

**COUNCIL**  
**17 JULY 2025**

**OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main updates under the Stronger Communities Portfolio are as follows: -

**Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

2. Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour trends for Darlington:

Darlington	YTD April/May 2024	YTD April/May 2025
Crime	1870	1874
ASB	440	645

**Crime**

3. The year-to-date crime figure has seen a small increase than the same period last year, by 0.2%. All reported incidents of violence with injury have seen a 10.9% reduction, burglary offences have reduced by 37.8% and vehicle offences has reduced by 46.3%. Specific areas of crime with comparative increasing trends are robbery, arson, racially aggravated crime, sexual offences, rape, and possession of weapons.

**ASB**

4. The ASB year-to-date figure is higher than the same period last year, by 46.6%. During the reporting period there was an increase in anti-social behaviour associated with off-road bikes, noise related incidents, driving in an anti-social manner at car parks, and youth related ASB (the weather has had an impact in this area). Additional measures were introduced to address the ASB, including multi-agency partnership working, additional uniformed staff on patrol, increased youth intervention work, increased staffing within CCTV room and increased civic enforcement.
5. During the reporting period the Young People’s Engagement and Justice Service have received five referrals into the Early Intervention and Prevention Pathway from the Civic Enforcement Team.
6. Between 1 April 2025 and 31 May 2025:
- (a) 8 young people received first warnings for ASB
  - (b) 5 young people received acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA)
  - (c) 2 young people committed ABA breaches

- (d) 5 young people were referred to Darlington Borough Council Young People's Engagement and Justice Service for positive intervention
- (e) 2 young people are pending interview
- (f) 1 young person has a Civil Injunction pending.

### **Parking and Environmental Enforcement Activity**

7. Since the last reporting period officers have continued to enforce parking contraventions and tackle problems associated with fly-tipping and waste in back lanes, the figures below provide an overview of activity:
  - (a) 70 environment crime cases (of which 48 closed) 1 Live Case and 21 Outstanding Cases
  - (b) 2 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for (1) Fly Tipping £1000 and (2) Duty of Care £600
  - (c) 2 Community Protection Warnings (CPW) were issued by the Police for noise and neighbour related issues.
  - (d) 3 individuals were prosecuted for obstructing investigations, with one individual ordered to pay £1080 for 3 offences related to fly tipping. A second individual was fined a total of £458 for obstruction under section 110 and the third fined £206 for obstruction under Section 110.
  - (e) 3 further Cases are pending Court dates in July 2025; one of which was adjourned in April 2025 for three offences (related to fly tipping).
  - (f) Trail cameras to improve CCTV deployment options are being considered.
  - (g) 2047 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) in relation to parking contraventions have been issued during the period of 01/04/25 – 25/05/25.

### **Begging Incidents**

8. Begging incidents over the last two months have reduced significantly compared to the same period the previous year. Increased dedicated patrols and joined-up partnership working has driven improvements.
9. There are currently six people begging and they are engaging with the outreach worker to provide all available support mechanisms. Intelligence is gathered amongst partners and reviewed at multi-agency meetings to determine the most appropriate solutions and actions. Support is offered through a dedicated outreach worker who engages and signposts individuals to the appropriate services.
10. Media campaigns focussed on begging continue to educate members of the public on ways to report incidents of begging.

## **PREVENT**

11. Prevent is the government strategy to combat terrorism and radicalisation in the UK. The annual Prevent assurance process for 2024/2025 has been completed for Darlington and the result of the benchmark assessment conducted by the Home Office is as below:

- (a) Multi Agency partnership Group – Exceeded
- (b) Local Risk Assessment – Met
- (c) Partnership Plan – Met
- (d) Referral Pathway – Met
- (e) Training Programme – Exceeded
- (f) Reducing Permissive Environments – Met
- (g) Communication & Engagement - Met

## **Household Support Fund**

12. The Benefit Enquiry Action Team (BEAT) continues to provide essential support to residents across the Borough. Darlington Borough Council commissions Citizens Advice Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland to provide the service, which in turn helps local people to identify and apply for unclaimed benefits they might be entitled to. Between October 2024 and March 2025 additional funding was made available via the Household Support Fund (HSF) to provide a temporary boost in service provision. Consequently, for the six months between October 2024 and March 2025 the service helped over 600 people within the Borough to identify and apply for over £1.1m in unclaimed benefits. The annual target is £1m+, so to achieve more than £1m within a six-month period is a fantastic result. Support was provided for over 20 types of benefits, with the highest values being attributed to Personal Independence Payments (£411k), Attendance Allowance (£150k), Carers Allowance (£97k), migration to Universal Credit (£97k), and Limited Capability to Work – Universal Credit (£94k). A dedicated campaign to raise awareness of BEAT is proving to be effective, with the One Darlington magazine being a notably successful means of communications for some benefits, and online channels for others.

