

CABINET
5 JULY 2022

QUARTER 4 – COUNCIL PLAN 2020-23 – DELIVERING SUCCESS FOR DARLINGTON
PERFORMANCE REPORT

Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Jonathan Dulston, Leader and all Cabinet Members

Responsible Director -
Chief Officers Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council Plan 2020-23 – Delivering Success for Darlington.
2. The report covers performance in and to the end of the last two quarters of the previous financial year, from October 2021 to March 2022.

Summary

3. Delivering Success for Darlington is the Council Plan and it sets out the vision for the borough: *“Darlington is a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate, where the economy continues to grow, where people are happy and proud of the borough and where everyone has the opportunity to maximise their potential.”* The Plan is structured around the following priorities:
 - (a) Growing Darlington’s Economy
 - (b) Maximising the Potential of our Young People
 - (c) Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential
 - (d) Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough
 - (e) A dedicated workforce who are proud to serve the borough and an accessible, effective and engaged council
4. The Performance report appended to this report outlines council performance up to the end of the final quarter of the 2021/22 financial year and is structured around the Council Plan, with:

- (a) A high-level update on overall progress, across all portfolios, towards the overarching vision and priorities highlighted above.
- (b) An update on each Cabinet portfolio area, highlighting progress against key actions and relevant key performance indicators

Recommendation

- 5. It is recommended that Cabinet consider progress against the Council Plan 2020-23, as set out in the performance report in the **Appendix**.

Reasons

- 6. The recommendation is supported as the purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the progress in implementing the Council Plan priorities.

Chief Officers Executive

Background Papers

- (i) The Council Plan 2020-23 - Delivering Success for Darlington

Neil Bowerbank: Extension 6052

S17 Crime and Disorder	A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are monitored as part of Council Plan performance reporting
Health and Well Being	The Council Plan outlines a number of key actions and priorities relating to improving the health and wellbeing of local residents, and so the performance report includes updates on how the Council has continued to support this over the first half of 2021/22.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	Progress towards the Council's climate change plan is outlined in the Council plan performance report.
Diversity	Equality measures are monitored as part of the Council Plan performance monitoring process
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This report outlines progress against the Council Plan and is intended to be used to help inform strategic priorities going forward.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	This report outlines progress against the Council Plan.
Efficiency	The report highlights staff an organisational effectiveness in terms of meeting the key actions and priorities laid out in the Council Plan.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	As Looked After Children and Care Leavers are highlighted as corporate priorities in the Council Plan, the performance report includes updates on how the Council has continued to support these groups over the second half of 2021/22.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The majority of measures in this performance report demonstrate progress towards achieving the council's strategic priorities, with the remaining measures demonstrating progress towards specific key actions aligned with individual portfolios as defined in the Council Plan 2020-23.
8. In most cases, progress against individual strategic priorities relies on action and support from services spanning multiple portfolios.

Growing Darlington's Economy

9. In terms of delivering more sustainable, well-paid jobs across the borough:
 - (a) Despite employment levels fluctuating during the COVID pandemic, the number of people employed (including self-employed) now appears to be increasing. In general, business confidence improved during the latter stages of 2021, resulting in investment returning and growth plans commencing. This resulted in demand for new employment increasing.
 - (b) The number of employees in Darlington continues to grow. As confidence returns, many employers, large and small, have recruited new staff to cope with increasing service and product demand.
 - (c) The number of Darlington residents claiming benefits for the reason of unemployment continues to fall – a trend which is mirrored in both regional and national statistics. The reduction in claimant count will be directly influenced by the growth in employment opportunities, as the economy recovers from the impacts of pandemic.
 - (d) The long-term UC claimant count in Darlington continues to fall. As the economy recovers from the impacts of pandemic, new job opportunities emerge, and consumer confidence increases, the availability of local employment opportunities has been considerably improved, providing opportunities for long-term claimants to return to the labour market.
 - (e) Darlington resident median weekly incomes increased in 2021. The general long-term trend shows Darlington median weekly earnings for residents are, and continue to be, in line with regional trends.
10. The characteristics of the Borough contribute to creating the right conditions to attract more people to work, live and enjoy the Borough:
 - (a) The number of fly tips (large and small) is reducing, falling from 3,411 in 2020/21, down to 2,963 this year. The work that has been taking place as part of the back lanes project has had a positive impact on the amount of side waste left out in back lanes.

