

**PROGRESS REPORT**  
**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL STRATEGY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) – Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present a proposed approach for the Neighbourhood Renewal element of the 2018 Futures Fund.

**Summary**

2. Neighbourhood renewal initiatives traditionally sought to ensure that no one be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. This report proposes that, to all intents and purposes, the council already has a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy: the borough's sustainable community strategy (SCS) *One Darlington Perfectly Placed* (ODPP), which includes a statement of intent to 'narrow the gap' and reduce inequalities. It is therefore similarly proposed that work should focus on the delivery of this existing partnership strategy.
3. Given the status of ODPP as a One Darlington Partnership strategy, Darlington Partnership will lead on this work to ensure collective buy-in, oversight and coordination of activity. The council's role will be as a key partner and signatory to the proposed approach, reflecting its roles as a significant place leader and influencer, employer and service provider in Darlington.
4. The Corporate Plan, developed and agreed by Cabinet last year, uses the same framework as the SCS, based on the eight desired outcomes needed to deliver ODPP. As the Corporate Plan is subject to an annual refresh, it is proposed that this opportunity is taken during this year's update of the Corporate Plan to prioritise and fully align with the neighbourhood renewal ethos of narrowing the gap, tackling deprivation and maximising social value across the organisation.
5. It is envisaged that actions identified to achieve ODPP will constitute a partnership, multi-pronged approach, comprised of three workstreams which, collectively, will impact on deprivation in both the short- and long-term:
  - (a) Interventions to ensure families have the BASICS (short-term)
  - (b) Interventions to boost families' RESILIENCE (medium-term)
  - (c) Interventions to tackle the CAUSES of poverty (long-term)
6. A performance monitoring framework focusing on residents' wellbeing across seven domains (personal wellbeing, economy, education and childhood, equality,

health, place, and social relationships) is recommended as the overarching means of measuring progress towards ODPP over the next 4 years.

7. Analysis of a broad evidence base has identified younger, low income families as the primary priority demographic for work relating to reducing wellbeing inequality, and that job quality should be the priority area.

### **Recommendation**

8. Cabinet are recommended to:-
  - (a) Agree the proposed approach, as outlined in this report, for the Neighbourhood Renewal Futures Fund theme.
  - (b) Agree to receive update reports on the progress of Fairer, Richer Darlington programme and the council's contribution to delivery.

### **Reasons**

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) The Cabinet is a signatory to the goals of One Darlington Perfectly Placed, as a statement of intent to narrow inequalities and protect the most vulnerable in our community.
  - (b) The financial hardship faced by many people in Darlington is rising and there was public support for the council to take steps to alleviate the problems households face during the 2018 MTFP consultation.

**Paul Wildsmith  
Managing Director**

## Background Papers

One Darlington: Perfectly Placed – Darlington’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2008–2026 ([http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/362819/one\\_darlington\\_perfectly\\_placed.pdf](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/362819/one_darlington_perfectly_placed.pdf))

Understanding local needs for wellbeing data: measures and indicators (<http://www.happycity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/understanding-wellbeing-locally-Nov-2017-links.pdf>)

Natasha Telfer: Extension 6083

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is evidence that extreme financial hardship can contribute to criminal behaviour and therefore tackling deprivation can aid crime prevention
Health and Well Being	There is evidence that financial hardship contributes to poor health and even to suicide, and the Futures Fund NR theme is directed to mitigate the impacts of this.
Carbon Impact	Place and the environment form key elements of both One Darlington Perfectly Placed and the Local Framework for Wellbeing, therefore this approach proposes measures to monitor the environmental impact of work going forward and will seek to ensure that carbon impacts does not negatively affect residents’ wellbeing
Diversity	Financial hardship is often more commonplace and more severe for protected characteristic groups, including women, children, residents with disabilities and BAME groups.
Wards Affected	All but with particular concentrations of need within those boroughs in the most deprived IMD deciles.
Groups Affected	All residents
Budget and Policy Framework	The Corporate Plan forms part of the council’s policy framework
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	One Darlington has as its focus the alleviation of poverty and inequality and this report directly addresses this goal
Efficiency	There is evidence that demand for a number of council services is positively correlated with financial hardship – effectively tackling deprivation and inequality therefore should reduce the costs of some services
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	80% of children taken into care in the last year were living in areas in the top most 30% deprived nationally, indicating a strong correlation between financial hardship and children needing support. In addition, care leavers often suffer poorer wellbeing outcomes, suggesting that LAC and Care Leavers could be key beneficiary groups from this work.

