indicators not reported in the body of the report.

		2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Approved Indicator	2023/24 Outturn
1	limits on fixed interest rates	88%	100%	79%
2	limits on variable interest rates	12%	40%	21%
3	Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing (upper Limit)			
	Under 12 months	12%	40%	21%
	12 months to 2 years	12%	50%	21%
	2 years to 5 years	20%	60%	26%
	5 years to 10 years	27%	80%	31%
	10 years and above	100%	100%	100%
4	Maximum Principal funds invested greater than 364 days	£50m	£50m	£50m

The Economy and Interest Rates

UK. Economy.

Against a backdrop of stubborn inflationary pressures, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and war in the Middle East, UK interest rates have continued to be volatile right across the curve, from Bank Rate through to 50-year gilt yields, for all of 2023/24.

Markets have sought an end to central banks' on-going phase of keeping restrictive monetary policy in place on at least one occasion during 2023/24 but to date only the Swiss National Bank has cut rates and that was at the end of March 2024.

UK, EZ and US 10-year yields have all stayed stubbornly high throughout 2023/24. The table below provides a snapshot of the conundrum facing central banks: inflation is easing, albeit gradually, but labour markets remain very tight by historical comparisons, making it an issue of fine judgment as to when rates can be cut.

The Bank of England sprung no surprises in their March meeting, leaving interest rates at 5.25% for the fifth time in a row and, despite no MPC members no longer voting to raise interest rates, it retained its relatively hawkish guidance. The Bank's communications suggest the MPC is gaining confidence that inflation will fall sustainably back to the 2.0% target. However, although the MPC noted that "the restrictive stance of monetary policy is weighing on activity in the real economy, is leading to a looser labour market and is bearing down on inflationary pressures", conversely it noted that key indicators of inflation persistence remain elevated and policy will be "restrictive for sufficiently long" and "restrictive for an extended period".

Of course, the UK economy has started to perform a little better in Q1 2024 but is still recovering from a shallow recession through the second half of 2023. Indeed, Q4 2023 saw negative GDP growth of -0.3% while y/y growth was also negative at -0.2%.

But it was a strange recession. Unemployment is currently sub 4%, against a backdrop of still over 900k of job vacancies, and annual wage inflation is running at above 5%. With gas and electricity price caps falling in April 2024, the CPI measure of inflation - which peaked at 11.1% in October 2022 - is now due to slide below the 2% target rate in April and to remain below that Bank of England benchmark for the next couple of years, according to Capital Economics. The Bank of England still needs some convincing on that score, but upcoming inflation and employment releases will settle that argument shortly. It is noted that core CPI was still a heady 4.5% in February and, ideally, needs to fall further.

Shoppers largely shrugged off the unusually wet weather in February, whilst rising real household incomes should support retail activity throughout 2024. Furthermore, the impact of higher interest rates on household interest payments is getting close to its peak, even though fixed rate mortgage rates on new loans have shifted up a little since falling close to 4.5% in early 2024.

From a fiscal perspective, the further cuts to national insurance tax (from April) announced in the March Budget will boost real household disposable income by 0.5 - 1.0%. After real household disposable income rose by 1.9% in 2023, Capital Economics forecast it will rise by 1.7% in 2024 and by 2.4% in 2025. These rises in real household disposable income, combined with the earlier fading of the drag from previous rises in interest rates, means GDP growth of 0.5% is envisaged in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025. The Bank of England is less optimistic than that, seeing growth struggling to get near 1% over the next two to three years.

As for equity markets, the FTSE 100 has risen to nearly 8,000 and is now only 1% below the all-time high it reached in February 2023. The modest rise in UK equities in February was driven by

strong performances in the cyclical industrials and consumer discretionary sectors, whilst communications and basic materials have fared poorly.

Despite its performance, the FTSE 100 is still lagging behind the S&P 500, which has been at an all-time high for several weeks.

USA. Despite the markets willing the FOMC to cut rates as soon as June 2024, the continued resilience of the economy, married to sticky inflation, is providing a significant headwind to a change in monetary policy. Markets currently anticipate three rate cuts this calendar year, but two or less would not be out of the question. Currently, policy remains flexible but primarily data driven.

In addition, the Fed will want to shrink its swollen \$16 trillion balance sheet at some point. Just because the \$ is the world's foremost reserve currency (China owns over \$1 trillion) does not mean the US can continually run a budget deficit. The mix of stubborn inflation and significant treasury issuance is keeping treasury yields high. The 10 year stands at 4.4%.

As for inflation, it is currently a little above 3%. The market is not expecting a recession, but whether rates staying high for longer is conducive to a soft landing for the economy is uncertain, hence why the consensus is for rate cuts this year and into 2025...but how many and when?

EU. Although the Euro-zone inflation rate has fallen to 2.4%, the ECB will still be mindful that it has further work to do to dampen inflation expectations. However, with growth steadfastly in the slow lane (GDP flatlined in 2023) a June rate cut from the current 4% looks probable.

Glossary of Terms

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	This is the Councils underlying need to borrow which can be traced back to the Councils Balance Sheet and the value of the Councils assets which have yet to be paid for.
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	Monies set aside from the revenue budget to repay accumulated debt.
Call	Investments that can be returned without a period of notice
Counterparty	Institutions, Banks etc. that with make investments or take out loans with.
Specified Investments	Investments in Banks and Building Societies with a high credit rating for periods of less than 1 year
Non-Specified Investments	Investments in un-rated Building Societies and any investments in Banks and Building Societies for more than 1 year.
Operational Liquidity	Working Cash flow
Authorised Limit	Maximum amount of borrowing that could be taken in total.
Operational Boundary	The expected amount of borrowing assumed in total.
PWLB	Public Works Loan Board. The Governments lending body to Local Authorities

Discount	Amount payable by the PWLB when loans are repaid if the current loan rate is less than the rate borne by the original debt
Yield Curve	Is a graph that shows the relationship between the interest rate paid and length of time to repayment of a loan.
Gilts	Government Borrowing Bonds
SONIA	The Sterling Overnight Index Average – generally a replacement set of indices (for LIBID) for those benchmarking their investments.
Spreads	The difference between the highest rate of interest and the lowest rate of interest earned/charged on any one particular maturity period i.e. 1 year, 2 year 5 year etc.
LIBID	London Interbank Bid Rate. The average rate at which a bank is willing to borrow from another bank.
LIBOR	London Interbank Offer Rate. The average rate at which a bank is willing to lend to another bank. LIBOR is always higher than the corresponding bid rate and the difference between the two rates is known as the spread.

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Report

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

Strategic Transport

Bus Service Improvement Plan

2. Within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), there is an aspiration to enhance the customer experience for users and a key part of this is to provide up to date and accurate information, under one brand identity, in a timely manner.
3. As a result, TVCA has now taken on responsibility for the updating of at-stop information and is collaborating with local authorities to make improvements. A full update across all bus stops is substantial as there are a total of 2,592 bus stops with information cases across Tees Valley at which timetable information is provided.
4. Due to slight re-timings to current Arriva and Stagecoach services, information at 1,476 stops needed to be updated as a priority from the end of July. This means that current timetable information is available at all stops where the current infrastructure has allowed.
5. In total, by the beginning of September 1,930 stops have been visited, checked and updated. Whilst the existing information in the remaining 662 stops is still accurate as they were not affected by the July 2024 re-timing changes these will be visited and inspected over coming weeks.
6. Later this year TVCA will be rolling out a new timetable template which will include information to make it easier for passengers to know who to speak to if they are unhappy with their journey and will promote the TVCA 'Improve My Journey' webpage.
7. In addition, work is ongoing to replace the Real-Time Passenger Information with a new system which is due to go live in November 2024 and replace the current obsolete displays with 90 modern display screens.

Darlington Station

8. Work on the construction of the multi-storey car park and station building at Darlington Station is continuing to be delivered on programme and completion of the first section of the building is expected to be completed in September 2024, with final completion and handover to Network Rail / LNER for fit out in February 2025.

9. Alongside the TVCA led works, Network Rail continue to make good progress with their parts of the project. The completion and handover of the first section of the building will enable Network Rail to begin the preparation work for the installation of the new footbridge later this year.

Active Travel and Bus Priority Improvements

10. A major public engagement exercise was carried out in July / August setting out proposals to improve the bus infrastructure across the whole of Tees Valley and also enhance the infrastructure for those walking, wheeling and cycling.
11. Overall, there was support for the schemes put forward and the public feedback will now be used to help inform the next stage of design of these schemes. Further details are expected to be published on each scheme later this year.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 (2027-2032)

12. Further work has been commissioned to develop the projects identified and agreed by the TVCA Cabinet in January 2024. TVCA is working with all local authorities and key stakeholders on the development of the programme.
13. TVCA is engaging with the new government, but is awaiting clarity and guidance on future funding beyond the current devolved transport settlement.

Strategic Infrastructure

Local Area Energy Plan

14. TVCA is liaising with all local authorities in relation to the commissioning of a series of Local Area Energy Plans for the region. This work will look at the net zero landscape in the region and consider areas, including: the energy distribution networks (gas and electricity); building fabric, including insulation; heat pumps and solar panels; and electric vehicle charging requirements. The plans will set out proposals to inform future energy needs and the transition to net zero.

Climate Change

15. The last meeting of the Cross-Party Working Group was on 18 July, where Cllr Snedker was re-elected as Chair of the Group. The Group had a presentation from SSE who presented their potential approach to a district heat network in Darlington. The Group also discussed the forthcoming offsetting strategy – due to be presented at Cabinet in October.

External Meetings and Engagement

16. I have attended various meetings and engagements since the previous meeting of Council, some of which are listed below:
 - (a) Visit to National Horizons Centre, meeting with Professor Vikki Rand

- (b) Film Premiere of “Iron & Steam The Dawn of the Stockton & Darlington Railway”, produced by Lonely Tower
- (c) Meeting with Phil Forster, Teesside Airport
- (d) Visit to see newly completed DBC build housing on Neasham Road
- (e) Met with Civic Enforcement and CCTV staff following the disorder to thank them for their excellent work
- (f) BBQ with young care leavers
- (g) Citizenship Ceremony
- (h) Visit to Baltic Apprenticeships
- (i) Rail North Committee
- (j) Darlington Town Deal Board
- (k) Raised the flag at the start of the Cycling Championships Day 2 leg which started in Darlington
- (l) Attended CPI’s 20th birthday celebration – with their Darlington office 10th anniversary next year
- (m) Aura Infection Control visit and award presentation to a local dental practice
- (n) Attended Dame Carol Black’s visit to the STRIDE partnership
- (o) Transport for the North Board

Councillor Steve Harker
Leader of the Council

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

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

Environmental Health

2. The Environmental Health Section has responded to 1,258 requests for service in Quarter 1 2024/2025. The main categories of these requests are:

(a) Food	114
(b) Licensing	118
(c) Noise	235
(d) Planning Enquiries	75
(e) Refuse	88
(f) Pest	263
(g) Personal searches	188

3. The food safety team have carried out a number of visits to retail shops to investigate the sale of packaged foods that do not have labelling in English as required by food safety laws. A significant amount of incorrectly labelled food has been seized from those premises.
4. Officers are currently visiting all Tanning shops in the Borough following complaints of under 18s using the premises illegally. All salon owners have received a visit and a letter detailing their responsibilities.
5. The Air Quality Annual Status Report has been submitted to Defra and positive feedback received.
6. Officers recently attended the Self-Neglect and Hoarding Conference organised by Darlington Safeguarding Partnership. Environmental Health have noticed an increase in reports of concerns regarding filthy conditions within residential properties and continue to work closely with colleagues from Social Services on these often-complex cases.

