

**CABINET  
10 JANUARY 2023**

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**COUNCIL PLAN 2020-23 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 (2022-23)**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member –  
Councillor Jonathan Dulston, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -  
Chief Officers Executive**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council Plan 2020-23 – Delivering Success for Darlington.
2. The report covers performance in and to the end of the first two quarters of the current financial year, from April 2022 to September 2022.

**Summary**

3. Delivering Success for Darlington is the Council Plan and it sets out the vision for the borough: *“Darlington is a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate, where the economy continues to grow, where people are happy and proud of the borough and where everyone has the opportunity to maximise their potential.”* The Plan is structured around the following priorities:
  - (a) Growing Darlington’s Economy
  - (b) Maximising the Potential of our Young People
  - (c) Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential
  - (d) Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough
  - (e) A dedicated workforce who are proud to serve the borough and an accessible, effective and engaged council
4. The appended performance report outlines council performance up to the end of the second quarter of the 2022/23 financial year and is structured around the Council Plan, with:
  - (a) A high-level update on overall progress, across all portfolios, towards the overarching vision and priorities highlighted above.
  - (b) An update on each Cabinet portfolio area, highlighting progress against key actions and relevant key performance indicators

5. While some impacts from COVID continue to pose challenges for the council, emerging national and global issues such as increasing energy and supply chain costs, and the war in Ukraine are having significant impacts on many residents, businesses and the council. Much is being done to support people who are most affected, as outlined throughout this report, but this does put increasing pressure on the delivery of council services.

### Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the progress against the Council Plan 2020-23, as set out in the performance report in **Appendix 1**.

### Reasons

7. The recommendation is supported as the purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the progress in implementing the Council Plan priorities.

### Chief Officers Executive

### Background Papers

The Council Plan 2020-23 - Delivering Success for Darlington

Neil Bowerbank: Extension 6052

S17 Crime and Disorder	A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are monitored as part of Council Plan performance reporting
Health and Well Being	The Council Plan outlines a number of key actions and priorities relating to improving the health and wellbeing of local residents, and so the performance report includes updates on how the Council has continued to support this over the first half of 2022/23.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	Progress towards the Council's climate change plan is outlined in the Council plan performance report.
Diversity	Equality measures are monitored as part of the Council Plan performance monitoring process
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This report outlines progress against the Council Plan and is intended to be used to help inform strategic priorities going forward.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	This report outlines progress against the Council Plan.
Efficiency	The report highlights staff an organisational effectiveness in terms of meeting the key actions and priorities laid out in the Council Plan.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	As Looked After Children and Care Leavers are highlighted as corporate priorities in the Council Plan,

	the performance report includes updates on how the Council has continued to support these groups over the first half of 2022/23.
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## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

8. The majority of measures in this performance report demonstrate progress towards achieving the council's strategic priorities, with the remaining measures demonstrating progress towards specific key actions aligned with individual portfolios as defined in the Council Plan 2020-23.
9. In most cases, progress against priorities relies on action and support from services spanning multiple portfolios. The following sections of this report highlight some of the key updates contained within the appendix across the thematic and portfolio areas.

### *Growing Darlington's Economy*

10. Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the covid pandemic, the number of new additional employment opportunities continued to increase in 2021. The long-term trend shows the number of employees in Darlington continues to grow, and in early 2022, recorded more than 45,000 employees in the Borough as post covid confidence returns and demand for goods and services increased.
11. 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.
12. Darlington resident median weekly incomes increased by 7% between 2020 and 2021, higher than the North-East rate (4.5%) and the England rate (5%). The long term trend for this measure projects year-on-year increases. Median weekly full-time employee based earnings have also increased over the same period, Darlington (15.5%), North East (6%), and England (5%).
13. The characteristics of the Borough contribute to creating the right conditions to attract more people to work, live and enjoy the Borough:
  - (a) Work continues to take place on the back lanes project to reduce the amount of side waste left out in back lanes. The introduction of an additional back lane crew has made a significant difference to the time fly tips are collected with the majority being collected in under 5 days with a significant number of those in under 2 days.
  - (b) Performance of street cleansing teams remains very high with an average of 97.36% of small and 93.24% of large fly tips removed within their target time.
  - (c) The cleanliness of the town centre has continued to remain at a very high standard during the first half of 2022/23.

