



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Agenda

10.00 am

Monday, 20 January 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

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

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2028/29 - To consider a response to Cabinet on the Plan taking into account the views of this Council's Scrutiny Committees: - -
  - a) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 2 January 2025
    - (i) Minutes of the meeting held on 2 January 2025
    - (ii) Stronger Communities Fund – Report of the Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities
  - b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Monday 6 January 2025
  - c) Adults Scrutiny Committee – Tuesday 7 January 2025
  - d) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 8 January 2025
  - e) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 9 January 2025  
(Pages 3 - 34)
4. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are

of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting

5. Questions

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Swinhoe', written in a cursive style.

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

**Friday, 10 January 2025**

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

**Membership**

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

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

## **ECONOMY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20 JANUARY 2025**

---

### **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 – 2028/29**

---

#### **SUMMARY REPORT**

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

1. To request that this Committee agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all Scrutiny Committees as part of the consultation process on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 and the Stronger Communities Fund 2025/26.

##### **Summary**

2. Attached are the minutes of all five Scrutiny Committees which have met during January to consider the MTFP for 2025/26 to 2028/29.
3. Attached is the Stronger Communities Fund report which was considered by the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

##### **Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that:
  - (a) That Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee provide a response to Cabinet for consideration on the 2025/26 to 2028/29 MTFP consultation.
  - (b) That the Stronger Communities Fund report be noted and this Committee provide a recommendation to Cabinet on whether the scheme should continue in 2025/26.

**Brett Nielsen**  
**Assistant Director Resources**

##### **Background Papers**

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

Brett Nielsen: Extension 5403

Council Plan	The Council’s MTFP contributes to all priorities in the Council Plan. Consultation with Members in the MTFP contributes to the delivery of the Plan.
Addressing Inequalities	The report does not contain any proposals that impact on equality issues.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific climate change impact issues in this report.
Efficiency & Resources	This report contains updated information regarding efficiency savings and use of resources contained in the MTFP.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no specific issues relating to health and wellbeing in this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	This report has no specific impact on individual wards.
Groups Affected	This report has no specific impact on individual groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This report does not require a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This report does not require an urgent decision.
Impact of Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. Cabinet at its meeting held on 3 December 2024, approved the Medium Term Financial Plan as a basis for consultation.
  
6. As part of consultation process, the MTFP was presented to each of the Council’s Scrutiny Committees to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, particularly those contents in relation to the services and finances falling within the remit of that Scrutiny Committee. The five Committees met as follows,
  - (a) 2<sup>nd</sup> January - Communities & Local Services
  - (b) 6<sup>th</sup> January – Children & Young People
  - (c) 7<sup>th</sup> January – Adults
  - (d) 8<sup>th</sup> January – Health & Housing
  - (e) 9<sup>th</sup> January – Economy & Resources
  
7. Members were asked to forward any views and comments to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

## **COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 2 January 2025

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

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Cossins,

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors McCollom (Cabinet Member for Local Services) and Garner (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

### **CLS10 INTRODUCTIONS/ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

### **CLS11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### **CLS12 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29, and forward any views.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2024, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 11 December 2024 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26.

Members recognised that the MTFP was subject to change due to the confirmation of the Central Government Funding, further clarification was sought around the Council's estimated income for the period of this plan and whether estimates would be updated and circulated.

Discussion ensued around Adult Social Care pressures and the increased overall packages costs. Members wanted to understand whether the expenditure in Children's services would deteriorate going forward and if this would be monitored.

Members discussed the increased demand in homelessness, it was stated that Durham County Council have developed a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2029. Members wanted to know whether this had been considered for Darlington Borough Council.

Members recognised that the Council would receive payment for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, further clarification was sought around whether this would benefit Street Scene area. It was explained that this grant funding was not included in the draft MTFP as the allocations had not been confirmed at the time of publishing.

Members requested more information in relation to the costs around the provision of the Council's statutory and non-statutory services and explored whether there were any further savings to be achieved in terms of how the Council provided its statutory functions.

Members scrutinised the additional pressures around the crematorium and whether this had been looked at to reflect in the MTFP and how frequently this is reviewed.

**RESOLVED** – (a) that the Scrutiny Committee accepts the Draft MTFP.

(b) That the minority view of this Scrutiny Committee is that it could not support the MTFP in its current form due to the increase of Council Tax and the choices that had been made.

(b) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

### **CLS13 STRONGER COMMUNITY FUND**

The Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with information on the spend and use of the Stronger Communities Fund to date, and invited consideration as to whether the scheme should continue in the following financial year.

The submitted report stated that Cabinet, at its meeting held on 6 February 2024, agreed to the continuation of the Stronger Communities Fund for the 2024/25 financial year as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024/25. It was noted that the fund enabled Councillors to use an allocated amount of money to deliver the objectives of building stronger communities. Each Councillor had been allocated £1,000 with the aim of supporting individuals and groups to enhance access to opportunities to improve health

and well-being outcomes, and/or invest in environmental improvements that enhance the local area to the benefit of the local community.

