

**COUNCIL**  
**15 JULY 2021**

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**PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN DARLINGTON**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Heather Scott, Leader of the Council**

**Responsible Director -  
Ian Williams, Chief Executive**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members on a new partnership approach to delivering success for Darlington agreed with partners and for Council to agree to amending the Council's constitution with regard to its lead strategic documents.

**Summary**

2. This report updates members on changes made to partnership working in Darlington where it has been agreed by partners that the Partnership Board cease and it is replaced by a Public Sector Executive Group and other partnership arrangements to be developed. Also, the report recommends as a result of the change in circumstances that the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) cease to be used as a strategic lead for the Borough and that the lead is provided to partners by the Council plan.
3. This changed approach was considered and approved by Cabinet on the 1 June 2021, subject to approval by Council of the constitutional changes required.
4. Following the receipt of a call-in from Cabinet on 1 June 2021 in relation to its decision in respect of the subject of this report, Partnership Working in Darlington, the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee held a special meeting on 25 June 2021. After carefully considering all of the points raised, the majority view of the Committee was that it was satisfied with the decision Cabinet took on 1 June 2021
5. The new approach requires amendments to the constitution with regard to the removal of the SCS from it.

**Recommendation**

6. That Members :-
  - (a) Note the new approach to partnership working in Darlington.

- (b) Recognise the great contribution to Darlington made by current and past Members of the Darlington Partnership.
- (c) Approve the change of emphasis with the Council Plan standing as the Council’s lead strategy and agree that the Council ceases to have a separate Sustainable Community strategy.
- (d) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Law and Governance to make consequential amendments to the constitution.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) to refresh partnering in Darlington and continues to thrive and acknowledge the general work done.
- (b) for the matter to be considered by Council in accordance with the procedure for making changes to documents that are part of the policy framework.
- (c) to enable appropriate amendments to the constitution to be made.

**Ian Williams  
Chief Executive**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impact
Health and Well Being	No direct impact
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impact
Diversity	No direct impact
Wards Affected	No direct impact
Groups Affected	No direct impact
Budget and Policy Framework	No direct impact
Key Decision	No direct impact
Urgent Decision	No direct impact
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report recommends a replacement for the SCS.
Efficiency	No direct impact
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No direct impact

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

8. The Darlington Partnership (DP) has for many years been seen as the overarching partnership across the Borough; it has its origins in economic growth and was established to bring together Public and Private sectors to grow the economy. When government legislation required local authorities to establish a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as part of the overall governance of the Borough, the DP became the LSP.
9. The DP embraced numerous statutory roles such as holding to account the Community Safety Partnership and Children's and Young Peoples Trust Board. The DP had five themed groups as follows :-
  - (a) Prosperous Darlington
  - (b) Aspiring Darlington
  - (c) Healthy Darlington
  - (d) Greener Darlington
  - (e) Safer Darlington
10. The Partnership was well funded and supported mainly by the public sector, but private sector involvement particularly in economic growth was very visible.
11. The key role of an LSP was to agree and deliver a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). This sets out overall framework/policy direction within which the public sector partners would work to achieve better outcomes for the Borough and Private and Voluntary Sector partners where appropriate would work to support the aims of SCS.
12. The SCS was produced by the DP and adopted by the Council. The SCS was titled One Darlington Perfectly Placed (ODPP) with two key strands :-
  - (a) One Darlington – acknowledged the significant gaps in the opportunities in Darlington and it strived to work to narrow those groups.
  - (b) Perfectly Placed – acknowledged that Darlington had many strengths due to its location and strived to maximise the economic benefits of this in its plans.
13. The SCS was last refreshed in 2014 but has not been reviewed since. Although it is fair to say the overall aims of the two priorities remain very much engrained within the Council it will not be the case in other public sector organisations as time has moved on.
14. Following changes in direction from a new government in 2010, the statutory requirement to have an LSP and SCS ceased. Darlington decided to continue with its approach on a voluntary basis, however the partnership lost any legal status and became a coalition with moral rather than legal oversight of activities within the Borough.
15. In the following years, the reductions to public sector funding led to the reduction of support for the DP leading to a review which removed all the themed groups and

retained the DP board only.