## MAIN REPORT

### Background and Context

10. Analysis of the public consultation on the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2018/19 to 2021/22 found that residents supported the proposed Futures Fund theme described as Neighbourhood Renewal. The focus of this theme was to address financial hardship and deprivation across Darlington.
11. Early work on this theme has already begun with allocations to the Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau to promote take up of unclaimed welfare benefits, to assist Darlington Credit Union in its work to improve the financial wellbeing of the community, and to support various bodies to deliver holiday hunger activities in three areas of the borough identified as being most in need.
12. In addition, work is underway to deliver other key actions of the programme within the council such as the adoption of community wealth building within a wider social value context in procurement, and scoping the delivery of a training programme for staff to better identify and signpost vulnerable households to services.
13. Work to develop a framework to guide further investments and outline a general approach over the next four years has been undertaken and an overview of this work and consequent proposal is outlined in the remainder of this report.

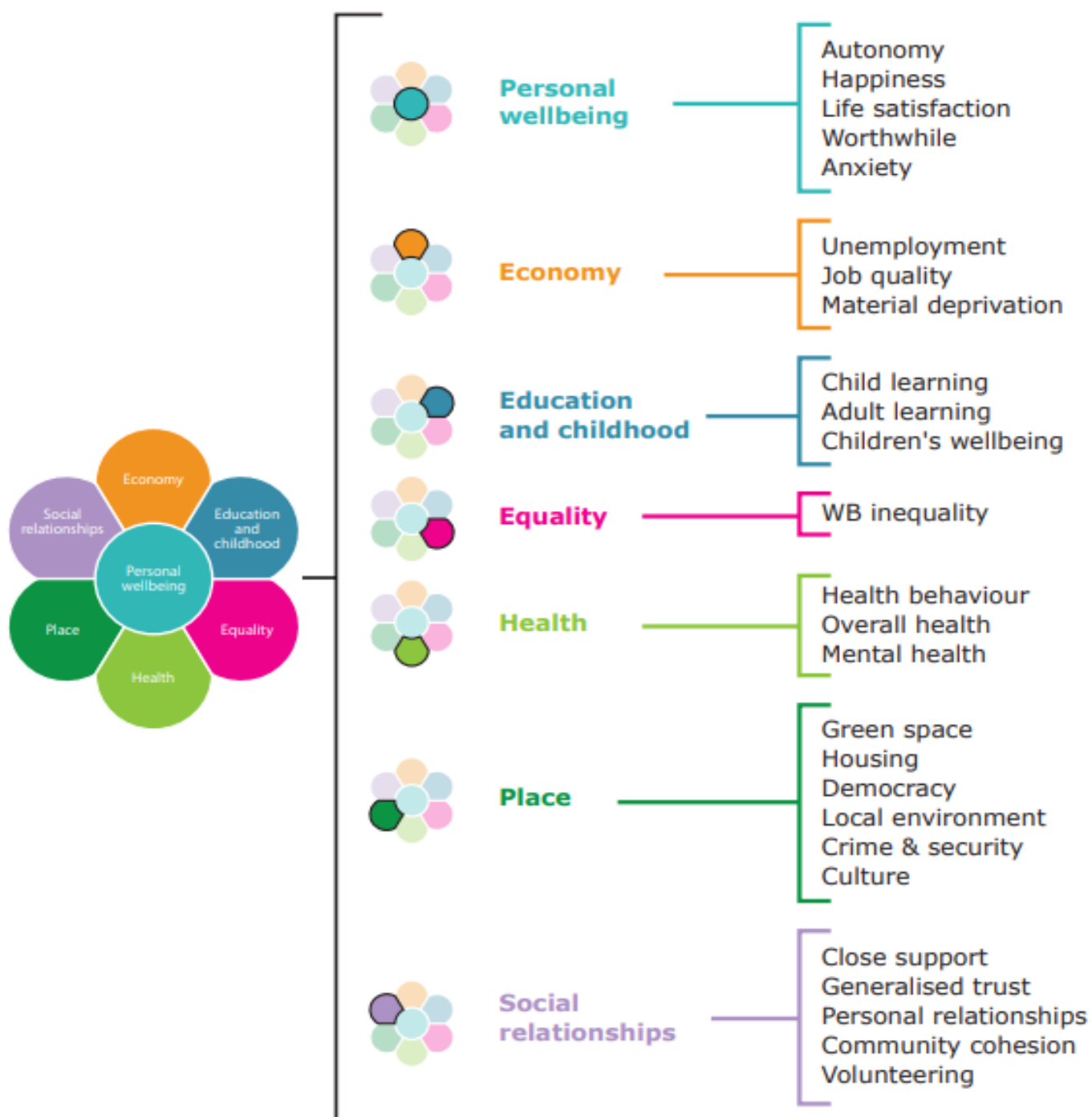
### Information and Analysis

#### Outcomes Framework – Focus on Wellbeing

14. Darlington's SCS, last refreshed in 2014, set out a vision to narrow the gap. The strategy, very much in line with neighbourhood renewal theory, highlighted recent increases in poverty and inequality and recognised that the happiest societies are those which are most equal and inclusive. The report therefore proposes that a neighbourhood renewal strategy for the borough already exists, and that work under this theme should focus on delivery of this existing strategy, which the Partnership remains committed to.
15. Progress towards the vision outlined in ODPP to date has not been consistently measured since its publication in 2008, and where indicators have been used they have been strictly aligned against the eight outcomes rather than seeking to provide a cumulative overview of performance.