The submitted report also stated that there is no provision for the Stronger Community Fund in the current MTFP proposals and that members should consider this.

The submitted report set out the spend against the £50,000, to date, together with information on what has been delivered in wards on an individual Councillor basis. It was noted that all of the funding must be given to the grant recipient by 31 March 2025, and that some Members had not, as yet, allocated any funding.

Discussion ensued around the format of the Stronger Community Fund and how it could have been daunting for Councillors to complete the necessary paperwork. It was suggested that if an example of the paperwork could have been given it may encourage Members to utilise their funds.

Members discussed that the Stronger Community Fund had helped Councillors to understand and support their wards through the funding. Members expressed that they could see that the funding helped within their wards and would like it to continue.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the current spend against the £50,000 be noted; and

(b) That the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised that the view of this Committee is that the scheme should continue in the 2025/26 financial year, in its current format.

This page is intentionally left blank



**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
2 JANUARY 2025**

---

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND**

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To review the spend, to date, against the Stronger Communities fund and to consider and make a recommendation as whether the scheme should continue in the next financial year.

**Summary**

2. As Members will be aware, Cabinet, at its meeting held on 6 February 2024, agreed to the continuation of the Stronger Communities Fund into the 2024/25 financial year as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024/25. The fund enables Councillors to use an allocated amount of money to deliver the objectives of building stronger communities.
3. Each Councillor has been allocated £1,000 with the aim of :-
  - (a) supporting individuals and groups to enhance access to opportunities to improve health and well being outcomes;
  - (b) investing in environmental improvements that enhance the local area to the benefit of the local community.
4. This report sets out the spend against the £50,000, to date, together with information on what has been delivered in wards on an individual Councillor basis (**Appendix 1**). It should be noted that all of the funding must be given to the grant recipient by 31 March 2025. Some Members have not, as yet, allocated any funding.
5. There is no provision in the current MTFP proposals for the continuation of the scheme in the next financial year and Members are requested to consider this and forward a recommendation thereon to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
6. If the fund does continue into the next financial year, any funding not spent by a particular Member may be carried forward for utilisation in the next financial year, however, their overall individual budget will remain at £1,000.

**Recommendation**

7. Members are requested to :-
  - (a) note the current spend against the £50,000

- (b) To consider the progress of the scheme, review the outcomes and forward a view to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on whether the scheme should continue in the 2025/26 financial year

**Councillor Jim Garner**  
**Stronger Communities Portfolio**

**Background Papers**

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

Shirley Wright: Extension 5998

Council Plan	The report contributes towards the Council Plan through Members allocation of the Stronger Community Fund. The Stronger Community Fund might contribute to 'Communities' – Working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities' and 'Local Environment' – A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough.
Addressing inequalities	The report does not contain any proposals that impact on diversity issues.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific carbon impact issues in this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The report contains updated information regarding the MTFP.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues relating to health and well being which this report needs to address.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications in this report.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	No specific groups are particularly affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	The report does not require a key decision.
Urgent Decision	The report does not require 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

8. This report has been written mid-year to allow an early assessment of its value to be included in the considerations around the MTFP.
9. In the 2024/25 financial year each Councillor was allocated £1,000 with the aim of :-
  - (a) supporting individuals and groups to enhance access to opportunities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes;
  - (b) investing in environmental improvements that enhance the local area to the benefit of the local community.
10. Each Member was required to enter into an agreement with the Council regarding the use of the funds which, amongst other things, stipulated that :-
  - (a) the process of awarding grants is open and transparent
  - (b) grants are made without prejudice or favour
  - (c) the funds will not be used for Members' personal or political gain
  - (d) Members will be responsible for ensuring as far as possible that the grant has been used for the purpose that it was provided
11. As part of the scheme, Councillors can, if they wish, pool their budget with other Councillors within their Wards and more widely across the Borough, the only limitation on beneficiaries of the grant is that they must be Darlington residents.
12. Any funding remaining after 31 March 2024 will be reclaimed by the Council.
13. There is no provision in the current MTFP proposals for the continuation of the scheme in the next financial year and Members are requested to consider this and forward a recommendation thereon to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

### Spend To Date

14. There has been a wide variation in take up of the fund. Some members have made good use of the fund whilst others have, to date, not utilised any. Appendix 1 sets out the spend, to date, against the £50,000, together with information on what has been delivered in Wards on an individual Councillor basis.

