

**CABINET**  
**06 JANUARY 2026**

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## **QUARTER 2 - COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -**  
**Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -**  
**Rose Rouse, Chief Executive and all Executive Directors**

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This is the performance report of the new Council Plan 2024-27. It summarises progress against the key commitments and deliverables in the plan.

#### **Summary**

2. The Council Plan was approved by Council on 18 July 2024. The plan outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the Council and Council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions and shaping delivery.
3. The plan recognises the fundamental link between health, wellbeing and the economy. There are six priorities: economy, homes, living well, children and young people, communities and local environment. Three core principles shape the delivery of the plan: addressing inequalities, tackling climate change and efficient and effective use of resources.
4. This report provides a summary of the key actions taken by the council to deliver the priorities in the Council Plan. The appendix contains narrative from lead service areas on key actions, demonstrating delivery of the priorities and core principles.
5. The full plan can be found on the council website.

#### **Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that Cabinet note the progress made in the delivery of the Council Plan.

**Reasons**

7. To monitor progress against key actions and priorities in the Council Plan.

**Strategic Leadership Team**

**Background Papers**

- (i) Darlington Council Plan 2024 - 2027

Lynne Davies: Extension 5070

Council Plan	This report is about the delivery of the council plan
Addressing inequalities	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Tackling Climate Change	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Efficient and effective use of resources	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Health and Wellbeing	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
S17 Crime and Disorder	Update on key actions are highlighted in the plan
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This does not require a decision affecting the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Update and key actions are highlighted in the plan

## MAIN REPORT

### INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

8. The Council Plan was agreed at Council on 18 July 2024. The plan is shaped by three core principles: addressing inequalities; tackling climate change; and efficient and effective resources. They are a long-term commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of all residents and ensuring the council can deliver the greatest impact within available resources.
9. There are six priorities for delivery:
  - (a) Economy
  - (b) Homes
  - (c) Living well
  - (d) Children and young people
  - (e) Communities
  - (f) Local environment
10. The Council Plan is monitored through 161 indicators collected via the report management system, of which 60 are qualitative measures. The council is currently at the midpoint of the 2025/26 financial year. The following section highlights a selection of the most notable achievements from the first half of the year.
11. A new **STEM Learning Centre** at Darlington's science park at Central Park will receive significant investment through the Government's Growth Mission Fund and Darlington's Pride in Place programme. The Chancellor announced £16 million towards the capital build in the Budget on 26 November 2025, underlining Darlington's growing national role as a hub for economic development, innovation, and skills. £5m additional funding from the Pride in Place programme will ensure the centre's mission to create pathways into high-quality employment for local people supports communities with the greatest barriers to participation, including those who are experiencing deprivation and are under-represented in this sector.
12. This cutting-edge facility will provide local young people with access to bespoke, specialist training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), ensuring Darlington and the region develops the skills and expertise needed for future growth. The centre will also deliver community outreach programmes to inspire and enable more residents to pursue careers in STEM sectors.
13. The council remains committed to improving the **energy efficiency of council housing stock** to reduce tenants' fuel bills and tackle climate change. This commitment is set out in the Housing Services Climate Change Strategy, approved by Cabinet in January 2024. The strategy recognises the significant investment required to meet Government targets: achieving a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030 and a net zero carbon rating by 2050. In the current financial year, the council has allocated over £4 million in capital expenditure to support energy efficiency initiatives.

14. This investment has been enhanced by successful bids to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WHSHF), enabling improvements to the following homes:
  - (a) SHDF Wave 1: Upgrades to 23 homes
  - (b) SHDF Wave 2: Improvements to 130 homes
  - (c) WHSHF Wave 3: Planned investment in a further 680 homes
15. These measures demonstrate our proactive approach to sustainability and our commitment to delivering warmer, more energy-efficient homes for residents.
16. The **S&DR200 Festival** marked the 200th anniversary of the world's first passenger rail journey on the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Delivered through a regional partnership, the festival featured a year-long programme of events, including the Ghost Train, exhibitions, and fringe activities. The headline event, the Anniversary Journey, took place on 27 September 2025. This historic recreation saw a replica of Locomotion No.1 travel from Shildon to Stockton, with a commemorative stop at Skerne Bridge in Darlington.
17. Investment in Hoptown Darlington has established a high-quality visitor attraction, earning multiple prestigious awards. Visitor numbers are projected to exceed 200,000 this year—a significant milestone. Building on the legacy of the anniversary year is a key priority, this will include the launch of passenger steam railway rides from Spring 2026 on what will be the UK's newest Heritage railway line. A comprehensive events and engagement programme will be delivered to further grow attendance and enhance the visitor experience in 2026.
18. Information on all the council plan indicators is provided in the appendix to this report.