

**Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**  
**30 June 2022**

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**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QTR 4 2021/22**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2021/22 at Quarter 4.

**Report**

**Background**

2. This report provides performance information in line with an indicator set and scrutiny committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by scrutiny committee chairs.
3. The indicators included in this report are aligned with key priorities. Other indicators may be referenced when appropriate in narrative provided by the relevant assistant directors, when providing the committee with performance updates.
4. Twenty-two indicators are reported to the committee, seventeen of them on a six-monthly basis and five annually.

**Headlines**

**Human Resources**

5. The number of days lost to sickness in 2021/22 is higher than in 2020/21, however the 2020/21 figures were significantly lower than previous years due to lockdown and less staff were absent due to hospital/medical treatment as non urgent procedures were cancelled.
6. The wellbeing programme has produced significant benefits for staff and continues to be a priority for the Council.

**Council Tax**

7. The amount of Council Tax arrears collected in 2021/22 was £1.55m, which was £0.32m more than in 2020/21. The amount of outstanding Council Tax arrears also increased but this was due to limitations on recovery action being imposed during the Covid pandemic.

8. Overall, £66m was collected by Revenues and Benefits officers in 2021/22, which is £5.5m more than the previous year. The overall target collection rate of 99% is on course to be met.

### **Business Rates**

9. The percentage of Businesses Rates collected was slightly above the target of 98% with £26.8m collected in 2021/22, which was £9.2m more than the previous year. The amount of Business Rates arrears reduced in 2021/22 and the overall target collection rate of 99% is on course to be met.

### **Culture**

10. Footfall has increased since 2020/21 and is expected to continue to increase.
11. The events team has provided a fantastic schedule of events and activities in the town centre to encourage visitors.
12. A number of new independent retailers have come to the town centre.
13. The work of the Town Fund has improved shop fronts in Skinnergate and the Yards.

### **Planning Applications**

14. 85.7% of major planning applications are decided within 13 weeks or to an agreed timescale.
15. 91.3% of non major or household applications are decided within eight weeks or an agreed timescale.

### **Economy**

16. The number of residents claiming unemployment benefits continues to fall. It is expected this will continue as the growth in employment opportunities increases following the pandemic.
17. Employment rates have remained static for 2020/21 but show a longer term gradual increase linked to employment opportunities.
18. The economically active rate is higher than both the national and regional average highlighting the growth in employment opportunities.
19. Average annual income has risen for the fourth year compared with the national income which has declined. Average income remains higher than the regional average and is closing the gap on the national average.

### **Environmental Health**

20. Thanks to good advice, inspections and enforcements by the environmental health team, many premises have been found to comply with food hygiene rules.

21. There has been a 64% increase in domestic noise complaints, due, in part, to more people working from home and increased dog ownership, despite this the target for investigating complaints has been met.

### Performance Summary

22. Performance of the six indicators reported annually that have targets.

- a) Four of the indicators shows performance better than its target.

ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target
HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year

- b) Two of the indicators show performance is not as good as their target.

FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered

23. Performance of the twenty two indicators reported annually:

- a) Of the twenty two indicators reported annually twenty one can be compared against their data at Qtr 4 2020/21.

- b) Ten indicators are showing performance better than at this time last year.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 106	24 months to date % of non major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count
ECI 329	Average annual income - Darlington residents

HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year
REG 301	Environmental Health : % of food premises which are inspected within the financial year in which they are due
REG 308	Environmental Health: % of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene

c) Eleven indicators are showing performance not as good as at this time last year:

ECI 330	Average annual income - Darlington employees
ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target
FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
FHR 003	Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health
FHR 008	Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman
FHR 009	Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office
FHR 019	Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

d) One indicator has information available up to Qtr 3.

ECI 327	Employment rate – all people economically active
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e) Of the sixteen indicators reported quarterly seven can be compared against their previous quarter data.

f) Three of the six indicators show performance better than at Qtr 3.

ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
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ECI 106	24 months to date % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count

g) Three of the indicators are showing performance not as good than at Qtr 3.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend

h) One of the indicators shows performance the same as Qtr 3.

REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)
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24. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Recommendations**

25. It is recommended:

- a) that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with appropriate Assistant Directors.

**Ian Thompson**  
**Assistant Director Community Services**

**Mark Ladyman**  
**Assistant Director Economic Growth**

**Brett Nielsen**  
**Assistant Director Resources**

**Luke Swinhoe**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

## Background Papers

Background papers were not used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Well Being	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
Sustainability	This report supports the Council's sustainability responsibilities
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	This report supports performance improvement across all Wards
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes.

## **Main Report**

### **Information and Analysis**

#### **Human Resources**

26. FHR 001 - Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness:

At the yearend 2021/22 the number of working days lost to sickness is higher than reported in 2020/21. However 2020/21 saw low figures of sickness absence as the country had numerous CV19 lockdowns. As society started to open again, absence conditions associated with social interaction have increased. Also during 2021/22 absence due to hospital treatment/medical increased, as the NHS reinstated non urgent procedures, some of which were postponed during the pandemic. Managers at all levels (with HR support) continue to manage sickness within the Council's sickness management policies. The Wellbeing programme has produced significant benefits for our workforce and continues to be a key priority within the new workforce strategy to promote the health and wellbeing of staff. Additional activities have been implemented during 2021/20, with further planned in 2022/23.

27. FHR 019 - Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers:

The number of staff leaving in 2021/22 is higher than in 2020/21. This is to be expected as during 2020/21 the pandemic meant many employers were not recruiting and employees were cautious regarding seeking new employment. In 2021/22, as we came out of the pandemic and due to local success in attracting new employers, many new employment opportunities have arisen in Darlington which has resulted in staff moving. The Council continues to undertake exit surveys for all staff that leave our employment to understand the reason for leaving and implement improvements where needed, with 92% of staff completing exit surveys stating they would work for the Council again. The Council continues to improve its offer to staff through wellbeing projects, employee benefits and other changes (for example agile working) to make the Council an attractive place to work.

#### **Health and Safety**

28. FHR 003 - Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health:

The number of reportable employee accidents/ill health for 2021/22 was 12, which is higher than in 2020/21. All accidents and ill health reports are investigated by management and the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, to identify issues or

trends and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. The profile and importance of health and safety continues to be a key priority for the Council at all levels. Relationships with partner organisations have been strengthened to ensure the promotion of a health and safety culture across all Council activities.

### **Complaints**

29. FHR 008 - Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman: 7 complaints were upheld during 2021/22, compared to 5 in 2020/21.
30. FHR 009 - Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office: 2 complaints were upheld during 2021/22 compared to 1.5 in 2020/21.

### **Procurement**

31. LGP 008 - Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend: Increased communication announcements and a refreshed intranet page over the past year has enabled officers to acquire a greater understanding of the procurement rules and the need for value for money and transparency which has contributed to the figure remaining above 85% for the third consecutive year.

### **Council Tax**

32. HBS 002 - Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected: The amount of Council Tax arrears collected exceeded the target for 2021/22, with £1.55 million collected compared to £1.23 million in 2020/21. The amount of outstanding arrears has also increased during 2021/22 from £5.6 million to £6.8 million. This was due to restrictions being imposed on recovery action due to the Covid pandemic.
33. HBS 009 - % of Council Tax collected in year: The percentage of Council Tax collected in-year in 2021/22 was slightly below the Council's target of 95.5%. However, £66.0 million was collected in 2021/22 by Revenues and Benefits officers, exceeding the amount collected for the previous year by £5.5 million. Despite the increase in Council Tax arrears, the overall collection rate of 99% is still on course to be met.

### **Housing Benefits**

34. HBS 003 - Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered: The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments collected was slightly lower than the target for 2021/22. £568k of overpayments were collected, compared to £646k collected for the same period in 2020/21. However, collection rates are currently at 107% of the new overpayment debt created (£533k) and the overall outstanding debt is decreasing (currently at £1.78 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will continue to decrease.