16. In order to ensure that the resource allocated to any neighbourhood renewal work meets the ODPP condition of 'Every Pound Well Spent', it is imperative to set clear objectives and outline a robust reporting framework.
17. It is proposed that ambitions should focus on improving residents' wellbeing in recognition of:
  - (a) The complex and far-reaching nature of poverty; and
  - (b) That the causes and consequences of deprivation:

- (i) Impact on all areas of the council, in addition to all stakeholders and residents; and
  - (ii) Requires a concerted and coordinated effort across and between internal teams and partners in order to maximise the likelihood of meaningful improvements.
18. The Local Framework for Wellbeing indicator set - developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health England, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (WWCW) and Happy City – offers a readymade framework that is:
- (a) Evidence-led
  - (b) In line with the holistic scope of narrowing the gap and ODPP
  - (c) Clear, coherent and intuitive – easy for non-specialists to interpret (and understand their contribution)
  - (d) Based on extensive public consultation of what actually matters to people, including subjective wellbeing
  - (e) Realistic – the indicators selected relate to local authority areas and are considered amenable to local action
  - (f) Valid – accurately represents what it claims to measure, with decent sample sizes
  - (g) Timely – reported regularly.
19. The framework –outlined in Figure 1 - is built around seven domains (personal wellbeing, economy, education and childhood, equality, health, place, and social relationships) which, in turn consist of twenty six sub-domains for when a more in-depth, nuanced understanding is desired.

Figure 1



20. Analysis of performance against this framework, appended to this report at **Appendix 1**, shows that Darlington performs well across many of these domains, most notably Happiness and Life Satisfaction where the borough scores above the local, regional and national averages.

21. This analysis also, however, highlights some key priorities, the most apparent of which is Job Quality, which is why this has been identified as the priority area for the Fairer, Richer Darlington programme to focus on.