- (d) The community safety team continue to work closely with the town centre team and wider town centre partners to tackle crime and Anti-Social Behaviour within the town centre, and the renewed public space protection order (PSPO) for the town centre came into effect in July. The Hub (No. 40) on Skinnergate which provides a place of safety, primarily for women and girls but also for vulnerable people opened in September.
  - (e) The rate of reported antisocial behaviour incidents across the borough has decreased by 6% compared to the same period last year. However, the Council continues to be proactive in addressing issues.
  - (f) We continue to invest in road safety education and through our Local Transport Plan, we continue to invest in speed management and casualty reduction schemes. We are seeing a sustained reduction in the number of people slightly injured in road traffic accidents based on the years prior to COVID19.
14. The percentage of the A-road network which needs to be considered for maintenance is 1.47%, and remains significantly below the national and the North East averages. We continue to invest in B & C class roads and this has seen a slight improvement in the quality of the network, and is an improvement on the previous year and better than the national average.

#### ***Maximising the Potential of our Young People***

15. The Ofsted profile of Darlington schools has continued to improve in this period. 82.9% of pupils now attend a Good or Outstanding school. The percentage of Good or Outstanding schools in Darlington now stands at 86.2% for primary and 75% for secondary.
16. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2-2½ years, defined as the proportion of children who received a review who were at or above the expected level in all five domains, remains statistically better than the England and the North East averages, at 93.9% in 2020/21. The national average for this measure is 82.9%
17. The number of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System in Darlington remains comparable to comparator areas in both 2019/20 and 2020/21. This continued positive performance reflects the good work of Council services and partners in early identification of young people in need of support, as well as impressive engagement levels with the Council's Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service (YPEAJS) team.
18. The council's Young People's Engagement & Justice Service (YPE&JS) had 31 young people referred to their service for diversionary disposals i.e. Pre Caution Disposals and Restorative Justice Disposals in the first 6 months of 2022/23. Over the same period, the team has achieved a 97% success rate in terms of those young people not going on to reoffend following engagement with the service.

#### ***Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential***

19. The Council has launched a plan to complement the national Levelling Up programme, ensuring that national investment generates the greatest prosperity for the people of Darlington. The focus is on ensuring that residents of Darlington, no matter where in the

borough they live, have the same access to opportunities to make the best of their talents and live a healthy and happy life, as in any other part of the UK.

20. The Council is leading a multi-agency programme in Northgate which is acting as a testbed for how focused activity can help residents access opportunities. The Towns Fund presents an opportunity to create an adult learning facility to improve skills for work. In addition, the Council is conferring with partner agencies to consider how all young people in Darlington can be supported to maximise their employment potential.
21. The number of street champions continues to rise steadily. There are 486 active street champions, the Big spring clean 2022 campaign was a success again and saw more volunteers sign up off the back of an organised litter pick. The scheme has also encouraged other groups to set up a regular litter picking event to improve with mental health/wellbeing for individuals who became self-isolated during lock downs.

### ***Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough***

22. The Council has a well-established group, the Public Sector Executive Group which brings together the chief officers of the major public sector agencies operating in Darlington. This group is currently focused on how agencies contribute to the Levelling Up Darlington Plan. Furthermore, strong working relationships are currently being forged with voluntary sector organisations who will advise on the use of £200k support from the Household Support Fund. This is in addition to the 7,945 households who benefitted from the previous Household Support Fund (£909,160) that was distributed during Q1 and Q2.
23. Supporting the Government scheme, council tax rebates totalling £7 million were swiftly distributed to over 50k households during Q1 and Q2 helping people cope with rising energy and living costs. Furthermore, money advice was collated and published on the council's website which included information from both the council and local organisations.
24. We continue to perform well and remain on a downward trajectory of people entering long term residential care. The services are continuing to work with providers, families and people to actively reduce the number of people needing long term care and enable individuals to return to homes with appropriate support.
25. As of the end of September 2022, 96.2% of 768 clients using social care were receiving self-directed support. Darlington typically exceeds both the national and regional averages for this measure, reflecting the strong ethos of the Council's Adult Social Care team of taking a strengths-based approach to support residents in need.

### ***A dedicated workforce who are proud to serve the borough and an accessible, effective and engaged council***

26. Employing over 2,000 people across a vast range of services, we have a proud and dedicated workforce, a large percentage of who live in Darlington. The workforce strategy and plan was rolled out last year. Priorities within the plan that have been delivered so far include the continued roll out of the management programme, the start of a formal pilot for agile working arrangements, and activities to promote a safe and healthy workforce.