- (b) Performance of street cleansing teams remains high with an average of 93.6% of small and large fly tips removed within their target time.
 - (c) The cleanliness of the town centre has continued to remain at a very high standard during the second half of 2021/22,. For most months, a 100% pass rate achieved, and all other months were well above the 90% pass rate.
 - (d) Purple flag re-accreditation was successful in demonstrating that Darlington town centre is safe and vibrant, well-managed, and supports the night time economy. Both crime and ASB were down on pre COVID levels within the town centre.
 - (e) Overall, recorded crime is 13% lower than the same period pre-pandemic, in 2019/20. Some types of reported crime have increased, for example violence against the person, largely due to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. The Council is working with Durham Constabulary and other partners to help address these issues and continue monitoring crime rates.
 - (f) The rate of reported antisocial behaviour incidents across the borough has decreased by 12% compared to the same period last year. However, the Council continues to be proactive in addressing issues.
 - (g) We continue to invest in road safety education, publicity and training in partnership with organisations such as the police and fire service. Through our Local Transport Plan we continue to invest in speed management and casualty reduction schemes.
11. During Q4 our programme of A road resurfacing schemes was completed with the final scheme being the A68 at junction 58. Our continued investment in road maintenance has seen an overall improvement in the A road network, with the percentage of the A road network which needs to be considered for maintenance falling to 1.3%, significantly below the national and northeast averages.
12. Our continued investment into maintenance of B and C class roads has resulted in an improvement in the quality of the highway network. The Percentage of non-principal roads where maintenance should be considered (B + C) is now at 5% which as an improvement over 2021 and better than the national average.

Maximising the Potential of our Young People

13. 79.4% (27) of our schools in Darlington, that have recently been inspected by OFSTED, are rated Good or Outstanding. 83% of schools and 75% of secondary schools are now rated Good or Outstanding.
14. The Council's Young People's Engagement and Justice Service (YPEAJS) had 37 young people referred to the service for diversionary disposals, i.e. Pre-Caution Disposals in 2021/22. Over the same period, the team has achieved a 97% success rate in terms of young people not reoffending following engagement with the service.
15. The 18-24 year old claimant count in Darlington continues to fall, now standing at 7%. As the economy recovers from the impacts of pandemic, combined with an array of new jobs

in the local economy, such as Amazon, Student Loans Company and the hospitality sector generally, young people now have improved opportunities to find employment.

Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential

16. The Council continued to provide targeted COVID support where it was most needed. Business grants were distributed at pace, vaccine clinics were organised for the homeless community, and the COVID bus continued to visit communities making it more convenient for people to get vaccinated.
17. The 'Let's do digital' initiative (loan of iPads and distribution of refurbished PC's, tablets, and phones) continues to develop with a steady flow of old devices being donated, refurbished, and distributed. Work is underway with some schools and voluntary groups to help identify people in most need of the devices, and some care leaves have been provided with phones. August 2022 marks the first full year of the two year initiative, at which point a mid-term of appraisal of the project will be carried out.
18. The School Uniform shop continues to see a growth in demand as more people become aware of the service. During the winter there was a targeted campaign for winter coats, hats, scarves, gloves and boots. 775 customers visited the school uniform shop between October 2021 and March 2022, with a total of 2,597 items being given out. In the same period just over 3,000 items of uniform, coats and shoes were donated from the community of Darlington.
19. The number of active street champions continues to rise steadily, with 416 registered in March 2022. The voluntary work carried out by local Street Champions is critical in helping to maintain a clean borough, supporting the work of Street Scene, and helping to achieve the Council's primary ambition of supporting economic growth by ensuring Darlington is an attractive place to live, work and play.

Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough

20. The number of older residents admitted to permanent residential or nursing care remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels. These measures reflect the ongoing work of Adult Social Care to, wherever possible, support people to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes with support.
21. Of the 415 individuals who completed a reablement package since April 2021, 207 had no ongoing care needs. This current performance of 49.9% is an improvement from the same period in 2020/21 (48.1%).
22. We continue to deliver adult social care services which are focused on preventing and reducing need, improving people's independence and providing care and support where needed. Examples include provision of advice, occupational therapy, assessments, crisis support, safeguarding, increasing use of assistive technology, and maintaining strong relationships with the voluntary sector.
23. We were successful in securing grant funding to distribute to care homes and care services in Darlington. This will enable providers to purchase IT equipment and licenses to support

interaction with people living with dementia in care home, extra care, and day care settings, and people with complex learning disabilities in care home and day care settings.

24. Adult Social care continue to benefit from strong established relationships across Management and Practitioners with both Voluntary Sector and Health colleagues. These relationships enable us to support Darlington residents in preventing admission and expediting discharge. Social Workers work alongside health colleagues in all the Teams, and are co-located in terms of RIACT. This joint approach to assessment, provision and support, enables us to identify the best solutions to peoples assessed needs and along with community and voluntary sector provision, deliver effective outcomes in keeping people in their own homes and independent as long as possible. Adult Social Care staff understand the importance of connectedness and as we move to a more integrated approach we are well positioned to respond collectively to the needs of our residents.

A dedicated workforce who are proud to serve the borough and an accessible, effective and engaged council

25. The Council's new Workforce Strategy and Plan was agreed in July 2021, with roll out commencing in October 2021. Briefings have taken place to ensure that the strategy is promoted and that the core values are embedded into every day working practices. Priorities within the plan that have been delivered include commencement of the new agile working processes, and supporting staff's wellbeing and mental health. Monitoring and evaluation of the success of the strategy has commenced with some early positive signs coming through staff feedback. The results of the 2021 employee survey were very positive with most areas where comparison was possible, improving on the previous survey result.

Adults Portfolio

26. Darlington has a very low number of people (46) with mental health needs requiring paid support. The Mental Health team within Adult Social Care work closely with the local Trusts and the Primary care Network/GPs to prevent escalation or reduce the need for intervention.
27. Since April 2021, 234 out of 290 Assistive Technology Toolkit Referrals assigned to Lifeline resulted in equipment being provided (80.7%). This is above the equivalent figures for the past two years (78.1% in 2020/21 and 73.9% during 2019/20.).
28. As of the end of March 2022, 96.5% of 752 clients using social care were receiving self-directed support. Darlington typically exceeds both the national and regional averages for this measure, reflecting the strong ethos of the Council's Adult Social Care team of taking a strengths-based approach to support residents in need. We maximise service users' choice and control over the services they receive, to ensure these best suit peoples' particular needs and preferences.
29. As of the end of March 2022, 100% of 94 carers using social care received self-directed support. Darlington exceeds both the national and regional average for this metric, and reflects how all carers, who are in receipt of a commissioned service, now have a personal budget. This enables them to maximise their independence and choice, to support their wellbeing and ensure they are able to access the support that best suits their needs.

