

## ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 APRIL 2021

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### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QTR 3 2020/21

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2020/21 at Quarter 3.

#### Performance Summary

2. This report provides performance information in line with an indicator set and scrutiny committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by scrutiny committee chairs.
3. The indicators included in this report are aligned with key priorities. Other indicators may be referenced when appropriate in narrative provided by the relevant assistant directors, when providing the committee with performance updates.
4. The indicators are measured against targets and compared to previous years however it must be noted that this has been a very different year. The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on normal business activities across the Council and whilst the response to the pandemic has been extremely positive there has been an impact on some performance measures which need to be taken into account.
5. Twenty-two indicators are reported to the committee, seventeen of them on a six-monthly basis and five annually.
6. One indicator cannot be reported due to an alternative system being introduced to record the information.

CUL 080	Town Centre footfall trend from the previous year
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7. Performance of the sixteen indicators reported at 9 months:
  - a) Of the sixteen indicators reported four have a target to be compared against.
  - b) All four of the indicators show performance is better than their target.

HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected
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HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year

c) Of the sixteen indicators reported quarterly all can be compared against their data at Quarter 3 2019/20.

d) Six indicators are showing performance better than at this time last year.

FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
FHR 003	Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health
FHR 008	Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman
FHR 019	Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

e) Nine indicators are showing performance lower than at this time last year:

ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 106	24 months to date % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count
ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target
HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend

f) One indicator is showing performance the same as at this time last year:

FHR 009	Staff turnover – Voluntary leavers
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8. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at **Appendix 1**.

### Recommendations

9. It is recommended:

- a) that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with appropriate Assistant Directors.

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Managing Director**

### Background Papers

Background papers were not used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Well Being	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
Sustainability	This report supports the Council's sustainability responsibilities
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	This reports supports performance improvement across all Wards
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes.

## **Main Report**

### **Revenue Collection**

#### **Council Tax and Business Rates**

10. Despite the challenges of covid-19 the collection of Council Tax arrears (HBS 002) is slightly above target for quarter 3. Darlington Borough Council is one of the top performers in terms of Council Tax arrears collection. The total arrears collected as a percentage of arrears outstanding was 27.85% for 2019-20, compared to 19.76% nationally despite the challenges of Covid-19.
11. In-year collection of Council Tax (HBS 009) remains on target, despite the challenges of Covid-19 and the inability to take court action to enforce Council Tax debts.
12. It is also pleasing to note the in-year collection of Business Rates (HBS 010) remains on target, despite the challenges of Covid-19 and the inability to take court action to enforce Business Rates debts.

#### **Housing Benefits**

13. Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (HBS 003) is slightly below target for quarter 3. This is because the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) suspended recovery of overpayments from Universal Credit during the initial Covid-19 lockdown. The number of overpayments being identified is also gradually reducing due to the continued migration of Housing Benefit claims to Universal Credit.

### **Governance**

#### **Human Resources**

14. Sickness absence (FHR 001) is 1.52 F.T.E. days lower than the same period last year with 75% relating to long term absence which is being closely managed.
15. Whilst absence rates have reduced overall, stress remains the highest absence reason equating to 46% of all absences, and 26% of this was deemed work related. Officers are increasing efforts in terms of stress risk assessment awareness and absence management relating to stress, and we are continuing to raise awareness of mental health via the Mental Health for Managers programme. The introduction of 14 Mental Health first aiders alongside the Mental Health Mentors launched last year have provided invaluable support to employees particularly through this pandemic with very positive feedback received.

16. Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers (FHR 019) - Of the 104 voluntary leavers 48 were from Children & Adults, 47 from Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services and 9 from Resources.

## **Health & Safety**

17. It is pleasing to report that the number of reportable employee accidents / ill health (FHR 003) has halved from the same period last year and stands at 2. Both have been investigated and any learning has been put into place.

## **Complaints**

18. Complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman (FHR 008) have reduced from twelve in 2018/19 to six in 2019/2020. The Ombudsman had upheld three complaints at the end of quarter 3, 2020/2021. While the reduction between 2018/19 and 2019/20 was as a result of learning from complaints, the most recent reduction is likely to be, in part, as a result of COVID-19.

## **Procurement**

19. Contracted spend (LGP 008) improved from 2018/19 to 2019/2020 and this improvement is also reflected in the first three quarters of 2020/2021 and is remaining above the target (80%). Officers are continuing to monitor non-contracted spend and where there is a need frameworks are identified and tendered.

## **Economy**

### **Culture**

20. An alternative system for the Town Centre footfall counters was installed in March 2020. The indicator CUL 080a has been included in Appendix 1 as a proxy indicator showing the weekly average footfall recorded since the installation of the new system has been affected due to the periods of lockdown.

### **Employment**

21. Covid-19 has had an impact on the unemployed claimant count nationally (ECI 321). Darlington's December figure of 6.9% is less than the North East average of 7.1% and higher than the England average of 6.3%. When compared to Dec 1999 Darlington's percentage increase figure of 46.8% (4.7% to 6.9%) is less than both the North East average whose figure is 61.4% (4.4% to 7.1%) and England average whose is 117.2% (2.9% to 6.3%).

## **Planning Policy**

22. Covid-19 has had an impact on the unemployed claimant count nationally (ECI 321). Darlington's December figure of 6.9% is less than the North East average of 7.1% and higher than the England average of 6.3%. When compared to Dec 1999 Darlington's percentage increase figure of 46.8% (4.7% to 6.9%) is less than both the North East average whose figure is 61.4% (4.4% to 7.1%) and England average whose is 117.2% (2.9% to 6.3%).
23. Whilst we expected Covid-19 to have a dramatic impact on housing delivery as construction sites shut down on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and we initially estimated no housing completions in the first quarter of the financial year 2020/2021 (ECI 401). The reality is by the end of the third quarter we had 440 completions, which in comparison is against 476 the previous year, so despite the pandemic we were only 36 units behind the previous non-pandemic year. The monitoring also shows in the third quarter we had 124 residential starts which compares with 111 in the previous year. We are therefore despite the pandemic expected to exceed our targets for the year.

## **Planning Development Management**

24. The indicators for the ECI 105 AND ECI 106 are broadly consistent with the previous 2 quarters including the corresponding 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter last year.
25. Indicator ECI 104 which measures the determination of Major Planning applications within 13 weeks has shown that there has been an 8% drop in performance since the last quarter and a 20% drop since the corresponding 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter last year. This can be explained by the fact that as the Council receives relatively small amount major applications as a proportion of the applications it received in the round. The figure can be affected positively or negatively by the time taken by a single application, or where an applicant has refused to agree to an extension of time [E of T] to enable the Council to determine an application within agreed time limits.