Climate Change

7. The advisory report on progress to date is presented to Council and appears elsewhere on this agenda. As can be seen from that report, we are continuing to reduce our emissions, year on year.
8. We are also revisiting the heat network feasibility study that was carried out in 2021. We have been approached by businesses interested in providing a no-risk to the council option and we are currently investigating, with the Procurement Team, our next steps.

Development Management

9. The application for the New Treasury Building is now with the Council following a formal announcement from the Government. Further discussions have been had with the applicant's agent to further improve the design of the scheme. These discussions have been productive and are now complete. A further meeting with residents to explain further the details of the scheme has taken place in conjunction with the Deputy Leader and Local Ward Members.
10. The matter was presented to Members of the Planning Committee on 7 August 2024. A decision was made to approve subject to the signing of a 106 agreement.
11. Further work is ongoing following the Outline Approvals for housing recently Granted at Coniscliffe Park. A 106 legal agreement has now been signed. Discussions have been held with the developers regarding the further involvement of nearby residents prior to a formal detailed submission. This meeting has now taken place. The details and modifications because of this engagement have been incorporated into plans which will form part of the detailed planning submission.
12. Enforcement reports relating to unauthorised development are still currently increasing. Most reports continue to be solved at officer level. All more significant cases where there are ongoing investigations, Members are updated confidentially at Planning Committee on a monthly basis.
13. The National Infrastructure Project at Byers Green for solar panels is now progressing. Unlike most applications a decision on the matter will be dealt with by a Government Inspector, not the Council. The matter will be heard at a Public Inquiry. The Council will be making submissions to the Inquiry in due course following engagement with interested parties.
14. Delivery onsite continues along Skinnergate and the Yards project, with enhancements completed to a significant number of properties and to the public realm. The planning application for Coniscliffe Road public realm proposals has been approved.

Building Control

15. Building Regulations applications and works progressing as normal, no issues to be reported.
16. Building Safety Regulator:
 - (a) Three Surveyors are now fully competence validated for the BSR, with one remaining surveyor progressing toward validation, allowing the service to function legally under the Building Safety Act 2022. The remaining surveyor post is being filled this week (part time) by an experienced competence validated surveyor.
 - (b) KPI's have been submitted to the BSR, although the BSR has just announced they are delaying KPI submission until January 2025. The work done this far is not wasted, as effectively we are now a step ahead for January.

17. Dangerous structures:

- (a) Fire at Valley House - Remaining wall structure not in immediate danger of collapse, owner has been advised to secure the building and demolish what remains of the dilapidated roof.

Business Investment

- 18. The number of business investment enquiries remains constant, with the main area of interests from the hospitality and hair and beauty sectors. There has also been a substantive enquiry for an engineering facility at Ingenium Parc.
- 19. The new UK Government has initiated its intention to develop new Local Growth Plans across the country. Combined authorities have been asked to produce a new high-level economic growth strategy that aligns with a new national industrial strategy, and which will feed into national spending and budget reviews. Council officers are working with peers across Tees Valley to help develop this policy document and ensure it meets local needs and ambitions. At this early stage, much of the discussion is focussed on the development process and the outcomes, and criteria that support flexibility, allowing localities to determine what contribution they will make to improve local economic growth.
- 20. The roll out of UK Shared Prosperity Funded business support activities is now complete. A range of support measures are now in place offering advice, guidance, development programmes, technical expertise and financial support to local businesses, including:
 - (a) *Business Start Up*: Tees Valley Entrepreneurs; Tees Valley Expertise
 - (b) *Business Growth*: Tees Valley Securing Investment; Tees Valley Supply Chain; Tees Valley Digital Transformation; Made Smarter Adoption North-East
 - (c) *Business Innovation*: Tees Valley Innovation Challenge; Tees Valley Net Zero; Tees Valley Labs
- 21. The Business Team are working collaboratively with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the service providers to raise awareness of these schemes and encourage Darlington businesses to engage and participate.
- 22. Darlington Innovation Growth Lab - a series of events where local business owners share insights on how they overcame the common challenges of growing a business – has returned. The September event discussed how sales are the very heartbeat of any business and how to develop longstanding customer relationships with impact and integrity.
- 23. Over 100 exhibitors are expected at Darlington Jobs Fair Wednesday 2 October. The free event brings together employers, support organisations and education providers. Attracting both public sector organisations and private businesses, the jobs fair boasts a wealth of opportunities for people of all ages, interests and backgrounds. Job sectors including construction, engineering, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, professional services, retail, transport and uniformed public services will be represented at the event

and attendees will have the chance to explore different careers, hear about local opportunities and speak in person with recruiting employers and support organisations.

Towns Fund

24. Delivery onsite continues along Skinnergate and the Yards project, with enhancements continuing to a significant number of properties. Planning approval is now in place for the Coniscliffe Road public realm proposals, with works targeted to commence in Autumn 2024.
25. Hoptown Darlington is now open to visitors, part funded by the Town Fund.
26. Our development partner Adavo are undertaking work to secure the required statutory consents for progression of the redevelopment of the former Northern Echo building. It is anticipated that the work will be completed to the ground floor in August 2025, with completion of the building in 2026.
27. Minor amendments to the design of proposals for the number 156 Northgate project have been finalised. These amends will now be reviewed in line with statutory requirements, subject to which the project will progress to tender for the works.
28. The design of proposals for the Edward Pease House are being finalised. Planning and Listed Building consents will be applied. Subject to approval and appointment of a suitable contractor, works are proposed start on site early in 2025.
29. The design of several property enhancements along Victoria Road continues to be developed, with progress made on several properties on site.
30. Negotiations with the owners of Northgate House have commenced with the appointment of an independent valuer agreed by the Council and the building owners. This work is ongoing and further updates on the progress of these discussions will be shared with members in due course.
31. Notwithstanding the above a planning application for the above building and the adjacent land along Gladstone Street/Kendrew Street is progressing which will form part of any forthcoming CPO process.

Estates

32. The acquisition of the Wilko leasehold interest has now completed, and measures are in place to keep the premises secure while potential interim occupiers are explored.

Planning Policy

33. The Government have announced a consultation on amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), this reflects the Government's commitment to housebuilding

and growing the economy. The consultation ran until 24 September.

34. The key elements of the amendments are set out below. In summary the key proposed changes out for consultation are as follows:
- (a) Housing targets will be mandatory using a new Standard Method. For Darlington this will be 500 per annum. Reference to 'exceptional circumstances' we used to justify a higher figure has now been removed.
 - (b) The new method will include a stronger affordability ratio driver and the removal of the clause about previous oversupply in an area.
 - (c) All authorities will need to have a Local Plan in place – there will be an end to changes to planning policy which have stalled Plan making and a commitment to the Government stepping in where authorities fail to deliver.
 - (d) Easier means to deliver major infrastructure. Revisions to NSIP threshold. (Byers Gill would have been our decision to make for example)
 - (e) Removal of reference to 'beautiful' and 'beauty' in favour of 'well designed'.
 - (f) Increased support for renewable energy proposals.
 - (g) Stronger encouragement to identify land for 'modern economy' uses such as tech, data centres, gigafactories etc.
 - (h) Public service infrastructure now extended to include early years and post 16 education.
 - (i) There are several other significant changes around Greenbelt and urban uplift which aren't relevant to Darlington.
35. You will note that Darlington's target of 500 is only slightly above the current Local Plan target of 492, whilst for example County Durham jumps from their current Plan target of 1,129 to 2,210 and Stockton's from 444 to 861.
36. Our main response to Government is that Local Planning Authorities who allocate enough land to meet their requirement under the new standard method should not be penalised if housebuilding does not meet the target.
37. A report will be prepared for a future Cabinet explaining the implications for our current Local Plan.

Conservation

38. We are currently out for consultation on the Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal, which suggests amendments to the Conservation Area boundary. Once the consultation period has ended a report will be prepared analysing the comments and making recommendations to the Council.

39. Work is currently on-going on a Conservation Area Appraisal for Middleton St George, a report will be prepared seeking approval for consultation on a new Conservation Area, this will be considered in the New Year.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Economy Portfolio

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Operational Services

General Overview

2. The Adult Social Care web pages have been updated, with clear information, signposting and guidance.
3. CQC Local Authority Information Return (LAIR) was submitted on 12 July 2024 and preparation is underway in readiness for the site inspection including briefing sessions for Members.
4. The latest performance reports identify the average age of individuals moving to permanent residential, or nursing care is 86, which is an increase from the previous 2 years where the figure was 84. This illustrates that people are maintaining their independence for longer.
5. From April - June 2024 the percentage of individuals who have no ongoing care needs following a period of Reablement has increased from 54.2% to 56.1%, whilst people whose level of need has decreased is 34.5% compared to 27.1% the previous year. This corresponds to the increase in the percentage of individuals who feel that they have improved. During this time 96.2% people who provided feedback said that they felt they had improved, this is compared to 88.1% last year and 89.3% during 2022-23. Reablement is continuing to achieve positive outcomes for people achieving optimum independence; not requiring care and support following intervention.
6. **Hospital discharges** - pressures continue however referrals continue to progress in a timely and safe manner. Recruitment is now aligned to the in reach reablement project working within Short Break stay placements with care home homes and individuals with the aim of earlier discharge home. We aim to analyse the data to review the impact of this project which is still in its infancy so unable to review at this time.
7. Meetings are regularly scheduled with the ICB and TEWV to observe opportunities to progress discharges where delayed transfers of care are identified. DBC housing also attend to observe general housing stock and housing options support within the independent housing market where appropriate.
8. **Safeguarding** - We have one care home currently within the Executive Strategy Process and improvements are being evidenced. Two care homes have recently concluded positively following successful evidenced improvement.

9. Safeguarding referral numbers have reduced when compared with the same period last year. However, we anticipate an increase throughout the school summer holidays which is reflective of a national and regional pattern.
10. **Occupational therapy (OT)** Referrals have increased significantly across the last three months. Referrals awaiting allocation for further assessment following triage and priority rated by an OT are currently at 160, this has reduced from 168 in March, this position is significant in view of received referrals of 288 over the last three months. There were 78 DFGs major works completed since April 2024: 55 level access showers/bathroom work 22 stairlifts 3 extension work 12 steps/access work 5 internal works/joinery (some of which was multiple works for one household).
11. **Sensory** - visual impairment officer is now in post and cases awaiting allocation have reduced.
12. **Blue Badges** - there are 240 referrals awaiting an OT assessment. Within the same period last year this was between 40-60. Agreement was reached to amend the current criteria list to remove the need for OT assessment for some long-term health conditions where medical evidence has been provided (COPD and Osteoarthritis). Customer Services are also supporting to progress approx. 112 referrals within agreed additional hours to create capacity and reduce backlog.

Commissioning and Contracts

13. The Commissioning Team is working with the 12 locally based Working Age Adults Residential care services to jointly develop new contracts for care arrangements. These providers meet the care needs of our most vulnerable and complex residents including people with learning, mental health and physical disabilities. The contracts will be tailored to each individual care home to reflect their different models of care. Commissioning is also working alongside our finance colleagues to develop a new sustainable and affordable fee model going forward. It is expected that the new arrangements will come into effect from 1 October 2024.
14. A joint Day Opportunities initiative is underway with Healthwatch Darlington. Day Opportunity services provide a range of community-based activities for older people, and people with learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities and mental health support needs. They allow people to pursue activities and interests that fit around their daily lives and are essential in supporting health and wellbeing. Healthwatch are facilitating an engagement and consultation exercise over the next few months consisting of a survey as well as face to face meetings which will gather the views of service users, families/carers and providers in order to gain an in- depth understanding of people's current experience of services and how this can be improved. The outcome of the review will help shape the new Day Opportunities contract which is due to be renewed in 2025.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

15. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners met on 25 June. Keith Wanley, Independent Author provided an update on progress of the Learning Lessons Review 'Philip & Loraine'. Key themes identified include self-neglect and hoarding disorder and Mental Capacity. Partners highlighted these issues are being reflected nationally. The report will be published once signed off by the Partnership.

16. Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) is a national model changing the way emergency services respond to welfare and medical calls and Partners discussed the responsibility they have to monitor and ensure partner agencies carry out their roles in the RCRP process.
17. The Partnership held its first conference on 2 July, this was in response to work carried out after several learning reviews in Darlington that involved aspects of self-neglect and hoarding. The conference featured a range of speakers which focussed on evidence-based research, challenging practice issues, hoarding disorder and indicators linked to self-neglect.
18. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group met on 9 July 2024 and Chairs of sub groups provided an overview of ongoing activity which highlighted how busy the groups have been. The group received presentations which provided an: overview of 'eyes on the baby', SUDI (Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy) prevention training being rolled out across Darlington, applicable to a wide workforce to educate on safe sleeping and an overview of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping agenda for Darlington.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

Children's Front Door

2. The Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) continues to perform consistently well. Contacts received into the service remain high and this is expected and in-line with the model adopted at the Front Door, encouraging partners and the public to discuss any concerns for children and seek advice in relation to appropriate services for families. The workforce is stable and experienced and outcomes are proportionate with lower referrals into social care and more contacts being referred to single agencies, universal services and Building Stronger Families.
3. Re-referrals to social care increased during 23/24 and work has now commenced to explore this within a weekly re-referral meeting. During this meeting any issues or themes will be identified and a plan agreed where deemed necessary.
4. Joined up working between CIAT and the Children with Disabilities team is underway to focus on improving contact enquiries carried out at the Front Door when a child is thought to/or has a disability.
5. 4 Kids, the Police and social care project that sits within the Front Door Service continues to play a pivotal role when working with families that have experienced domestic abuse; feedback continues to be very positive. 4 Kids form part of the multi-agency daily triage meeting and assist with decision making, providing crucial insight such as footage from Body Worn Cameras, this is innovative and a service that is unique to Darlington.
6. With regard to Missing and Exploited year-end data we have seen a reduction in missing episodes, however the number of children going missing remains consistent. We continue to work closely with Police colleagues and staff within the Children's Homes. We know that children who go missing are often at a higher risk of exploitation and so the two areas of safeguarding are closely linked. Child exploitation continues to be monitored and disrupted via the Missing and Exploited Group, this is a multi-agency meeting that is held fortnightly.

Building Stronger Families Service

7. The Service continues to offer a wide, diverse range of groups which are specifically focused on those families who have been identified as requiring targeted intervention. In addition a similar offer is given to those families in the community who are not known to other services (universal support).

8. Staff continue to work efficiently to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time. When work with Building Stronger Families ends the family are able to access a number of groups giving longer term support through the family hub model. In addition, we continue to work with partners and colleagues to remind them and support them in the identification of a universal offer where appropriate. This is an ongoing piece of work which we hope will have a positive impact on the families in order to prevent escalation back into statutory services.
9. The refreshed Early Help Assessment is currently being trialled. Two of the managers are in the process of completing assessments to ensure it is appropriate and fits with the ethos of being a more succinct and family friendly assessment. It remains the intention to launch this new assessment later in the year.

Young People's Engagement and Justice Service (YPEJS)

10. The support given by the newly appointed Victim Liaison Officer has provided an enhanced provision and afforded the opportunity to now work with all victims of crime, regardless of criteria or need.
11. The annual Strategic Plan was completed within the identified timescale and initial feedback has been positive via the Youth Justice Board. A focused response is imminent and will be shared with the YPEJS Strategic Management Board at the earliest opportunity.
12. The Service is still awaiting confirmation of the Youth Justice Grant allocation. There remains a level of anxiety given the delay in this and indeed what the amount may be and whether there is to be a decrease in allocation based on previous years.

Safeguarding Assessment and Care Planning including Children with Disabilities

13. 259 children & family (C&F) assessments have been completed in the year to date and timeliness of C&Fs has significantly improved with June 2024 data showing that 98.8% of C&Fs were completed within statutory timescales. This has been due to focused management oversight to ensure any delayed C&F assessments do not impact on children and improved performance is linked to more management workloads within the Assessment and Safeguarding teams.
14. We support 300 children under child in need plans and 115 children are subject to child protection plans. After an increase in Q4 of children subject to child protection plans which was directly linked to a reduction in our children in care numbers, this has now reduced and is more stable.
15. Focused work is ongoing in relation to our re-referral numbers, this is children where a re-referral is made within 12 months of a previous referral to social care. Year to date, 22.4% of referrals to social care are re-referrals. To understand and learn from this further a weekly re-referral meeting is taking place with representatives from the children's front door, Assessment & Safeguarding and members of the senior leadership team. This enables us to review re-referrals 'live' and embed learning within the service. In addition to this a deep dive of no further action C&F assessments has been undertaken with learning being shared within the service. The deep dive shows that at times we continue

to close children to social care on 'safety plans' which is against current guidance and that we are not always well communicating our concerns to families.

16. Ongoing development work with the Assessment & Safeguarding teams is taking place to focus on further enhancing the quality of our work with families and learning from best practice. Alongside this we are developing our electronic system by reviewing changes to our C&F structure, reviewing our pre-birth process and embedding our legal discussions within LCS to enable better reporting.

Looked After and Care Leaver information

17. We continue to expand out taster flat provision and currently we have 12 flats. This is supporting young people to transition to independence with support. They are utilised by our Staying Close project.
18. Work has progressed to secure a further taster flat through DBC Housing Services.
19. A young person has been identified to move into the additional taster flat later this month, this young person is currently in an external residential placement at a weekly cost of £4,093. The four young people to date who have moved/due to move into the expanded taster flat capacity had a combined weekly external residential placement cost in the region of £17,000.
20. As of the end of June we had 298 children looked after which has reduced again from 31 March 2024, when the number of looked after children was 300, this figure is lower than 29 February 2024, when we had 310 looked after children and 358 looked after children at the end in September 2023. 18 of these children are unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children. The reduction in looked after children is a result of focused work across all services to ensure when children become looked after, all other support has been considered. Monthly tracking meetings are held to reduce delay for children and ensure plans are progressed. We are currently working hard to reunify several families back home and discharge the care orders of the children.
21. There are currently 141 care leavers currently being supported by the team aged 18-25. An increase from 134 in March 2024 we also support 42 care experienced young people under the age of 18 years. The service supports 186 care experienced young people aged 16-25. We keep in touch with all our care leavers and there are regular opportunities for them to come together for activities and support. These events are organised daily during holiday periods such as walks, and other free activities are organised. Other examples are cookery and budgeting classes and clothes swap shops.
22. We have been successful in obtaining funding for three new projects; Family Finding, Mentoring and a Safe Space youth provision. Family finding is supported by three additional Lifelong Links workers are now in post and supporting 24 children with one young person waiting to be allocated. The team is supporting children and young people to establish a network of support as well as support from a dedicated life story social worker and a therapeutic worker. The service feels like it has now gathered momentum and is growing in its numbers.

23. The mentoring programme offers the opportunity for care experienced adults to become mentors for younger children in care. We have successfully recruited and trained 13 care experienced young people to date. 58 young people are now attached to the programme an increase of 22 since March 2024 with two additional referrals under consideration. The matching process has been incredible positive for all concerned and rewarding emotionally for all parties. It was really good to hear from some of the brilliant mentors at an event in Duke Street recently, when children in care and their mentors enjoyed pizza and chat at Hideaway Bar. Our mentors are often holding down jobs, bringing up their own families whilst also helping younger children in care. It is a fantastic initiative and promises to go from strength to strength.
24. Safe space is a youth provision ran by the team for children in our care. It is a mix of social and focused activities aimed at reducing loneliness, anti-social behaviour and supporting children's emotional health. The service is held every Monday evening. There has been a trip to the Knife Angel when it visited Sunderland. Since March 2024 we have achieved more events in the Community as planned. More events took place in the Summer such as tree planting and litter picks with an environmentally friendly and sustainable BBQ held in August.
25. Staying Close remains a significant strength. We are currently supporting 23 young people as part of this pilot, funded by the DfE. This number has increased from 21 in March. A further two young people are due to close to the service so further two Young people will be joining this service when this happens. Further consideration around referrals is always being reviewed. Some comments from workers feedback about the young people are "growing into himself and is happy" "House Proud and in work", "Rings for help when needs it". It is a great that one young person has progressed to a level where he feels he no longer needs this intense support. "Thank you for what I have learned and your help"
26. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – We are currently supporting 18 unaccompanied children; we are mandated to support a maximum of 22 children and young people. We had one young person turn 18 in June 2024 and another two turned 18 in July 2024, we can expect additional and new referrals in the coming months.
27. Within the last year, we supported 11 new and additional unaccompanied children. Ten transferred from the Home Office, one on foot.
28. Of the ten-home office mandated referrals, two young people travelled from Afghanistan, two travelled from Eritrea, two travelled from Turkey and one each from the following countries, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, and Egypt.
29. In addition to the children, we offer support to 16 over-18-year-olds through leaving care support.
30. We have Eleven unaccompanied young people placed in Darlington and seven outside of Darlington with four of these placed at a distance

Fostering and Supported Lodgings

31. **Recruitment** - Our fostering friendly policy has been agreed and signed off by Chief Officers. We have worked with HR colleagues to secure a policy for additional time off for

employees who wish to become foster carers or are existing foster carers to support them in meeting their fostering commitments. We have worked with and met with the Fostering Network to gain accreditation as a Fostering Friendly Employer. This, alongside a stronger fostering offer and continuing to develop our support to carers will position us to compete favourably in what is a limited pool of potential carers. Our next steps are to consider internal and external communications and arrange meetings with external businesses.

32. The team arranged and delivered recruitment events in the Collaboration space on two occasions, we have attended a Tractor and Digger Day in the Town Centre, Hullabaloo day at South Park, have recruitment tents booked for Legends and Fairies Day during the school holidays and Dinosaur Day both in the town centre.
33. We continue to promote recruitment through the DBC face book page and make links between our recruitment activities and the DBC face book page. We will be reviewing our recruitment activities throughout the first 6 months of the year to plan our next 12 months, with events being planned for Halloween and Christmas.
34. We have approved 6 new carers and 1 supported lodgings provider since April 2024.
35. We currently have nine assessments for Foster Carers ongoing with panel dates from August through to November 2024. Two Supported Lodgings Assessments are underway and Four applicants that have expressed an interest following home visits, we are waiting for applications.
36. Data from Foster With North East Hub evidences we have the highest conversion in the region of enquiry to application through to assessment.
37. **Retention & Support of Carers** - The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team continues to run monthly coffee mornings and support meetings for carers to meet each other and to listen and interact with different speakers.
38. Foster Carers are accessing Life Story work sessions with Professor Richard Rose through the Summer and carers who are part of the Mockingbird one constellation benefited from trauma informed therapeutic training led by our own therapeutic team with plans for this to be delivered to other carers due to its success.
39. The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team held a summer event for carers on 15th August 2024 at Willow Rd Community Centre where there was a bouncy castle (for the children) and light refreshments to bring carers and children together.
40. A new initiative that we are in the early stages of consulting with carers is looking to develop a Baby Group as carers who predominantly care for babies and infants felt that they would like more opportunities to come together and to access specialist training and support and we are exploring what this might look like and whether we could follow a Mockingbird style model.
41. Darlington Foster Carer Association held their general meeting last month and appointed several new board members with plans to expand the support and activities that they can offer to carers and in being a more active voice for carers within Darlington.

