

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 AUGUST 2021**

THE NORTHGATE INITIATIVE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report summarises the current position and developments of the Northgate Initiative.

Summary

2. The Northgate Initiative was established in 2019, comprising of a multi-agency programme which seeks to pilot a range of interventions in order to improve outcomes for local residents in all areas of wellbeing including economy, education and childhood, health, environment and social relationships.
3. The workstreams align with the Local Framework for Wellbeing indicator set, which was developed by the ONS, Public Health England, What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Happy City, to identify a consistent means of monitoring residents' wellbeing at a local level.
4. There have been some measurable improvements over the past 18 months, working towards the targets set for 2024. Momentum is building as the restrictions of the pandemic are lifted allowing community engagement to develop as face to face work is able to take place.
5. Strong management of the programme ensures accountability for progression against defined aims. (see appendix 1. 'Actions to Vision' attached)

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that this report is received for information and comment.

**Ian Williams
Chief Executive**

Background Papers

Northgate Initiative: Actions to Vision

author : Sarah Small Ext 5757

S17 Crime and Disorder	The initiative aims to improve community safety in the Northgate ward
Health and Well Being	The initiative aims to improve the health of the residents of Northgate ward
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	Home energy efficiency is a focus of the initiative
Diversity	No impact
Wards Affected	Northgate ward
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	Neighbourhood Renewal
Key Decision	none
Urgent Decision	none
Council Plan	This report details the work of the Northgate Initiative which is key element of the Council's plan to 'Work with communities to maximise their potential.
Efficiency	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

7. Northgate is a place where residents are empowered to take control of and improve their wellbeing and life outcomes, by helping deliver the following conditions:
- (a) Fairly paid, quality employment opportunities
 - (b) Access to continuous learning
 - (c) Enough information and support to get and stay healthy
 - (d) A clean and green local environment that people can take pride in
 - (e) A safe place to live
 - (f) A community that cares for each other

Workstream Achievements to date

Environment

8. Community Safety has provided services and support to the community through:
- (a) targeted patrols (Civic Enforcement)
 - (b) proactive investigation and support concerning environmental crime and anti-social behaviour (Civic Enforcement)
 - (c) community engagement activities (Community Resilience Officer)

9. A range of key developments have been delivered since 2019 including:
 - (a) The introduction and delivery of an Environmental Crime Plan
 - (b) The introduction and delivery of a Responsible Dog Ownership Plan

10. Deliverables:
 - (a) Rapid removal of graffiti
 - (b) Design of community murals (in development)
 - (c) Provision of skips
 - (d) Defensive planting
 - (e) Installations of decorative trellis (replacing wire or glass)
 - (f) Deployment of 4 dedicated CCTV mobile cameras

Crime & Security

11. Policing within the Northgate area is part of the police daily activity. It is classed as an area of the locality which has a higher demand and the level of engagement is proportionate to that. There have been opportunities to adapt police approaches to try and tackle longer term issues in a more strategic, problem solving manner.

12. Delivery across the locality of the Home Office Safer Streets funding (£298,918) secured to introduce target-hardening of area.
 - (a) 416 properties visited by police regarding crime prevention advice / guidance

 - (b) 86 properties received target-hardening measures / 24 pending

 - (c) Delivery of crime prevention packs (locks, timers, cameras, marking kits, alarms, tv simulators & personal attack alarms

13. Initial delivery of Eyes and Ears event to local councilors. Programme designed to promote awareness / reporting of community issues / concerns. This will in time be delivered to the residents of Northgate.

14. Evident reduction in calls relating to 'concern for safety' in JD3 beat code area (Northgate). Between April-June 2020 there were 157 calls compared to 86 calls for the same period in 2021, 41 of which relate to Darlington Memorial Hospital indicating only 50% were actually community based calls.

15. There has been a clear increase in proactive patrols and engagement, these locations will be reviewed as Covid restrictions are lifted with Northgate remaining high on daily neighbourhood team briefings.

Housing

16. An operational focus has developed in Northgate, which has included supporting Housing in the delivery of the Next Steps project to reduce the number of empty homes and promote independent living.

In December 2019 there were 177 empty domestic properties in the Northgate area, out of a total of 2,290 (7.7%). This compared with an empty property rate of 3.7% across the whole of Darlington. 108 of these (4.7%) had been empty for more than 6 months. In addition, 36 of these (1.6%) had been empty for more than 2 years.