This page is intentionally left blank

Stronger Communities Fund Grant Information										
	Councillor	Signed Agreement	Recipient - Name of Group	Purpose of Grant	Date Grant Awarded	Amount Allocated (£)	Amount Remaining (£)	Agreement letter Returned	CU Account empty	Receipt Recd
Bank Top and Lascelles	Andrew Anderson									
Bank Top and Lascelles	Helen Crumble									
Bank Top and Lascelles	David Ray									
Brinkburn and Faverdale	Rebecca Baker	Y	Darlington RA Cricket	Towards the purchase of cricket instruments and kit	23-Jul-2024	500.00	330.00	25/07/2024		29/07/2024
			Seb Corking - Karting	Towards the purchase of karting uniform	23-Jul-2024	170.00				24/07/2024
Brinkburn and Faverdale	David Beckett	Y	Darlington RA Cricket	Towards the purchase of cricket instruments and kit	23-Jul-2024	500.00	330.00	25/07/2024		29/07/2024
			Seb Corking - Karting	Towards the purchase of karting uniform	23-Jul-2024	170.00				24/07/2024
Brinkburn and Faverdale	Scott Durham	Y	Darlington RAs Young Footballers	To help support the group and funds towards a tournament away.	28-May-2024	1000.00	/	17/05/2024	Y	04/06/2024
Cockerton	Jan Cossins	Y	Cockerton Prized Silver Band	Purchase carol books and sheet music	20-Sep-2024	200.00		25/09/2024		26/09/2024
			Sew Happy To Help	Purchase sewing materials and equipment	18-Sep-2024	200.00		30/09/2024		01/10/2024
Cockerton	Jim Garner	Y	Cockerton Business Group	Christmas Decorations and Libray Bench	14-Oct-2024	500.00		16/10/2024		05/11/2024
			Darlington RA Cricket Club	To support football teams trip to Mulheim	19-Sep-2024	250.00		20/09/2024		23/09/2024
Cockerton	Neil Johnson	Y	Cockerton Community and Business Group	To provide financial support throughout the year and a purchase of a book bench outside Cockerton Library.	18-Jun-2024	1000.00	/	19/06/2024		20/06/2024
College	Bryony Holroyd	Y	Wendy Aitken (Parent)	Towards the dance competition in Prague.	5-Jun-2024	200.00	150.00	07/06/2024		12/06/2024
			Pierremont Crecent Street Party	Funds to go towards the payment for road closure	13-Jun-2024	150.00		20/06/2024		27/06/2024
			QE College	To support the Christmas Celebration Project	28-Nov-2024	500.00		02/12/2024		03/12/2024
College	Matthew Snedker									
Eastbourne	Joe Dillon									
Eastbourne	Jonathan Dulston	Y	Darlington Baptist Church	To fund the development workshop	11-Sep-2024	500.00		18/09/2024		18/09/2024
Eastbourne	Kevin Nicholson	Y	Maidenedale Nature and Fishing Reserve	To support the reserve with seed planting and clean up	28-Oct-2024	500.00		04/11/2024		05/11/2024
Harrowgate Hill	Roz Henderson		Elim Pentacostal Church	To help support the family drop in sessions	14-Oct-2024	250.00		19/10/2024		28/10/2024
			St Marks and St Pauls Church	To support the wellbeing hub to run various events for residents	26-Nov-2024	450.00		01/12/2024		03/12/2024
Harrowgate Hill	Richard Lawley	Y	Whessoe Parish Council	Towards the Summer Event	25-Jul-2024	485.00	515.00	26/07/2024		31/07/2024
Harrowgate Hill	Anna-Maria Toms	Y	Barry Thompson - Grange Road Baptist Church	Funds to go towards the use of a Reclaim Our Communities Advisor	27-Aug-2024	1000.00	/	29/08/2024	Y	19/09/2024
Haughton and Springfield	Chris McEwan	Y	Salvation Army	Towards the Food Bank	28-Aug-2024	1000.00	/	29/08/2024		20/09/2024
Haughton and Springfield	Dawn Storr	Y	St Andrews Church	Towards the Food Bank	28-Aug-2024	1000.00	/	29/08/2024		29/08/2024
Haughton and Springfield	Nick Wallis	Y	Haughton School	To support poverty proofing in schools	28-Aug-2024	500.00	/			19/09/2024
			Health in Haughton	To purchase nordic walking poles	28-Aug-2024	500.00	/			
Heighington and Coniscliffe	Paul Crudass									
Heighington and Coniscliffe	Gerald Lee									
Hummersknott	Kate Mammolotti									
Hummersknott	Thomas Robinson									
Hurworth	Lorraine Tostevin									
Hurworth	Paul Walters	Y	Hurworth Scout Group	To purchase a new Scout Hut	28-Nov-2024	500.00		09/12/2024		11/12/2024
			Mustard Tree Cafe	To purchase a new front door to the Charity		500.00				
Mowden	Pauline Culley									
Mowden	Alan Marshall									
North Road	Hilary Allen									
North Road	James Coe									
North Road	Anne-Marie Curry									
Northgate	Sajna Ali	Y	Arthur Wharton Foundation	Towards the funding of group sessions	18-Jul-2024	250.00	750.00	30/07/2024		12/08/2024
Northgate	Sonia Kane	Y	Arthur Wharton Foundation	Towards the funding of group sessions	18-Jul-2024	250.00	750.00	30/07/2024		12/08/2024
			Stockton and Darlington Railway	Towards the reprinting of the walk booklet 5 for Northgate Ward	15-Oct-2024			29/10/2024		
			Edge Centre	To set up a reduced priced grocery store	13-Nov-2024	300.00				
Park East	Libby McCollom									
Park East	Michael Nicholson	Y	YMCA	Towards supplies for activities for youth sessions.	15-Oct-2024	1000.00		15/10/2024		28/10/2024