13. Arrangements are in place for the Household Support Fund to be delivered in line with the Cabinet report of 8 April 2025. As in previous years, vouchers to the value of £12 per week will be issued to parents of children in receipt of free school meals over the summer holidays.

## **Plan for Neighbourhoods**

14. Arrangements are in place for the Council to support the independent Board that has been approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to lead Darlington's Plan for Neighbourhoods. It has agreed two priority areas: Driving Growth and Thriving Neighbourhoods. In line with the guidance provided, it is focusing on neighbourhoods seen as 'left behind'. Discussions are underway with the voluntary and community sector to carry out community engagement which will inform the Regeneration Plan that is required to be submitted by 28 November.

## Trading Standards

15. Darlington businesses have been visited and advised on the upcoming disposable vapes ban which came into force on 1 June 2025. Compliance check visits will be undertaken. Several inspection visits have been completed by the trading standards team including public houses, large retailers, and tanning shops. Visits to Darlington Farmers Auction Mart have been conducted to check on animal welfare.
16. A safety concern with regard to an unsafe mobile phone charger was notified to the trading standards team who have issued a press release to advise the public on how to stay safe and a radio interview given on this topic and the disposable vape ban.

## Private Sector Housing

### Warm Homes: Local Grant

17. In 2024 a consortium of Tees Valley Councils (Middlesbrough, Darlington, Stockton, Redcar & Cleveland) was created to seek funding for the improvement of energy performance in private dwellings – both owner-occupier and in the private rental market. In March 2025 the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which awards the grants to local authorities, awarded the Tees Valley consortium £13.9M to deliver home energy improvements.
18. The scheme will be delivered in partnership with a national energy supply company and will offer households on lower incomes, living in properties with energy performance rating (EPC) between D and G, the opportunity to improve their property's energy efficiency and energy performance rating through a variety of single and combined improvements and adaptations. This will include the installation of modern energy efficient low carbon heating systems and improved insulation of dwellings. There will be no contribution from occupiers for any works carried out.
19. The scheme will be delivered over three years with funding split over the three years as follows:

<i>Total across whole Funding Period</i>	<i>£13,953,865.00</i>
<i>FY 25/26</i>	<i>£2,322,957.00</i>
<i>FY 26/27</i>	<i>£5,874,899.00</i>
<i>FY 27/28</i>	<i>£5,756,009.00</i>

20. Residents and landlords will be able to apply for works to be carried out to their properties and then work with the main supplier to identify and implement the most effective solutions to improve the energy efficiency of the property. Some properties may only need small improvements, such as improved insulation, to enable a measurable improvement in energy efficiency, whereas other properties might require considerable works to be carried out. A measure of energy performance before and after improvements will be made to demonstrate the effectiveness of the scheme and the improvement in energy performance achieved.

21. Consortium members are currently working on the procurement and delivery arrangements for the scheme.

### **Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2)**

22. Following a successful bid in January 2023, a scheme to improve energy inefficient properties, funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, provided measures to 81 properties across the Toss Valley.
23. The project is being led by Darlington Borough Council, under a partnership name of Home Energy Efficiency Toss Valley (HEET) aimed to improve up to 300 properties.

### **Licensing**

24. Following full public consultation, a revised Pavement Café Policy has been discussed at the Licensing Committee, with recommendations for Full Council to consider. Included in these recommendations are for there to be a complete ban on smoking and vaping in pavement cafes.
25. The government has announced that there will be a public consultation on proposals to address issues of cross-border taxi licensing, which, although lawful, has reduced the ability of licensing authorities to deal with local problems. Regional taxi licensing is being considered, which could see a Toss Valley wide taxi licensing regime and alignment of policies.
26. Early consultation is taking place with street traders and stakeholders with a view to amending DBC's current Street Trading Policy. This will take into consideration changes to Darlington's town centre in recent years and the competing demands of businesses.

**Councillor Jim Garner**  
**Stronger Communities Portfolio**