

COUNCIL
25 JANUARY 2024

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main areas of work under my Health and Housing Portfolio were as follows:-

Public Health

Stopping the Start:

2. In October 2023, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) published its policy paper, *Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation*, where the government set out an intention to create the first 'smokefree generation'.
3. The Department of Health and Social Care launched a consultation on the proposals set out in the policy paper on 12 October 2023, and inviting responses until 6 December 2023.
4. Specifically, DHSC is seeking views on introducing new legislation to raise the age of sale for tobacco, further regulating vaping to reduce its appeal to children, and introducing new powers for local authorities to issue fixed penalty notices to enforce age of sale legislation for tobacco products and vapes.
5. The Director of Public Health and I responded to the consultation on behalf of the Council supporting the governments proposal to change the age of sale for tobacco products and change regulations around the selling, advertising of vapes to young people and particularly of disposable vapes. We also recommended that local authorities are provided the funding to properly regulate and enforce any new legislation.

Health and Well Being Board

6. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 14th December and the agenda included a paper outlining Darlington's Commitment to Carer, a review of the current terms of reference for the Health and Wellbeing Board and a paper by the Director of Public Health around the next steps to develop a Darlington Joint Local Health and Wellbeing strategy.
7. Following the formal board there was a facilitated workshop with all members of the Health and Wellbeing board to review and identify the local priorities for improving health and wellbeing in the light of the evidence and context discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2023.
8. The workshop considered the priorities across a life course using the following thematic approaches:
 - (a) Children and Young People: Best Start in Life

- (b) Staying Healthy and Living Well
- (c) Healthy Places
- (d) Healthy Ways of Working

9. A report describing the outcome of the workshops will be brought to the Health and Wellbeing Boards next meeting in 2024 before being shared with wider stakeholders.

Housing Services

New Build

10. Work is continuing at a pace to complete the first homes on our Neasham Road new build site. The first phase of the construction, being undertaken by our Building Services team, will see 22 properties due for completion in March 2024. These will be handed over to our Housing Services team who will commence advertising for rent.

Climate Change

11. I am pleased to report that the Housing Services Climate Change Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2024. This strategy sets out the aims and actions for our Council homes to become net zero carbon, although it is accepted that this is a long term project that will take a number of years and significant investment, currently estimated at over £140m.
12. Substantial work has already been undertaken with successful Government bids for over £1.5m benefitting 760 Council homes, with the Council investing £1m for these properties as well. This is in addition to the £2.7m invested by the Council to complete the replacement of all single glazed windows in Council homes.
13. The Social Housing Decarbonisation wave 2 project is now underway. A contractor is currently being procured and work is due to start in April 2024. This work will provide upgrades to 130 Council homes, including external wall insulation and low energy lighting, utilising £1.2m of Government funding and £1.2m of Council investment.
14. Proposals are included in the Housing Revenue Account MTFP for 2023-24 to increase our annual investment in energy efficiency measures from £1m to £3m each year. If agreed this will enable us to have the financial capacity to bid for further Government funding, as this becomes available, and to accelerate some of our capital improvement programmes, reducing our carbon emissions and lowering utility bills for our tenants.

Anti-Social Behaviour

15. Our Housing Services Tenancy Enforcement team continue to ensure that our tenants enjoy the right to a safe home and community by taking firm action against those who commit anti-social behaviour. A successful eviction was carried out in the North Road ward in November 2023 against a tenant engaged in drug related anti-social behaviour, following close work with the Police and local residents.
16. A further eviction was carried out in December 2023 in the Bank Top and Lascelles ward against a tenant engaged in drug related, noise nuisance and property damage anti-social

behaviour. Again, this was achieved with close work between Tenancy Enforcement Officers, the Police and neighbours.

Dolphin Centre

17. The Dolphin Centre Christmas events programme has been extremely successful with six party nights welcoming 180 guests to each evening, which included a three-course meal, live entertainment, and DJ. Several guests have reserved tables for 2024.
18. Bowling and soft play continued to be very popular during the festive period. New events introduced to the programme included Bowling with The Grinch and Breakfast with Santa, with both events selling out.
19. Membership campaigns have maintained numbers around 2000 with the new year campaign in full swing. There is currently a review taking place around the GP referral scheme to identify best practice nationally and options around self-referral to encourage attendance and retention.
20. Water education and Key Stage 2 swimming have continued to be a priority during the pool closure with new reporting systems in place to highlight positive progression for children within the scheme.
21. It is great news that the main pool at the Dolphin Centre will reopen on Friday 26 January 2024. As previously reported, this will continue to require alternative access arrangements due to the toddler pool area and walkway still undergoing works. This will mean that the showers in the toddler pool area and the two slides will continue to be out of use during this period. The toddler pool and new features, along with the remaining facilities, will be available for customers to enjoy in Spring 2024.

Haughton Matters Project

22. Since securing £6,690 from Sport England's Small Grants, the Health in Haughton Project has continued to grow. Throughout November, 68 residents took part in the programme with over 250 attendances recorded. The project currently consists of Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, Dance Fit and Low Impact Fitness. Each session has a strong group of participants who are committed to attending weekly. The aim is to see each session continue to grow and flourish in 2024 with extra promotion.

Eastbourne Sports Complex Capital Project

23. Eastbourne Sports Complex capital project is nearing completion. The UK Track Mark standard athletics track, and additional stadia artificial grass pitch opened in September 2023 as part of a phased opening programme. The phased programme was implemented as soon as possible to allow clubs and users to access the facilities which had been greatly missed during the development, whilst the remaining works were completed. The new reception area, changing facilities and improved car parking facilities are substantially complete apart from some final works, including the connections to the site by Northern Power grid, which is expected to be fully completed by the end of January 2024 with an opening ceremony targeted for February.

24. This project will strengthen current community delivery and will further develop Eastbourne Sports Complex facilities to be accessible for a wide range of new community groups, partners, and additional visitors with the aim to become the leading outdoor facility provider in the area. The site can be acknowledged as home of athletics in Darlington and the response from athletics and football users has been extremely positive, which has included greater usage of the 3G football facilities than originally anticipated.

Councillor Matthew Roche
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing