

Cabinet

21 October 2015

County Durham Partnership Update



Report of Corporate Management Team

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Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Durham County Council's Cabinet on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP) including key issues from the Board, the five thematic partnerships and all area action partnerships (AAPs). The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Summary

2. Cabinet recently received an update on the conclusion of the Community Buildings Asset Transfer project that has resulted in 98 of the 120 buildings remaining in community use. The main theme of this report builds on that and shows how, in light of the changing landscape within the public sector and significant reductions in funding, community buildings are becoming more important to the fabric of local communities. However, as highlighted in that report, asset transfer is only the start of the process, the real success is ensuring that community buildings are hubs in communities and used by local people and partner organisations. Support given to community buildings, both as part of the programme as well as those not owned by the council but which offer valuable facilities and services to the wider community, support all of the priority themes of the County Durham Partnership.
3. The report also updates on the strong partnership working with voluntary and community sector partners including the development of the Centre for Volunteering and Social Enterprise, the steering group of which has met twice and is looking at a number of innovative ways to improve the volunteer experience as well as further engage businesses.
4. The work of the recently established Durham Humanitarian Support Partnership is highlighted in the report. It is part of the wider County Durham Partnership, chaired by Cllr Eddie Tomlinson, and will address how the council and partners respond to the refugee crisis in Syria.
5. Preparations have begun within many of the thematic partnerships on reviewing their plans and strategies and developing them for the forthcoming year. Each partnership does this slightly differently with the Health and Wellbeing Board and

Children and Families Partnership consulting with partners and stakeholders at their Big Tent event which will take place in November. The Safe Durham Partnership will utilise their strategic assessment information for their plan.

6. Other thematic partnership highlights include the Children and Families Partnership achieving two awards for its work with children and young people particularly around Young Carers and imaginative and inclusive practices. Planning is underway by the Health and Wellbeing Board for their annual Big Tent Event to be held in November which will have a range of workshops on different key initiatives. Planning is also underway for the next Environment Awards which will take place at the end of November with over 60 applications received. The report also contains an update on the Transformation Challenge Award paid to the Fire and Rescue Service.

Joint working with the Voluntary Sector, Local Councils and Armed Forces

7. The new Armed Forces Covenant Fund has been launched by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). This year the funding will focus on three priority areas: local armed forces community integration projects; the coordination and delivery of support to the armed forces community; and Issues facing veterans in the criminal justice system. Funding is available for small grants up to £20,000, primarily for community integration projects and large grants up to £500,000, for more strategic, higher impact projects. The lead organisation can be either a registered charity or a statutory body. If the application is not lead by an armed forces charity, it must have an armed forces charity as a key partner. Decisions on both small and large grants will be made by a national panel based on the recommendations of regional panels. Further information can be obtained from the [MOD](#) website and local support is available from the [County Durham Community Foundation](#).
8. The County Durham Partnership was one of the first to sign up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant after its national launch and has made significant strides in putting policies and procedures in place in order to best support people in the armed forces and their families. The Armed Forces Covenant Coordinator (North & Scotland) for the RAF Families Federation has said that she feels confident that if they had a member of the RAF “family” who needed support and information in County Durham the matter would be rectified promptly. She also shares what she sees in Durham as best practise.
9. Work is progressing positively in developing the Centre for Volunteering and Social Enterprise which, in the first two years, will be supported by the Government’s Transformation Challenge Award funding linked to delivering the Durham Ask, and delivered by Durham Community Action (DCA). The Steering Group has met and brings together key people from the council, university and DCA as well as others who bring knowledge and specialist expertise in specific areas of business.
10. **Durham Humanitarian Support Partnership**, led by the county council and chaired by Cllr Eddie Tomlinson, has been established to consider how the council and its partners respond to the refugee crisis in Syria. The first meeting of the Partnership took place on 25 September, when it was agreed that the council and partners recognise that the current crisis in Syria is a national issue and welcomed the national commitment to ensure that support is resourced. The Partnership outlined its supports for the UK’s response to the crisis and confirmed it is preparing to play its part in welcoming refugees to County Durham.

