

**COUNCIL**  
**14 JULY 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Stronger Communities Portfolio.

**Community Safety**

**Safer Streets Programmes**

2. The Safer Streets 3 programme continues to progress. The multi-agency hub in Skinnergate has been secured and DBC Building Services have commenced works to the building.
3. A joint bid with Durham has been submitted as part of Safer Streets 4 to continue with projects already underway as part of Safer Streets 3 (Violence Against Women and Girls) with a few additions: a second bid for anti-social behaviour has been submitted with workstreams to address anti-social behaviour in Darlington. When the outcome of the bids is known, further updates will be provided with details of activity if successful.

**Town Centre Public Space Protection Order**

4. Cabinet, in their meeting on 22 June 2022, considered replacing the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order that ran out in February this year, which Members approved. The Order will be implemented from Monday 4 July 2022 and will cover:
  - (a) Persons acting in an anti-social manner who continue to drink alcohol in public places, which are not licensed premises, after they have been asked to stop.
  - (b) Persons acting in an anti-social manner who fail to surrender any alcohol in their possession in public places, which are not licensed premises, when asked to do so.
  - (c) Begging.
  - (d) Threatening behaviour.

**Civic Enforcement Service**

**Environmental Crime**

5. An operation with the Road Policing Unit to tackle rogue scrap metal carriers is in the process of being arranged. Civic Enforcement officers will focus on waste carriers licence offences and the police will be conducting checks on any vehicles stopped carrying scrap metal to ensure the vehicle is road worthy.

6. 'Walk This Way' dog fouling initiative was officially launched in partnership with the Dogs Trust in May 2022.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

7. 'Operation Staysafe' took place involving partners (Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service, social care, schools, drug and alcohol support services) and police on 23 and 24 June, in conjunction with the year 11 school leavers. The operation's aims are to safeguard young people who may be placed at risk through alcohol consumption.

### **Trading Standards**

8. Following a request for support from Durham Constabulary, a significant quantity of suspected counterfeit goods, including over 500 wireless game controllers, were seized from a Darlington trader and signed over to Trading Standards for further investigation.
9. Two multi-national company brand protection teams provided excellent professional services and supplied witness statements confirming that the majority of the goods were indeed counterfeit. On 22 May, Trading Standards issued a Formal Caution to the trader and secured a voluntary forfeiture of all counterfeit goods, which will be disposed of in due course. A small quantity of goods not deemed counterfeit were returned to the trader.
10. On 24 May, Immigration Enforcement Officers, seized a quantity of illegal tobacco products (cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco) from a Darlington trader and signed them over to Trading Standards for further investigation. Trading Standards takes a 'stronger together' approach to delivering its service and continues to seek out new, and develop existing, partnerships with law enforcement agencies.

### **Private Sector Housing**

#### **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

11. The Private Sector Housing Team have continued to support the Refugee Support Officers by carrying out accommodation inspections to confirm that properties are suitable for guests being welcomed into Darlington by sponsors. These initial checks have included ensuring that each property proposed is available for at least six months, is free from serious health and safety hazards and suitable for the number of people to be accommodated.

#### **Cost of Living**

12. Private Sector Housing have been working with Northern PowerGrid and the Green Doctor Team to deliver energy awareness sessions at various hubs around Darlington. In total, 32 sessions were held, advising residents in relation to how they can reduce their energy bills, make their homes warmer by being more energy efficient, maximise their income and potentially access grants and other support following the rise in energy costs on 1 April 2022. This partnership will continue throughout 2022, with further sessions currently being planned for the Autumn when further increases in energy bills are expected.

## **PREVENT**

13. DBC Prevent Champions met on Thursday 19 May. The champions scheme has been expanded to include Designated Safeguarding Leads from Darlington schools and updates are also being provided to schools via a one-page newsletter, which can be read out to other teaching staff as a 'toolbox talk' or displayed on staff notice boards.
14. The new 'one stop shop' website for counter terrorism, ProtectUK, was launched in April and has been publicised via the weekly staff briefing and DBC Prevent Champions.
15. The Community Resilience Officer is now attending the Ukrainian Refugee Operational Group to ensure any community tensions are reported and dealt with in a timely manner.
16. An 'Emergency Services Day' took place on Saturday 2nd July in the Market Place.
17. The event was attended by members of the Community Safety team and provided a good opportunity to engage with the public on a range of topics, including Prevent.

## **Licensing**

### **Taxis**

18. The automated taxi licensing system has now been tested and went live on Friday 1 July.
19. Following an interim review of the Taxi Licensing Policy, a report has been submitted for the Licensing Committee to consider public consultation on new proposals, including the removal of vehicle age restrictions (to be replaced by Euro 6 engine standards), knowledge locality test to be removed for private hire drivers and tint restrictions to be removed. These are all recommendations from Department for Transport and will help the taxi trade, who are still having difficulties following Covid restrictions.
20. The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 brought about by Darlington's MP has now received Royal Assent. DBC Licensing already carry out much of what is in the legislation along with other North-East Licensing Authorities and now await government guidance.

### **Licensing Act**

21. Akbar Dynasty, who had its licence revoked by the Licensing Committee last year, appealed the decision to magistrates. Since the revocation, the premises has changed ownership and magistrates allowed the premises to keep the licence subject to stringent new conditions.

### **Pavement Cafes**

22. Consultation on the policy review resulted in a limited number of representations which will be incorporated into the new draft. The Business and Planning Act is likely to be made permanent in the coming months and will be taken into consideration once confirmed.

## Crime and Disorder

21.

Darlington	YTD APRIL 2021	YTD APRIL 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	835	915	+10%
Incidents	2570	2471	-4%
ASB	335	351	+5%

22.

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	YTD APRIL 2021	YTD APRIL 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	81	118	+46%
Incidents	170	209	+23%
ASB	18	27	+50%

## Lead Local Flood Authority

23. The Council continues to work with the Environment Agency on developing a scheme focussing on environmental improvements in the River Skerne following receipt of an indicative allocation of £700,000.00 from the Environment Agency. The scheme will focus on the section from Russel Street up to Skerne Bridge in order to improve habitat quality. The scheme will be developed in conjunction with the EA throughout the 2022/23 financial year with a view to submitting an outline business case for the funding by the end of the financial year. It is envisaged that the improvements will be carried out from 2023/24 onwards. The works will be complete in time for the 2025 Stockton and Darlington Railway Bicentennial celebrations.

## Climate Change

24. **Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD2)** – 183 Applications were received for a range of measures from all tenures including those in the Private Rented Sector. 64 Properties have been improved to date. The Scheme was extended until June 2022 and is expected to improve 94 properties in total, 57 of which are in the Private Sector.

**Councillor Mike Renton**  
**Stronger Communities Portfolio**