

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 June 2026

PRESENT – Councillors Johnson (Chair), Anderson, Beckett, Donoghue, Holroyd, Layton, M Nicholson and Mrs Scott

ABSENT – Councillor Renton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Roche

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Catherine Shaw (Public Health Officer) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH2 TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2026/27

RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee be held at 10.00 a.m. on the following dates :-

- 19 August, 2026
- 28 October, 2026
- 6 January, 2027
- 3 March, 2027
- 14 April, 2027

HH3 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :

(1) 15 APRIL 2026

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 15 April 2026.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 15 April 2026 be approved as a correct record.

(2) 14 MAY 2026

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14 May 2026.

RESOLVED – That, with the addition of Councillor M Nicholson's apologies, the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14 May 2026 be approved as a correct record.

(3) 29 MAY 2026

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2026.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2026 be approved as a correct record.

HH4 DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026 GROWING HEALTHY

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the Annual Public Health Report, an independent report on the health and wellbeing of Darlington.

The submitted report stated that this year's report focused on the health of children and young people, describing the current position of some key public health outcomes and the range of services and interventions in place locally to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people across key areas of focus.

It was reported that during the development of the report the Director of Public Health visited three primary schools and one secondary school, to talk to some children and young people; and Members were informed that the format of the report is web based with short videos for each section.

The report provided details of the progress made to date on the recommendations of the 2024/25 Annual Public Health Report; and the recommendations made in the report for 2025/26 were outlined.

Discussion ensued regarding admissions for unintentional and deliberate injuries in children; and following a question regarding the stop smoking service Members acknowledged the work being undertaken to target key demographic groups. Members were pleased to note that the further improvement in the percentage of mothers smoking at the time of delivery, which had reduced further to 4.4 per cent.

Members sought clarification regarding the definition of 'poor health'; requested figures for those accessing perinatal mental health services; and discussed the uptake by schools for the Healthy Lifestyles Survey. Members noted that all schools in Darlington are invited to participate in the survey, that roughly 6000 children and young people in Years 5 to Year 11 complete the survey and that this would be rolled out to colleges in the future.

Discussion ensued regarding child poverty and how this was being addressed by the Council, with Members noting that the priority is to ensure every child has the best start in life; and reference was made to the Holiday Activity Fund and Public Health funding being used to target areas of deprivation.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations of the Annual Director of Public Health Report be accepted.

HH5 ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGY 2026-2029

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that the draft Darlington Oral Health Promotion Strategy (2026-2029) (also previously circulated) be reviewed and considered.

The submitted report stated that good oral health is an important part of someone's overall health and wellbeing and oral health promotion is part of the public health responsibilities of the local authority.

It was reported that the Oral Health Promotion Strategy sets out a vision for a future where everyone has the knowledge, resources and support to maintain good oral health throughout life, recognising that prevention is far more effective and less costly than treatment; and that the priorities set out in the strategy are based upon the principles of prevention, addressing inequalities and collaboration, taking a life course approach. Reference was made to the priority areas of the strategy.

Members were advised that the strategy had been developed in partnership with others through the establishment of an Oral Health Alliance, which included public health and wider council colleagues, NHS services such as the oral health team, 0-19 service and stop smoking service, the primary care network, health watch and voluntary and community sector representation and the delivery of the strategy would also support the work of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, which has responsibility for dentistry services.

Members extended their thanks to officers and discussion ensued regarding the importance of messaging around sugar content in drinks and the benefits of water fluoridation; Officers agreed that further work was required in relation to comms for sugar intake and informed Members that a school food working group and a comms plan would run alongside the strategy.

Members sought clarification regarding the programme of work for older adults in the community; and questions were raised in relation to monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy. Members noted that performance would be monitored by the Oral Health Alliance who have oversight of and review the plan on a page annually, in addition to the self-reported data in the Healthy Lifestyle survey and data relating to damaged/missing/filled teeth and hospital admissions for extractions.

Following a question regarding the supervised toothbrushing scheme, Members were advised that self-reporting had identified a number of benefits, including improved toothbrushing in the home environment, speech and language and attendance at school.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Oral Health Promotion Strategy be reviewed.

(b) That Members comments and feedback on the Oral Health Promotion Strategy be received.

HH6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for the Municipal Year 2026/27 and to consider any additional areas to be included.

Discussion ensued on the current work programme including dates for those items currently unassigned a meeting date. It was requested that the item on 'House Building Programme' be received at the meeting scheduled for 28 October 2026 and Members agreed to receive an update on the Council's buyback programme for Council Housing. Members requested that any presentations received from external organisations be composed using an accessible size font.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

HH7 REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee last met on 2 June 2026 and the next meeting of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 23 July 2026.

Members noted the approved Minutes from the meeting held on 12 March 2026 (previously circulated). A discussion ensued regarding substitution arrangements for the joint scrutiny committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members look forward to receiving an update of the work of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

(b) That it be noted that Members of this Scrutiny Committee request that consideration be given to a review of the Council's substitution arrangements for Scrutiny Committees to ensure representation at the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.