

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
5 JANUARY 2023**

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**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2022/23 at Quarter 2.

**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, eighteen of them on a six-monthly basis and four annually.

**Headlines**

**Human Resources**

5. The number of days lost to sickness so far in 2022/23 is higher than at the same period in 2021/22, however a large percentage of the increase is due to changes in recording Covid19 absence.
6. Management of sickness remains a high priority for all levels of management, supported by HR. Wellbeing activities continue to be a key priority from our workforce strategy to promote the health and wellbeing of our staff.
7. The number of staff leaving the council has increased slightly due to new opportunities in Darlington.
8. Exit interviews show 90% of people they would work for the council again.
9. A review of recruitment processes has been undertaken with targeted promotion through various routes including social media and recruitment fairs. We continue to develop our package of benefits as an employer with new initiatives and wellbeing projects.

## **Health and Safety**

10. The number of reports of accidents and ill health to the HSE has fallen compared to the same point in 2021/22.

## **Complaints**

11. Three complaints have been upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman and one complaint upheld by the Information Commissioners Office.

## **Procurement**

12. Contracted spend as a percentage of total non-salary spend has remained largely consistent for three years. In quarter 2 there was a slight reduction (which is similar to what was experienced in the preceding year).

## **Council Tax**

13. The amount of Council Tax arrears collected has exceeded the target for 2022/23, with £1m collected.
14. Revenues and Benefits officers collected £39.1 million, an increase of £2.7 million. The overall collection rate of 99% is still on course to be met.

## **Business Rates**

15. The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target due to the continuing award of Covid Additional Relief.

## **Housing Benefits**

16. £259k of Housing Benefit overpayments were collected. The outstanding debt is decreasing (currently at £1.64 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will continue to decrease.

## **Culture**

17. Footfall has continued to increase. The events programme attracted new visitors and fantastic feedback. New independent retailers have opened and the Towns Fund continues to improve shop fronts. Darlington is part of the High Street Task Force initiative and is waiting for further development opportunities.

## **Planning Applications**

18. The low number applications, 9, continue to sway the figures, but 7 cases met the target of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time.
19. 95% of non major or household type applications were decided within target time.

## Planning Policy

20. The Local Plan was adopted in February. It was hoped this would result in a number of planning applications to promote economic growth. However, due to the Government announcing Darlington is part of the nutrient neutrality catchment area of the river Tees, no new permissions for housing developments can be granted at the moment. The downturn has yet to be felt due to existing permissions continuing to be built out. For the period April to the end of September there has been 341 completions and 296 starts.

## Economy

21. The number of residents claiming unemployment benefits continues to fall to a level similar to pre-pandemic rates. It is expected the claimant count rate will be impacted by the current business environment, where rising costs and low confidence mean that many businesses are stagnating on growth plans, reviewing operating costs and suspending recruitment.
22. The economically active rate has remained around 80% from April to Dec 2021. The July to June figure of 79.2% is above both the England and regional average highlighting the growth in new employment opportunities within the area.

## Environmental Health

23. 531 noise were complaints investigated and closed, 97.6% were within the target of six weeks. The increase in noise complaints has continued compared to pre-Covid levels.

## Performance Summary

24. Performance of the four indicators reported with 6 monthly targets.

- (a) Three of the indicators show performance better than their target.

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

- (b) One indicator show's performance not as good as their target.

HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
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25. Performance of the twenty-two indicators reported:

- (a) Of the twenty-two indicators seventeen can be compared against their data at Qtr 2 2021/22.
- (b) Twelve indicators are showing performance better than at this time last year.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
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 401	New homes delivered against annual target
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
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
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

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

ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
FHR 019	Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend

(d) One indicator has information available up to Qtr 1. When compared to the Qtr 1 period for 2021/22 of 79.8%, this gives performance of not as good.

ECI 327	Economically active rate - aged 16-64
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(e) Of the eighteen indicators reported quarterly eight can be compared against their previous quarter data.

(f) Three of the six indicators show performance better than at Qtr 1.

ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 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)
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

(g) Four of the indicators are showing performance not as good than at Qtr 1.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend

(h) One of the indicators shows Qtr 1 performance not as good than as Qtr 4.

ECI 327	Economically active rate - aged 16-64
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26. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Recommendations**

27. It is recommended 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**

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

**Anthony Sandys**  
**Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues**

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

### **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no specific carbon impact issues in this report.
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 outcomes
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

#### Human Resources

28. FHR 001 - Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools):

The number of days lost to sickness at Q2 is higher than at the same point in 2021/22. Over 50% of the increase in days lost this quarter have been as a result of Covid 19 absence, which for the majority of last year was not recorded as sickness during the initial isolation period, in line with national practice. Sickness management continues to be a priority for managers at all levels with support provided by HR. Wellbeing activities continue to be a key priority from our workforce strategy to promote the health and wellbeing of our staff. Many activities have been offered during the first half of the year with further planned for the remainder of the year with health promotion and awareness activities on the programme.