Park East	Matthew Roche									
Park West	Bob Donoghue	Y	Elm Ridge Church Abbeyfield Society	Towards the purchase of equipment to support the Elm Ridge Nature and Community Partnership Towards the purchase of a defib	18-Sep-2024 15-Oct-2024	300.00 300.00		01/10/2024 15/10/2024	02/10/2024 28/10/2024	
Park West	Heather Scott	Y	Elm Ridge Church Abbeyfield Society	Towards the purchase of equipment to support the Elm Ridge Nature and Community Partnership Towards the purchase of a defib	19-Sep-2024 19-Sep-2024	300.00 300.00		01/10/2024 20/09/2024	02/10/2024 23/09/2024	
Pierremont	Stephen Harker									
Pierremont	Mary Layton									
Pierremont	James McGill									
Red Hall and Lingfield	Mandy Porter									
Red Hall and Lingfield	Dr Amanda Riley									
Sadberge and Middlton St. George	Deborah Laing									
Sadberge and Middlton St. George	Colin Pease	Y	Middleton St George Bishopton Sadberge	Purchase of a picnic table at the new play park To purchase white goods for kitchen To purchase speed monitoring equip	15-Oct-2024 29-Nov-2024 10-Dec-2024	500.00 250.00 250.00		16/10/2024	28/10/2024	
Sadberge and Middlton St. George	Yvonne Renton	Y	Middleton St George Bishopton Sadberge	Purchase of a picnic table at the new play park To purchase white goods for kitchen To purchase speed monitoring equip	15-Oct-2024 29-Nov-2024 10-Dec-2024	500.00 250.00 250.00		16/10/24	28/10/2024	
Stephenson	Ian Haszeldine									
Stephenson	Mohammad Mahmud									
Whinfield	Jamie Bartch									
Whinfield	Andy Keir	Y	Yarn Bombers	To purchase materials	19-Sep-2024	200.00		19/09/2024	20/09/2024	
				Total Spent		17725.00				
				Grant Allocation						
				Remaining		32275.00				

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 6 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Allen (Chair), Crudass, Layton, Renton, Toms and Dr. Riley

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Ali, Johnson and Storr

**ABSENT** – Councillors Dulston

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Wallis

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion) and Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources)

### **CYP21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Dr Amanda Riley declared her position on the board of governors of Heathfield school.

### **CYP22 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2024**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2024

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### **CYP23 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29**

The Assistant Director – Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) which invited members to discuss and give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to the areas within their remit and forward views to a special meeting the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation that the council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26 which the Assistant Director Resources briefed the committee on the headline changes. It was also highlighted that the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) has been received in late December 2024, covering the 2025/26 period only.

In summary we noted that positive progress is being made overall with additional funding, however, there remains a significant annual funding deficit.

Questions were raised which included as to whether a breakdown of spending for individual services is available with the response that further information to that displayed in appendix 1 can be provided if members contact officers with their specific requests.

It was also asked as to whether updated figures will be included in the MTFP as they become available, with officers confirming that the most up-to-date version of the plan will be provided for Cabinet in February and for the Special Meeting of the Council on 20 February 2025.

Discussions were held in which members credited officers within Children's Services for their positive work in reducing costs by bringing services in-house and reducing the number of external placements.

**RESOLVED** - The MTFP was considered and members agreed to:

- (a) Forward any further comments to the Chair prior to the Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2025.
- (b) That authority be given to the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers, to agree the Minutes of this meeting prior to their inclusion in the Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2025.

#### **CYP24 SEND STRATEGY 2025-2029**

The Assistant Director Education and Inclusion presented the draft Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2025-2029 which details the key elements of the Strategy and the planned implementation with partners.

Members were informed that the SEND Strategy establishes our strategic approach to the delivery of SEND services for children and young people in Darlington, ensuring the offer is coordinated and responsive to the needs of our community. The strategy sets out our shared local area vision, principles, and priorities to ensure that partners across the Darlington local area are working together effectively to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) from birth to the age of 25. The SEND Strategy has been coproduced with partners across the borough, and is fundamental to implementing partners responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014. It reflects the ambitions and priorities of the Council Plan and other key strategic documents.

Questions were raised which included how relevant information regarding SEND and EHCPs is being provided to parents with the response that the offer is displayed in as clear terms as possible on the Council website and that outreach and accessibility remains a focus. With "Let's Talk SEND" sessions promoted on social media and via flyers including QR codes with evening and online sessions being planned for the future.

