

**COUNCIL**  
**29 SEPTEMBER 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 safe place, 'number 40', in Skinnergate has been secured and launched on 1 September 2022, opening as a safe place from Friday 2 September 2022.
3. The joint bid with Durham City and Darlington Town Centre for Safer Streets 4 has been successful to continue with projects already underway as part of Safer Streets 3 (Violence Against Women and Girls) with a few additions; it is hoped this bid will also enable the safe place in Skinnergate to remain open for three years.
4. A second Safer Streets 4 bid has been successful for anti-social behaviour (ASB), with workstreams to address the issue in Darlington.
  - (a) Future Pathways, multi-activity sessions provided by Martin Gray Academy.
  - (b) Theatre in Education programme in secondary schools focussed on ASB issues.
  - (c) Bespoke ASB education programme for smaller targeted groups in secondary schools.
  - (d) Recruitment of a reparation worker to deliver an ASB pathway and early intervention programme.
  - (e) Delivery of a family support programme for 10 families.
  - (f) Completion of a digital ASB training package by all Civic Enforcement Officers and Police Community Support Officers.

## **Civic Enforcement Service**

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

5. Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week took place from 18 - 23 July: a national campaign to raise public awareness around anti-social behaviour, community confidence and reporting. Throughout the week, civic enforcement officers in partnership with police, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Members and DBC communications team held several community roadshows. These events were hugely successful, engaging over 80 people throughout the week.

### **CCTV**

6. Funding has been successfully secured to replace/upgrade CCTV provision in Darlington. Over the coming months, a project group will be responsible for overseeing and planning this programme of work.

### **Trading Standards**

7. A letter of warning was sent by Trading Standards to an individual in Darlington, following the seizure of a quantity of illegal tobacco products by Immigration Enforcement Officers and investigations by Trading Standards.
8. The sale and supply of illegal vaping products, as well as the sale and supply of vaping products to under-age children, are priorities for enforcement action in 2022-23 by Trading Standards, working in partnership with other law enforcement agencies. As a result, four Darlington retailers have been inspected and quantities of illegal vaping products have been seized. Investigations are ongoing and enforcement action will continue with unannounced inspections, seizure of illegal products, targeted warnings and social media communications, along with any further actions as required.

### **Private Sector Housing**

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

9. The Private Sector Housing Team have continued to support 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. As of 16 August 2022, 42 inspections have been carried out.

## **Cost of Living**

10. Private Sector Housing have been working with Northern PowerGrid and the Green Doctor Team to deliver energy awareness sessions at various hubs around Darlington. A second set of sessions commenced in September 2022 in preparation for the rise in energy costs in October 2022, to advise 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.

## **PREVENT**

11. Prior to the end of the year, a bid will be submitted of up to £30k to the Home Office's Preventing Radicalisation Fund. The bid will fund specific training for designated safeguarding leads in schools and colleges to enable them to recognise when male students are vulnerable to radicalisation (particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, similar conditions and mental health issues) and know what actions to take. If successful, the training will be delivered during February/March 2023. The bid is in response to the current local threat, which is predominantly young men/teenage boys being targeted for extreme right-wing radicalisation.
12. Four information sessions held via Microsoft Teams were offered to staff interested in becoming facilitators for the 'Eyes and Ears' community engagement programme, to support empowering people in communities to look out for signs that people may need help and the steps they can take to assist. In addition to the online sessions, an in-person event was held in the Town Hall foyer for Members and staff. Attendees commented very positively about the programme and Members offered support to publicise the launch in their wards. The pilot of the programme commenced in September 2022 following delays due to Covid restrictions.

## **Licensing**

### **Taxis**

13. Public consultation for proposed changes to the taxi policy with an interim review has now closed and a report was presented at the Licensing Committee on the 6 September seeking approval for the changes to be authorised by Full Council.
14. A new automated license application system has been introduced and went live on 1 September 2022. This system will make it easier for drivers to apply. A communication plan will be used to promote the trade and the easier application process.
15. The main taxi operator in Darlington, 1AB, has recently been taken over by a company called Take Me, who are based in Leicestershire. Officers will work with the new company to understand their plans going forward and provide further updates.
16. Funding has been obtained from Safer Streets 4 to keep taxi marshals on Friday and Saturday nights in Grange Road for a further 12 months.

## Crime and Disorder

17.

Darlington	YTD JULY 2021	YTD JULY 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	3698	3640	-2%
Incidents	10391	10617	+2%
ASB	1224	1264	+3%

18.

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	YTD JULY 2021	YTD JULY 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	403	490	+22%
Incidents	772	894	+16%
ASB	98	102	+4%

## Climate Change

### ECO4

19. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), is a government energy efficiency scheme, administered by Ofgem. ECO4 is a four-year scheme and is intended to run to 31 March 2026. The main objective of ECO4 is to improve the least energy efficient housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable households.
20. The Private Sector Housing Team are currently encouraging participation in ECO4 through energy companies. Householders are encouraged to use the Simple Energy Advice website to find energy companies who are carrying out ECO works at low or no cost, such as cavity wall insulation, loft installation and the replacement of faulty or broken boilers. 7,783 energy efficient measures have been installed in Darlington through ECO funding since the scheme started.

### Information Sharing

21. The Community Resilience Officer met with the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer to discuss different methods of disseminating climate information to the public; including, attending the next Darlington UNITY Group meeting to deliver a presentation.

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