### **Business Rates**



**35. HBS 010 - % of Business Rates collected in-year:** 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 £9.2 million. The amount of Business Rates arrears reduced in 2021/22 and therefore, the overall collection rate of 99% is still on course to be met.

## **Culture**

**36. CUL 080a -** Using the information provided by the Springboard footfall counters, the footfall in Darlington has increased in comparison to 2020/21 figures and continue to follow this trend for 2022/23 period. Some restrictions with face masks were reintroduced in November and December 2021. The events team have continued to schedule a variety of events and town centre animation to encourage visitors to the town centre. We will continue to review and monitor the footfall data. Darlington has welcomed a number of new independent retailers to the town centre and the continued works programme with the Towns Fund is improving shop fronts within the Skinnergate and Yards areas.

## **Planning Applications**

**37. ECI 104 - % of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time:** The department continues to provide a prompt service for deciding major applications with an increase over the previous quarter up to 85.7%

**38. ECI 105 % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time:** Although this indicator is slightly down on the previous 2 quarters it is still a healthy 91.3% of non major or Household type applications now decided within Target or an agreed time.

**39. ECI 106 - 24 months to date % of non major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time:** For the 24 months to date indicator the department is showing a continued improvement with 88.5% of non major or Household type applications now decided within Target or an agreed time.

## **Planning Policy**

**40. ECI 321 - Monthly unemployed claimant count:** 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

41. ECI 327 - Employment rate – all people economically active: The economically active rate has remained around 80% from April to Dec 2021. The December figure of 81% is above both the England average of 78.7% and North East Average of 74.7% highlighting the growth in new employment opportunities within the area.
42. ECI 329 - Average annual income - Darlington residents: Residents average income has risen for the 4th year in succession, the £24,280 is above the North East average of £23,414 and closing the gap between the England average of £26,192.
43. ECI 330 - Average annual income - Darlington employees: Employees average income has fallen for the 2nd year in succession from the high of £23,658 in 2019/20 to £23,149 a decrease of £509 per annum. This figure is in-line with the North East average of £23,151 but below the England average of £26,204.
44. ECI 401 - New homes delivered against annual target: The Local Plan was adopted in February. It was hoped this would result in a number of planning applications to promote economic growth. Whilst the number of completions remains high and above Local Plan targets at 511 for the year 2021/22, the Government announced in March 2022 that Darlington was part of the Nutrient Neutrality catchment area of the River Tees. The impact of this is that no new permissions for housing developments can be granted until it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of Natural England that any development would not increase the release of nutrients (Nitrogen) into the River Tees or its tributaries. This will delay the granting of planning permissions which ultimately will impact on housing delivery.

## **Environmental Health**

45. REG 301 - % of food premises which are inspected within the financial year in which they are due: To limit the spread of Covid infection during the Pandemic Environmental Health officers were under instruction from the Food Standards Agency not to visit commercial premises unless they had evidence that there was a direct risk to public health. As a result of this, officers were left with a significant backlog of inspections. The Local Authority (LA) recovery plan has re-started the regulatory delivery system for the highest risk businesses and provides greater flexibility for lower risk businesses wherever possible. Officers have developed a plan which triages all currently registered food premises and uninspected premises and ensures that priority is given to the highest risk premises.
46. REG 308 – % of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene: Premises within the Borough have shown a consistently high level of compliance year on year. This is due to a robust, consistent, and proportionate advice, inspection, and enforcement regime by officers.
47. REG 312a – % of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt: During 2021/2022 688 domestic noise complaints including barking dogs were received and investigated by Environmental Health. The target of 90% has been met despite there being a 64% increase in domestic noise complaints compared to pre-

Covid levels 2019/2020. This increase is likely to be due to people continuing to work from home and increased dog ownership.