42. **Panels** – We are advertising for an additional Panel Chair and Panel members to support the increase and diversity of our Fostering panels. This is an exciting opportunity to recruit a more diverse selection of panel members from across our community to come together as a panel to make decisions about the suitability and appropriateness of our carers. Panel members will now be paid a fee as we seek to further develop our panels and we will be encouraging care experienced people to be applying to become a panel member so that we can benefit from their experiences and views.
43. **Supported Lodgings** – Fostering & Supported Lodgings Team Manager has now made his application to Ofsted and is going through the application process. Once completed there is a waiting list for interviews for Registered Manager. The manager and team are working hard to develop the Supported Lodgings service and ensure that it will be ready and compliant with standards and regulations for when Ofsted visits to inspect the service.

Homes for our Children

44. Cedars, Dunrobin Close, Lancaster Close, Harewood Hill Lodge and Gilling Crescent children homes all received our annual Ofsted inspection. I am thrilled all homes were graded as 'Good'. This time last year, we had one home (Harewood) graded as "Good", with other homes graded as "Requires Improvement". This is a huge achievement for the team with Cedars as a brand-new provision and Lancaster opening as a new build home.
45. Cedars offers emergency care and short breaks for children on the edge of becoming looked after. Cedars initially operated Friday to Monday. Following investment, Cedars has expanded operating hours over seven days in line with mainstream children's homes. Recruitment activity is underway to secure additional staffing to facilitate the increase in service offer. Once positions are appointed to, a revised Statement of Purpose will be submitted to Ofsted.
46. We are in our next phase of children's homes expansion with Gilling Crescent young people and staff due to move to a new build property at Butterfield Drive.
47. Ofsted stage one registration has been submitted and handover of the site is planned for week commencing 19th August. We have experienced delays in hand over delays due to snagging and health and safety checks.
48. Gilling Crescent will be repurposed creating additional local placements for our children in care.
49. Our three mainstream children's homes (Dunrobin, Gilling and Lancaster) remain at full occupancy, each home supports three young people in our care.
50. All staff in the children's homes are completing DDP therapy training.

Education

51. **Transition**- Officers working with school leaders in the Education Strategy Group (ESG) have developed a Darlington Transition Programme. Well managed transitions between education settings that put children and young people at the heart of the process have

been identified as a priority for the Education Strategy Group (ESG). Transition from primary to secondary school is an important milestone in the lives of children and families. Research indicates that ensuring the smoothest possible start to secondary education requires focus on both the pastoral and academic needs of pupils.

52. The programme aims to:

- (a) Ensure continuity and progression in learning to enable all children and young people to achieve
- (b) Develop the resilience of children and young people when managing change, allowing them to progress and thrive
- (c) Strengthen mutual understanding, partnership working and professional development between phases of education
- (d) Encourage good practice in the transfer of information between partners and provide opportunities for mutual support
- (e) Support retention in education and training into post-16 education and beyond

Youth Unemployment

53. The Darlington 18–24-year-old claimant count has risen slightly from 510 young people in May 2024 to 515 young people in July 2024. Darlington’s claimant count at 6.9% (6.9%) is higher than the North-East average of 5.9% (5.9%) and the national average of 5.2% (5.1%). Overall, all averages have remained relatively static over the last three months.

54. The July 2024 figures (May 2024 in brackets) for the Tees Valley are as follows:

(a) Hartlepool	8.3% (8.7%)
(b) Redcar and Cleveland	7.5% (7.7%)
(c) Middlesbrough	8.1% (7.8%)
(d) Stockton -on-Tees	7.9% (7.7%)
(e) Darlington	6.9% (6.9%)

55. Since its start in March 2024, to the end of July 2024, the Darlington Employment Initiative (DEI) has worked with 76 participants, of which 32 have moved into employment. 46 (60%) of the participants were aged 16-24, and of those 15 have moved into employment.

56. DEI offers employability support to economically inactive people of all ages, with a focus on; those looking after the family/home, those early retirees over 50, and those who are short term sick (under 12 months). The programme runs until 1 March 2025 and is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Children’s Commissioning and Contracts

57. The priorities within the refreshed Children’s Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy have been further progressed through work between the children’s commissioners and local providers to expand the range of regulated supported accommodation for Looked After Children and Care Leavers aged 16 and 17. It is expected that through this partnership

approach there will be a further 15 units of supported accommodation developed with the first units of accommodation coming online by November 2024.

58. A tender exercise has been undertaken to seek to increase the number of contracted providers of regulated community care for Darlington children. This is care for children with assessed eligible social care needs and will be tailored to the individual support needs of the child. The care can range from care provided directly into the family home, to support to access social and community based opportunities. Some children will also have a specific need for support with personal care. Tender evaluations are underway with new contracting arrangements commencing in February 2025.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

59. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners met on 25 June. Suzy Kitching Independent Author provided an update on progress of the Child J Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review, following the death of a 22 month old child. Suzy is preparing a draft report for consultation and key themes include child's lived experiences, impact of parental mental health and unseen men/care givers. A report will be published in due course following the conclusion of the criminal investigation.
60. Partners discussed Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) which is a national model changing the way emergency services respond to welfare and medical calls and Partners discussed the responsibility they have to monitor and ensure partner agencies carry out their roles in the RCRP process relating to children.
61. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group met on 9 July and Chairs of sub groups provided an overview of ongoing activity which highlighted how busy the groups have been. The group received presentations which provided an: overview of 'eyes on the baby', SUDI (Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy) prevention training is being rolled out across Darlington applicable to a wide workforce to educate on safe sleeping and an overview of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping agenda for Darlington

Councillor Nick Wallis
Children and Young People Portfolio

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

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

Public Health

2. We are working with Fresh to promote the Stoptober 2024 campaign to encourage people to quit smoking as part of this national campaign, as evidence shows that if someone can make it to 28 days smokefree they are five times more likely to quit for good. The Director of Public Health, Leader of the Council, a Stop Smoking Advisor and successful quitters attended a photo shoot at Hopetown, to be used as part of the campaign. The opportunity has also been used to promote the North East [Declaration](#) for a Smokefree Future.
3. We have launched the use of an App as part of an infection prevention quality assurance programme for adult residential care providers. It has been commissioned for 3 years initially, which will allow us to understand the impact of implementation and acceptability to users. Darlington is only the second community area in the country to do this
4. The App is matched to the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act and national infection prevention and control (IPC) standards. It is anticipated that a standardised approach across care providers will drive up compliance with requirements, prepare providers for success with CQC inspections, help reduce incidences of infection and outbreaks and reduce hospital admissions, which in turn should enhance the quality of life for service users. Care providers have been engaged in the process of planning for the pilot via direct conversation and briefing updates in a variety of forums. The App dashboard enables Public Health to have continuous oversight of IPC practice, with the system intended to replace the approach of an annual inspection and improve overall oversight of IPC practice. Environmental Health, Safeguarding and Commissioning colleagues have inputted into the development of the programme and will be able to utilise the information gathered, whilst area CQC colleagues have been consulted and are supportive of the programme. Regular reviews during the 3 years will be service user led with feedback gathered.
5. With support from the Association of Directors of Public Health North East and sustainable food partnerships the North East was selected as a regional partner for *Good Food Local* over the next three years. Good Food Local is a project run by Sustain (the alliance for better food and farming), funded by Impact on Urban Health. The work has included a regional benchmarking process to encourage local authorities to make commitments to 'good food'. A regional launch event is taking place on 26 September at Darlington College, with representation from local authorities and members of Food Networks across the North East and North Cumbria. The launch event will be an opportunity to share the

action plans which have been developed in response to the outcomes of the regional benchmarking and there will be guest speakers sharing expertise in areas such as food growing and community food action, healthy food for all, sustainable food economy and food for the planet.

6. We have been informed that Dame Carol Black, who carried out the independent national review on drugs which led to the 10-year Drug Strategy 'From Harm to Hope', is planning to visit Darlington on 11 September to see in practice how recovery and treatment services can work together in an integrated and purposeful way to deliver on key aspects of the national strategy. Our treatment provider (We Are With You) put forward the Darlington partnership with Recovery Connections and the council's ACCESS provision as an excellent example of how this can work well with positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities. It is a huge credit to everyone involved.
7. The areas of particular interest for the visit by Dame Carol Black are:
 - (a) the integrated/partnership working with a Lived Experience Recovery Organisation (LERO);
 - (b) treatment and recovery for those who use heroin/crack;
 - (c) diversion from prison, service in prisons and continuity of care on leaving custodial settings.
8. We have worked with our providers to plan the agenda for the day to showcase Darlington's partnership approach and emphasis on a holistic recovery focused treatment offer, whilst also highlighting areas of innovation and demonstrating the positive impact the increased national funding available to Darlington has had in supporting all of this work.

Director of Public Health Annual Report

9. The Director of Public Health is required to produce an independent annual report on the health of the local population, on a topic of their choice. The annual report for 2023/24 has looked at the issue of women's health and makes 3 overarching recommendations. The report is available here – <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/21677/director-of-public-health-annual-report-2023-24.pdf>

Housing Services

10. June saw Refugee Week, the world's largest Arts and Culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary, and the theme this year was 'Our Home'.
11. To celebrate the occasion, our Housing Services Refugee Team hosted an event at The Hullabaloo, which was entertaining, productive and educational but also displayed the amazing resources in Darlington and the support on offer. There was access to the Hullabaloo sensory area, a fire engine for children to enjoy investigating, a Ukrainian Orchestra; Kostia for people to enjoy, together with a wealth of agency stands offering practical advice, free services, events and guidance.

12. Naloxane Training – We are currently rolling out Naloxone training for Housing, Lifeline and Customer Services staff. This training is being provided by Public Health to enable staff to support harm reduction and provide support to individuals who may take an overdose.

Lifeline Services

13. A review of meals is currently being undertaken at our Extra Care schemes with the aim to improve the quality and choice for residents. Residents are being consulted as part of the review, with mystery shopping being undertaken by our Tenants Panel, which is also helping us to evaluate the current service.
14. A planned programme of works to upgrade carpets, decoration and furniture for the communal areas of our Sheltered schemes is currently being developed, with the scheme residents being involved in the planned works. New flooring at Park Place has already been installed as part of this process.

New Build

15. Work on the Sherborne Close Phase 2 new build site has now commenced, which will deliver 14 new Council homes, including a further 5-bedroom property for Children's Services. A previous funding bid with Homes England had already successfully delivered £0.545m towards the project but, following a further bid for funding, I am pleased to report that the Council has secured another £0.325m from Homes England towards the project. Completion of the site is due in September 2025.
16. As I previously announced, the first phase of our Neasham Road new build scheme has now been completed and I am pleased to report that the first 21 tenants have now moved in and are settling into their new Council homes.