29. FHR 019 - Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers:

The number of staff leaving the employment of the Council up to the end of Q2 is slightly higher (0.2%) than at the same period last year. This is expected as local success in attracting new employers to Darlington and national recruitment issues following the pandemic have created many new employment opportunities, which has resulted in staff moving. The Council continues to undertake exit interviews with all our staff that leave, to understand why people leave and to inform on any improvements where needed. From those interviews, 90% of people completing exit surveys stated they would work for DBC again. We are working hard to recruit and retain the best talent, in a very competitive employment market. We have undertaken a review of our recruitment processes, with targeted promotion of Council vacancies through various routes e.g. social media and recruitment fairs, which have resulted in successful recruitment. We continue to develop our package of benefits as an employer with new initiatives and wellbeing projects to make the Council an attractive place to work.

#### Health and Safety

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

The total number of reports to the HSE as required by the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) is 4, which is lower than at the quarter 2 for 2021/22. 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. Health and Safety is a key priority for the Council at all levels and continues to be promoted through all working practices.

#### Complaints

31. FHR 008 - Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman:

Three complaints have been upheld in 2022/23 to date, compared to four at Quarter 2 in 2021/22.

32. FHR 009 - Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office:

One complaint has been upheld in 2022/23 to date, compared to two in 2021/22.

### **Procurement**

33. LGP 008 - Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend:

Increased communication announcements and a refreshed intranet page over the past year has helped officers to better understand and the procurement rules which has contributed to the figure remaining around 85% for the third consecutive year. In quarter 2 there was a slight reduction (which is similar to what was experienced in the preceding year).

### **Council Tax**

34. HBS 002 - Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected:

The amount of Council Tax arrears collected for quarter 2 has exceeded the target for 2022/23, with £1.00 million collected compared to £0.81 million for the same period in 2021/22. The amount of outstanding arrears increased due to Covid from £5.0 million at the end of quarter 2 in 2021/22 to £5.9 million at the end of quarter 2 in 2022/23, but recovery action restarted in the first quarter of 2022/23, which explains the increase in arrears collection.

### **Housing Benefits**

35. HBS 003 - Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered:

The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments collected in quarter 2 was lower than the target for 2022/23. £259k of overpayments were collected, compared to £269k collected for the same period in 2021/22. However, collection rates are currently at 118% of the new overpayment debt created (£220k) and the overall outstanding debt is decreasing (currently at £1.64 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**

36. HBS 010 - % of Business Rates collected in-year:

The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 2, with 62.5% of Business Rates collected, compared to 53.5% in quarter 2 of 2021/22. The main reason for this increase in performance was due to the continuing award of Covid Additional Relief being awarded in quarter 1, significantly reducing the amount of Business Rates to pay. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £16.9 million compared to £16.8 million by quarter 2 of 2021/22.



## Culture

### 37. CUL 080a - Town centre footfall weekly average:

Footfall has continued to increase year on year in Darlington since 2020. The programming of events throughout 2022 continue to attract new visitors to Darlington with some fantastic feedback. Darlington has continued to welcome 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. Darlington has been part of the High Street Task Force initiative and awaiting reports and feedback for further development opportunities to enhance and continue to look at methods to improve the town centre and attract more businesses, residents and visitors to Darlington.

## Planning Applications

38. ECI 104 - % of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time: The low number applications, (9) continue to sway the figures, but 7 cases met the target equating to 78 % of the total.

39. ECI 105 % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time:

This indicator continues to show that 95% of non major or Household type applications were decided within Target or an agreed time.

40. 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 shows 88.3% of non major or Household type applications are decided within Target or an agreed time.

## Economy

41. ECI 321 - Monthly unemployed claimant count:

Throughout 2022, the monthly unemployed claimant count has steadily decreased up to July 2022 – a trend which is mirrored in both regional and national statistics. These decreases have reduced the claimant count to a level similar to pre-pandemic rates. Since July 2022, consecutive increases have been recorded, with the claimant count in September 2022 now standing at 4.4%. The claimant count rate will be impacted by the current business environment, where rising costs and low business confidence mean that many businesses are generally stagnating on growth plans, reviewing operating costs and suspending recruitment and taking on new staff.

42. ECI 327 - Economically active rate - aged 16-64:

The economically active rate has remained around 80% from April to Dec 2021. The July to June figure of 79.2% is above both the England average of 78.8% and North East Average of 74.6% highlighting the growth in new employment opportunities within the area.

## **Planning Policy**

### **43. 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. 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 (Nitrates) into the river Tees or its tributaries. This is continuing to delay the granting of planning permissions which ultimately will impact on housing delivery. However, the downturn has yet to be felt due to existing permissions continuing to be built out. For the period April to the end of September there has been 341 completions and 296 starts.

## **Environmental Health**

### **44. REG 312a – % of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt:**

For Quarter 1 and 2 of the 531 noise complaints investigated and closed 97.6% were within the target of 6 weeks. The increase in noise complaints has continued compared to pre-Covid levels.