It was also asked what impact engagement with children / families had on the development of the strategy with officers confirming that they were heavily included with engagement with children in early years being a priority.

Clarifications of tribunal outcomes was asked with info provided that nationally, 98% of tribunal decisions go against Local Authorities however in Darlington this figure is far lower which underscores the effectiveness of work with parents and carers.

It was asked to whether academisation is an issue to SEND delivery with officers confirming that SENCO staff are present in each school to aid with delivery and if any issues are raised to the Local Authority, they are always considered carefully.



Discussions were held which included the possibility of a Task and Finish group to look into message delivery.

A member also highlighted that parents have reported difficulties in accessing dyslexia diagnoses which officers agreed to look into.

**RESOLVED** – Members agreed the recommendations and noted the priorities outlined in the strategy.

Members were also provided with an update on progress made on the Council's Safety Valve agreement to address historic deficit in the High Needs Block which supports education provision for young people with Special Educational Needs. The council entered into the "Safety Valve" agreement with the Department for Education (DfE), enabling funding over a 5-year period to address the accumulated deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB).

**RESOLVED** – Members noted the Safety Valve terms of agreement and progress made to this date.

## **CYP25 TRANSITIONAL SERVICES**

The Assistant Director Education and Inclusion provided members with an update on the responsibilities for the Local Authority in relation to support young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to prepare for adulthood.

The Care Act 2014 places several duties on Local Authorities in England to ensure young people with care and support needs are well-prepared for adulthood. This includes young people with disabilities or those who may need ongoing care as they transition from Children's to Adult Services.

A member expressed their appreciation for the work being done in this area and asked the key policies of the plan with the response that working with families is a constant priority and maintaining the responsibility of Children's Services to support individuals into the care of Adult's Services.

**RESOLVED** - Members noted the content of the report and agreed the suggested recommendations.

## **CYP26 WORK PROGRAMME**

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

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

## **ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 7 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Anderson (Chair), Crumbie, Layton, Mammolotti, M Nicholson, Renton and Tostevin.

**APOLOGIES** – The Mayor and Councillor Storr.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Curry, Holroyd and Toms.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Joss Harbron (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Martin Short (Director of Place - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) and Paul Dalton (Democratic and Elections Officer).

### **AD24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute AD26 below, as an employee of the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust.

### **AD25 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2024**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 22 October 2024, be approved as a correct record.

### **AD26 AUTISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update the Adult Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date in relation to the National Autism Strategy and the subsequent actions within Darlington. The submitted report provided a joint position statement from the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust and the Council.

The submitted report defined Autism, provided an overview of the national context, outlined the priority areas of focus for the National Autism Strategy 2021-26, explained the aim of improving understanding and acceptance of Autism within society, identified the work being undertaken to prevent mental health crisis for people with Autism and the support provided to encourage more Autistic people into employment.

The submitted report also outlined the work being done across the Borough to tackle health and care inequalities for autistic people, and in terms of building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care.

Members welcomed the involvement of 'Inclusion North' in the development of the strategy, and were keen to invite representatives to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Discussion ensued on the number of residents in the North-East who had received an autism diagnosis, and how many of these residents were accessing Mental Health services. Members were also keen to know how the numbers on the waiting list for a diagnosis

compared to one year ago, and whether the number of inpatients with autism, and the number of inpatients suspected of having autism, but who did not have a diagnosis, was monitored.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the contrast between the target to reduce waiting lists alongside the increased identification of people suspected of being autistic. Members were also keen to ensure that the support for the local working group had been budgeted for in light of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the report be noted and that progress be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **AD27 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29**

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29, and forward any views, in particular those in relation to the services and finances which were specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2025, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 11 December 2024 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26, with an update on the draft financial settlement provided to Members.

Concerns were raised in relation to the use of reserves to balance the budget, and whilst it was acknowledged that the proposed additional funding received as part of the draft financial settlement was welcomed, it was noted that the Council's reserves would still run out prior to the end of the proposed plan should circumstances remain the same.

Members also recognised the additional pressures created by the increase in National Insurance contributions, and the concerns raised by suppliers, however noted that the Council did not have the resource to support the uplift.

Discussion ensued on the position in other authorities and Members cited examples where authorities were not in the position to budget for such a lengthy period, and speculated on the manner in which funding might be distributed in a fairer way in future.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the

Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

(b) That the minority view of this Scrutiny Committee is that it could not support the MTFP in its current form due to the proposed use of all reserves prior to the end of the proposed MTFP.

#### **AD28 CQC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the CQC Assurance Framework.

The submitted report stated that the CQC Assurance Framework for Local Authorities in England, introduced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), was a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services. It was stated that the Framework was aligned with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aimed to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.

The submitted report updated Members on the requirements of the CQC Assurance Framework, the duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority and provided an updated timeline for the forthcoming inspection.

