

**COUNCIL**  
**26 JANUARY 2023**

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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', Skinnergate, continues to run well and is independently staffed by volunteers supported by SIA security.
3. There are now nearly 30 dedicated volunteers who have been provided training of equipment. A supply of personal attack alarms are distributed to vulnerable people through the safe place.
4. In early 2023, volunteers will undergo further training to equip them to deliver on street support where they will patrol the town centre and offer support to vulnerable people.

**Civic Enforcement Service**

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

5. Officers continue to refer into the Future Pathways initiative, as part of the Safer Streets 4 programme of work, with the following outcomes achieved in the final quarter of 2022:
  - (a) 6 First Warnings have been given to persons identified as being involved in ASB.
  - (b) 17 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA) have been signed.
  - (c) 7 Final Warnings have been given to persons who refused to sign ABAs.
  - (d) 6 people have been identified as being involved in ASB and are now awaiting an interview.

**Environmental Crime**

6. In the period of reporting the following outcomes have been achieved:
  - (a) Four files pending for court for fly tipping offences;

- (b) One Fixed Penalty Notice issued for littering and two enquiries ongoing in relation to pigeon feeding in the town centre;
- (c) One Fixed Penalty Notice issue for breach of Duty of Care in relation to a fly tip;
- (d) Four Community Protection Notice Warnings issued for side waste.

### **Trading Standards**

7. Under Operation CeCe (a national illegal tobacco initiative) the Trading Standards team, supported by law enforcement partners and a tobacco detection dog team, visited and searched seven retail premises in Darlington on 29 November 2022. This operation follows enforcement action carried out on 27 September 2022. The team seized illegal, high strength, disposable vapes as well as a quantity of illegal cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco. There was a mixture of concealed products and products on open display.
8. On 1 December 2022, an officer from the Trading Standards team carried out night-time economy visits as part of a multi-agency operation under the name 'Operation Autumn'. Two retailers of particular interest to Trading Standards were searched, and a quantity of illegal disposable vapes, cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco were seized.
9. A further visit was conducted by an officer from Trading Standards and Durham Constabulary to a retailer on 5 December 2022 and, once again, a quantity of illegal disposable vapes, cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco were seized.
10. Across all three days of action, 19,580 sticks of cigarettes, 7.65 kg hand rolling tobacco and 498 disposable vapes were seized with a total street value of nearly £12,000.
11. Investigation and reinforced action is being focussed on retailers who are attempting to cash in on the popularity of disposable vapes by increasing the supply of illegal versions, often selling them to under-age children.

### **Private Sector Housing**

#### **Damp and Mould Growth**

12. Over the 3 years, 2018-19 to 2020-21, the Private Sector Housing Team receive on average 90 service requests per year where damp and mould growth is a contributory factor.
  - (a) 23% of all damp and mould growth service requests were dealt with within 10 days by providing advice to the occupier or landlord.
  - (b) The remaining 77% of cases required an inspection. In those cases, an inspection is arranged for 10 days later to allow the landlord to make contact with the tenant and start any necessary works. On average these requests were resolved within 70 days.

13. Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale (where prolonged environmental mould exposure within his home contributed to his death), the Team anticipates a further rise in service requests over the winter period; October figures showed a 104 per cent increase on average figures for the time of the year.
14. The Private Sector Housing Team have recently reviewed information on the Darlington Borough Council website and will continue to do so over the winter period to advise residents of available support for energy efficiency measures, how to reduce condensation and mould growth as well as financial assistance available.

**PREVENT**

15. A successful 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. The bid focusses on the impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder on 11–18-year-olds in relation to the risk of being radicalised. A project provider was identified in December, with delivery expected to commence in February/March 2023.

**Crime and Disorder**

16. Across the Borough the figures are as follows:-

Darlington	YTD NOVEMBER 2021	YTD NOVEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	7337	7711	+5%
Incidents	20464	21096	+3%
ASB	2351	2112	-10%

17. The crime increase equates to 374 offences with burglary in private dwellings and possession of weapons rates increasing. Action has been taken with regards to residential burglaries and a number of offenders have been identified and charged. Rates in possession of weapons has seen an increase due to the number of stop searches carried out.
18. Incidents have increased by 632 reports, with an increase in youth related incidents. Partnership work between the police and Civic Enforcement teams has seen youths identified and actions taken to try and improve behaviour.
19. Within the town centre the figures are as follows:-

DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE	YTD NOVEMBER 2021	YTD NOVEMBER 2022	% Increase/decrease
Crime	920	978	+6%
Incidents	1701	1719	+1%
ASB	199	186	-7%

20. The crime increase equates to 58 offences with vehicle crime rates increasing. Further analysis shows that vehicles being insecure is the main reason for this uptick in offences.

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