### ***Adults Portfolio***

27. Darlington has a very low number of people (48) with mental health needs requiring paid support. The Mental Health team within Adult Social Care work closely with the local Trusts and the Primary care Network/GPs to prevent escalation or reduce the need for intervention.
28. Since April 2021, 187 (74.8%) Assistive Technology Tool kit Referrals assigned to Lifeline resulted in equipment being provided, and work continues to between Lifeline and the Adult Social Care Team to promote assistive technology.
29. As of the end of September 2022, 100% of 88 carers using social care received self-directed support. Darlington exceeds both the national and regional average for this metric, and reflects how all carers, who are in receipt of a commissioned service, now have a personal budget. This enables them to maximise their independence and choice, to support their wellbeing and ensure they are able to access the support that best suits their needs.
30. Of the 228 individuals who completed a reablement package since April 2022, 124 had no ongoing care needs. This current performance of 54.4% is an improvement from the same period in 2021/22 (53.5%).

### ***Children and Young People Portfolio***

31. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) have continued to receive excellent services throughout 2022. Increasingly more children with SEND are attending Darlington mainstream schools, and the proportion of Darlington pupils with and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending mainstream school settings in the borough has risen from 32.8% in 2018 to 38.4% in 2022.
32. During the past 6 months, 90% of the families the Strengthening Families KFT team worked with have engaged in the interventions and continued successfully to stay together safely as a family unit.
33. 53 children and young people ceased to be in care between April and September 2022, an increase of 2 on the same reporting period last year. The majority of Darlington children in care at the end of September 2022 were in foster placements (47.9%). Kinship care with relatives was 18.9%, 13.3% were placed with a parent, 15.7% were living in supported residential accommodation, and 4.2% were placed for adoption.
34. There are currently 58 approved foster care families and we have recruited a further 4 foster care families during the year. We have 19 kinship connected carers approved with a further 17 families that have temporary approval with children in place. 5 families are going through the mainstream assessments to become approved foster carers to support Darlington's children in care. Nationally, there are difficulties with recruitment. Work continues to raise the foster caring profile in Darlington via our website, social media, and on TV.
35. 22.2% of our care leavers are engaged in further education and 51.9% of the young people are in employment. There is an excellent relationship with our Learning and Skills officers

to understand all school leavers destinations to promote and encourage further learning, training, and/or employment opportunities.

36. Darlington's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme was further extended for Summer 2022, delivering in communities throughout the Borough. More than 800 children engaged with 62 different programmes at 18 sites across Darlington during the 6 week summer school holiday. Total number of attendances exceeded 1,000 with over 10% of children with SEND.
37. Young people using the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) service have continued to see positive progression in education, employment or training over the past 12 months, exceeding our expected target. Sustained outcomes are an important indicator that highlights the determination the young people and YEI service have and is showcased by the year-on-year increase in sustained education, employment or training.

### ***Economy Portfolio***

38. 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. The new Street Food section of the market continues to be successful with 3 new vendors ensuring the offer remains new, fresh and interesting.
39. The Council has received some strong enquiries in relation to land at Ingenium Park, and officers will continue to work with these businesses to bring forward investment. Furthermore, planning approval is due to be granted for 300,000 sq. ft of commercial space along Tornado Way adjacent to Lingfield Point, and officers are working closely with landowners and investors for the development of a commercial site at Faverdale Business Park. Work is progressing at Central Park to deliver improved landscaping and accessibility to plots with the remaining works to complete by end of March 2023.
40. The Council continues to work closely with the Government Property Agency (GPA) with the delivery of the permanent DEC location on Brunswick Street. Several meetings on the proposed design for the new building have been held between the developers and the Council's planning officers. It is anticipated that the building will be completed in late 2025.
41. The Town Fund has acquired additional properties in the town, including 156 Northgate which will be refurbished and transformed into office space. A procurement exercise to identify a partner to design, build and manage the three upper floors as high quality office space has commenced.

### ***Health and Housing Portfolio***

42. The Public Health team has continued to progress with a number of priorities such as distribution of information and offer of support to those affected by suicide across the borough, the implementation and evaluation of a Weight Management programme designed for adults with a Learning Disability, roll out the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training to a range of different internal and external services, and delivery of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey to 8,400 local pupils, across a number of primary and secondary

Darlington schools.

