

**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2025**

CABINET

Tuesday, 2 December 2025

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

INVITEES – Councillors Snedker and Dulston

C44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C45 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON
ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

No representations were made by Members or members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

**C46 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS CABINET HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER
2025**

Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 4 November 2025.

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

REASON – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

C47 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

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

C48 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

C49 KEY DECISIONS:-

(1) WORKING AGE ADULTS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

The Cabinet Member with the Adults Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of People requesting approval to allocate financial resources for a transformation project for Working Age Adults (WAA) services in Adult Social Care (ASC), in partnership with IMPOWER, which aims at improving outcomes, reducing costs and

embedding sustainable change.

The report explained that the ASC sector is facing unsustainable financial pressures, particularly within the WAA cohort, which included individuals with learning disabilities, autism, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, physical issues and other complex needs. The group represents a growing proportion of the care system in Darlington.

It was clarified that IMPOWER will work collaboratively alongside the service and partners e.g Finance, performance, Transformation, Commissioning and Adult Social Care teams to deliver the project.

The report detailed the proposed transformation project with IMPOWER and that will be delivered in three phases; Diagnostic (Analysis of demand and cost drivers, benchmarking, and identification of priority groups), Test and Learn (Trial Interventions, co-production with stakeholders and evaluation), Scale-Up (Subject to gateway decision, development of a strategic business case and system-wide transformation).

It was stated that the total investment is £247,287 (excl. VAT), with a minimum expected ROI of 3:1. This will provide actionable savings in year one to at least cover the cost of the investment, with estimated savings in subsequent years of £0.750m per annum.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that: -

- a) Cabinet agrees the allocation of financial resources to enable the WAA transformation project to proceed.
- b) Delegated authority is granted to the Executive Director of People to oversee implementation and approve progression to Phase 3, subject to gateway review.

REASON - The recommendations are supported by the following reasons: -

- a) Rising demand and costs in WAA services, with ASC spend increasing to gross £48.6m in 2024/25.
- b) Increasing numbers of high-cost support packages and residential placements.
- c) Opportunity to invest in preventative and strengths-based best practice approaches to improve outcomes and reduce long-term costs.
- d) IMPOWER's proven track record of supporting Local Authorities to deliver significant savings and improved outcomes

C50 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - MTFP 2026-27 TO 2029-30

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the proposals for the revenue budget, capital programme, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2026/27, in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2029/30 and the 30-year Business Plan.

The submitted report stated that the Council was the largest provider of social housing in the Borough, providing 5,266 homes to local residents; those homes were of a high standard of accommodation that met the Decent Homes Standard; as a result of the high quality of the homes and the services provided they were in high demand; to meet that demand the

Council had an ambitious programme to build new homes in Darlington, funded through capital receipts from the right to buy sales, grant funding and borrowing of £8.2m.; and that the HRA funded a Tenancy Sustainment Service to provide tenants with advice and support to address the financial challenges that they were facing. The proposed revenue budget expenditure of £32.042m included £7.579m to fund responsive repairs and maintenance and £12.261m contribution to the capital programme. The proposed capital programme of £22.119m included £1.352m for heating system replacements, £1.617m for property adaptations, structural works, external works and roofing, £2.025m for window and door replacements, £3.672m for kitchen and bathroom replacements, £5.237m to deliver energy efficiency measures to tackle climate change and £6.821m to complete capital schemes approved in previous years and to deliver our new build Council housing programme.

It was reported that the key decision to be made regarding the HRA each year was the balance between setting rent and service charge levels that were affordable to the Council's tenants whilst ensuring there was sufficient resources to invest in housing stock, tackle climate change and maintain services; Local Authorities had the discretion to increase rents by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus one per cent; CPI for September 2025 was 3.8 per cent which meant that Members could decide to increase rents by up to 4.8 per cent; and that consideration would need to be given to the current economic pressures facing tenants balanced against the need to maintain and improve the housing and deliver the capital and energy efficiency programme.

RESOLVED - It is proposed that the following recommendations are agreed for wider consultation:

- (a) An average weekly rent increase of 4.8% for 2026-27 be implemented, giving an average social rent of £89.92 and affordable rent of £101.95.
- (b) Garage rents and service charges are increased as shown in Table 3.
- (c) The revenue budget at Appendix 1 is approved.
- (d) The Housing Business Plan at Appendix 2 is agreed.
- (e) The capital programme at Appendix 3 is approved.

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

C51 HOUSING SERVICES TENANCY POLICY 2025-2030

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance to approve the Housing Tenancy Policy 2025-2030.

The report explained that the Housing Tenancy Policy 2025-2030 sets out the type of tenancies it offers and aims to help those in housing need access a home that meet their needs, helps to build sustainable and healthy communities and to help make decisions about who lives where and in what type of tenancy and for how long.

