

**COUNCIL**  
**26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 2023/24**

2. Scrutiny received an update on Quarter 4 performance against key performance indicators for 2023/24.
3. We considered the performance position in relation to the 22 indicators, noting that 15 had increased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported, whilst 7 had decreased when compared to the same period last year or from when last reported.
4. We wanted to understand why the footfall numbers in the Town Centre had decreased and what plans are in place to help improve this. Conversation ensued onto whether any work had been done around understanding where the public spend their time after purchasing a parking ticket.
5. We discussed the sickness improvement and asked whether there was any correlation between sickness and agile working. Discussion was carried out around the average income levels for Darlington and how we compare with the North East.
6. We wanted to congratulate the Housing Team for their efforts and hoped that the work continues as it is.

**Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 Quarter 1**

7. We received a report from the Assistant Director Resources providing an early forecast of the 2023/24 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process, which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
8. We were provided with the early forecast of the 2024/25 financial position which included current projected over / underspends in departments, changes to budgets since the MTFP was approved and council-wide budget information.
9. The report included the Council's projects revenue reserves at the end of 2024/25 are £10.967m, £1.376m lower than the initial 2024-28 MTFP position. The position related to the £2.542m of departmental pressures and a contribution of £0.155m from general reserves, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.

10. We discussed the overspend in Leisure and Cultural Services due to security costs, we asked if the Police had any special facilities in the Town Centre to help with this issue. We discussed reviewing this with the Police and Crime Commissioner.
11. We scrutinised the cemeteries and crematorium services pressures, we wanted to understand how this could be resolved. Conversation ensued around the electricity costs for street lighting and car parks, we asked what rate we pay under the NEPO framework and the overall utility cost changes.
12. We discussed the MTFP (Medium-Term Financial Plan) process and if there is to be a review prior to the usual MTFP timetable. We were advised that Officers and Cabinet Members are continuously reviewing the budget.

### **Annual Review of the Investment Fund – Update**

13. The Assistant Director Resources provided us with an update on progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
14. We were provided with details including a summary of the purpose of the Investment Fund which currently has 10 funded schemes, progress updates on those schemes and projected returns from joint ventures.
15. We queried whether it would be possible to quote the profits after tax rather than pre taxation. Officers advised that due to unverified tax rates it would be appropriate to quote profits pre-tax.

### **Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 1 2024/25**

16. We welcomed the Assistant Director Highways & Capital Projects who presented the report which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
17. We considered the report which provides information on the delivery of the Council's capital programme and a summary of current projects. The report included the projected outturn of the Capital Programme is £330.867m against an approved programme of £331.530m.
18. We discussed the progression of demolition in Skinnergate and whether residents are kept informed. Clarification was given that the Victoria Road Façade Improvement project is a Towns Fund project to improve shop frontages and is not linked to the Darlington Station project.

### **Complaints Made to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and The Housing Ombudsman Service**

19. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager attended to provide members with an update of the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.

20. We received an explanation of the report and its purpose to provide insight into services with 28 complaints registered for Darlington Borough Council. A summary of each upheld case was provided, and the LGSCO were satisfied that the Council had successfully implemented 100% of their recommendations.

#### **Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023 2024**

21. We received the report of the Complaints and Information Governance Manager providing annual reports of Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Corporate, Housing and Public Health which was presented at 10 September Cabinet.
22. We considered the reports and information was provided on comparison with previous years' statistics.
23. We wanted to understand the differences between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

**Councillor Ian Haszeldine on behalf of  
Councillor Rebecca Baker  
Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**