Members welcomed the update from the Assistant Director, Adults, and questioned the possible delay between inspection and the publication of the final report within the timeline, and whether there was any redress in terms of this.

Discussion ensued on the national context as regard to the new inspection regime, the logistics in terms of the CQC establishing the inspection structure, and the potential for reflection and targeted inspections at the conclusion of the initial inspection process. Members felt that it was encouraging that staff retention had vastly improved in Darlington, that the Council maintained a positive workforce, and hoped that this would be reflected in the CQC outcome.

Clarification was sought in relation to the selected areas for improvement or development in terms of the self-assessment, with Members advised that the self-assessment reflected the Council's own interpretation, with some specific areas prioritised for completion.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the update provided be noted.

#### **AD29 HOSPITAL DISCHARGES**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an overview of the requirements on the Local Authority to support hospital discharges and to provide an update on how Darlington is performing in terms of hospital discharges.

The submitted report stated that local authorities (LAs) played an essential role in supporting hospital discharges to ensure that people transitioned smoothly from hospital care to appropriate community or home settings. It was explained that this involved close collaboration with the NHS to prevent delayed discharges and to support people's recovery

and well-being after their hospital stay.

It was stated that LAs' involvement in hospital discharges was part of the broader health and social care integration effort in the UK, which aimed to provide joined-up, patient-centred care across settings. The key duties of LAs in this process were summarised within the submitted report.

Members reflected on the difference between services in Darlington and other areas, noting that the services provided upon discharge in Darlington were markedly better than those experienced in other areas.

Discussion ensued on the number of patients involved in delayed transfers of care (DTOC) from acute physical health settings, with Members noting that these figures were extremely low, and any such cases were as a result of systemic failures rather than by the local authority.

Further discussion took place on the progress of the work being undertaken with Housing to identify opportunities to utilise an Extra Care Housing (ECH) property, with the ability to provide short term stays for people unable to return home due to inappropriate housing, awaiting adaptations or no fixed abode, to support a period of assessment outside of a bed-based health and/or care environment to determine long term needs and next steps.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted, and that an update report be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

### **AD30 TRANSITIONAL SERVICES (PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE AND SUPPORT NEEDS)**

The Assistant Director, Adults, and the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the responsibilities for the Local Authority in relation to support young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in preparation for adulthood.

The submitted report stated that the Care Act 2014 placed several duties on Local Authorities in England to ensure young people with care and support needs are well-prepared for adulthood. This included young people with disabilities or those who may need ongoing care as they transition from Children's to Adult Services.

The submitted report summarised the key areas for preparing young people for adulthood and the key SEND duties of Local Authorities, both of which aimed to give young people a stable, supportive framework for moving into adult life, with a focus on well-being, independence, and meaningful community engagement.

Members entered into discussion on the process of reassessment and annual review and it was noted that there were a number of overdue adult reviews. Members were assured that a risk management approach had been adopted with those with the greatest need/complexity being reviewed first.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

### **AD31 ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES DURING COVID - UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the recommendations submitted to this Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2024, by the Adult Social Care during the Coronavirus Pandemic Task and Finish Group.

The submitted report stated that the purpose of this Task and Finish Group was to assess the view of both Adult Social Care (ASC) staff (both Darlington Borough Council employees and commissioned staff) and end users in terms of the changes that were required due to Covid and the associated lockdowns.

It was reported that the Task and Finish Group gave consideration to the new methods of working that staff and care recipients particularly liked, so that the Council could consider whether they should continue to be used / offered as an option after the Covid lockdowns had ended. The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, together with the actions undertaken since the final report of the Task and Finish Group was submitted to the Committee, were outlined within the submitted report.

Members noted that there were some recommendations outside the sphere of the Council's remit and were unable to directly influence care settings, however Members were pleased that the Council maintained a commitment to liaising with such settings. Members also noted the impact that the pandemic was continuing to have in terms of waiting lists.

Members received assurances that the Council's website and the Living Well website had been updated, that residents were being encouraged to access the website via the netcall service, and that those with additional eligible needs were being signposted in accordance with the Council's duty to do so.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

### **AD32 WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance, submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Members requested that the Council's Environmental Protection Officer be invited to the Ordinary Meeting of the Adults Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025, in relation to the item on 'Hoarding and Self-Neglect'.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the report be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank



## HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Layton (Chair), Baker, Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Johnson and Mrs Scott

**ABSENT** – Councillors Mahmud and Pease

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Roche

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Margaret Enstone (Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

### HH28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### HH29 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), requesting that consideration be given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to consider the MTFP, in particular those services and finances within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2025, for consideration.

It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation process. A briefing was delivered to Members on 11 December 2024.

The Assistant Director, Resources informed Members that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26. The key headlines were outlined, with Members noting that whilst the estimated income was circa. 2m better than expected for 2025/26, there still remained a number of pressures and uncertainties.