17. Currently there are 159 empty domestic properties in the Northgate area, out of a total of 2,298 (6.9%). Of these 159 properties, 88 of these (or 3.8%) have been empty for more than 6 months and 34 (or 1.5%) have been empty for more than 2 years.

18. In August 2020, as part of the Government's Rough Sleeper Next Steps initiative, Darlington Borough Council successfully bid for funding to purchase 4 long-term empty properties in the Northgate area, providing up to 8 separate units of accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The purchase and refurbishment of all 4 properties was completed in June 2021 and tenants have started to move in.

19. The Council are currently looking at options to possibly purchase and refurbish further empty properties in the Northgate area (finances permitting), or partner with other Social Housing Providers.

20. The government has committed to upgrade as many private rented sector homes as possible to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C by 2030, where practical, cost-effective and affordable.

21. In December 2019 there were 148 properties in Northgate with either an F or G rating, with 69 of these being listed as rented properties. There has been an improvement in these figures as of September 2020, (the last set of issued figures) this has improved to 122 properties (17.3%) in Northgate being registered as being either F or G, with 52 (24.6%) of these being listed as rented properties.

22. In addition specialist training has been undertaken by Private Sector Housing Officers to support enforcement of problematic landlords.

Economy

23. A presentation was made to the Northgate Steering Group, focusing on the potential housing redevelopments which will take place under the Towns Fund Initiative. Providing housing in the Northgate House / Gladstone Street area.

24. Economic Development have part funded the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives Peer Research recruitment and training. The peer researchers will assist in gathering the views and opinions of the residents living in the Northgate area.

Childhood & Education

25. Children's Services previously provided traditional statutory provision for the residents of Northgate. The Children's Centre based within the area provided additional family groups with an international focus with the diversity of the Northgate community in mind. Other than this there were no additional services or provision available.
26. A scoping exercise carried out identified the services available to residents of Northgate, this produced a pleasing and diverse selection of provision. But provoked questions around the use of services and were residents aware of what was readily available to them.
27. In response a working group was set up with representation from Children's Services, Health Visitors, Safeguarding, the local schools and young people's engagement and justice service.

The idea of creating a community Family Hub was developed, which will provide a means of alternative approaches to service delivery, underpinned by the principles of community involvement in the heart of the community based initially at Corporation Road Primary.

28. Visual representation of Northgate will be produced to help overcome any language barriers, this will depict all of the community assets within the ward and surrounding area including the town centre assets, bus tops, cycle routes. Pictures of local people and local features.

Transition from Primary to Secondary Education

29. It became apparent from gathering statistical analysis in the early stages of the initiative that there were challenges with the transition of pupils from Primary to Secondary education. This was found to be a town wide issue where more work needed to be done to help children build relationships with secondary teaching staff and for them to gain an understanding of the new pupils to include personal circumstances, which would potentially impact upon their education.
30. This has resulted in schools working much more closely together. The transition process begins much earlier and will last longer, as the primary and secondary schools work in partnership beyond the actual transition period. Secondary staff and children will maintain contact with the primary teachers to assist with overcoming any challenges, using their experience and knowledge from the child's primary school journey.

Health

31. Initially the Primary Care Network (PCN) aimed to focus on GP registration as it was evident there was a lack of residents from the Northgate area registering with their local GP.
32. As a result of Covid the PCN resources were redirected into the vaccination programme. Councillor Ali worked closely with the PCN to encourage residents of Northgate to have the vaccine.
33. The PCN are now working on a Well Being service which will have a significant focus on Northgate residents, they will also play an active role in the Community Hub in the longer term.

Shaping Places for Healthier Lives

34. Darlington was successful in securing £20,000 for the discovery phase of the Health Foundation and Local Government Association, Shaping Places for Healthier Lives Fund. Which aims to create the conditions for better health by funding local partnerships to take system-wide action on the wider determinants of health.
35. This phase involved delivering a diverse community engagement initiative based around fuel poverty, and the opportunity to train Peer Researchers. Individuals who are embedded into the community of Northgate, to work directly with residents to address the challenges and issue which matter the most to them and their families.
36. Three main assumptions on fuel poverty were predicted and founded following the engagement work. Stage 3 of the bid has been submitted which if successful will aim to alleviate the issues and their impact on the residents of Northgate (decision expected August 2021).

Assumptions

- (a) Most residents living in fuel poverty are private renters
- (b) Most residents living in fuel poverty are either unemployed or in poor quality employment
- (c) Knowledge of relevant support services in the area is low