

**COUNCIL**  
**24 NOVEMBER 2022**

---

**OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO**

---

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 was launched on 1 September 2022, and opened as a safe place on Friday 2 September 2022. The project has already started demonstrating success and has seen around 80 recorded interactions in the first six weeks of operation. There are now in excess of 20 volunteers signed up (with more anticipated) who will staff the premises.
3. All Safer Streets 4 workstreams are well underway.
  - (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 (ASB)**

4. Officers have commenced referrals into the Future Pathways initiative, which forms part of the Safer Streets 4 programme of work.
  - (a) nine First Warnings have been given to youths identified as being involved in ASB.
  - (b) one Final Warning has been given to a youth who refused to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement (ABA).

- (c) 11 Youths have been identified as being involved in ASB and are now awaiting an interview.

### **Environmental Crime**

- 5. In the period of reporting, the following outcomes have been achieved:
  - (a) two convictions at court for fly tipping offences;
  - (b) two Fixed Penalty Notices issued for littering (feeding the pigeons in the Town Centre);
  - (c) five Community Protection Notice Warnings issued for side waste.

### **Trading Standards**

- 6. In the period of reporting, the following outcomes have been achieved:
  - (a) Under Operation CeCe, a national initiative, a multi-agency team, visited numerous shops targeting illegal tobacco trading. The exercise seized over 46,000 cigarettes, over 14Kg of rolling tobacco, 218 illegal vapes and counterfeit watches.
  - (b) In a separate operation the team seized 628Kg of tobacco products.
  - (c) The team are working with the National Trading Standards Scams Team to compensate vulnerable victims who were fraudulently targeted to make upfront payments of fees. The compensation came from funds secured from the proceeds of crime. Five victims in Darlington have received compensation to date. The team are also working with national teams on bank fraud and visiting victims to offer advice and put measures in place to prevent further scams.
  - (d) The team have also issued a warning letter to a farmer over an animal health matter where a number of severely lame ewes were presented for sale.

### **Private Sector Housing**

#### **Private Sector Housing Strategy 2022-2027**

- 7. The Private Rented Sector performs an essential role in supporting Darlington's economic viability and meeting housing needs. As such, Private Sector Housing have published a five-year plan with three key aims:
  - (a) Decent quality homes in the private rented sector
  - (b) Enable growth in the private rented sector
  - (c) Working with and supporting all residents in Darlington

8. This strategy presents some of the key challenges facing the Private Sector Housing team. There is a focus both on current initiatives and future intentions to ensure that the living conditions of residents continue to improve.

### **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations**

9. Changes to regulations were introduced in October 2022. In addition to ensuring smoke alarms are positioned on each floor, at the start of each tenancy landlord's must now:
  - (a) ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers);
  - (b) ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once informed and found to be faulty.
10. Prior to the changes in legislation, the majority of landlords were compliant with the 2015 regulations. Awareness amongst landlords of the new regulations will need to be raised.

### **PREVENT**

11. A joint bid was submitted with Durham County Council to the Home Office for £30k to deliver specific education to designated safeguarding leads in schools/colleges. This training will upskill these members of staff to recognise and mitigate the impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder on 11–18-year-olds in relation to risk of being radicalised.

### **Communications**

12. A pilot event for the Eyes and Ears programme was held on 29 September 2022. All learning will be incorporated into future delivery, which will commence in November/December 2022 pending availability of prospective attendees.
13. HM Treasury have asked for a member of the UNITY group to represent Darlington communities at their newly formed engagement group, with the first meeting scheduled for 25 November 2022.

### **Crime and Disorder**

14.

Darlington	YTD SEPTEMBER 2021	YTD SEPTEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	5588	5682	+2%
Incidents	13487	16137	+4%
ASB	1780	1748	-2%

15.

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	YTD SEPTEMBER 2021	YTD SEPTEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	657	740	+13%
Incidents	1244	1303	+5%
ASB	149	148	-1%

## Climate Change

### Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2)

16. As part of the LAD2 project, 57 energy efficiency measures were installed in energy inefficient owner-occupied properties. These included ten properties which have benefited from external wall insulation and 28 properties that have been fitted with solar panels.

### Home Upgrade Grant phase 1 (HUG1)

17. The HUG1 project commenced in October 2022 and will focus on improving 260 energy inefficient homes across the Tees Valley that are 'off gas' (those not connected to or not using gas to heat their homes or water). This project is being managed by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and is expected to be completed by March 2023.

### Household Support Fund

18. On 26 May 2022, the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. As has been done for previous schemes, the fund has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need. This will be the second extension to the fund since its inception in October 2021.

19. A programme of support was agreed at Cabinet on October 11<sup>th</sup> and a proposal submitted to the Department of Work and pensions on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

20. The allocation for Darlington is £913,853. To comply with the guidance and taking into account delivery in previous rounds the following elements for inclusion in the programme are as follows:

- (a) Food vouchers to families with children on free school meals
- (b) Fuel vouchers
- (c) Support for the Food Bank
- (d) Support for Care Leavers
- (e) Support for Elderly
- (f) Support for Vulnerable Groups through the voluntary and community sector

21. For elements delivered by third party organisations procurement procedures have been followed with allocations approved by Procurement Board on 24<sup>th</sup> October. Agreements have been drawn up and arrangements for spend are in place.
22. Provision of food vouchers during school holidays for families with children on free school meals has been included as in previous rounds as has fuel vouchers. In total 57% of the allocation is being delivered by the third sector.

### **Stronger Communities Awards**

23. The Stronger Communities Awards was held on Friday 11 November. The awards celebrate achievements in 15 categories. This year 430 nominations from the public were received. The ceremony itself attracted over 400 guests including The Mayor, High Sheriff and Vice Lord Lieutenant, who subsequently wrote to say that through the awards the strength of community in Darlington shone out.

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