

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 APRIL 2022**

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 2 years working towards the targets set for 2024. As the restrictions of the pandemic were lifted community engagement has been developed through face to face working.
5. Strong management of the programme ensures accountability for progression against defined aims.

Recommendation

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

**Seth Pearson
Director, Darlington Partnership**

Background Papers

Northgate Initiative: Actions to Vision

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
Corporate 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)
9. A range of key developments have been delivered since 2019 including:

- (a) The introduction and delivery of an Environmental Crime Plan – An Environment Crime Co-ordinator is now in post delivering on a back lanes project with the aim of cleaner waste free back lanes. Early resident feedback from this is excellent.
- (b) The Responsible Dog Ownership Plan is now complete, but a group is still running and delivering key pieces of work such as dog fouling initiatives.

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

11. CCTV remain deployed in the ward to assist in dealing with ASB and environmental crime. There has been no great evidential value of deploying cameras in the back lanes, however they have acted as an excellent deterrent.

Crime & Security

12. 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.
13. 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) 110 properties received target-hardening measures
 - (c) 18 properties have had trellis fitted
 - (d) 44 residents have received crime prevention packs (locks, timers, cameras, marking kits, alarms, tv simulators & personal attack alarms)
14. Evident reduction in calls relating to 'concern for safety' in JD3 beat code area (Northgate). Between March 2020 to February 2021 there were 499 calls compared to 474 calls for the same period up to February 2022, a decrease of 5%.
15. There has been a clear increase in proactive patrols and engagement, these locations have been reviewed as Covid restrictions were lifted with Northgate remaining high on daily

neighbourhood team briefings.

Housing

16. 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. In March 2022, there were 150 empty domestic properties in the Northgate area, out of a total of 2,298 (6.5%). Of these 150 properties, 79 of these (or 3.4%) have been empty for more than 6 months and 30 (or 1.3%) have been empty for more than 2 years.
18. 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. This led to 4 properties being bought by DBC and fully renovated.
19. These properties are now online as an extension to the current homelessness pathway, providing some additionality for individuals who would be difficult to place within the hostel / shared environment. Placing two individuals in the same property has not yet been explored, due to some of the complexities of the client group.
20. Five individuals a mix of male and female and (ages) have been housed to date. Each person placed is assessed to establish their needs and from this Housing Options formulate a Personalised Housing Plan to support the person into independent living. Third sector partners the 700 Club then deliver specialised support until the individual is ready to move on.
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. In December 2021, (the last set of issued figures) there were 84 (4.5%) properties in Northgate with either an F or G rating out of a total of 1879 lodged EPCs, with 26 (1.4%) of these being listed as rented properties.
22. In addition specialist training has been undertaken by Private Sector Housing Officers to support with the enforcement of problematic landlords.

Economy

23. 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.

24. The 2021/22 funding included within the Towns Fund for the Northgate area has now been approved by government and has been received by Darlington Borough Council. This will facilitate the further development of proposals associated with the Towns Fund in Northgate.

Childhood & Education

25. Following a scoping exercise to identify the services available to residents of Northgate, 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 results were pleasing but the uptake of provision across all services was low.
26. The earlier idea of creating a Community Information Hub, to help encourage residents to engage in provision is well underway and will be located at Corporation Road Primary School. It will provide a means of alternative approaches to service delivery, where service providers will provide drop in style sessions in a trusted place for residents.
27. Services onboard include DBC Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Income, Citizens Advice Bureau, Credit Union, Groundwork NE, McNay Street Children's Centre, Health Visitors, The Bread & Butter Thing and Health providers.
28. It is hoped the hub will be live by the end of April, following necessary security adaptations to the school to ensure the safety of the pupils as the general public will be accessing the school building.
29. There has been a slight change in focus for this workstream, as work is more focussed towards a noticeable decrease in social service intervention coupled with an increase in Early Help support. With the aim to help families at a much earlier stage, so social service intervention is not needed.

Transition from Primary to Secondary Education

30. Primary and Secondary schools are working more closely together. With the transition process starting much earlier, as the primary and secondary schools work in partnership beyond previous transition periods. Secondary staff and children are maintaining contact with the primary teachers to assist with overcoming any challenges and barriers to their education journey.

Health

31. As a result of Covid the PCN resources from an early of the initiative were redirected into the vaccination and then booster programme.

32. 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 information Hub, with a focus on increasing GP registration and mental health.

Data Dashboard

33. In January 2022 the Steering Group agreed to set up a Data Dashboard to help analyse the impact of the Northgate Initiative and to identify any gaps where work need to be increased or done to improve life for the Northgate residents. This has been done using baseline data from 2018/19 up to and including the most up to date information available.
34. As a result of the implementation of the dashboard the focus and targets have changed slightly to reflect the real needs of the area. This 'real-time' way of analysing progression will create greater impact on the success of the initiative longer term.