Children and Young People Portfolio

30. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) have continued to receive excellent services throughout 2021/22, including:
 - (a) Increasingly more children with SEND are attending Darlington mainstream schools.
 - (b) The proportion of Darlington pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending mainstream school settings in the borough has been steadily increasing since 2016/17 and are now significantly above average for neighbouring authorities but remains below the national average.
 - (c) The percentage of new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued by Darlington within twenty weeks (including exceptions) has consistently been above the national average since 2015.
31. Over the last 9 months, the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme has continued to be embedded across Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services, utilising relational practice to ensure timely interventions which support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to come into care.
32. 99 children and young people ceased to be in care in 2021/22. This is an increase when compared with the 80 children who ceased in 2020/21, a small decrease from 2019/20 (102 children) and an increase on 2018/19 (86 children).
33. The majority of Darlington children in care at the end of March 2022 were in foster placements (190), 36 were placed with parents, 35 were living in supported residential accommodation and 12 were placed for adoption. The proportion of children placed for adoption or with in-house foster carers has been positively increasing.
34. There are currently 55 approved foster care families and we have recruited a further 9 foster care families during the year. A comprehensive marketing and recruitment campaign for the fostering service has been designed and signed off via the Corporate Parenting Panel. This is a multi-faceted approach designed to promote the service with the general public and boost numbers of residents expressing an interest in becoming a foster carer and providing greater choice of placements and homes for children who need them.
35. The repurposing of our existing children's homes remains ongoing with a plan to move one of our existing homes into a new property by the Autumn and re-purposing the existing property to provide earlier targeted support and so avoid escalating pressures and support needs. This service will support young people and work with the whole family in a relational way to address emerging needs and pressures and so reduce the risk of family breakdown.
36. The proportion of Darlington care leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has positively remained low with 23.1% at the end of 2021/22, which is below the most recently available national and regional averages. This low number of NEET care leavers is particularly inspiring given the impact of COVID-19, which has generally led to

increases in NEETs nationally, and reflects the considerable work undertaken by the Care Leavers service, including Job Centre Plus and businesses in Darlington to increase opportunities.

37. Referrals to the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) have continued to grow, month on month during 2021/22 with young people continuing to move into education, employment, and training. Having an embedded Job Centre Plus Youth Adviser within the service is working well, helping increase client numbers over the period with local employment opportunities also rising.
38. Four Darlington secondary schools were included in the Department for Education One Vision schools initiative. These schools were partnered with high-performing institutions and given bespoke support to raise standards. Three of these schools have been inspected since being part of the One Vision initiative and all have moved from a Requires Improvement to a Good judgement.
39. The In2 cohort participated in a social music making project over a 10 week period, learning how to play colourful plastic instruments, leading to a performance alongside a band, for peers, teachers, and parents. The groups have now moved onto a literacy project involving self-portraiture and collage, poetry writing, song writing, and filmmaking.
40. The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme funded by Department of Education is now firmly established at multiple settings across Darlington and is thriving. 630 children were directly engaged in the 8 x 3day programmes over the Easter School holidays at West Park Academy, Eastbourne Sports Complex, Firthmoor CC, Redhall, Longfield Academy, Skerne Park Academy and Middleton St George. Special sessions were also delivered at the 4motion Bike centre at West Park.

Economy Portfolio

41. The Towns Fund continues to deliver in its objectives and work has been completed in the various yards along Skinnergate. Engagement work and consultation (carried out by Groundwork) on proposals to improve Skinnergate and Coniscliffe Road have proved extremely successful with the proposals coming to cabinet for agreement in the summer.
42. Work on the Northern Echo building continues with architects appointed to work with client departments (Darlington College and DBC Learning and Skills) to developed Adult Skills Hub on the ground floor. This is anticipated to be open in 2023.
43. We are receiving a great deal of enquiries into the availability of land and buildings for business expansion and relocating. One particular development which may assist in meeting this demand is the current application for the development of circa. 300,000 sq.ft of commercial space.
44. At Central Park, construction of the new Innovation Central development continues on programme with completion set for August 2022. At Ingenium Park, drainage works are underway with Phase 1 now complete and Phase 2 due to commence in the summer. Faverdale Business Park has now been actively advertised to the market.