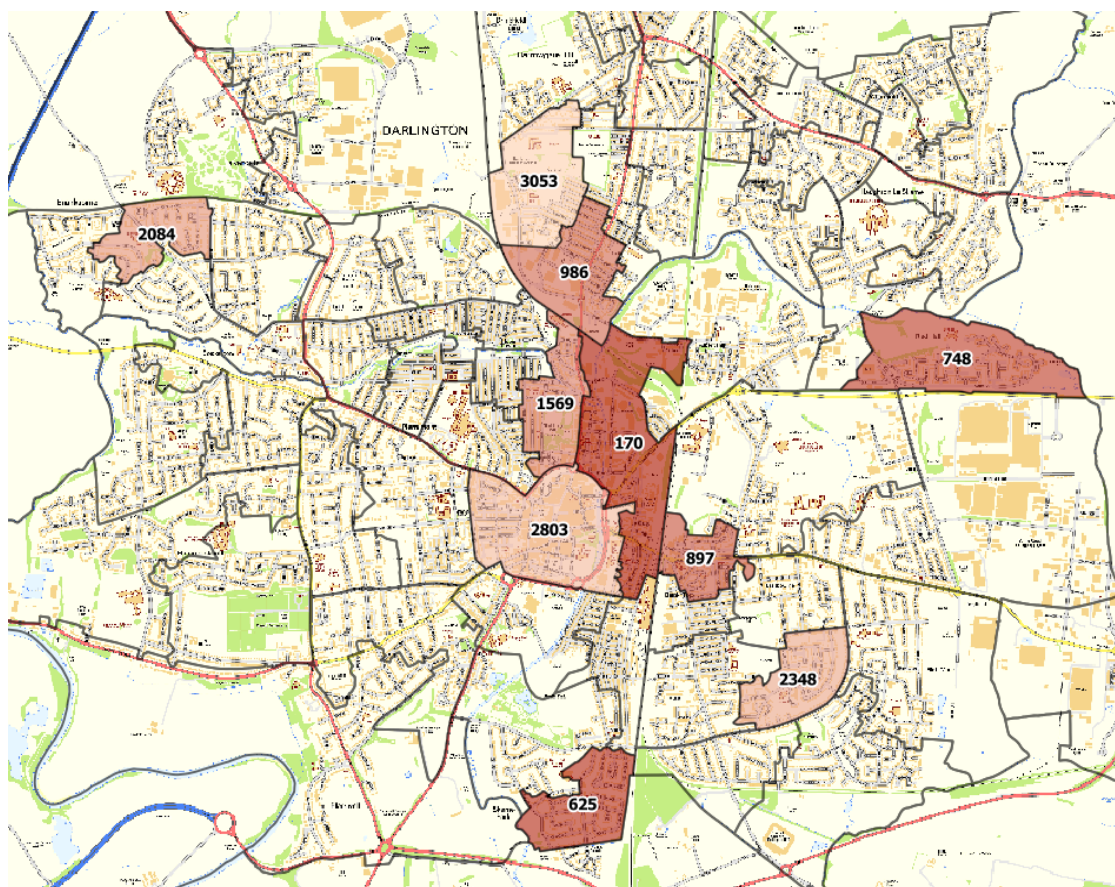
## Evidence Base

22. A comprehensive evidence base has been compiled and analysis undertaken to identify priority areas and demographic groups for action.

23. This evidence base included data such as:

- (a) 2015 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2015)
- (b) The Local Framework for Wellbeing performance measures
- (c) CACI Acorn Household Segmentation
- (d) Internal service user data, including:
  - (i) Recent looked after children
  - (ii) Current troubled families
  - (iii) Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- (e) Modelled data on the impact of welfare reforms across the borough

24. This data identified areas across the borough that fall within the top 10% most deprived in England, as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015. These areas are shown in the below map: the numbers refer to the areas ranking out of 32,466 nationally.



25. A profiling exercise of the households within these areas identified that:

- (a) 74 per cent are categorised as 'Urban Adversity', defined as *'the people who are finding life the hardest and experiencing the most difficult social and*

*financial conditions*'. Across Darlington as a whole, 27 per cent of households are categorised as Urban Adversity, meaning that the incidence of these households is almost three times higher in these neighbourhoods.

- (b) The average age of the head of household, at 38, is younger than the average for the rest of the borough (42)
  - (c) These households are more likely to contain children, with 0-17 year olds accounting for 24% of residents in these areas, compared to below 21% for the rest of the borough.
  - (d) Households in these areas are significantly more likely to be in receipt of means-tested benefits, and/or be in low-skilled employment.
26. These findings support national and local modelling work that has found younger households with children have been hit hardest by austerity. Overall 83% of the total financial loss from welfare reforms is expected to fall on households with dependent children in Darlington, with the average annual loss in income for this household type eight times higher (£1,330) than that for households without dependent children (£170).
27. There could be significant potential implications for the local authority in future years if action is not taken to address these issues; a strong correlation is discernible between deprivation and statutory intervention, with local households living in Darlington in areas in the top 30% most deprived nationally accounting for:
- (a) 80% of children taken into care in the last year
  - (b) 63% of 'troubled families'
  - (c) 60% of identified NEETs
28. In light of these findings, it is therefore proposed that younger families with children should be a priority group for interventions.