11. The Partnership, which is part of the wider County Durham Partnership framework, will look at all needs families seeking refuge in the county may have, including housing, food, health, education, translation services and community support. It will also work with churches, the voluntary sector and other partners to identify what help may be required and how it should be provided. A working group will consider the operational aspects of accommodating refugees within County Durham to support the work of the Partnership. The approach is designed not just to enable the vital preparations to be made, but to ensure that the families arriving here, many of whom will have experienced desperate situations, experience the best possible welcome.
12. **Durham AAP's** Pointers have recently been awarded a Queens Award for Voluntary Services from the Lord Lieutenant Sue Snowden. The Pointers had over 20,000 queries from visitors last year and there are now over 50 volunteers acting as Pointers who deliver Durham's unique welcome as well as offering information and signposting in the city centre.
13. The **Local Councils Working Group** recently approved a number of grants under the Delivering Differently programme, a Government fund that was awarded to work with town and parish councils on clean and green initiatives. Initially 19 submissions were received from 11 different councils. The working group has approved grants to town and parishes totalling £35,700 to date with other expressions of interest requiring further information. Colleagues from Communities and Local Government Department visited Durham on Friday 2 October to find out more about the programme and progress made to date.

Supporting Community Buildings

14. The council's successful Community Buildings Asset Transfer programme has seen almost 100 community assets, valued by local people, stay in community use due to the support of a range of officers and partners as well as the will and commitment from dedicated members of the community. These buildings are now fit for purpose, sustainable and community hubs in towns and villages where, if the programme had not been implemented, places may have been left with no facilities for local people. Through working with and supporting management committees, council officers alongside colleagues from partner organisations, have ensured that local people who give up their time on a voluntary basis are doing so in a way that protects them from personal liabilities and that they have a range of skills to operate vibrant and sustainable centres.
15. Support given to community buildings, both as part of the programme as well as those not owned by the council but which offer valuable facilities and services to the wider community, support all of the priority themes of the County Durham Partnership, examples of which include:
 - a. Altogether wealthier; job clubs and employment support with examples from East Durham AAP and Great Aycliffe and Middridge (GAMP) AAP.
 - b. Altogether better for children and young people; mother and toddler groups; pre-school groups; youth groups with examples from Weardale AAP, Durham AAP, Spennymoor AAP, East Durham Rural Corridor (EDRC) AAP, Chester le Street AAP, Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH) AAP, Teesdale AAP and 3 Towns AAP.

- c. Altogether healthier; exercise and healthy eating sessions with examples from East Durham AAP, EDRC AAP, Derwent Valley AAP, 4 Together AAP, Durham AAP, 3 Towns AAP, BASH AAP and Stanley AAP.
 - d. Altogether safer; venues for PACT and other meetings; security improvements to the buildings supported by Stanley AAP
 - e. Altogether greener: allotment and gardening clubs; energy efficiency work supported by 3 Towns AAP and Stanley AAP
16. Job clubs and employability courses are very important ways of supporting people into, or back into, employment. AAPs in **East Durham, East Durham Rural Corridor (EDRC)** and **Great Aycliffe and Middridge (GAMP)** have supported local community venues to put on activities linked to employment. **East Durham AAP** has supported a network of community job clubs staffed by locally recruited volunteers. This also links to broader issues such as welfare reform and credit unions as well as supporting people with broader problems such as social isolation and confidence building. Horden Youth and Community Centre, for example, is also promoting social enterprise by offering space within the centre for newly established businesses. A project running in the **GAMP AAP** area is utilising different community based venues including the library and Pioneering Care Centre for their 'Employability Pit Stop' project. This helps people with personal development, completion of application forms and CVs as well as their IT skills.
17. Many community venues also host youth groups and activities for children and young people and are hubs for this activity. Both **Chester le Street and District and Spennymoor AAPs** have funded Mobile Cinema projects within centres across their areas. The former through the development of a Community Buildings Consortium Trust and the latter through their children and young people's task and finish group. Films were shown during school holidays and covered all age groups and different genres and, for many centres, this was a step away from their usual activities but attracted new users and offered local young people an affordable activity during the school holidays. An example of an AAP which has worked directly with young people linked to a community centre is **Durham AAP** and Ludworth Community Centre. After helping establish a new management committee the AAP is working closely with young people in the area regarding the establishment of a skate park on land adjoining the centre as this is something the young people would like in their area.
18. Other examples of support for more traditional projects include **Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH) AAP** and the youth club project at Coundon and Leeholme Community Centre which also incorporates children's parties and healthy eating clubs through funding from elected members as well as County Durham Community Foundation. **Teesdale AAP** has used their Children and Young People's Small Grants Fund to help a number of community buildings to purchase equipment and therefore increase their offer to young people. Stanhope Community Centre in **Weardale AAP's** area has primarily been used for youth engagement activities and has recently diversified into arts and crafts. The AAP has worked with the management committee to increase users to the centre.
19. **Durham AAP**, like many others, has a number of Community Buildings within its area that it supports in a variety of ways including putting on health related projects. Framwellgate Moor was part of the Asset Transfer programme and has gone from

strength to strength with a significant increase in user numbers with many health and fitness focussed projects.