Climate Change

17. Work has now commenced on our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 project. We successfully secured £1.461m of grant funding, which will be matched with our own funds to provide a £2.9m scheme, upgrading 130 homes in the Parkside, Redhall and Lascelles areas. Upgrades will include external wall insulation, as well as new windows and doors, providing warmer and more energy efficient homes.

Dolphin Centre

18. The newly refurbished toddler pool opened to public in August. The pool features new interactives and splash area, which has been very positively received by families. The reopening of the toddler pool also enabled the reopening of the popular slides. The pool complex is now fully open following a lengthy refurbishment period to ensure that Darlington has a pool for the future.

19. Dolphin Centre memberships are currently at the highest level in the history of the centre with over 2,400 live memberships in circulation. The centre has witnessed a noticeable increase since the reopening of the main pool earlier this year and real growth in student membership following focused marketing and student engagement work carried out in the last 12 months.

South Park Café

20. South Park has performed extremely well over the summer with hundreds of residents and families using the facility. Some recently installed outdoor permanent seating has been a welcome addition to the café over the summer, inviting park users to enjoy the facilities.

Holiday Activity Project

21. The HAF programme (Holiday Activities and Food) is for children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals. The programme ran for five weeks over the summer holidays with a vast geographical spread across the town. Over 4,000 places were available for children aged 5-16 years of age. A specialist SEND programme ran for five days at Beaumont Hill Academy. The programme had a digital presence in the town and was promoted on social media. A wide variety of physical and enrichment activities were provided including NE Wake Park, Learn to ride, Forest School, Junior First Aid and Surfing. New activities were introduced including a visit to Hopetown. Over 50 providers have delivered on the programme.

Health in Haughton Matters

22. The Health in Haughton Matters Project continues to record over 300 attendances each month. The programme consists of Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, Dance Fit and Low Impact Fitness. The Health in Haughton Matters Constitution continues to drive the programme across Darlington. The group have put a bid together for a National Lottery Awards for All grant for £20,000. The grant will allow four new sessions to be added to the provision over the next two years.

Councillor Matthew Roche
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

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

Highway Maintenance Programme

2. Highway Maintenance Schemes on site:
 - (a) Heighington Footways (Phase 3): Footway Reconstruction (0.319km)
 - (b) Avon Road Estate Footways (phase 2): Footway Resurfacing (0.404km)
 - (c) C38a Neasham Road (Phase 3): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.214km)
 - (d) A1150 Salters Lane North: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.891km)
 - (e) A68 West Auckland Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.510km)
 - (f) Micro Asphalt / Surface Dressing Contract (4.185km, 27 sites)
 - (g) A67 Piercebridge: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.882km)
 - (h) Unc. Roundhill Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (1.68km)
3. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) B6280 Yarm Road & Hundens Lane junction: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.231km)
 - (b) Unc. West Auckland Road West Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.190km)
4. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) Unc Barmpton Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.810km)
 - (b) Patching Contract: Carriageway Patching (18 sites)
 - (c) A167 Croft Road (Tees View): Carriageway Remedials (0.050km)
 - (d) Unc Riverside Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.310km)

Safer Routes to School (SRTS)

5. A scheme for St. Augustine's Primary School was previously consulted on. Taking account of responses received, a revised scheme will be consulted on in September.
6. A scheme for St. Bede Primary School on Thompson Street East was consulted on, with a closing date of Sunday 23 June. Responses have been analysed and the scheme is being taken forward to the statutory Traffic Regulation Order stage with comments being incorporated into the scheme where appropriate.
7. A scheme for Hurworth Comprehensive was consulted on and construction is currently on site programmed until 10 September 2024.
8. A scheme for Longfield School has been developed and is expected to go out to consultation in September.
9. Feasibility work has started for a scheme at Mowden Junior School.

Bus Services

10. Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) are in the process of revising the way at stop bus information is displayed. This includes new branding and making information easier for passengers to access. The re-design also aims to improve the quality of information available.
11. TVCA have launched a new scheme offering cheaper fares for people aged under 22. This comprises of a £1 single fare and a £3 day ticket, which will primarily be valid in Tees Valley, but will also allow cross boundary travel into the Transport North East Area. There was also a 'kids travel free' offer during the summer holidays: for every fare paying adult a child under 11 could travel with them for free.
12. TVCA as Local Transport Authority has produced a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This is required to secure the release of its BSIP funding allocation for 2024/25. TVCA continue to develop the improvement programme with support from local authorities.
13. It has been agreed that the supported bus services in Darlington and the Tees Flex service will all be funded by TVCA until March 2025. Funding beyond March 2025 is dependent upon further Department for Transport funding through the BSIP process. The supported services are 3 and 4 (evenings and Sundays), 6/6A, 16, 17 and 18.

Rail Education Programme

14. The Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership recruited a Rail Education Officer in September 2023 to deliver a programme of rail safety and confidence sessions in schools within a 1.5-mile corridor of the Bishop Line, between Bishop Auckland and Darlington. The two-year programme is funded by the rail industry.
15. Sessions began in schools in November 2023 and up until the end of the 2024 academic year (end July 2024) the programme has now been delivered in 22 schools in total, including ten in Darlington: Corporation Road Primary, Firthmoor Primary, Gurney Pease Academy, Heathfield Academy, Northwood Primary, Red Hall Primary, Springfield Academy, St Bede's RC Primary, St George's CE Academy and St John's CE Academy.
16. Up to the end July 2024, 3,791 pupils have received the training, of which 1,967 are Darlington students.

Hopetown Darlington

17. Hopetown Darlington, the north's newest visitor attraction, has welcomed over 35,000 visitors in the first month since opening on 16 July 2024.
18. Visitors have enjoyed a fun-packed summer programme of activities and events, including Brick Journeys exhibition, family-friendly workshops, tours of the site and outdoor entertainment. 'Experiment!', a unique, immersive experience telling the story of how we changed the world from Darlington, will be launched for visitors in late September.
19. During the Autumn season, schools' engagement will be a major priority at Hopetown, alongside a broad range of community groups and an exciting month-long Christmas programme.
20. The official opening of Hopetown will happen on Friday 27 September (199th birthday of the Stockton and Darlington Railway) with invited guests, partners, and Darlington school children, celebrating the town's wonderful new visitor attraction.

Darlington Hippodrome

21. The Mousetrap ran for seven performances between 23 and 27 July, selling over 4,200 seats across the week (up from 3,240 seats sold across the week in April 2019). Audio description and a touch tour for visually impaired people took place prior to the Saturday matinee.
22. September highlights have included Sounds of the 60s Live hosted by legendary DJ Tony Blackburn, and West End musical Sister Act from 9 to 14 September. Ghost The Musical also opened on 24 September and will run to 28 September.
23. On 1 August the venue was hired by the BBC for an event hosted by the Director General. The hire was a great success, with positive feedback received about both the event and the venue.
24. A Taste of Africa Family Fun Day was held on Saturday 24 August: a day of culture, entertainment, cuisine and community spirit for all ages in celebration of African heritage.
25. During the school summer holidays, young people have joined in with circus skills workshops (to complement performances by Cirque in the theatre), Youth Theatre and Youth Dance taster sessions.

Libraries

26. The Reminiscence Collection for older people at Darlington Libraries will be extended thanks to a funding contribution from Darlington Rotary Club. New boxes are being created on the themes of Royalty, Childhood, Music, Women's War, Pets, 1970s and 1980s. The Reminiscence Collection helps to stir memories and conversations about the past. The collection is used at monthly Musical Memories sessions at both libraries and is freely available for public use in the Reminiscence Room.
27. This summer, Darlington Libraries offered in the region of 140 activities, workshops and events for children and young people over the school holidays; almost double the usual number. The increase is attributed to workshops within The Hive, and the Cockerton Team running out of hours events at the branch. Highlights within The Hive include, 3D design and print, digital illustration, sewing, coding and animation. The branch library ran Teddy Bears Sleepovers, story and crafts, photography, movie screenings and educational activities learning about different continents. Alongside this programme, the usual programme of summer activities was also provided, including Baby and Toddler sessions, magicians, animal encounters, authors and illustrator experiences.
28. Darlington Libraries took over the market square for a fun day incorporating children's entertainment, a range of author and illustrator experiences and mascot meet and greets. Building on the success of last year, the day presents an opportunity to engage with a large group of families, to promote library services and the Summer Reading Challenge.
29. From September 2024, a range of new workshops are now being offered in The Hive. In addition to workshops for school pupils, the following are also available for children
 - (a) Animation
 - (b) Paper Crafting (Home Educated Children)
 - (c) Digital Illustration (Home Educated Children)
 - (d) 3D Design & Print
30. The following activities are available to adults:
 - (a) 3D Design and Print
 - (b) Fabric/Sewing Social Group
 - (c) Dress Making Course
 - (d) Paper Crafting
 - (e) Digital Illustration
 - (f) Music Production Course

Creative Darlington

31. The Art Gallery counter at Darlington Library recorded 3,157 attendances to the Hot Contents exhibition by Matt Denham, which ran between Wednesday 19 June and Thursday 18 July. The exhibition included video works, audio recordings, photographs and an installation. Hot Contents was informed by 24 participatory sessions and 44 monthly meetings which helped the artist to build and maintain community connections. Darlington Culture Volunteers helped steward the exhibition. The project was backed by Arts Council England Project Funding, and the Heritage and Culture budget.
32. A group exhibition showcasing work by members of Darlington Borough Council's Community Arts Project was on display between 23 July and 6 August 2024 with 1,948 visits to the Art Gallery counted during that period.
33. An exhibition by Sophie Seita was on show from 9 to 14 August and was promoted within Darlington Library's summer holiday programme and the Darlington Pride programme. It included a work informed by LGBTQ+ young people that was informed by a workshop the artist co-ordinated by Curious Arts.
34. Heritage & Culture fund programme budget supported a Mini Pride event at Darlington Library and Darlington Hippodrome on Monday 12 August, programmed by Curious Arts.
35. Tracks Darlington, with £2,000 Heritage & Culture Fund programme budget support in 2024/25, secured a £30,000 Arts Council England Project funding award and will deliver a range of activities. These include a Last Train Home Express launch event at Hopetown Darlington on Thursday 5 September, and the Last Train Home Festival, held across Darlington Hippodrome, The Hullabaloo and The Forum Music Centre, on Saturday 7 September.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

36. The Summer programme began this year on Wednesday 17 July with GOLD Tea Dance with people dancing and enjoying afternoon tea while attendees could engage with many organisations for support and advice.
37. The Vintage Car Rally, held on Saturday 20 July, attracted thousands of visitors with fantastic feedback and increased footfall.
38. Darlington by the Sea also returned for 5 days on Monday 24 July, attracting visitors from across the region. This event is always exceptionally popular, with families enjoying the experience of playing in the pop-up beach in the town centre.
39. 1,970 runners took part in the annual 10k Road Run, with extra road closures and traffic management strategies implemented this year to increase safety. The race was very well received, and feedback has been positive. In addition to the 10k, a Junior 3k and Family Fun Run brought lots of visitors to Darlington.