### **A Multi-Pronged Approach**

29. The emerging approach is multifaceted, and recommends three, simultaneous workstreams be undertaken to improve residents' wellbeing over the short-, medium- and long-term:

#### **(a) Interventions to Ensure Families have the BASICS**

Although raising incomes through sustainable employment (see c.) remains the best route out of poverty, there are a number of challenges facing families currently living in poverty in Darlington that need to be addressed in the short-term, such as the ongoing impacts of welfare reforms, the poverty premium and costs of necessities such as food and fuel.



## (b) Interventions to Boost Families' RESILIENCE

Where basic needs cannot be met, families need to be supported to become more resilient. It is recognised that boosting resilience in children and their parents is more likely to lead to positive outcomes in relating to education, employment and their ability to cope with future challenges, however, it is also important for professionals and organisations to change the way they work to allow them to better recognise the strengths of a child or their family.

## (c) Interventions to Tackle the CAUSES of Poverty

Well-paid and sustainable work remains the best way of increasing household incomes and moving families out of poverty. Darlington's economy needs to be one which can provide opportunities for local people to benefit from the growth across the borough. This very much aligns with the *One Darlington Perfectly Placed* vision and recent national work on inclusive growth, defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as 'economic growth that creates opportunities for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society'<sup>1</sup>.

30. The aim of the approach is to add value to existing work by partners by identifying a small number of priorities which will make a significant impact on families and are not already being delivered. The identified priorities in Table 1 below are set out under the three themes.

**Table 1: Summary of the themes, areas and priorities of the approach**

Themes	Areas	Priorities
<b>COVERING THE BASICS</b>	Boosting Families' Incomes	Mitigating the impact of welfare reform on families with children
		Increasing benefit take up
	Reducing Families' Costs	Tackling the poverty premium
		Making food and fuel more affordable
<b>BOOSTING RESILIENCE</b>	Strengthening Families and Communities	Adopting strengths-based approaches
	Improving Families' Access to Services	Improving identification & signposting of families in poverty
		Poverty-proofing services
<b>TACKLING THE CAUSES OF POVERTY</b>	Removing Barriers to Quality Employment	Tackling costs of employment
		Improving employability
	Increasing Supply of Quality Employment	Community wealth building (aka maximising the amount of spend retained locally)
		Taking responsibility for employee welfare

## An Action Plan

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2015)

31. Given the status of ODPP as a Darlington Partnership strategy, Darlington Partnership will lead on this work to ensure collective buy-in, oversight and coordination of activity.
32. An action plan to deliver the programme over the next three years will be incorporated into a 'Charter for a Fairer, Richer Darlington', currently under development and owned by Darlington Partnership. The Charter will:
  - (a) outline the overall approach,
  - (b) ask stakeholders to pledge to contribute toward delivery of the vision and explain what these contributions would entail,
  - (c) outline the programme plan, along with delivery leads and desired outcomes.
33. It is proposed that the council will act primarily as a key partner and signatory to the programme, in its role as place leader and influencer, employer and service provider.
34. The Corporate Plan, as the council's formal delivery plan for ODPP, will be refreshed, along with its performance indicators, to incorporate the Wellbeing indicators, identify clear priorities and actions and, ultimately, to contribute to delivery of the overall vision of reducing wellbeing inequality across the borough.
35. Where possible, actions will be low or nil cost, and it is proposed that some funding be left unallocated in order to:
  - (a) Allow the council and partners to bid for match funding opportunities as they emerge over the course of the period;
  - (b) Encourage buy-in to the overall vision by allowing officers, Members or partners to develop their own proposals to improve resident' wellbeing and tackle deprivation.
36. Any proposals for use of the neighbourhood renewal funding will be required to demonstrate that it will lead to a measurable improvement in residents' wellbeing and tackle deprivation among priority groups and areas. A list of criteria will be applied to any proposals which will be used to rank proposals and ensure that funding is allocated as effectively as possible. The proposed criteria are:
  - (a) Evidence-led: both in terms of a robust needs analysis and theory
  - (b) Match-funded: proposals that seek to exploit opportunities to lever in external funding into the borough will be prioritised
  - (c) Cost-effective: a clear business case outlining how initiatives will seek to avoid significant downstream costs or deliver significant benefit to residents should be provided
  - (d) Added value: proposals that seek to engage local partners and or involve volunteers will be prioritised