20. The recent launch of the Robin Todd Dementia Centre of Excellence will provide a Dementia Support Worker to work in the **East Durham AAP** area, employed by the Alzheimer Society. The development of this project will give an all round information, support and signposting service for dementia patients and their families. The support will be one to one or group activities and will include emotional, financial and medical advice, developing support networks designed to give emotional support to those families and carers feeling isolated and alone. The Support Worker will signpost and link with The Hospital of God at Greatham, Age UK, Carers Association, Alzheimer's Society, Mental Health Services for Older People. This will enable community based activities to be developed and work towards making East Durham 'Dementia Friendly'.
21. Other examples of support to community buildings is via the voluntary and community sector such as in the **4Together AAP** area and the work of the Cornforth Partnership. Their Good Friends Network is one of the many projects that has helped combat social isolation by matching volunteers with people within the community who need someone to talk to. A number of community venues throughout the AAP area are utilised for people to meet with others and participate in activities such as a craft and natter group. This is similar to the Silver Talk project supported by **Mid Durham AAP** and Derwentside Homes which is a telephone befriending service for older people suffering from social isolation. This project has received a number of awards and is being taken up by other organisations nationally. These are just a few examples of one of the main values of community venues, hubs for local communities to meet and socialise and offer each other valuable support both formally and informally. **Derwent Valley AAP** has supported two projects within Citizens House, another building that has been recently transferred to the community, both for people with dementia as well as their carers and relatives. This work offers invaluable support in potentially difficult personal circumstances to local people within a warm and friendly community setting.
22. Under the altogether safer priority theme, **Stanley AAP** has funded improvements to St Stephen's Centre in South Stanley through a new security system which has improved security of the building itself as well as that of the centre's staff, volunteers and users. Community safety is important for centres as the majority of people involved are volunteers who often open and close the centres at night and outside of regular working hours. Some also have IT and other equipment that need to be kept securely.
23. Community buildings are regularly used for Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings as they offer safe and independent places for people to liaise with the police. A specific example of community based work addressing the altogether safer priority is Shotton Partnership's work delivering target hardening as well as establishing a group of community safety volunteers and install CCTV in the village
24. **3 Towns AAP** has helped with the refurbishment of Roddymoor Community Allotments which has improved the facilities and encouraged the involvement of the wider community in environmentally linked work. The community garden has also been improved with the whole project providing a quality, safe environment for users of all ages and needs.

25. These are a few of the many positive examples from across the county through support given to both meet the needs of buildings to be open and functioning and also to deliver against the partnership's priority themes. As well as supporting specific activities and projects based within community venues as shown above support has also been given to the operating of the venues themselves. The type of support includes:
- a. Structural: access roads; roofs
 - b. Refurbishments: decorating; heating and electrics; kitchens; bathrooms; flooring
 - c. Funding, both external and through elected members: support with bid writing and business and financial plans to support bids
 - d. Network support: mentors from other centres; establishing virtual networks
 - e. Volunteers: increasing volunteers; improving the skills of the management committees; legal services etc
26. Much of the work of the Asset Transfer programme was focused on the information detailed above, in order to make the buildings and their management committees sustainable and fit for the future. The programme was well supported by partners from the public, private and voluntary and community sector. The Council invested in the programme through a specific staff resource initially as well as through AAPs. Elected Members were also very supportive of the programme and targeted neighbourhood budget spend on centres within their area which needed investment.
27. There are many examples across the county of support given to community building management committees in order for them to be able to provide a valuable service. The following captures a small part of that work and gives different examples from across the county but in no way shows the full countywide picture.
28. **BASH AAP** worked with local councillors to secure funding for the repair of Henknowle Community Centre's roof in order to make it watertight as well as the windows and brick work. This work allowed for the asset transfer to go through and for the centre to be able to continue to offer groups such as the British Healthy Heartbeat Support Group space within the centre. **Stanley AAP's** small grants fund has helped the 2nd Annfield Plain Scout Group to improve the pedestrian access to the scout hut through the replacement of broken and uneven paving as well as groundworks and drainage making the hut safer and more accessible for its users.
29. A number of community buildings in the **Mid Durham AAP** area have been supported recently. Significantly, £500,000 of funding has been secured from the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund for the rebuilding of Hamsteels Community Centre with work driven by local Elected Members. This was achieved through working in partnership with Cornsay Parish Council and others with the building of the new facility due to start next month. Another example is in the Brandon area through the formation of a new management committee for Brandon Community Hall. This has raised £60,000 to refurbish their toilets, kitchen, roof and driveway. The group is also moving forward by applying to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and has a number of groups now using the hall.

30. Internal refurbishments have featured heavily in the support given to community buildings in recent years. Pittington Community Centre, within **Durham AAP's** area, has recently utilised funding for the council and Biffa to install a new heating system as well as work on a new disabled toilet which will make the centre more sustainable and energy efficient. **EDRC AAP** has funded Future Leisure in Coxhoe (FLiC), alongside Coxhoe Parish Council since 2011, for a range of works including car park resurfacing, plumbing upgrades and equipment and furniture. This has all gone to help to reduce inequalities in health and improve physical fitness for local people.
31. Some smaller projects include Quarrington Hill Community Centre which has benefitted from funding through the AAP's It's Up 2 U participatory budgeting event for a new kitchen in order to better meet the needs of the users of the centre. **3 Towns AAP** has funded St Catherine's Community Association to upgrade their water heating system as well as redecorating the entrance area of the building. This has improved the accessibility and general appearance of the building for the users as well as attracting new users. **Stanley AAP** has used its small grants funding to support Tanfield Lea ad District Community Centre to redecorate their main hall as well as make kitchen improvements. This was the result of a local survey asking local people what improvements they would like to see.
32. Many community buildings require additional funding but do not have the experience of writing funding applications. Framwellgate Moor Community Centre, through being part of the asset transfer programme, has gone from strength to strength in many ways. They have successfully applied for Lottery funding for stage one of their proposed expansion and have said that the support they received from the council has been central to their development. They have also found that once a community group has a well rounded bid developed it can be used again for other funders with amendments as necessary.
33. Support and funding from Elected Members have been vital in making the asset transfer programme a success, as well as the many other community facilities sustainable and fit for purpose. There are a huge amount of examples of neighbourhood funding being utilised for match funding as well as directly for refurbishments, capital works, events and open days. Many Members also act as trustees on management committees or support them informally. Town and parish councillors often do the same and all Members act as community champions which is an invaluable resource.
34. In summary, the network of community buildings across County Durham is now much more sustainable and fit for purpose due to the support of Elected Members, a range of council officers, partner organisations and importantly, the volunteers who ensure they are open for business on a daily basis. And, in light of the changing landscape within the public sector and significant reductions in funding, community buildings are becoming more important to the fabric of local communities. The information above provides a snapshot of the work undertaken but is by no means the whole picture.

Altogether wealthier

35. The **County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP)** at its Board on 14 July focused on anti – poverty and access to employment. Recognising the welcome yet still tentative growth in the local economy the board used this meeting to understand and reflect on ensuring barriers to employment are being overcome. To

enable sustainable growth the County needs to ensure wider participation in the labour market is effectively joined together with a skills and business growth programme.

