



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

# Extraordinary Meeting of the Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 19 June 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QT

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

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Declarations of Interest.
3. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given):-
  - (a) The Public; (Pages 5 - 8)
  - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
4. Notice of Motion
  - (a) To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor Durham and seconded by Councillor Dulston –  
**Supporting Sporting Clubs & Protecting Green Spaces for the Stars of Tomorrow**

**That this council notes:**

- a) Strong sports clubs are vital community assets, offering social connections, promoting physical and mental health, and fostering a sense of belonging. They provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to interact, build relationships, and contribute to their local areas. Furthermore, sports clubs can address social challenges like reducing crime and improving educational

attainment.

- b) Where supported they can contribute to a vibrant economy, not only bringing in much needed investment into the town through improved facilities but support the small trader, the local cafe or pub.
- c) Darlington has a strong history of producing sporting stars, each honing their fledgling skills or exercising on the various green spaces we have within the Borough.
- d) For the small child, “Tommy Crooks Park” can become Wembley, “Bellburn Field” Anfield and “Fryers field” the crease at Lords.
- e) It was important as a Council to refresh the Playing pitches & Built facility strategy in 2021 to understand the Towns current capacity, how we could help sports clubs such as Darlington FC finding its forever home. This strategy was guided by short, medium and long term actions, the latter maturing no later than 2026.
- f) The Labour/Lib Dem administration has recently approved its Physical Activity Strategy for the next 10 years, it makes reference to the actions within the above report, however it puts a longer timeframe on delivery up to 2031.

**That this Council Believes:**

- a) Any decisions approved by this council which effect Sporting Clubs and spaces where sports are played goes beyond politics and should be cross party and made by “Full Council”
- b) Darlington Council has a chequered history when it comes to supporting the sporting clubs in Town or protecting the green spaces used to play sport on.
- c) We can’t reverse what has gone before but can do better in the future.
- d) This Council will always be an anchor for Sporting Clubs in choppy waters, the best interests of the club at the heart of joint working arrangements.
- e) Any review of the actions required within the Playing pitches and Built facility strategy cannot be pushed back, if anything we must do more and we must go faster.

**That this Council resolves to:**

- a) Bring forward the review of the Playing pitches & Built facility strategy 2021 to identify which aims require renewed focus.
- b) Officers provide clarity and full transparency on any plans which may impact on the Economic health or security of Tenure for any Sporting Club within the Borough.

- c) Commit to bringing forward the required changes to the Local Plan either through policy or Land Designation which will ensure that all recreational spaces are protected from House Building.
- d) Commits to an unwavering support to ensure Darlington FC finds its forever home.
- e) Ensuring that any plans which effects a sporting club, either economically or its secure tenure, these decisions are scrutinised by a committee made up of all members from Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee, Community and Local Services Scrutiny Committee and Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- f) Following the above review, "Full Council" rather than "Cabinet" approves or rejects said plans.
- g) This Council delegates to the Monitoring Officer the task of making any Constitutional changes necessary to facilitate the above.
- h) If required ask the Mayor to convene an Extraordinary meeting of Council to approve changes set out in g), if the next meeting of Council is more than 45 days from date of this meeting.



**Amy Wennington**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Wednesday, 11 June 2025**

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

**Membership**

The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Coe, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Dillon, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Garner, Harker, Haszeldine, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, 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 James McAllister, Democratic Officer, Resources and Governance

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: [james.mcallister@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:james.mcallister@darlington.gov.uk) or Telephone 01325 403122

Questions submitted on Notice for the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council – Thursday, 19 June 2025

Question No.	Question received from	Respondent	Question
1.	Michael WALKER	Councillor HARKER	<p><i>'Given the clear concern that Darlington Borough Council is running scared of scrutiny, as highlighted in recent criticism over the Council's appalling scrutiny restructure, the decision to hold an extraordinary meeting is very welcome. The public rightly deserve answers — especially as some residents have waited over a year for a response from the Leader of the Council.</i></p> <p><i>In light of tonight's motion recognising the vital role that community and sports groups play in improving health, reducing crime, and fostering social cohesion, can the Leader explain why Skerne Park Community Partnership has been forced to vacate its base at the Coleridge Centre — effectively putting on hold key community engagement activities like boxing, coding, and self-defence classes?</i></p> <p><i>As I'm sure you're aware, these activities can't be organised from someone's living room. What action is the Council taking to ensure that grassroots groups like this — which so clearly support the Physical Activity Strategy and wider wellbeing objectives — are properly supported, not pushed out and residents of our town are helped?'</i></p>
2.	Leigh TAYLOR	Councillor ROCHE	<p><i>"Cllr Roche, you recently pointed out that 'Physical activity is critical for promoting good health. It improves wellbeing and the number of years that people can live healthily.'. Therefore, knowing that a motion has been presented to support the council and residents to achieve this is great to hear.</i></p> <p><i>One of the most popular activities in the UK is swimming and council pools are often the most accessible venues. There is however an elephant in the room – the 'changing village'. Unfortunately, mixed sex 'village' cubicles mean that the dignity, privacy and safety of women and children is potentially compromised. This is not my opinion; it is based on a growing body of evidence.</i></p> <p><i>In 2018, a Sunday Times FOI investigation found there were '134 complaints of changing room sexual assaults, voyeurism and harassment in 2017-2018: 120 (nearly 90%) occurred in mixed facilities. Just 14 were in single sex changing areas.</i></p>

*A WRN 2024 report catalogued press reports which confirm that women and girls are at risk in village-style changing areas: 'In Swansea, a 27-year-old male was convicted of voyeurism in a communal village-style changing area at the LC Waterpark. He was charged with 'observing a private act for sexual gratification' after he had followed a 15-year-old girl into the changing rooms and filmed her by putting his phone under the partition wall of the adjoining cubicle. Similar incidents have occurred all over the country, e.g. Bakewell, Bicester, Leicester, and a particularly nasty case occurred at pools across London and the Southwest of England where two men colluded to photograph at least 6,000 victims, including children.'*

*The scale of this issue has been further illustrated by Swim England, who in February 2025, held an extraordinary emergency safeguarding meeting because cases of voyeurism and using mobile phones to photograph women and girls changing at swim competitions have doubled. In a statement at the safeguarding meeting, Swim England said it "strongly recommended" that swimming organisations engaged with local pool providers to encourage them to create "simple barrier systems" to allow mixed changing villages to have separate changing areas for either sex.*

*Cllr Roche, to help the council address the 'Active Environments' issue of 'Creating and protecting the spaces that make it easier to be active', the changing rooms offer needs to change. The Dolphin Centre's dry change is already single sex - what is the explanation for this and why this isn't also the case with the wet change for pool users? "*

Notes:

[1]

<https://democracy.darlington.gov.uk/documents/s24659/Item%20No.%204%20-%20Physical%20Activity%20Strategy%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>

[2] (Sunday Times article <https://archive.ph/evO4g>)

[3] p9 Leisure Centres: Putting Women and Girls at Risk

[https://a86851fb-c226-400d-9bf4-401a61daaa40.usrfiles.com/ugd/a86851\\_0f9e0eeec3b54ff18327bfce8f5e6f52.pdf](https://a86851fb-c226-400d-9bf4-401a61daaa40.usrfiles.com/ugd/a86851_0f9e0eeec3b54ff18327bfce8f5e6f52.pdf)

[4] Voyeurs target female athletes at swimming competitions. Women say they are considering leaving the sport after leaked Swim England report shows 'significant increase' in incidents. The Times 31/03/2025

<https://archive.ph/Ge7sd#selection-1715.0-1715.283>



This page is intentionally left blank