It also stated that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards state that Registered Providers of social housing must "offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households,

the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock”.

It was reported that the Tenants Panel had been consulted on the draft policy, they gave their full support apart from the issue of tenancies for new build properties which was set out in paragraph 12 of the report. The strategy was considered by the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee on the 29th of October 2025, and the Committee agreed the onwards submission to Cabinet.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- (a) Consider the contents of this report
- (b) Approve the Housing Services Tenancy Policy 2025-2030

REASON - The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- a) The Housing Services Tenancy Policy 2025-2030 ensures that tenants are provided with the right tenancy for their circumstances and that the Council makes the best use of its Council housing stock.
- b) The RSH, in its Tenancy Standard, sets out that registered providers of social housing must publish clear and accessible policies, which outline the types of tenancies they will grant, the circumstances in which they will grant tenancies of a particular type and the circumstances in which fixed term tenancies will be granted.

C52 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) FOR CONSULTATION

The Leader introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Strategic Leadership Team to propose a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2026/27 to 2029/30 for consultation, including setting a budget and Council Tax increase for 2026/27.

The submitted report stated that the Council was facing significant and unparalleled financial challenges stemming from reductions in public spending; the aftermath of Covid; the current economic climate; increased cost of living; income deprivation and rising poverty; high inflation; and the increased demand for services particularly in relation to adults and children’s social care and homelessness. The Council is facing a spiralling increase in cost and demand for services in Children’s and Adult’s Social Care which have had a direct impact on the Council’s contracted expenditure.

It was reported that as part of the funding reform consultation, the government confirmed the intention and expectation that councils would increase their Council Tax by 5% per annum, including the Adult Social Care precept. The MTFP then proposes a Council Tax increase of 2.99% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2% which will generate £2.126m and £1.422m respectively. It was explained that Adult Social Care is by far the largest overall budget with a spend of £59.7m and the precept is crucial to meet overall costs, and pressure faced in this service area.

Details of the projected expenditure and income; budget pressures and savings; schedule of proposed fees and charges; assumptions used to prepare estimates; projected Revenue Outturn 2025/26; and proposed Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2029/30, were all also appended to the submitted report.

RESOLVED - That the Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital

Programme, as set out in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively to the submitted report, be approved for consultation, including: -

- (a) A Council Tax increase of 2.99% plus a 2% Adult Social Care Precept to help fund social care for 2026/27.
- (b) The Schedule of Charges as set out in Appendix 3.
- (c) The efficiency savings and transformation programme proposed.

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

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

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

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

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

C53 MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2025/26

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

It was reported that the mandatory Prudential Code, which governed the Council's borrowing, required Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, which related to capital spending and borrowing. The Prudential Indicators were set out in three statutory annual reports, a forward-looking annual treasury management strategy; a backward-looking annual treasury management report; and the mid-year update. The key objectives of those three annual reports were set out in the submitted report, together with the key proposed revisions to the indicators which related to a reduction in the Operational Boundary to £182.456m and the Authorised Limit to £276.297m to allow for any additional cashflow requirements.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that:

- a) The revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 are examined
- b) (b) The Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) projected outturn shown in Table 11 is noted
- c) (c) That this report is forwarded to Council with comments from this committee, in order for the updated prudential indicators to be approved

REASON - 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 Local Government Act 2003
- d) To enable further improvements to be made in the Council's Treasury Management function

C54 PRIDE IN PLACE

The Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection which was to provide the background to the Pride in Place Programme, Outline the current position of the fund in Darlington, Outline the Council's governance arrangements and Present the Regeneration Plan submitted to MHCLG for approval.

The report explained that Darlington is part of the Government's Pride in Place programme which will invest £19,539,000 in Darlington over the next ten years. In order to manage the fund an independent Neighbourhood Board has been established to which the Council acts as secretariat and accountable body. Staffing arrangements have been revised in order to support the delivery of the fund objectives and officers will attend meetings to advise the board.

The report stated that the Project Management capability will be provided by the Council and the Council's procurement team ensures the procurement route is correct, appropriate Governance arrangements are also in place. It was explained that a Regeneration Plan had been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

RESOLVED - It is recommended that:

- a) The Regeneration Plan is endorsed
- b) b) The governance and programme delivery arrangements are agreed

REASON - The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- a) The Pride in Place programme represents an investment of £19,539,000 in Darlington over the next ten years.
- b) The programme in development directly supports the ambitions of the Council Plan

C55 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER - LOWSON STREET

Members were in agreement that the Traffic Regulation Order Report be deferred to the next meeting of the Ordinary Meeting of Cabinet in January.

C56 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

**DECISIONS DATED –
FRIDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2025**