

# Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

1 February 2024

ITEM NO. ....

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## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QTR 2 2023/24

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### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2023/24 at Quarter 2.

### 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. 22 indicators are reported to the committee, 18 of them on a six-monthly basis and four annually.

### April to September 2022/23 comparison to 2023/24

#### Culture Indicator

5. The weekly average footfall in the town centre has decreased (CUL 080a – 297,496 to 280,682). Investment from the Towns Fund is ongoing to support the High Street, a comprehensive programme of events is being delivered to attract people to the town and a marketing campaign with video was released to attract new businesses to the town that reached over 30,000 views across all media platforms. Occupancy rates in the town centre are currently approximately 90.6%.

#### Planning Indicators

6. The percentage of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within an agreed time increased (ECI 104 – 77.8% to 85.7%). Six of the seven applications were decided within the target time. Additional checking and monitoring have been introduced into the planning process.
7. The percentage of non-major planning developments decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time has decreased very slightly (ECI 105 – 95.9% to 94.9%). There were 187

decisions issued for the 197 applications received. The recruitment of staff to vacant posts has assisted the section to maintain the good performance level.

8. The percentage of non-major planning developments decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time over the last 24 months has continued its' trend and increased (ECI 106 – 88.4% to 92.3%).

### **Economic Growth Indicators**

9. The monthly unemployment claimant count percentage has remained relatively static since April 2022, the figure is identical to 1 decimal place (ECI 321 - 4.3% to 4.3%). This trend is mirrored in both regional and national statistics. Darlington's rate is marginally higher than both the North East (4.0%) and England (3.8%).
10. The June economically active percentage has increased by 3.7% (ECI 327 – 79.00% to 82.74%). The percentage is better than the north-east and England, whose has remained constant, around 74% in the North East, and 79% for England. Working age economically inactive people have various reasons for not looking for and/or being able to start work, e.g., students, sickness, caring and family responsibilities and early retirement.
11. The number of new homes delivered within the year has decreased (ECI 401 - 341 to 90). Housing delivery continues to be strong within the borough despite ongoing challenges with Nutrient Neutrality. Despite not granting any significant new housing permissions in the past financial year housing completions have still exceeded the annual local plan target. Options to mitigate nutrient pollution from new development are now being applied. Two rounds of Natural England credits have now been issued with a third having recently closed.

### **Human Resources Indicators**

12. The number of working days per full-time equivalent (FTE) lost due to sickness by Council employed staff has decreased (FHR 001 – 4.9 to 4.3). The number of days lost to sickness at the end of Q2 2023/24 has reduced by 593 days, (0.53 per FTE) when compared to the same period in 2022/23. Managers at all levels continue to manage sickness within the Council's sickness management policies supported by HR officers. The Wellbeing programme continues to be a high priority to promote the health and wellbeing of our staff and has produced benefits to our workforce and the Council as a whole, through many activities. The annual flu vaccination clinics have started, and further wellbeing developments are planned for the remainder of the year.
13. The percentage of voluntary leavers has decreased (FHR 019 – 5.1% to 4.2%). The number of voluntary leavers at the end of Q2 is lower than at the same point in 2022/23, 84 compared to 98. We undertake exit interviews and surveys to understand why staff leave and to inform future improvement. Results show that 87% of leavers would work for the Council again. Work is ongoing to improve/develop a number of areas including employee engagement, the Performance Development Review process,

succession planning and our recruitment processes. We continue to improve our employment package to ensure the Council attracts and retains the best talent in a very competitive employment market.

### **Health and Safety Indicators**

14. The number of reportable employee accidents / ill health to the HSE under Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, has increased (FHR 003 - 4 to 7). All accidents and ill health reports are thoroughly investigated by management and the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, identify issues or trends, and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. Health and Safety is a key priority for the Council at all levels and is promoted through all working practices.

### **Complaints and Information Governance Indicators**

15. The number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman increased (FHR 008 - 3 to 5). The four complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman related to Adult Services (1), Children Services (1) and Education and Inclusion (2). The one complaint upheld by the Housing Ombudsman related to Housing Management Services.
16. The number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) increased (FHR 009 - 1 to 9). Four of the six upheld complaints related to delays in responding to Subject Access Requests (SARs). Risk of enforcement action from the ICO in relation to SARs remains an above the line risk on the Council's Risk Register and work is ongoing to reduce that risk below the risk appetite line. This work includes the use of agency staff in the short term to respond to SARs and a project to digitise the Council's historic adult and children's social care records to ensure we are better equipped to deal with SARs in a timely manner in future.

### **Housing and Revenues Indicators**

17. The amount of Council Tax arrears collected has decreased (HBS 002 - £1,017,446 to £991,442). This is only slightly lower than the amount collected for the same period in 2022-23 and still exceeds the 2023-24 target. The higher amount last year was due to having restarted recovery action following the Covid pandemic, where most recovery action was suspended. We are still dealing with arrears resulting from Covid and the ongoing economic situation. However, despite these pressures, the amount of outstanding Council Tax arrears has reduced from £5.9 million at the end of quarter 2 in 2022-23 to £5.6 million at the end of quarter 2 in 2023-24.
18. The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered has increased and exceeded the 2023-24 target (HBS 003 - £259,293 to £327,697). Collection rates are currently at 118% of the new overpayment debt created (£278k), whilst the overall outstanding debt continues to decrease (currently at £1.51 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 decrease over the next

few years.

19. The percentage of Council Tax collected in-year has remained static and above the 2023-24 target (HBS 009 – 53.0% to 52.9%). The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £39.8 million compared to £37.8 million by quarter 2 in 2022-23, an increase of 5%. The collection target for 2023-24 is on course to be met, despite the pressures of the current economic situation.
20. The percentage of Business Rates collected in-year decreased but still above the 2023-24 target (HBS 010 – 62.5% to 58.9%). The main reason for this reduction is due to the cessation of the Covid Additional Relief scheme. There has also been a national Revaluation with effect from 1 April 2023 which increased the overall amount of rateable value for Darlington by £2.8 million or 3.2%. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £18.5 million compared to £20.2 million by quarter 2 of 2022-23 and we are on course to meet our target for 2023-24.

### **Legal Indicator**

21. The percentage of contracted spend as a percentage of total non-salary spend increased (LGP 008 – 83.7% to 84.2%). Increased communication and early engagement and a refreshed intranet page over the past year has helped officers to better understand the procurement rules. The Procurement team engage with departments, checking the spend against the Contracts Register on a regular basis.

### **Environmental Health Indicator**

22. The percentage noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt increased (REG 312a - 97.6% to 98.4%). The 90% target continues to be consistently achieved and work has been carried out by Environmental Health to make the reporting of noise complaints (non-council properties) easier for service users. From July 2023 members of the public have been able to report a noise nuisance via a reporting tool on the council website which is proving successful with 32% of noise complaints received by this method in Q2 2023/24.

### **Performance Summary**

23. 17 of the 18 indicators have Quarter 2 data to report. One has Quarter 1 data.
24. When taking into consideration what is best performance for each indicator:
  - a) Eight of the 18 indicators have increased when compared to the previous year.
  - b) Ten of the 18 indicators have decreased when compared to the previous year.
25. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at Appendix 1.
26. Detailed performance and narratives for each indicator is attached at Appendix 2.

## 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