Members raised concerns regarding their ability to agree the MTFP given the changes following the draft financial settlement; Members were informed that the MTFP would be updated prior to Cabinet on 4 February 2025.

Discussion ensued regarding the impact of National Insurance contribution increases on health service providers, noting that all services providers would be impacted by this increase as there was no specific funding for this going forward. Members were informed that the Council would be reviewing the sustainability of provisions; and following a

suggestion by a Member for more in-house services, Members were informed that the Council regularly reviewed costs of in-house and external providers as part of the tender process. Members also noted the intentions of Housing Services to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation.

Reference was made to the income generated by the proposed increase in car parking tariffs which would support a range of other services. Members suggested that this be publicised more widely to help mitigate negativity surrounding the increase in the tariffs. Members entered into a discussion regarding the savings generated by the back office, in particular staff vacancies.

Clarification was sought regarding the funding for concessionary fares and Tees Valley Combined Authority funding. A number of suggestions were also raised, including the potential for a review of council tax banding, request for additional funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority for sustainable transport and increased residents permit parking charges and locations. Members were informed that a review of residential parking locations was due to be undertaken in the Spring.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That this Scrutiny Committee support the MTFP 2025/26 to 2028/29 based on the information available at this meeting.

(b) That the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

### **HH30 CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Economy submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the revised briefing note for Scrutiny Committees drafted by the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer, in relation to the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

The submitted report stated that, following the Local Government 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; and a further commitment to monitor the Council's supply chain of emissions was also added.

It was reported that a revised briefing note (also previously circulated) had been drafted by the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer, reminding Members that tackling climate change was a shared responsibility; was deeply connected to other policy issues and local action was necessary for sustainable solution; and that Scrutiny had a critical role to play in these cross-cutting issues.

It was also reported that climate change as a stand-alone issue sat within the remit of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, however everything that the Council did either

had an impact on, or was impacted by, climate change, so it was important that all Scrutiny Committees ensure that everything that came before them had considered this.

Members suggested that external organisations also be encouraged to include climate considerations in any updates provided to this committee.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the advice and guidance provided by Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer in the revised briefing note be noted.

(b) That the questions outlined in the revised briefing note appear as an appendix to our Agenda, and form part of any submitted Quad of Aims, to ensure that these questions remain in the forefront of Members' mind when scrutinising reports.

(c) That all internal reports coming to this Committee have a small section at the end of each report entitled 'Climate Considerations', with a brief note about any considerations which have been given, where appropriate (This can come with the qualification that the staff within the department are not qualified in climate action).

This page is intentionally left blank

## **ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 9 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors , Coe, Baker, Dillon, Durham, Henderson, Marshall, McGill and Mrs Scott

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Haszeldine and Ray

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillor McEwan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy) and Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Resources)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Mark Ladyman (Assistant Director Economic Growth), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

### **ER120 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### **ER121 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2024**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 31 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### **ER122 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29, and forward any views.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2024, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 11 December 2024 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26.

The Assistant Director Resources gave an update of the headline changes to funding from the draft settlement which included:

- The settlement provides draft allocations for 2025/26 only.
- Additional funding from the Chancellors budget has been allocated through an increase in Social Care grant and a new Recovery grant, we estimate to receive circa. £1m more than estimated.
- Several Children's Social Care grants have continued and rolled together, increasing resources by circa £0.7m.
- A new Children's Social Care Prevention grant, £0.6m.
- The New Homes Bonus has been extended for one year, £0.545m.
- The Services grant has ended reducing income by £0.166m.
- No allocations have been received for the National Insurance offset, but £515m has been allocated nationally and it is estimated the grant will be £0.67m less than included in the MTFP. There is no allocation for the HRA or suppliers through this grant.
- There will be updates to the expenditure since the MTFP was published for example CPI inflationary and demand changes which will offset these changes.
- The Council has also received an allocation for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging of £2.6m, officers are working through the additional service requirements this funding brings.
- In summary the draft settlement for 2025/26 is positive, but there remains a significant annual funding deficit.

Members recognised that the MTFP was subject to change due to the confirmation of the Central Government Funding, further clarification was sought around the Council's estimated income for the period of this plan and whether estimates would be updated and circulated.

Conversation ensued around the price inflation, how the largest element which had increased was ICT costs. Member asked if delaying the software systems had been considered to save in these areas.

Members discussed the Leisure facilities such as the Dolphin Centre, Hippodrome etc had been ran with a financial subsidy, Members wanted clarification whether these facilities had been operating at a loss.

Conversation continued regarding the Risk Reserve, Members wanted to comprehend what this would cover and if this was different to the General Reserves. Confirmation was sought around the utilisation of the Risk Reserves and what other Reserves the Council holds.