- (e) Sustainable: proposals that require a one-time injection of seed corn funding will also be prioritised.

37. As highlighted elsewhere, the council is already taking action to deliver the priorities under each of the workstreams, including but not limited to:

(a) Covering the Basics

The council is funding #DarloMillions, a campaign in collaboration with Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau that encourages residents to check their entitlement to financial support and, where eligible, make a claim in order to ensure families in need of support are receiving it and, also, to support the local economy. At the time of writing the campaign has supported households in Darlington to claim an additional £727k income a year, and is well on its way to meeting its target of £1m by April 2019.

(b) Boosting Resilience

Officers are scoping a new training programme to be delivered initially to officers to improve the identification and signposting of vulnerable households across the borough. Should the training prove successful, it is envisaged that this training could then be rolled out to relevant partner organisations and community groups.

(c) Tackling the Causes

The council is committed to tackling the causes of poverty in Darlington, and is actively working to support this aim. A social value charter is under development, which will require council suppliers to demonstrate how they will help deliver wider social value when delivering goods and services to the council. Related to this, work to encourage inclusive local growth by maximising the amount of council funding spent within the borough (community wealth building) is underway. This approach, which has been adopted by a number of other areas, seeks to ensure that the local economy builds wealth and prosperity for all residents by harnessing existing wealth to localise spend, investing in local supply chains, and improving competitiveness. This work will focus on ensuring that as much council spend as possible is retained within the borough and, where this is not possible, regionally, in order to support the local economy and wider wellbeing outcome for residents, including quality jobs. Work will focus on supporting:

- (i) local businesses to be better able to bid for opportunities;
- (ii) officers to consider local suppliers during the commissioning and procurement of services;
- (iii) other local anchor institutions to adopt a similar approach in order to maximise the benefit of this approach to Darlington.

## Governance

38. A key objective is to ensure that responsibility for delivering the programme sits with a broad range of partners and stakeholders across the borough and is not just driven by the council.
39. Darlington Partnership Board will therefore provide ultimate oversight of and leadership for work relating to Fairer, Richer Darlington.
40. The One Darlington Partnership Executive will act as the operational group for all work, guiding and managing the programme, and helping identify future priorities and actions. Membership of this group has been expanded, accordingly, to include the three workstream leads.
41. The three workstream leads will be responsible for setting the overall direction of activity, and driving delivery. They will also be responsible for reporting operational performance to the Executive Board.
42. Finally, priority leads will be tasked with delivery of specific actions and responsible for reporting operational progress to work stream leads.
43. It is envisaged that the strategic board will receive progress updates against the identified priorities, including a narrative on the activity to date alongside specific data and intelligence where relevant to evidencing progress. Updates will also include relevant information from complementary work undertaken elsewhere which will help deliver the aims of the programme.
44. Each anchor institution across the public sector in Darlington will have a vital role in terms of driving change and actions internally. It is proposed that Chief Officers' Board (COB) will act as the lead officers' group to take forward actions within the council. Internally, the proposal is to embed both the ethos and activity of narrowing the gap as far as possible into existing structures. Overall oversight will therefore lie with Chief Officers' Executive (COE) and Cabinet, who will receive biannual updates on progress against the Corporate Plan and therefore all work being undertaken that contributes to achievement of the overall vision.
45. In terms of the council's contribution to delivery, it is envisaged that:
  - (a) Work to encourage residents' resilience and ensure that families have the basics will be predominantly delivered by:
    - (i) For population-based approaches - Children and Adults Services, including a key role for Public Health, as well as Housing, the new Community Safety team and Community Services in recognition of the positive impacts that culture and physical activity can have on range of wellbeing outcomes. There will be strong links with existing and related provision such as Early Help, Routes to Work, Learning and Skills, Holiday Hunger and voluntary provision, including Darlington Cares.
    - (ii) For built-environment approaches - Planning, Urban Design and Housing, with a key role too for Community Safety and Street Scene services.

