

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15 April 2026

PRESENT – Councillors Johnson (Chair), Anderson, Crudass, Holroyd, Layton, M Nicholson and Mrs Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillors Beckett and Pease

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Roche

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Cheryl Williams (Housing Asset and Compliance Manager) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH48 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 4 MARCH 2026

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 4 March 2026.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 4 March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

HH49 UPDATE: CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Assistant Director, Housing and Revenue submitted a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Climate Change Strategy 2024-2029.

The presentation outlined the aims of the strategy and details were provided of the actions taken in 2025/26 in relation to retrofit. Members noted that £1.36m funding was secured from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2.1; that this money had been used, alongside the Council's matched contribution to roll out retrofit works to 119 homes; and this work was completed in August 2025. Details were provided of the energy efficiency measures applied.

It was reported that further funding was awarded under the government's Warm Homes Social Housing Fund and the Council secured over £3.5m funding which would be supported by DBC matched funding of over £11.6m and this would see 680 homes upgraded with works such as external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, door and window upgrades and roof extensions as required. Members were informed that a further bid was being submitted for an additional £1.5m funding from the Warm Homes social Fund to upgrade a further 200 properties.

Members noted that almost 3000 new Stock Condition surveys and EPC's had been commissioned, providing a clear picture and further insight into which homes are performing

well and which require further energy work interventions. It was reported that there had been an increase in 240 properties reaching EPC C.

The presentation also provided details of actions taken in 2025/26 in relation to new build homes. Members were advised that new builds were built to a standard of EPC B; that solar photovoltaics and air source heat pumps were included as standard; and electric vehicle chargers would be installed in line with new building regulations.

Details were provided of the planned and responsive maintenance and in relation to EPC's Members were advised that 55 per cent of council properties now had an EPC C or above; that there had been an increase of 240 homes having reached EPC C or above from January 2025 to January 2025 and roughly 1000 homes had a high scoring EPC D and required minor works to obtain an EPC rating of C. Details were also provided of the plans for 2026/27 and key areas of focus for the future.

Following a query, Members were assured that air source heat pumps worked well and engagement was being undertaken with tenants to ensure that the technology was understood and being used correctly. Members also questioned whether the air source heat pumps had helped to reduce tenants' energy bills.

Members noted the process in place to inspect work undertaken by contractors; and Members were informed that the council has worked closely with contractors to ensure they had the capacity to deliver the upgrade work for the additional 200 properties.

Members sought clarification regarding the four new build properties that were 1 point short of achieving an EPC A rating.

Further discussion ensued regarding the rolling programme of work and how this was prioritised; and Members sought clarification regarding the communal EV chargers.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

HH50 DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026 - GROWING HEALTHY

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the Annual Public Health Report, an independent report on the health and wellbeing of Darlington.

The submitted report stated that this year's report focused on the health of children and young people, describing the current position of some key public health outcomes and the range of services and interventions in place locally to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people across key areas of focus.

It was reported that during the development of the report the Director of Public Health visited three primary schools and one secondary school, to talk to some children and young people; and Members were informed that the format of the report is web based with short videos for each section.

The report provided details of the progress made to date on the recommendations of the

2024/25 Annual Public Health Report.

The Director of Public Health gave a presentation to accompany the report, and in doing so, outlined the key issues, services and key performance indicators in relation to the main areas of focus of the report; those being health of our children and young people, pregnancy and birth, best start and early years, school children and young people, healthy lifestyle survey, oral health, substance misuse, mental health and vaccinations; and the recommendations were outlined.

Discussion ensued regarding life expectancy inequalities between wards in the town. Members noted that the work being undertaken would contribute to and have a positive impact however the outcomes would not be evident for a number of years; and in relation to licensing and planning decisions for fast food outlets in Darlington, Members were advised that Public Health worked with planning, providing information regarding obesity rates and proximity to fast food outlets and that local profiles were being developed from data collected, which would help to further inform discussions with planning and licensing.

Members raised concern regarding the statement 'Efforts continue to increase the numbers of young people with drug or alcohol addictions accessing the service for treatment' and suggested more context be provided; and Members requested the recommendations from the self-harm audit.

Following a question, members were informed of the work undertaken in relation to alcohol use in children and clarification was sought regarding the definition for new referrals to secondary mental health services for young people.

Discussion ensued regarding oral health, including advice for older people. Members were informed that an oral health strategy was being developed and would be brought to scrutiny for consideration, that additional Integrated Care Board funding had been used to purchase resources and kits for care homes and that the oral health teams work closely with care home settings.

Members also sought clarification regarding the access to perinatal mental health services and were keen to receive and give consideration to the full Annual Director of Public Health report.

RESOLVED – That, to allow adequate time for scrutiny, the Annual Director of Public Health report be brought back to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

HH51 WORK PROGRAMME

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

Discussion ensued on the current work programme and a Member suggested that this Committee scrutinises sites identified for new build council housing.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

HH52 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

It was reported that the Board last met on 19 March 2026 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 18 June 2026.

RESOLVED – That Members of this Scrutiny Committee continue to receive the Minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

HH53 REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee last met on 12 March 2026 and Members noted the approved Minutes from the meeting held on 11 December 2025 (previously circulated).

RESOLVED – That Members look forward to receiving an update of the work of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting of Scrutiny Committee.