

**COUNCIL
28 NOVEMBER 2024**

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council the updates for the Stronger Communities Portfolio are as follows:

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

2. As previously reported, the criteria for reporting Crime and ASB have changed over recent years. It is therefore difficult to get like for like comparison between years but they now are getting to a point where figures are more comparable.

Local Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Darlington	YTD Sept 2023	YTD Sept 2024
Crime	6378	5446
ASB	1271	1378

3. The figures in the table above show the year to date comparisons between this year and last year. There is a decrease in crime but an increase in ASB. Analysing quarter 2 incidents against quarter 1 of this year, the combined total of incidents has reduced by a total of 505 with Crime down by 16%, but ASB has increased by 13%.

Crime

4. Whilst crime figures have declined burglary, vehicle crime and shoplifting are areas being monitored and targetted. The Police, together with partners, have responded through crime prevention campaigns, target hardening initiatives, dedicated focused patrols, proactive operations, use of criminal powers and targeting suspects which has resulted in arrests.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

5. To try and tackle ASB the trailblazer project focuses patrols and activity across the eight hotspot areas. From the 1 July 2024 until 22 October 2024 a total of 575 patrols were carried out in the eight specific Trailblazer selected hotspot areas.
6. There are notable reductions in reported ASB in the North Road (-34%) and Cockerton East (-33%) hotspot areas. However, there was a significant increase in one hotspot area, the Town Centre (+35%), this increase is linked to a gathering of youths in Tommy Crooks Park moving into the Town Centre. Work continues with partners to determine any specific patterns or intervention requirements.

Youth Related Incidents

7. Future Pathways ASB evening sessions have completed the second Cohort with a total of 26 young people referred and 17 active referrals successfully completing the programme. The third cohort has begun having received a further 26 referrals.
8. As part of the recovery phase following the summer disorder Future Pathways have held the first of three community events where sporting and intergenerational activities between DBC staff, Police and young people were well received.
9. Present reporting period from 1 July 2024 to 22 October 2024.
 - (a) 27 young people were referred to Darlington Borough Council Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service for positive intervention.
 - (b) 17 young people received first warnings for ASB
 - (c) 21 young people received acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA)
 - (d) 9 committed ABA breaches
 - (e) 6 young people are awaiting interview
 - (f) 1 Young person has a pending Civil Injunction

Environmental Crime

10. Since the last reporting period officers have continued to tackle problems associated with fly-tipping and waste in back lanes, the figures below provide an overview of activity:
 - (a) 118 environmental crime cases were received (of which 102 closed).
 - (b) Under Section 34, the duty of Care in relation to waste:
 - i) 3 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued.
 - ii) 1 alleged offender summoned to court for two S34 (waste duty of care) and 2 transporting wastes without licence offences. Failed to attend so a warrant has been issued.
 - (c) Under section 33, the unauthorised or harmful deposit of waste. i.e fly tipping 3 prosecutions have taken place totalling £851 fines, costs and victim surcharges.
 - (d) Under Section 110, intentionally to obstruct an authorised person in the exercise or performance of duties:
 - i) 7 prosecutions have taken place totalling £3548 fines, costs and victim surcharge.
 - ii) 1 court summons where the person failed to attend and warrant issued.
 - iii) 1 file submitted to legal for a S110 offence.
 - (e) In terms of Community protection notices, are issued to prevent unreasonable behaviour that negatively impacts on the local communities quality of life:
 - i) 1 prosecution for breach of the notice with £458 fines, costs and victim surcharge.
 - ii) 13 warnings issued.

Community Resilience

11. Number Forty supports anybody who needs assistance during an evening in Darlington. It has been open for more than 1300 hours with a total of 1197 people coming through it for various reasons and support during the night. Volunteers do a great job in providing support at No.40. However, the number of volunteers has declined significantly. Members are requested to promote number 40 and the opportunity for volunteering through their community engagement activity.
12. The Shopwatch network continue to exchange information and intelligence. There are currently 167 members. There is work ongoing to ensure all retail/businesses in the town have a means of communication outside of the 'shopwatch membership' i.e. financial houses, restaurants etc.
13. The Begging figures for July to September 2024 shows a 36% decrease, when compared to same period last year. There is a cohort of around 16 people continuing to beg with partners constantly engaging with them offering all available support mechanisms. The Police have an Integrated Management Unit to manage those people who continue to beg, despite all forms of support, coaching and advice. A new communication plan involving the provision of posters has also been produced to tackle the problems associated with begging in the town centre.
14. Hate Crime incidents for September (18) show a level lower than previous levels following the summer disorder. There were twelve race related incidents; five involved behaviour towards emergency services staff, with single reported incidents within a licensed premises, a retail outlet and a restaurant.

Licensing

15. Two private hire drivers have recently been convicted for illegally plying for hire in Darlington's town centre after they were seen on CCTV. Also, one of the drivers had no insurance, so in addition to fines he received six points on his licence.
16. A further two people have been summonsed for illegal dog breeding/selling and will appear at court in December.
17. The alcohol licences for Bambudda and Bambudda TAO Asian Street Food were reviewed after Immigration Enforcement found six illegal workers across both premises, which were run by the same people. Both premises had their licence revoked by the Licensing Committee.
18. A refreshed Gambling Policy is being presented to Council for approval as this is required on a three-year cycle. There a very limited changes as the Gambling Commission has not produced revised guidance as it is currently awaiting legislative changes.

Trading Standards

19. Trading Standards have successfully obtained three-month Premise Closure Orders against two persistent illegal vape and tobacco sellers namely Corner Shop, High Northgate and Ali's, Whitby Way. Illegal trade continued outside both premises which resulted in the arrest of one male and seizures of illegal goods from two vehicles.

20. Trading Standards continue to follow-up on intelligence and undertake investigations to tackle the storage and supply of illegal vapes and cigarettes.
21. E-bike sellers and repairers have been visited and given advice on the safety issues around lithium batteries and chargers.
22. All retailers licensed to sell fireworks are inspected by the Trading Standards team to ensure that everything is safe and legal. The team visit all those businesses during the fireworks sales period 15 October until 10 November each year.

Private Sector Housing

23. As part of the Government's Healthy Homes Project looking at damp and mould growth in homes, reporting has indicated that during Quarter 3, there were 24 complaints where damp and mould was mentioned or identified during an inspection. 12 of which were identified as being a category 1 hazard for either Damp and Mould or Excess Cold under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. None of these cases resulted in formal action, with the owners of the properties resolving the hazards identified following informal action.
24. The team have recently worked with the owners of three long term empty properties that were previous prohibited bringing them back into use.

Darlington Cares

25. Darlington Cares continues to deliver initiatives across its three priority focuses, environment, education and social justice. It is on track to achieve 10,000 hours of volunteer support for Darlington.
26. Its sister project, Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership (DEEP) continues to grow and develop its activity. On 2 October DEEP shared an event with Darlington Business Club to engage smaller businesses and support them on their journey towards Net Zero. As a result four businesses have joined DEEP which was featured in the Northern Echo.

Voluntary and Community Sector

27. The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector engagement group (VCSE) continues to prove a valuable way for the Council to engage with the sector.
28. The Head of Community Safety joined the meeting in September to discuss the disturbances that had occurred in August. As a result, there is better communications with the sector should it be required for and future community safety concern.
29. The VCSE group has provided a useful forum for Youth Forum North East to work with the sector in planning the establishment of the Darlington Youth Partnership which held a launched event on 26 September 2024.