45. The Government Property Agency (GPA) continues to invest in Feethams House to accommodate Her Majesty's Treasury, with the first cohort of officials to be relocating into the building in early June 2022. Furthermore, the GPA has concluded its exercise in identifying a permanent location for the Darlington Economic Campus. A vacant site at Brunswick Street has been chosen as the preferred site and discussions with the developers, architects and the Council's planning department has commenced on the proposals for 110,000 sq.ft grade A office building.
46. The Local Plan was successfully adopted in February 2022. Our new Local Plan sets out what the opportunities are for development in the area, and what types of development will and will not be permitted and in which locations.
47. Officers together with elected members and partners are currently organising Darlington Business Summit for autumn 2022. This will replace the former Darlington Business Week and aims to be more interactive with various opportunities for local businesses to promote both their services and goods.
48. TVCA continues to invest into the Teesside International Airport. TVCA have now relocated to the airport and the Council have supported the development of the airport through the granting of various planning approvals to facilitate its continued development.
49. A housing and climate change strategy is being developed and we are working with the Tees Valley Combined Authority on both an electric vehicle charging strategy and a bus service improvement plan.
50. Work is continuing to improve the efficiency of our corporate buildings, with increased capacity for solar panels on the Town Hall roof and improved controls for the heating system. As we move to blended working, business travel is still reduced as we have become used to online meetings.
51. Our tree planting commitment is well on the way to being achieved, with more than 15,000 trees planted.

Health and Housing Portfolio

52. Despite COVID, the Public Health team has continued to progress with a number of other priorities:
 - (a) Securing suicide prevention funding to promote 'Postvention' work with partners and distributing information and training across the borough.
 - (b) Coordinating a local Mental Health prevention funding opportunity.
 - (c) Delivered 'Make Every Contact Count' training to frontline services and partners across the borough, using a train the trainer approach, and developing a range of toolbox talks to support delivery.
 - (d) Delivery of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey to 8,400 local pupils across 32 Darlington schools including a new section on COVID-19 impacts.

- (e) Beginning work to re-procure the 0-19 Service.
 - (f) Continuing to develop a joint application for a local Mental Health Prevention Concordat.
 - (g) Successfully gaining the Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (SSMTR) to expand the number of treatment places for substance misuse for both adults and young people.
 - (h) Reestablishment of the toothbrushing scheme in reception and primary schools.
 - (i) Commissioning of a joint oral health needs assessment in conjunction with neighbouring Tees Valley local authorities.
53. Visitor numbers to the Dolphin Centre have continued to grow throughout the year following the reopening of facilities and the recovery of the business post COVID-19 restrictions. Quarter 4 has seen a large increase in the events programme and reengagement of on-site partners including the introduction of new partners. The gym and Dolphin Centre memberships have also continued to rise during this quarter. Visitor numbers in April 2021 were 14,000, rising to just under 620,000 at the end of Q4.
54. All of Darlington Borough Council's social housing stock continued to meet the Decent Homes Standard in 2021-22, demonstrating the ongoing commitment and good work of the Housing and Building Services teams over the course of the COVID pandemic.
55. Rent collection rates for Council housing in 2021-22 is slightly below target and performance in the previous year. However, over £25.5 million was collected and rent arrears remain within expected levels. Housing officers continue to promote help and guidance to tenants needing support, make affordable repayment plans with customers, and assist with benefit claims and budgeting skills. The number of tenants, at 1,750, in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) is at its highest level since UC was introduced, however average rent arrears for tenants receiving UC is lower than the regional average.
56. The number of people presenting to the Council's Homelessness services remains high as a result of the ongoing pressures as a result of the COVID pandemic. Presentations in 2021/22 have increased by 33% compared to the previous year. To cope with the additional demand, we have increased the number of temporary accommodation units by 36%, from 11 to 15, as well as purchasing and refurbishing 4 empty properties to provide 8 new units of accommodation. Officers have also successfully bid for additional funding through the government's Rough Sleeper Initiative to recruit 4 additional staff to deliver a range of support and advice services to homeless people.
57. Feedback amongst Lifeline service users remains positive, with the service recognised as providing excellent value for money. There were over 9,380 emergency response call-outs to elderly and vulnerable customers in 2021-22.

Local Services Portfolio

58. The footfall in Darlington town centre has increased in comparison to 2020/21 figures and continues to follow this trend for 2022/23 period. The events team have continued to

schedule a variety of events and town centre animation to encourage visitors to the town centre, with the Christmas Lights switch on, Ice sculpture trail, and Food festival leading to significant increases in visits.