36. The work of the Poverty Action Strategic Group has been closely linked to the Altogether Wealthier thematic area through housing providers. The CDEP Board discussed current intelligence gathering initiatives with housing providers to understand the potential impact of changes to welfare support but also expected impact through budget announcements. A further presentation from the newly formed County Durham Housing Group allowed for a wider discussion on mitigating against potential impacts and partnership working at a community level to deliver appropriate and meaningful employment support to those often furthest away from the labour market.
37. A further presentation was received from Department of Work & Pensions to discuss recent changes to access to welfare support through the Job Centres. Understanding gaps in current provision were discussed with key links made to the European Social Fund. It was agreed to be more widely actioned through the County Durham Investment Group and EU workstreams.
38. Formal proposals for a devolution deal designed to drive economic growth and bring jobs and investment to the North East were submitted on 4 September 2015 to Government. The North East Combined Authority has set out its proposals for devolution in a document submitted to the Treasury for consideration as part of the autumn spending review.
39. Key points included in the proposals are ambitious plans for:
 - a. The North East to be recognised as the UK's regional export lead by attracting targeted investors and by building on the area's existing strengths and assets.
 - b. Investment in the area's workforce – enabling people to develop their skills in line with the needs of local business, improving their employment opportunities and raising aspirations and expectations.
 - c. A long-term programme of investment to generate market confidence and stability and maximise investment opportunities.
 - d. Fiscal devolution to ensure a level playing field in terms of costs faced by business in the North East and to allow for the local retention and reinvestment of the proceeds of additional growth in the area.
 - e. The creation of an integrated and upgraded local transport system across the North East with devolved responsibility for all aspects of capital and revenue funding, underpinned by long-term investment in infrastructure improvements.
 - f. The reform of public services, to address growing spending and demand pressures, by empowering communities and reducing dependency.
 - g. Devolution to councils and communities to ensure the diverse nature of the North East and its distinct places and people are taken into account in decision making.
40. The submission marked the first stage of a formal expression of interest for proposals to be considered as part of the spending review in November. There is still more work to be done alongside wider engagement and further development of proposals. The County Durham Economic Partnership is supporting Durham

County Council in ensuring the needs and opportunities for County Durham are aligned with those of the wider region.

41. Since October 2013, the Council and County Durham Economic Partnership has been working in partnership with the two main credit unions in County Durham; the Prince Bishops Community Bank and the renamed Durham Credit Union, NE First.
42. The main objective of the arrangement is to promote general membership of the credit unions and establish direct employee salary deduction schemes into a credit union saving account. During the period of the partnership, both credit unions have expanded and amalgamated to now cover the whole of the North East, with a combined membership of 10,000 and reserves of £3m plus.
43. In addition, the following activities are ongoing:
 - a. Short Term Loan Platform Pilot
 - i. This pilot has been possible due to funding from the Northern Rock Foundation, intended to rival the type of payday lender such as Wonga for speed and ease of access via the internet, but without the huge costs. This should be available by spring 2016.
 - b. Promoting with AAPs - In partnership, the Council and local AAPs are:
 - i. Encouraging credit unions as an alternative to high cost weekly payment stores.
 - ii. A school based financial education programme has also commenced to encourage young people and their parents to save regularly. In the first term, 150 young people; 45 parents and 5 staff have opened accounts. Further funding is being sought to expand the programme.
 - iii. Piloting community based job clubs in the autumn to support local people in the community to look for work and gain computer skills.

Altogether better for children and young people

44. The **Children and Families Partnership** has recently achieved two prestigious awards for its work with children and young people. Working in collaboration with The Bridge, part of Family Action the Children and Families Partnership were successful in being awarded the County Durham Young Carers Charter. The Children and Families Partnership pledges to support young carers' needs, and to encourage member organisations to sign up to the charter within their own organisations.
45. The Children and Families Partnership have worked with Investing in Children and were presented with the Investing in Children Membership Award, which recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice. The Children and Families Partnership demonstrated a commitment to dialogue with young people that leads to change, which is part of an ongoing process where young people are seen as partners with a valid contribution to make to the design and delivery of services.
46. Force 7 was commissioned to undertake a study of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training. The research was undertaken as a study of the North East, with a specific County Durham report being developed. Headline findings indicate that 40% of those who took part in the survey have suffered from stress, anxiety or depression and almost one in ten have taken drugs since becoming NEET. The research could be used to inform discussions if County

Durham is successful in future European funding bids. Durham County Council's Education service area provides support and intervention to ensure the best educational outcomes for children and young people in County Durham. County Durham attainment levels are positive when compared to national averages.

47. The Children and Families Partnership agree that positive promotional messages should be produced to promote County Durham as a high performing county in terms of school educational attainment and subsequent skills levels. Positive promotional messages will be included on the Durham County Council website, and County Durham will be promoted as being a high performing county to residents, employers and businesses.