Members discussed the Council's estimated income around the National Insurance Offset, Members asked how much National Insurance will cost to the Council, officers advised that that allocations had not been received as yet, but estimated a shortfall on the general fund directly employed staff of circa £0.670m and additionally there is no funding for staff or charges into the Housing Revenue Account and there is no funding for suppliers in this allocation. Allocations will be received in the final settlement.

The report explained main area of reduced income in Financing costs was due to a change in

reporting requirements for the Minimum Revenue Provision, Members wanted to recognize what had changed in the MRP.

Conversation ensued around the increase in Pre-Application Planning Advice fees, Members sought further reasoning on this, officers advised that increase is to reflect the quality of the advice that the Council Offers.

The Committee questioned whether up to date figures will be presented at the Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January.

Members mentioned that they would like to see the Stronger Community Fund continue for the 2025/26 Financial Year.

**RESOLVED** – (a) The majority view of this Scrutiny Committee is that it could support the MTFP in its current form.

That the minority view of this Scrutiny Committee is that it could not support the MTFP in its current form due to the increase in parking charges and licencing costs.

(b) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

## **ER123 SECTION 106 FUNDING**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with an update on the position with respect to Planning Section 106 (S106) Agreements of its information and monitoring.

The report explained that the S106 agreements are legal agreements which have secured financial contributions from developers to run in tandem with planning permissions, to make developments acceptable and fund infrastructure in the vicinity of the development.

The report included information which showed the current position in relation to the live S106 agreements as of November 2024. It was explained that the live S106 planning agreements currently had a total value of £33.5m and from these agreements the Council had received £19.9m and in that respect £9.4m had been spent on obligations agreed with developers. It was also stated that the remaining amount of money had been allocated to infrastructure projects which were either in progress or had been planned to be so.

Conversation ensued around the £19.9m of £33.5m had been received by the council, Members wanted clarification whether there was any risk of the Council not to receive the remaining.

Members wanted to understand whether the money had to be spent by certain dates and whether applications put in are discussed with the appropriate Local Ward Councillors.

Conversation followed with regards to the Sustainable Transport Contribution, the report detailed a £1.5M contribution towards Teeside International Airport, Members queried what this was for.

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

#### **ER124 DARLINGTON MARKET UPDATE**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided an update for Members on the position with respect to the redevelopment of the Darlington Indoor Market.

It was explained that in 2017 the Council entered a lease/partnership agreement with the Market Asset Management Ltd (MAM) for the management, refurbishment of the Victorian Indoor Market and the management and improvement of the Darlington's Outdoor Market. The report also explained that it was not a management agreement, but it was based on a long-term lease with MAM and the Council.

The report clarified that during a period of tenancy negotiations within the indoor market and from the impact of Covid 19 restrictions on the refurbishment of the indoor market commenced. The report detailed the phases of the development of the indoor market.

The report included the new stalls and other various groups who had utilised the indoor market for events and some private sector organisations which hosted corporate meetings.

The report also stated that the Outdoor Market which MAM operated had witnessed a significant growth because of various developments, with its income had gone up by 116% on last year and capacity often at its limit on Mondays and Saturdays.

It was stated during the meeting that phase 3 of the improvements had now been completed.

Members asked what the current vacancy rate was for the indoor market and requested further clarification around the high turn over for the food stalls, officers explained that the turnover had now settled.

Members asked whether local events in the indoor market could be a useful for publication of the Indoor and Outdoor Markets.

**RESOLVED** – That Members note the report.

#### **ER125 DARLINGTON TOWN FUND**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided an update to Members on the progress of the current position with regard to the Towns Fund programme within Darlington.

The report stated that the Council had an allocation of £23.3M capital funding from the Government to fund projects to revitalise and improve the town along with £446,000



revenue funding to enable programme development.

The report noted the funding success this included T-Levels facility, Skinnergate & The Yards, Victoria Road, contribution of £4.508M to the development of the completed Hopetown Visitor attraction in Northgate and the acquisition of properties and land to enable further intervention projects. Alongside the success the report detailed the projects which had a higher risk of delivery within the timescale of the Town Fund.

Also included in the report were the projects that had been announced and progressed within the Town Fund. However, the allocation of the budget had been paused to enable further consideration by Government, notification had been received that the proposal is to allocate this funding to the Council but guidance from the Government in regards to this is still awaited.

Members expressed their disappointment with regards to Northgate House, Officers explained that this was due to the lack of communication from the property owners to Council Officers and that the Council is still working on an outcome.

Members wanted to know if officers had received any information regarding the success of the T Facility at Darlington College. The Committee also asked if a breakdown of the remaining funds could be given and where it would be spent.

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

#### **ER126 CLIMATE CHANGE BRIEFING NOTE**

The Climate Change Briefing note had been updated for Members to utilise during Scrutiny Meetings. The note explained how scrutiny had a critical role to play in cross-cutting Climate Change issues and that tackling Climate Change is a shared responsibility.

**RESOLVED** - That Members note the updated Climate Change Briefing.

#### **ER127 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

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

This page is intentionally left blank