

**COUNCIL**  
**20 JULY 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**

**Number Forty**

2. Number Forty continues to receive positive attention from the media and the public. Since opening in September 2022, a total of 359 incidents of assistance to vulnerable people in the night-time economy has been recorded.
3. A team of 27 dedicated volunteers are in place with recruitment ongoing.
4. Number Forty Street Friends launched in time for the busy Eurovision event in the town centre. Trained Street Friends volunteers are currently active in the night time economy on one to two occasions per month, until additional volunteers can be recruited to the team.

**Safer Streets**

5. During May, 'Have Your Say' sessions were organised at Kings Church (Whessoe Road), Well Methodist Centre (North Road), St Thomas Aquinas Church (North Road), The HUB Corporation Road School and Morrisons (North Road). The aim was to collect feedback on the initiative and seek views from the community. All information collated will be used to support future 'Safer Streets' initiatives, and issues were also forwarded on to appropriate services (including Police) for action as appropriate.

**Civic Enforcement Service**

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

6. Officers continue to refer into the Future Pathways initiative as part of the Safer Streets 4 programme of work. The following outcomes were recorded in the period of reporting (1 April 2023 to 15 June 2023):
  - (a) 1 First Warning given to a youth identified as being involved in ASB;
  - (b) 2 Final Warnings given to youths who refused to sign Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA);
  - (c) 16 ABAs have been signed;

- (d) 5 Breaches of ABAs recorded – a parent/guardian will now receive a letter advising the breach has occurred and this will be recorded on the Council's system. If subsequent breaches occur, evidence collected may be used in further courses of action.
7. 18 youths have been identified as being involved in ASB and are now awaiting an interview and potential intervention activity.

### **Environmental Crime**

8. The following outcomes were recorded in the period of reporting (1 April 2023 to 15 June 2023):
- (a) 1 pending prosecution for non-payment of Fixed Penalty for breach of PSPO (dog fouling);
  - (b) 3 successful prosecutions for fly tipping, resulting in fines;
  - (c) 3 fly tipping prosecutions and 3 pending prosecutions for fly tipping listed in July;
  - (d) 1 Community Protection Warning issued for side waste;
  - (e) 15 open case enquiries ongoing.

### **Trading Standards**

9. The sale and supply of illegal cigarettes and vapes, in particular to under-age children, is a priority for enforcement by Trading Standards in 2023-24. In the previous seven months, Trading Standards have seized over £155,000 worth of illegal cigarettes and vapes from Darlington. To tackle this organised crime, the team have forged stronger relationships with partner agencies including Police, HMRC, and Immigration. Premises Closure Orders have also been obtained on two offending businesses.
10. Trading Standards visited twenty problem traders following concerns of Child Sexual Exploitation and intelligence development has been focussed on this area, disseminating intelligence to relevant agencies and continuing to work in partnership to develop a protocol for tackling such issues. Subsequently, enquiries have been received from around the country who wish to adopt Darlington's model.

### **Private Sector Housing**

11. Three new policies were approved by Cabinet in June 2023 as follows:
- (a) Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2023
  - (b) Civil Penalties Enforcement Policy and Guidance: Housing and Planning Act 2016

(c) Civil Penalties Enforcement Policy and Guidance: The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector Regulations 2020

12. The policies aim to provide the Private Sector Housing team with additional tools that can be used to improve conditions in the private sector housing market.

**Community Engagement**

13. The Community Resilience Officer attended a meeting with the MP and local businesses on 6 June in United Reform Church, Northgate. The concerns of attendees were listened to and recorded, with a ‘Community Action Forum’ proposed as a way of addressing issues in the longer term and to improve community cohesion and engagement with local services.

**Licensing**

14. A prosecution file was submitted in relation to an unlicensed scrap metal dealer.

**Crime and Disorder**

15. Across the Borough the figures are as follows:

Darlington	YTD MAY 2022	YTD MAY 2023	% increase/decrease
Crime	1802	2263	+26%
ASB	659	403	-39%

16. The crime increase equates to 461 offences, with public order and harassment rates increasing. This can be partly attributed to changes made to the way that Durham Constabulary are recording public order offences and harassment.
17. ASB has decreased by 256 reports. This is as a result of changes to the way that Durham Constabulary are recording ASB cases, as more cases are crimed as Public Order or Harassment.
18. Within the town centre the figures are as follows:

Darlington Town Centre	YTD MAY 2022	YTD MAY 2023	% Increase/decrease
Crime	239	265	+11%
ASB	52	24	-54%

19. The crime increase equates to 26 offences, with shoplifting rates increasing. This could be attributed to the ‘cost of living’ crisis.

**Climate Change**

20. Licensing officers are part of the Electric Vehicle Charging Points working group to represent issues highlighted by the taxi trade.

## **Equality and Inclusion**

21. Pride month took place throughout June. While the high profile Darlington Pride Weekender takes place in August, the Council supported and celebrated Pride month with posts and videos on social media and by flying the Rainbow Flag. Furthermore, Cllr Coe was appointed as the LGBTQIA+ ambassador for the Council, and in doing so made a clear commitment to supporting and promoting the LGBTQIA+ community.

## **Voluntary and Community Sector**

22. Strong working relationships have been forged with the voluntary sector. A third sector liaison group has been established. It is the mechanism through which the Council can liaise with the voluntary sector in developing joint approaches to vulnerability and inequality.

## **Darlington Connect**

23. The Voluntary and Community Sector group has fostered a collaboration of voluntary sector organisations. Premises have been opened in the town centre titled 'Darlington Connect' where residents can access advice and support with a wide range of issues which has delivered a programme to a value of £200,000 as part of the Household Support Fund (HSF). The collaboration will continue to deliver for the Council in the next round of HSF.

## **Darlington Cares**

24. Darlington Cares rapidly recovered from the limitations faced through Covid. The existing programme has been rebooted and the Board explored other areas it could focus on. An initiative called 'The Great Park Auction' was first held in 2018. The last scheme delivered over 3,400 hours of volunteering in Darlington's parks. A fresh auction was held on March 1st. More than 3,650 hours of volunteering hours were pledged by five companies to reinvigorate The Denes, Stanhope Park, Eastbourne Park and Fryers Field.
25. Membership has been growing significantly to 26. The procurement team have been directing suppliers to Darlington Cares to explore how they can deliver their social value commitment by becoming a member with very positive results.

**Councillor Dr Amanda Riley**  
**Stronger Communities Portfolio**