- (b) Work to tackle the causes of poverty and encourage inclusive and sustainable growth by, building the capacity of local firms/social enterprises to win contracts with the council and other anchor institutions, further developing the use of social value in procurement, and acting as a place leader for community wealth building in collaboration with the Darlington Partnership. This will require involvement from Procurement, Legal, Commissioning and Economy.
- 46. Subject to Cabinet's agreement, the Corporate Plan and associated performance monitoring framework will be refreshed, with progress reported every 6 months.
- 47. Some actions have already been delivered, including allocations to the Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau to promote take up of unclaimed welfare benefits, to assist Darlington Credit Union in its work to improve the financial wellbeing of the community, and to support various bodies to deliver holiday hunger activities in three areas of the borough identified as being most in need.
- 48. In addition, work is already underway to deliver some other key actions of the programme within the council such as the adoption of community wealth building within a wider social value context in procurement, and scoping the delivery of a training programme for staff to better identify and signpost vulnerable households to services.

### **Financial Implications**

- 49. A £500,000 Neighbourhood Renewal Futures Fund was identified in the 2018/19 – 2021/22 MTFP.
- 50. Cabinet agreed in June 2018 to invest £50,000 from this fund in Darlington Credit Union deferred shares as a revenue contribution.
- 51. A further £16,000 has been allocated to contribute to a partnership approach to deliver enrichment programmes for children over the summer holidays in some of the most deprived areas of the borough. These programmes engaged children in a variety of activities such as arts and crafts, cooking, games, physical activity and trips to local parks and green spaces, and provided attendees with a range of healthy snacks and nutritious lunches to encourage and support healthy eating.
- 52. This report therefore proposes a framework to guide investments from the remaining balance, over the next four years.

### **Procurement Implications**

- 53. Consideration of Social value is already part of the Council's procurement processes. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) require the award criteria to include a suitable proportion of the evaluation criteria to be based on Social Value (unless there are appropriate reasons why Social Value should not apply). The CPR also states that for tenders over the EU Threshold, this should usually be not less than ten per cent of the total award criteria and form part of the Quality Criteria.
- 54. Work is currently underway to further develop the way that social value considerations are included in the Council's procurement processes, in keeping with the Council's 'best value' obligations. This is likely to include awareness raising

and staff training, the adoption of a social value charter, clear guidance on the use of social value, and developing criteria to measure and evaluate the outcomes. We also want to make it easier for suppliers and businesses to participate in Council procurement exercises. This is likely to be achieved by a greater use of pre procurement engagement/consultation, simplifying procurement documentation, and seeking to increase local supplier and business involvement. This will seek to enable a greater proportion of Council spend to be retained locally and deliver a Fairer, Richer Darlington.

55. It is hoped this approach will then be adopted by other anchor institutions across the borough by ensuring that work undertaken involves the Partnership and by requiring anchor institutions wishing to sign up to the Charter make a specific commitment to considering social value, including community wealth building, in their procurement processes and policies.

### **Equalities Considerations**

56. The vision outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy is to reduce inequalities, including between those with protected characteristics and those without. Consequently, a number of objectives and actions outlined in the existing Corporate Plan and any refreshed versions do and will relate directly to equality issues, for example Children with the Best Start in Life. It is therefore not envisaged that the proposed approach outlined in this report would have a negative impact on any protected characteristic groups.

### **Consultation**

57. Significant public consultation was undertaken during the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and during its refresh in 2014.
58. Public consultation on the MTFP Future Fund themes, including Neighbourhood Renewal, was also undertaken in late 2017/early 2018.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

59. The Sustainable Community Strategy is a Darlington Partnership document, and the vision and framework outlined within it were agreed by the partners.
60. In the consultation on the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2018/19 to 2021/22 residents supported the proposal to create a futures fund theme described as Neighbourhood Renewal. The focus of this theme was to address the financial hardship and deprivation found in households and neighbourhoods across Darlington.