16. Since the review, the DP has changed focus where originally as an LSP it set overall vision and strategy it has focussed more on delivering solutions to challenges identified by partners such as :-
  - (a) Foundation for Jobs
  - (b) Good Friends
  - (c) Darlington Cares
  - (d) A campaign for awareness of mental health in the Workplace
  - (e) A campaign to raise the awareness of Domestic Violence with employers
  - (f) Fairer Richer Darlington Programme aimed at tackling the short, medium, and long-term impacts and causes of poverty.
  - (g) The Bread and Butter Thing.
17. It is fair to say that a lot of the work has been done outside the Board and delivered by the Director of the Partnership and partners. The Director has been the driving force in delivering the many projects.
18. The DP Board met bi-monthly for approximately 2 hours between 12 noon and 2pm despite the good work achieved, discussions with the vast majority of partners revealed a general feeling that the Board itself is not where work gets done and although a useful networking opportunity it is generally felt that a new approach was required to partnering to deliver success for Darlington.
19. To this end, a meeting of the public sector funders of the partnership was arranged to discuss and develop a new proposal which is set out in the following part of this report.

## **Proposal**

20. As the legal requirement and status of an LSP has ceased, the public sector partners were clear that Darlington Borough Council has the democratic mandate to set policy for the Borough in consultation with partners and the public. It was therefore suggested that the pretty much redundant SCS is stood down and that the Council fills that void by providing leadership to the Borough via its Council Plan – Delivering Success for Darlington (DSFD). Partner agencies would seek where possible to take a lead from the plan and align their plans where appropriate.
21. A Darlington Public Sector Executive Group (PSEG) to be established including senior officers from key public sector bodies with the purpose of co-ordinating efforts to Deliver Success for Darlington. The key aims would be to :-
  - (a) Gain a common understanding of the issues facing Darlington
  - (b) Collective 'horizon scanning'

- (c) Maximise the benefits of the public sector resources
  - (d) Review and plan initiatives to deliver success
  - (e) To advise their own Governance on issues raised at the partnership and seek approval from them where appropriate
  - (f) To work and support the private and voluntary sector to deliver programmes and projects to deliver success for Darlington.
  - (g) To act as the Programme Board for key initiatives.
22. The group would meet regularly and would include the following or their representatives:-
- (a) Chief Executive, DBC
  - (b) Chief Operating Officer CCG
  - (c) Chief Constable
  - (d) Chief Fire Officer
  - (e) Director of Teesside University
  - (f) Chief Executive of Durham & Darlington Health Trust
  - (g) Principal of Darlington College
  - (h) Chief Executive of the Police Victim and Crime Commissioners office.
23. Other relevant officers may well attend as necessary.
24. The Group initially would support/oversee the following delivery projects/organisations with more to follow :-
- (a) Darlington Cares
  - (b) Bread and Butter Thing
  - (c) Northgate Initiative
  - (d) Community Wealth Building
25. The group will be supported by the Director of the Darlington Partnership who will act as programme/project lead for many of the initiatives together with support from the Council's Policy & Performance Manager in respect of evidence and policy matters. Partners would continue to financially support PSEG as they do the Darlington Partnership and lend their support as needed.
26. As outlined in the aims above the group will work with the private sector engaging through existing, issues focused forums such as the Towns Fund Board and Darlington Cares.
27. The Board would also look to work with the voluntary sector to ensure they are aware of emerging challenges and opportunities.
28. It is also recognised that other partnership arrangements will be developed to ensure the Voluntary and Community Sectors are fully engaged.

## **Legal and Constitutional Implications**

29. The SCS was previously adopted by the Council as part of the documents that comprise the Council's policy framework. The legal requirement for Council's to adopt a SCS was repealed by the Deregulation Act 2015 [ S.100(2)(c) ] and whether council's continue to have an SCS is a matter of local discretion. Agreement to remove a policy framework strategy will require this to be considered by Cabinet and then Council, who will need to approve any change of approach.
30. Should the SCS cease to be used, reference to it as a document forming part of the policy framework will need to be removed from the constitution and consequential amendments made as necessary to reflect this change.