40. Darlington Pride proved to be a great success, despite the uncertainty created by the national unrest in the week prior to the event. Thousands of visitors came to Darlington to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community with many organisations attending and great live music on stage for visitors to enjoy. The annual Saturday event in the market square was followed by the more relaxed event in South Park on the Sunday and the Mongay Pride Party.
41. Making Sense Together, a specialist event aimed at neurodivergent people and families, returned for 2024 on Thursday 15 August. The event offered visitors sensory and engaging opportunities to explore and enjoy an event alongside specialist service providers on site for people to be signposted and supported.
42. Additional town centre animation days were programmed including Legends and Fairytales and Dinosaur Day, which attracted many visitors into Darlington with activities around the town centre to encourage people to explore and move around different locations.
43. The Market Asset Management (MAM) team organised a second food festival in the town centre over the August Bank Holiday, with the addition of some extra Continental Market dates after a successful event earlier in the year. The additional markets add to the programme and atmosphere in Darlington.
44. Following the success of the British Cycling National Road Championships in June, British Cycling returned to Darlington to launch a race stage from the town centre on Wednesday 4 September. The 153 km race formed Stage 2 of the Men's Tour of Britain and was televised live on ITV4, providing an excellent opportunity for coverage of Darlington. Large-scale sporting events are very popular and showcase the town to new visitors, including overnight stays.

Environmental Services

45. Winter maintenance season is undertaken each year, commencing on the first Monday in October. The season will commence this year on Monday 7 October.

Climate Change

46. The Hive at Darlington Libraries is now offering a "Make-do and Mend" weekly workshop where different skills and technical techniques are shared to support attendees to repair, reuse and re-imagine clothing and fabric items.

Councillor Libby McCollom
Local Services Portfolio

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

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

Revenues and Benefits

2. Following the successful approval and implementation of the Council Tax and Business Rates Recovery Strategy in January 2024, the Revenues and Benefits team has initiated their first committal cases, to address some long-standing Council Tax debts, as follows:
 - (a) A resident in privately rented accommodation who had never paid any Council Tax on his home and owed over £8,100 in Council Tax, was sent a letter of intent to take committal action. Following contact with, and support from CAB, a direct debit was set up for his current year's Council Tax. At court, the Magistrate's issued a warrant of commitment, suspended on payment terms of no less than £195 each month, until the debt has been cleared.
 - (b) Another resident in privately rented accommodation who had never paid any Council Tax on his home and owed over £7,600 in Council Tax, was also sent a letter of intent to take committal action. The resident subsequently agreed to set up a direct debit for his current year's Council Tax and at court, the Magistrate's issued a warrant of commitment, suspended on payment terms of no less than £100 each month, until the debt has been cleared.
 - (c) A resident who owed over £7,400 in Council Tax dating back to 2016 was sent a letter of intent to take committal action. Numerous attempts to contact the resident, including visits had previously been undertaken, with no response. Following a letter of intent to take committal action, an agreement was made to start paying £230 each month to reduce the debt, and the first payments have already been received.
3. In addition to these committal actions, the Revenues and Benefits team continue to perform well in recovering other long-standing and large debts to the Council, as follows:
 - (a) Two Housing Benefit overpayments relating to undeclared capital were discovered in July 2024: one amounting to over £19,100 and the other amounting to over £20,200. In both cases, the team pressed for full payment, given that it had already been established that the debtors had sufficient capital to repay the debts. In both cases, the amounts were paid in full.

- (b) A resident owed over £7,000 in Council Tax arrears after he had inherited a property. A charging order was secured on the property and after the sale, £4,100 was paid from the proceeds of sale, with the resident paying the remaining £2,900 to clear the debt.
 - (c) A resident owed over £3,900 in unpaid Council Tax and had been returned by our Enforcement Agents, as they had been unable to collect the debt. Following investigations, it was established that the resident owned the property and was advised that we would pass it to our legal representatives to obtain a charging order and potentially force the sale of the property. The debt was then paid in full in June 2024.
4. The national collection of Council Tax and Business Rates performance statistics for 2023-24 has recently been published. The performance of our Revenues and Benefits team has previously been reported, but these national statistics show how well we compare to other Councils, as follows:
- (a) Our in-year collection of Council Tax of 96.39% was the third best in the North-East and above both the regional average of 94.93% and the English average of 95.94%.
 - (b) Our in-year collection of Business Rates of 99.97% was the best in the North-East and fourth best in England. Our performance was well above the regional average of 97.78% and the English average of 97.23%.
 - (c) Our collection of Council Tax arrears of 29.66% was the second best in the North-East and well above both the regional average of 14.55% and the English average of 16.73%.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

5. The Council's capital programme has a wide range of exciting projects being developed and delivered.
- (a) Darlington Station Project is progressing with works to the external areas and works external aspects of the buildings are nearing completion. The is being managed by TVCA.
 - (b) Hopetown Darlington is now open to the public and initial feedback received from visitors is very positive.
 - (c) Site work is now complete on the first phase at the Neasham Road housing scheme, and those properties are in the process of being handed over to Housing for allocation, whilst work continues on the second phase.
 - (d) Work has commenced at the Sherborne Phase II housing site with initial site clearance and excavation work complete.
 - (e) Detailed design work continues for the No.156 Northgate refurbishment scheme.

- (f) Site clearance and strip out works are nearing completion on the former Northern Echo building.
- (g) Business cases continue to be developed to secure additional projects from funding opportunities.
- (h) There remains a risk of further inflation related effects on construction related costs.

Corporate Systems and Processes

- 6. Artificial intelligence has the potential to make the delivery of some council services more efficient and at a reduced cost. The mainstream application of this technology within local government and many other sectors is still within its infancy, but we are actively involved with several local, regional, and national networks that are assessing and experimenting with this technology.
- 7. In addition to testing the functionality of Microsoft CoPilot, for which we already hold several licenses, we are developing a structured approach to inform if and when it would be appropriate to apply artificial intelligence more broadly to aid with the delivery of our services in line with the required data security measures.
- 8. The ambition is to have a clear plan in place by the end of 2025.

Death Registrations

- 9. The death registration process has remained largely unchanged for over 50 years. From Monday 9 September 2024 the way in which deaths are registered changed. Reform was identified largely arising from the Shipman Inquiry and the COVID Pandemic but also a number of other government inquiries and investigations.
- 10. The lead government department for these changes is the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
- 11. From 9 September 2024 the Medical Examiner Service became a statutory function, meaning all deaths except those referred to the Coroner must be scrutinised by a Medical Examiner. This applies to deaths that occur both in a hospital and in the community. The Medical Examiner Service for County Durham and Darlington is based at Darlington Memorial Hospital.
- 12. There are also other changes to the death registration process that apply from this date, including for medical professionals who can certify the death, a mandatory requirement for the Medical Examiner to discuss and agree a cause of death with the family of someone has died and also changes of who can attend the register office to register a death. The requirement to register a death within five days and also of having to attend the appointment to register the death are unchanged.
- 13. These changes will put the bereaved at the centre by providing an opportunity for them to raise questions or concerns with a senior doctor not involved in the care of the deceased. This will improve practice and communication, support the right deaths being referred to

coroners for further investigation and help deter poor practice and criminal activity.

14. A working party including the Medical Examiner Service, Coroner's Office, Register Office, Burial and Cremations team and funeral directors have been meeting for some time in preparation for these changes, to ensure that those bereaved have the correct information the impact of change is minimised upon those who have been bereaved.

Councillor Mandy Porter
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio

**COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council the updates for the Stronger Communities Portfolio are as follows:

National Unrest

2. The violence, in towns and cities across England and in Northern Ireland, was fuelled by misinformation online following the tragic incident in Southport. The unrest manifested in Darlington on the 5 August.
3. The Police lead the response and the Council and partners provided coordinated support. The focus of the unrest in Darlington was around the North Lodge and Gladstone Street area. Thankfully, there were no injuries, but several arrests were made for violent disorder and those have been dealt with swiftly through the Court system. The Leader and I have thanked staff who stepped up during this challenging period of unrest.
4. During the period of unrest contact was made with leaders of communities where our residents were feeling extremely nervous and concerned. Following the initial periods of unrest funding has been made available to areas where physical recovery is needed, this is not the case in Darlington. However, monitoring and engagement activity continues in numerous guises across a number of organisations to try to restore confidence, provide education and reassurance to communities and reduce any community tension that exists. The Council recognises that this will be an ongoing process.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

5. As previously reported the parameters in relation to crime and ASB have changed over recent years, like for like comparisons between years are becoming more comparable in terms of reporting criteria.

Local Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Trends – Darlington

Darlington	YTD July 2023	YTD July 2024
Crime	4337	3763
ASB	849	932

6. The combined total of incidents across Darlington has reduced by a total of 491 incidents when compared to the previous year.

Incidents specific to Darlington Town Centre

Darlington Town Centre	YTD July 2023	YTD July 2024
Crime	392	379
ASB	59	98

7. The combined total of Crime and ASB across Darlington town centre has increased by a total of 26 incidents when compared to the previous year.

Analysis of Crime statistics and patterns

8. Despite there being a reduction in crime overall some specific areas of crime are showing an increase, these include burglary (156 to 165), vehicle crime (222 to 246) and shoplifting (427 to 484), but retail crime in the town centre has reduced by 9% (133 to 103).
9. The Police, together with partners have responded through crime prevention campaigns, dedicated and additional patrols, proactive operations, use of criminal powers and targeting suspects which has resulted in arrests.

Analysis of ASB statistics

10. Analysis shows some specific geographic areas are seeing elevated levels of ASB when compared to last year. Town Centre (59 to 98), North Road (280 to 305) and East (263 to 290). There was a specific incident that may have affected the figures and that related to a group of youths gathering in Tommy Crooks Park and moving into the Town Centre.
11. Partners have increased patrols in these areas, targeted offenders and identified several individuals who are now subject of further investigation and intervention by the relevant services.

Interventions

12. Shopwatch continues to exchange information and intelligence. Investigations are underway to look at a system whereby all retail/businesses in the town have a means of communication outside of the 'shopwatch membership'. The group will continue reassurance work and support businesses as part of ongoing work in relation to the recent unrest.
13. Youth related incidents have reduced by 18% (808 to 663) and Youth/alcohol related incidents have reduced by 19% (52 to 42). Our Early Intervention and Prevention offer has been enhanced following the MoJ 'Turnaround' grant and Home Office 'Immediate Justice' investment. Referrals into this pathway gives opportunity for earlier intervention.
14. The Young People's Engagement and Justice Service have received 20 referrals into the Early Intervention and Prevention Pathway from the Civic Enforcement Team during this reporting period. Since the programme began in July 2023 there have been a total of 226 referrals in from Police, Civic Enforcement and Children's Initial Advice Team. Only 7 children have gone on to commit an offence and subsequently entered the judicial process.

15. Future Pathways ASB evening sessions have commenced a second cohort on 26 June and all 22 places are filled, this cohort runs until week commencing 26 August.
16. Work continues to intervene and steer young people away from ASB and crime:
 - (a) 5 young people received acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA)
 - (b) 2 committed ABA breaches and these are being followed up.
 - (c) 20 young people were referred to Darlington Borough Council Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service for positive intervention
 - (d) 15 young people are awaiting interview
 - (e) Increased patrols have been undertaken in hotspot areas.
17. In addition to ASB related activity the Civic Enforcement team have increased parking enforcement activity in all areas, but particularly in the town centre and resident parking areas where a number of complaints have been received. Officers have also continued to tackle problems associated with fly-tipping and waste in back lanes, the figures below provide an overview of activity:
 - (a) 44 environmental cases have been received (of which 34 have been closed)
 - (b) 4 successful prosecutions
 - (c) 10 case files submitted to legal
 - (d) 13 Community Protection Warnings issued
18. Over recent months there has been an increase in reports of begging in the town centre. A new communication plan involving the provision of posters has also been produced to tackle the problems associated with begging in the town centre. The involvement of the Integrated Management Unit of the police to manage those people who continue to beg, despite all forms of support, coaching and advice is proving beneficial.