59. Darlington has welcomed a number of new independent retailers to the town centre and the continued programme with the Towns Fund is improving shop fronts within the Skinnergate and Yards areas.
60. Work has continued through the period with partners to develop the 2025 celebrations programme. The council has allocated £1m to the Bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and £500K for the restoration of Locomotion No.1 replica. Stockton Borough Council and the TVCA have also allocated similar funds for the Bicentenary programme.
61. Work has continued this year, developing and finalising the proposals for the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter project putting in place all the approvals including planning and Cabinet for a start in early May 2022.
62. Major refurbishment works are underway at Darlington Library. Services are temporarily operating on a much smaller scale, however, all stock is available to select from our website, app, over the telephone or in person at the central or branch library, and we continue to offer a free Home Delivery Service to those aged 60 and over.
63. Cockerton Library is thriving following its modest refurbishment in November. The team are actively engaging with the community to encourage use from local schools, groups, and residents. Schools are making regular visits, and a weekly Story and Craft, and a Lego Club is underway.
64. Key updates from the programme of works across Tees Valley to improve transport links include continued lobbying for funding for key road projects, development of local railway stations, developing enhanced partnerships with bus operators to secure improved services, development of cycling and walking schemes including work on Duke Street and Woodland Road, and feasibility of electric vehicle charging.

Resources Portfolio

65. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022-26 was approved by Council in February 2022 and provides a balanced budget for the life of the plan. This plan allows investment in Darlington and in its residents of over £100 million per year, capital investment of £157 million, and creates the conditions and opportunities for growth.
66. The 2021-25 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is expected to show an improved position from the original plan at the year end, this is despite in year pressures from COVID 19 and inflationary increases.
67. The West Park housing joint venture, which is part of a larger scheme and will be completed over a seven year period, is progressing well with sales buoyant and only six of the properties available in 2022 left to sell. The Neasham Road joint venture has commenced with infrastructure works in progress on site, and all properties available for

sale in 2022 are sold. The Council's out-of-borough joint venture with Esh Group is still in its infancy however all properties available for sale in 2022 are sold.

68. The percentage of Business Rates collected in-year in 2021-22 was slightly above the Council's target of 98.0%. £26.8 million was collected in 2021-22 by Revenues and Benefits officers, exceeding the amount collected for the previous year by £9.7 million. The overall collection rate of 99% is still on course to be met.
69. The spend with Darlington-based suppliers has increased from Quarter 2 by 3% and remained stable through Quarter 3 and 4, which equates to £33.2M for the 12-month period. This reflects the continued engagement with the local supply chain, advertising opportunities via the Council's website and social media.
70. Average daily visits to the corporate website are down slightly on the previous 6 months as COVID restrictions ease and people are no longer seeking localised information. However, average visits are still up by over 1,000 a day compared to pre-pandemic levels.
71. Following a comprehensive assessment of the corporate website, the number of online transactional services is now at 176. This will be used as the baseline for future performance reporting.

Stronger Communities Portfolio

72. Darlington Cares activity continues to recover after the impact of Covid on volunteering levels. A networking event was held in March celebrating its 10th year of operation. Four new members have joined in the last quarter including Amazon.
73. The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT) has gone from strength to strength over the past year with eight hubs now operating across Darlington. A strong team of volunteers with a working total of 4,850 volunteer hours, have supported the growth of the scheme which has been critical to families in making life affordable. As of March 2022, TBBT have given out 24,487 bags, which equates to 294,000kg of food or 700,000 meals.
74. Following a review, the Civic Enforcement team continues to focus on three key areas of work: anti-social behaviour, environmental crime and parking enforcement. There has been a particular focus in recent months on back lanes and environmental crime.
75. The easing of COVID restrictions has provided the opportunity for more staff to receive the corporate equality and diversity training, with in person sessions now underway and being delivered flexibly around working patterns. To date, over 1,000 of the current workforce has received the training, and 76% of councillors have participated in at least one of the bespoke sessions.