43. Dolphin Centre visitor numbers for quarter 2 (22-23) have increased significantly by 51,443, compared to the same quarter in 21- 22. Visits in July (84,000) were the highest monthly total since reopening following lockdown.
44. All of Darlington Borough Council's social housing stock meets 100% of the decent homes standard. This demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to provide excellent quality social housing and reflecting the good work of the Housing and Building Services teams.
45. The remaining actions in the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are now complete. Despite increasing challenges of finding alternative accommodation, the Housing Options team managed to secure 236 positive outcomes for clients in Q2. This is an increase of 47%.
46. The Lifeline service continues to record consistent take up of new customers, with a slight increase in overall numbers in quarter 2 of 2022-23 compared to the previous year. Feedback amongst service users remains positive and the service provides excellent value for money, with over 4,500 emergency response call-outs to elderly and vulnerable customers in the first 2 quarters of 2022-23.

### ***Local Services Portfolio***

47. 2022 has seen an exceptional programme of events starting with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The reaction from visitors has been excellent and offering these large scale free events has attracted thousands of visitors to Darlington town centre, leading to a notable year on year increase in town centre footfall.
48. Work has continued with partners to develop the 2025 celebrations programme, built around 6 core element; Live steam and motive power, Exhibitions of early steam locomotives, Education and school projects, Knowledge sharing and conferences, Community events, Large-scale outdoor arts and street theatre. Furthermore, in May, work started on site for phase 1 of the new rail shed (part of the Rail Heritage Quarter) which the A 1 Steam Locomotive Trust will relocate to from the carriage works once complete.
49. Our central library is going through major restoration works. We have opened a temporary library location point at The Dolphin Centre and offered access to additional services via telephone, email, and at our branch library in Cockerton, striving to meet the needs of our customers as best we can during this time. Cockerton Library remains popular, and during opening hours sees a mix of ages visiting to borrow, enjoy a school visit, a story, craft, or Lego activity, or take part in our group specifically for older people.
50. The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan has now been agreed and a prospectus was submitted to Government which has secured £310m in transport investment in the next 5 years from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). This funding will see the biggest investment in sustainable transport ever seen in the Tees Valley and will assist in delivering climate change objectives across the region.



### ***Resources Portfolio***

51. The Council has invested in six joint ventures for house building to date, with all sites progressing well and on target to provide profits as expected. Three of the projects, at Eastbourne, Heighington and Middleton St George, are completed with the investment repaid and dividends received.
52. The West Park and Neasham Road joint ventures are progressing well with all of the properties available in 2022 either sold or reserved, with reservations made against the 2023 release. The Council's out-of borough joint venture with Esh Group is still in its infancy; however, the majority of properties available for sale in 2022 are sold or reserved, with reservations made against the 2023 release.
53. The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 2, with 62.5% of Business Rates collected. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £16.9 million compared to £16.8 million by quarter 2 of 2021-22.
54. The spend with Darlington-based suppliers has increased from the last financial year, in the first two quarters by 4% (£3m) to 43%. This reflects the continued engagement with the local supply chain, advertising opportunities via the Councils website and social media.
55. There has been a modest increase in the daily visits to our website since the last reporting period (4.8k to 5.1 k) taking us to our highest reported 3 month average to date. Work continues to convert the site's content into plain English with approximately 60% of the web pages now complete.
56. There has been a net increase (+19) of transactional functions available across the corporate website since the previous reporting period. There are currently 195 transactional functions available, all of which need to be managed and maintained.

### ***Stronger Communities Portfolio***

57. Darlington Cares rapidly recovered from the limitations faced through Covid. The existing programme continued to reboot whilst the Board explored other areas it could focus on. In particular, it is exploring how it can join forces with the Council and other agencies to help planting trees and other biodiversity action. A well-attended networking event, celebrating 10 years of Darlington Cares, was held on 24th March. From that and increased awareness of Darlington Cares, four new members have been recruited, including Amazon.
58. The Bread & Butter thing has continued to support families across Darlington in making life more affordable especially at a time when families need it most. 8 hubs currently serve the town with plans for the ninth hub to be fully operation by the end of 2022. Since the 1st April 2022 TBBT have given out 16,431 bags of food which equates to 145,066kg of food. Not only supporting families but preventing good food from being wasted or placed into landfill.
59. The Hub on Skinnergate which provides a place of safety, primarily for women and girls but also for vulnerable people opened in September and is proving to be a well used valuable resource to support the late night economy.

60. The total number of current staff who have attended a half day equality and diversity training session is 1,259 people. An additional 185 people have attended more than one session. Over 150 people who have now left the organisation also received the training.