Licensing

19. Two people (mother and son) prosecuted by Licensing for unlicensed dog breeding/selling animals. Both were fined and given a five-year ban for keeping animals. These convictions follow a series of prosecutions targeting criminals who exploit animals for profit.
20. On 13 August, Uber were granted a licence to operate private hire vehicles in Darlington. Uber vehicles from Stockton and Durham can already be seen in Darlington as they can lawfully take cross border bookings.

Trading Standards

21. A multi-agency operation targeting two licensed restaurants involved in organised crime found a number of illegal workers. Two further people were safeguarded from exploitation. These premises will be subject to a full licence review when papers are submitted by Home Office Immigration Enforcement.
22. Trading Standards undertook a joint visit with a vet to check on farm animals following up on a report of welfare concerns.

23. Op Nightstar work around the supply of illegal cigarettes and vapes with a focus on potential child sexual exploitation concerns ended on 31 March with the last day of action under this banner taking place on 4 April 2024. Investigations have continued under Operation Oracle with test purchase operations and inspection visits to problem retailers. Cash, illegal vapes and cigarettes have been seized from several stores. Vehicles used as storage for illegal goods have been seized.
24. Premise Closure Orders were granted by the Courts in relation to two problem retailers. Further closure order requests will be heard by the Courts in late August.
25. Our Routine Inspections of Darlington businesses are now well underway with visits planned to problem traders and high-risk businesses taking place.

Private Sector Housing and Update on Climate Change

Great British Insulation Scheme and ECO4 flex

26. In September 2023, the Private Sector Housing Team published a revised Statement of Intent for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) following the introduction of the Great British Insulation Scheme.
27. Great British Insulation Scheme and ECO4 Flex are household referral mechanisms within ECO wider schemes, which enable Local Authorities to widen eligibility criteria for properties to receive energy efficiency measures. This allows participating local authorities to include households they consider to be living in fuel poverty or on a low income or those vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, who may not qualify for the schemes via the standard eligibility criteria.
28. Under this scheme, the team have issued 247 declarations. These works have generally improved the Energy Performance Certificate rating by two bands in each property treated.

Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2)

29. Following a successful bid in January 2023, a scheme to improve energy inefficient properties, funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, has commenced across the area by our delivery partners ESH Construction.
30. The project is being led by Darlington Borough Council, under a partnership name of Home Energy Efficiency Tees Valley (HEET) aims to improve properties that are not heated by gas appliances across the Tees Valley.
31. There are approximately 9,000 potentially eligible properties across the area with around 2,800 in Darlington that could benefit from measures such as external wall insulation or solar panels.

Darlington Cares

32. Darlington Cares is set to deliver 10,000 hours of volunteering through its members volunteers. These cover schemes supporting education, environment and social justice. EE has embarked on a programme working in the Denes alongside The Friends of The Denes.
33. Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership will be holding two events in the autumn: a 'network and learn' event at Teesside University's Net Zero centre and an event for Darlington's small businesses to help them access support in starting work on net zero.

Voluntary and Community Sector

34. The Council continues to engage effectively with voluntary and community sector through the engagement group chaired by Inclusion North. It has three subgroups, children and young people, social inclusion and financial inclusion. It is embarking on a major piece of work looking at vulnerability and how agencies across the public and voluntary sectors can provide better support and points where people are prone to becoming vulnerable.
35. At its last meeting the Head of Community Safety attended the group as it considered the riots. The group are keen to be involved in any work going forward which supports groups made to feel vulnerable and to promote inclusion.

**Councillor Dr Amanda Riley
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance Framework - Update

2. The Committee received an update on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance Framework and Members were reminded of the new regulatory powers granted to the CQC under the Health and Care Act to assess local authorities, the role of the CQC, and the four themes and nine underlying quality statements contained within the assessment framework. We received further information in relation to the Care Act Principles, an anticipated timeline of activity in terms of our local assessment, the status of inspections across the North-East as at July 2024, and the work undertaken in terms of Darlington's self-assessment, including an analysis of current strengths and areas of development. It was noted that there will be CQC briefing sessions for those members involved in the assessment process.
3. Members were keen to hear more on the criteria and selection process for the cases to be inspected by the CQC, the additional workload that shifting timescales would create, the learning opportunities from those authorities which had gone through the inspection process, and the work undertaken to improve accessibility and presence on the Council's website.

Care Homes in Executive Strategy Measures / Arrangements

4. The Committee were pleased to receive an update on those services which have come out of the Executive Strategy process (ESP) during 2023-24, the services currently within Executive Strategy, and an ESP case study.
5. We were advised of a Risk Notification pilot scheme undertaken to reduce the quantity of inappropriate safeguarding concerns which did not meet the threshold of safeguarding being received by Adult Social Care. It was reported that the pilot initially included four care homes, however we were informed that this had been increased by one further care home and one domiciliary care agency. The Risk Notifications could be submitted for witnessed and unwitnessed falls, medication errors, peer on peer verbal or physical altercations, and, in the case of the domiciliary care agency, missed or late calls. Members received information relating to the Risk Notifications received during the pilot period, alongside a breakdown of the Risk Notifications per provider, the outcomes of the pilot, and identified next steps.
6. Members scrutinised the data provided in relation to the Risk Notification pilot, noting that one provider appeared to have a large number of falls, though it was acknowledged that many of the falls were attributed to one individual, and it was recognised that some

medical conditions had a greater propensity for falls and that it was not possible to remove all barriers. Members agreed that the Risk Notification process would need to be introduced across the sector in a staged manner, and it was hoped that the process would provide confidence to report and be a mechanism for improvement, rather than reprimand developing and continuing a culture of open dialogue between the council and care providers within the borough. Members were also interested to understand whether the local authority could assist in bridging any gaps in training with agency staff and if like the local authority, care providers used agencies only on an agreed framework to maintain standards.

7. Further discussion ensued on whether poor personal hygiene care could generate a Risk Notification, and we received reassurances that all care homes were monitored, not just those selected for the Risk Notification pilot, and that any such concerns would be addressed by the Contracting Team or the Safeguarding Adults Team.
8. We sought greater clarification of the guidance in terms of the definition of 'No Harm' in a safeguarding context and were keen to understand whether there was a framework of acceptable providers and what level of control the Council had in terms of ensuring the quality of safeguarding with our providers. Members accepted the definition of 'No Harm' provided by officers, commenting that any issue triggering risk notification does not equate to no harm to the individual.
9. Discussion returned to the volume of witnessed and unwitnessed falls, and it was noted that it was important to recognise any patterns in relation to multiple falls and the actions attempted to address these. A subsequent discussion took place on the reasons for redacting the identity of the providers.

Safeguarding

10. Following on from the update on the Executive Strategy process, the Committee received a presentation from the Service Manager (Safeguarding and ACT) on current safeguarding arrangements, based on the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP), which focused on placing the individual at the centre of the process, concentrating on the outcome that they would like to achieve and examining the risks and concerns in the context of the individual's well-being.
11. We were reminded of the obligations placed on the Council by Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 and were advised of the safeguarding triage tool used to gather relevant information. The tool provided guidance on specific aspects, such as contacting an individual safely in domestic abuse concerns, patterns of behaviour and repeat concerns, and that practitioners were encouraged to use the tool to aid decision-making and promote MSP. A number of steps to enable the Council to be preventative in its approach to individual's well-being, safety and overall need were outlined, including a Risk Notification Pilot, continued professional development across Adult Social Care, improved links with contracted services within the Safeguarding Adults Team, and information sharing meetings with partners and agencies.
12. Members returned to the Risk Notification pilot spoken of in the previous presentation and enquired whether a similar approach had been adopted by other local authorities, and

whether the pilot was comparable with any other work being undertaken by other local authorities.

Performance Indicators End of Year Report 2023/24

13. We received a report which provided Members with performance data against Key Performance Indicators for 2023-24. The performance information provided was in line with an indicator set and Scrutiny Committee distribution previously agreed by the Monitoring and Coordination Group, and subsequently agreed by the then Scrutiny Committee Chairs. The indicators were aligned with key priorities, and twelve indicators are reported to this Committee, ten on a six-monthly basis and two annually.
14. Members were informed that one of the indicators showed performance consistent to the same period last year (ASC 019 - Percentage of people who have no ongoing care needs following completion of provision of a reablement package), and that three of the indicators demonstrated that performance had declined in comparison to the same period last year (ASC 002 - Older people aged 65+ admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care per 100,000 of the 65+ population, ASC 003 - Adults aged 18 - 64 admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care homes, per 100,000 population, and ASC 049 - Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support) and we were informed that these continued to be monitored and managed.
15. One indicator remained the same as this time last year (ASC 050 - Proportion of carers using social care who receive self-directed support), and that three indicators were not comparable as they were reviewed at a point in time (ASC 208 - Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started - year to date, ASC 209 - Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started – per month, and ASC 211 - Number of strategy meetings undertaken i.e. concerns progressed to strategy per month).
16. Two indicators recorded annually (ASC054 - The proportion of people who use Adult Care services who find it easy to find information about services - and ASC055 - The proportion of people who are carers who find it easy to find information about services) were not included within the report submitted to the Committee as the results would be released towards the end of 2024, and that these would be included in the Mid-Year Scrutiny Report.
17. We noted that due to recent ASCOF/CLD (Client Level Data) changes there were two indicators that were no longer reported on (ASC 045 – Proportion of adults with a learning disability who live in their own home or with their family - and ASC 046 – Proportion of Adults with learning disabilities in paid employment).
18. Members were eager to ascertain whether there was sufficient signposting to information and support available for those on direct payments who wished to contract in their own services, particularly in the case of elderly carers. Discussion ensued on the number of younger adults placed in care homes, whether there were more younger adults from out of the Darlington area accessing our care homes, the appropriateness of mixing younger adults with complex needs with elderly residents, and whether there was a need for more specific appropriate homes for younger adults requiring care.

19. Concerns were raised around the non-reporting on ASC 046 - Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment, and Members were informed that this had been a decision at a national level. Comparisons were drawn with regional figures, and a discussion took place on some of the potential reasons for, and the anecdotal evidence around, the regional differences.
20. Clarification was sought in terms of the Direct Payment practice guidance document, which was provided to staff, and the potential requirement for a future review of the Performance Indicators provided to the Scrutiny Committee.
21. It was noted that the last time the ASCOF/CLD indicators were reviewed was 2018 and a desire to review those reported to the committee was expressed to ensure that scrutiny is effectively scrutinising the most appropriate indicators following the CQC inspection.

Adult Social Care Transport Policy 2024

22. The Committee received a report outlining that the Adult Social Care Transport Policy had been redesigned and developed with the Transport Team. The changes to the policy were required as the last Adult Social Care Transport Policy no longer complied with current legislation, including the Care Act 2014 and the national eligibility framework for adults and carers, and needed to meet the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2022, which states that local authorities must meet and provide for people's needs and the promotion of health, independence and well-being.
23. The submitted report expanded on the strategic overarching aims of the Policy, highlighted that the Policy met the ambitions of the Council Plan, and outlined the options available to assessors, with the initial option of looking at the potential for independence and use of community resources, and short-term support.
24. Members of the Committee welcomed the support available for unpaid carers within the revised Policy and were keen to understand any additional costs that might be incurred as a result of the updated Policy.

Councillor Andrew Anderson
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Performance Indicators Year End 2023/24

2. We welcomed the Assistant Director – Children’s Services who provided members with an update on performance against key performance indicators. Points of note included the 8401 contacts being the highest on record and a 58% increase from 2020/21 while also showing a higher level of complexity on average. The 768 referrals reported were a reduction from 2022/23 figures (but still a 49% increase on 2021/22) with 358 children currently in care.
3. We were informed that timeliness on assessments is showing improvements with 95% meeting targets, with a major factor in this being the stabilising of staff. However, stability of placements remains a challenge with children being moved more often than desired.
4. Questions raised included as to whether the large numbers of referrals are the result of the COVID period with officers confirming that this is the case and that numbers are not anticipated to reduce for some time. Members also asked to clarify what external agencies assist the service with officers stating that they are often health or education based with a number of partner agencies included however the service always have full sight of any work being undertaken. Further questions included as to whether there has been a noticeable impact on resources with an increase in children being returned home and it was confirmed that there has not been a significant impact and that support is available for families where needed. It was also asked if support is available for care leavers with officers confirming that personal advisers and one to one advisers are available alongside the Care Leavers Covenant.
5. Discussions were held which included as to whether a “Risk Assessment” scheme could be introduced or standardised across schools, in the vein of the system employed in care homes to identify children’s possible needs. Officers stated that they could contact colleagues in Adult services to check if any schemes could be translated and also assured members that the Vulnerable People Panel also looks at any cases that schools have concerns over with schools being able to get in touch with staff to discuss any concerns whenever they arise. A further discussion was held regarding the reasons why children may need to be moved with officers stating that it is often due to need outpacing the number of placements available with children occasionally having to wait to move to the most suitable placement for them.

6. We noted the content of the performance information provided and members also expressed that they would be willing to share any fostering information in ward newsletters and on social media.

The Uniform Exchange Scheme

7. We welcomed the Darlington Partnerships Director who provided members with an update on the uniform exchange scheme which continues to see growth in use. The relocation to a unit beside Feetham's multi storey car park has been successful, saving cost whilst providing a good facility for both volunteers and customers. We were informed that help with school uniforms was showing a great number of searches on the Darlington Council website and following this it was determined that the scheme would be valuable for residents. The new location is now running with positive feedback from both volunteers and the public who visit the site with 3006 customers to date.
8. Discussion was held with regards to the affordability of school uniforms with members commenting that having incorrect uniforms can make children feel singled-out with minor changes to uniforms making them unsuitable for donation or handing-down resulting in families having unsustainable uniform costs. It was also suggested that sewing lessons for parents could be useful to help longevity of uniforms.
9. We noted the content of the update provided and members expressed their approval of the scheme and appreciation of the efforts of those involved.

Work Programme 2024/25

10. We gave consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling work programme, and items can be added as necessary.

Councillor Hilary Allen
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 – 2023/24

2. Scrutiny received an update on Quarter 4 performance against key performance indicators for 2023/24.
3. We considered the performance position in relation to the 31 indicators, noting that 24 had increased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported, whilst 7 had decreased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported.
4. We discussed Fly-Tipping, how reports of large fly tipping have decreased but reports of small fly tipping has increased. We wanted to understand what provision has been put in place for back alleys and rural areas. We asked if cameras could be an appropriate action to stop the offences of Fly-Tipping. We wanted the Committee to send a letter of recommendation to Magistrates supporting the idea to raise the fixed penalty fine.
5. We discussed the percentage of principal roads where maintenance should be considered and how on the narrative that a Scanner Vehicle had previously been used, which now a Visual Annual Engineering Inspection now takes place instead. We wanted clarification on what this process is and asked questions around roads within their wards.
6. We discussed the punctuality of buses in Darlington and wanted to understand the main reasons behind this. We have requested that an invitation for Arriva to attend this Scrutiny Committee would be a sustainable way to understand the issues further.
7. Conversation then ensued around the incidents and accidents in road traffic accidents, we have urged for data to be received around speed monitoring in Darlington. We were reassured that the date is forthcoming.

Stronger Communities Fund Update

8. Scrutiny received a report providing Members with an update on the spend and use of the Stronger Communities Fund for the 2023/24 financial year. We noted that there had been good use of the fund, with £3,700.30 of the £50,000 remaining unspent.
9. We noted that the agreement for 2024/25 has been updated to specifically require Members to consider whether the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members applies and to declare any potential declarations of interest within the signed agreement.

10. We noted the update of the scheme for this financial year, that all applications will be approved via the Monitoring Officer.
11. We discussed that all Councillors should be encouraged to use the full amount of the Stronger Community Fund.

Councillor James McGill
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 2023/24

2. Scrutiny received an update on Quarter 4 performance against key performance indicators for 2023/24.
3. We considered the performance position in relation to the 22 indicators, noting that 15 had increased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported, whilst 7 had decreased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported.
4. We wanted to understand why the footfall numbers in the Town Centre had decreased and what plans are in place to help improve this. Conversation ensued onto whether any work had been done around understanding where the public spend their time after purchasing a parking ticket.
5. We discussed the sickness improvement and asked whether there was any correlation between sickness and agile working. Discussion was carried out around the average income levels for Darlington and how we compare with the North East.
6. We wanted to congratulate the Housing Team for their efforts and hoped that the work continues as it is.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 Quarter 1

7. We received a report from the Assistant Director Resources providing an early forecast of the 2023/24 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process, which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
8. We were provided with the early forecast of the 2024/25 financial position which included current projected over / underspends in departments, changes to budgets since the MTFP was approved and council-wide budget information.
9. The report included the Council's projects revenue reserves at the end of 2024/25 are £10.967m, £1.376m lower than the initial 2024-28 MTFP position. The position related to the £2.542m of departmental pressures and a contribution of £0.155m from general reserves, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.

10. We discussed the overspend in Leisure and Cultural Services due to security costs, we asked if the Police had any special facilities in the Town Centre to help with this issue. We discussed reviewing this with the Police and Crime Commissioner.
11. We scrutinised the cemeteries and crematorium services pressures, we wanted to understand how this could be resolved. Conversation ensued around the electricity costs for street lighting and car parks, we asked what rate we pay under the NEPO framework and the overall utility cost changes.
12. We discussed the MTFP (Medium-Term Financial Plan) process and if there is to be a review prior to the usual MTFP timetable. We were advised that Officers and Cabinet Members are continuously reviewing the budget.

Annual Review of the Investment Fund – Update

13. The Assistant Director Resources provided us with an update on progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
14. We were provided with details including a summary of the purpose of the Investment Fund which currently has 10 funded schemes, progress updates on those schemes and projected returns from joint ventures.
15. We queried whether it would be possible to quote the profits after tax rather than pre taxation. Officers advised that due to unverified tax rates it would be appropriate to quote profits pre-tax.

Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 1 2024/25

16. We welcomed the Assistant Director Highways & Capital Projects who presented the report which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
17. We considered the report which provides information on the delivery of the Council's capital programme and a summary of current projects. The report included the projected outturn of the Capital Programme is £330.867m against an approved programme of £331.530m.
18. We discussed the progression of demolition in Skinnergate and whether residents are kept informed. Clarification was given that the Victoria Road Façade Improvement project is a Towns Fund project to improve shop frontages and is not linked to the Darlington Station project.

Complaints Made to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and The Housing Ombudsman Service

19. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager attended to provide members with an update of the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.

20. We received an explanation of the report and its purpose to provide insight into services with 28 complaints registered for Darlington Borough Council. A summary of each upheld case was provided, and the LGSCO were satisfied that the Council had successfully implemented 100% of their recommendations.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023 2024

21. We received the report of the Complaints and Information Governance Manager providing annual reports of Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Corporate, Housing and Public Health which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
22. We considered the reports and information was provided on comparison with previous years' statistics.
23. We wanted to understand the differences between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

**Councillor Ian Haszeldine on behalf of
Councillor Rebecca Baker
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

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COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023-24

2. Members welcomed a report, sharing the Director of Public Health Annual Report for 2023/24, which considered keys areas of women's health, with the aims of highlighting inequalities that girls and women face, and understanding what this means for Darlington.
3. We noted that the report includes chapters on early years and adolescence, women's health services, employment and wellbeing and the importance of women's safety on their ability to live a healthy, fulfilling life.
4. Members entered into a discussion regarding mental health, noting that reasons for self-harm and suicide were complex. We highlighted the need for a focus on healthy exercise rather than 'sport' and were informed that work is being undertaken to develop a physical activity strategy. Members queried school readiness and how this was measured.

Health and Safety Compliance in Council Housing

5. We received a report from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenue, updating Members on Health and Safety Compliance in Council Housing.
6. The report provided details of the areas where compliance is monitored on a regular basis, including asbestos, electrical, gas, fire, fire door and water safety, lift safety, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and damp and mould.
7. Following a question, we were advised of the range of mechanisms in place to ensure that council tenants are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety.

Health Protection Assurance

8. We welcomed a report from the Director of Public Health updating Members on health protection arrangements in Darlington.
9. Members were informed that the protection of the health of the population is a legally mandated responsibility of the local authority as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and that the Director of Public Health is responsible for the discharge of the health protection functions delegated to the Council.

10. An annual health protection assurance report is produced to provide an overview of health protection arrangements and relevant activity. We noted that health protection describes activities and arrangements that seek to protect the population from risks to health arising from biological, environmental or chemical hazards through prevention, surveillance and control.
11. We noted the role of Directors of Public Health and local authority Public Health teams in supporting health protection work and welcomed details of the range of groups, information flows and reports in place to support health protection functions. Information was also provided on the performance and activity in relation to prevention, surveillance and control.
12. Particular concerns were raised regarding the hazards associated with the Aycliffe Quarry and we were informed that the quarry is regulated by the Environment agency, that gas emissions have reduced as a result of work undertaken at the site and the advice of the UK Health Security Agency is that there are no long term health risks associated, however if people experience symptoms they should contact their GP or NHS 111.
13. We also discussed the reduction in uptake of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, and noted that Darlington is not an outlier and that behavioural insights have been undertaken which will be used to improve information that is communicated regarding the vaccine.

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review 2023-24

14. Members received a presentation from the Head of Housing, updating Members on the Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy, which was approved by Cabinet in 2022 to ensure Housing Services effectively deal with ASB and hate incidents.
15. We were provided with details of the aims of the policy and the new regulatory requirements introduced on 1 April 2024 and their expectations.
16. We welcomed details of performance, noting that 500 cases involving tenants were opened in 2023/24 with the main themes being noise, drug misuse and pet nuisance. We were pleased to note that the majority of complaints were resolved through advice being given.
17. We noted the work undertaken in the last 12 months and welcomed an update on the planned work for the next 12 months.
18. Members did query the support provided to tenants who had been evicted and support provided to victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Performance Indicators - 2023/24 Quarter 4

19. We received an update on performance against key performance indicators for 2023/24 at Quarter 4.

20. We noted that of the 36 indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, 17 showed performance better than from when last reported, 18 showed performance not as good as when last reported and 1 indicator showed performance the same as when last reported.
21. Particular concerns were raised regarding the figures for opiate users successfully completing treatment. Members were informed that service users entering treatment have very high levels of dependency and require a lot of support to get to the point of accessing treatment. We were assured that outcomes are improving as a result of additional investment and increased staffing.
22. Members have requested further information regarding NHS Health Checks.

Work Programme

23. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

Councillor Mary Layton
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee

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