Altogether healthier

48. The Health and Wellbeing Board appointed Cllr Lucy Hovvells as Chair of the **Health and Wellbeing Board**, and Dr Stewart Findley as Vice Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board for the coming year.
49. The Health and Wellbeing Board Big Tent engagement event will take place on the afternoon of 4 November at the Xcel Centre, Newton Aycliffe. Over 300 people will be invited to attend the event, including patients, service users and representative from the voluntary sector. A number of workshops will take place which will have a focus on a number of key initiatives for the Health and Wellbeing Board including the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, the impact of housing on health, the natural environment and health, seven day services, health and social care integration, diabetes, carers, mental health services for adults, physical activity and community safety (with a focus on community safety issues that impact on health e.g. drugs, alcohol and domestic abuse). National speaker, Dr William Bird will be the key note speaker at the event and will launch the consultation for the Physical Activity Framework for County Durham. The event will provide an opportunity to share best practice and user experiences as well as utilising the work of the Area Action Partnerships.
50. The second Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report for 2014/15 has been agreed. The Annual report provides background information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, including functions, membership as well as governance and accountability. It outlines the achievements of the Board during its second year, the commitments made by the Board and key performance achievements. The Health and Wellbeing Board supports a number of local projects across County Durham, which aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people in their local communities. Details of the projects are included in the Annual Report.
51. The Annual Report details the engagement undertaken within County Durham, which includes individual involvement, collective involvement and patient experience activities. A section is included in the Annual Report on the Local Government Association Peer Challenge, which took place between 24th and 27th February 2015. Future work of the Health and Wellbeing board is also outlined in the Annual Report.

Altogether safer

52. The **Safe Durham Partnership** is making progress in terms of planning and delivering the statutory 'Prevent duty' placed on partner organisations. County

Durham can demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of people being drawn into terrorism in the local area. County Durham is recognised as a low risk area but no area will be deemed risk free.

53. Each organisation specified by the act is represented at the 'County Durham and Darlington Contest Silver Group' which oversees the work of the Safe Durham Partnership priority on Counter Terrorism. Each specified authority (local authorities, criminal justice agencies, educational establishments and NHS Trusts), along with Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has a plan for implementing the duty and is engaged in a review of the collective partnership response.
54. Training to help key members of staff has been undertaken in order to help staff recognise the signs that an individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know how to refer them for support. Durham Constabulary are training staff within partner organisations to be able to deliver WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent); a national product developed by the Home Office. This will extend the training already received. All partner agencies are in the process of amending policies and procedures impacted by the Prevent Duty and have plans in place to meet the wider responsibilities.
55. Work is ongoing to identify all private, voluntary and independent sectors providing services or exercising functions in relation to children in the County. This will allow us to communicate the Prevent duty and their responsibilities. Work is also underway to identify sectors providing out-of-school activity in order that the partnership can communicate a requirement for them to include Prevent within safeguarding policies and procedures.
56. Previous reports have highlighted the DCLG Transformation Challenge Fund awarded of £500,000 to Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service. To date, £320,000 has been allocated towards the fitting of fire and crime preventative measures across County Durham properties. Eight of the main housing providers have signed up to a partnership agreement that will see them assign £20,000 of their 2015/16 budget towards the procurement and installation of preventative measures.
57. In excess of 2,000 frontline professionals have received fire/ crime awareness input including carers, nurses, social workers, contractors etc. In essence anyone with access to vulnerable people across County Durham was trained. As a result of the project the Police and Fire Service are now both offering documented advice on both crime/ fire awareness within the home as part of their core role.
58. One of the main objectives of the project was to ensure a sustainable centralised referral process was set up in such a way that ensured the Safer Homes initiative could function as main stream work once the project had concluded. Fire and Rescue ensure all referrals received are forwarded to the appropriate authority/ service responsible for dealing with the specific vulnerabilities identified. The level of reductions in house burglary and dwelling fires, along with savings achieved from a centralised referral process at Fire Service HQ has been achieved. The investment in sustainable home safety solutions will provide benefits for many years to come.

Altogether greener

59. The **Environment Partnership** Board has had an input into the development of the Council's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy following a presentation at their meeting. In terms of the 'environment', various aspects interplay and have an overall impact e.g. the use of open spaces, woodlands, play areas, refuse and recycling services, licensing, street scene, antisocial behaviour etc. The Environment Partnership is keen to assist in working to deliver the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy action plan in conjunction with the various partners over the next few years.
60. The Board has recently been working on developing the formal links between the Environment and Health. Currently the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being developed and evidence for this Strategy was required by September 2015. The Environment Partnership recognise more positive health messages need to be given to the public in relation to promoting the benefits that the Environment can bring e.g. via volunteering in the open spaces, walking instead of using the car, exercising, having access to green and open spaces etc.
61. The Environment Awards are a unique opportunity to showcase and celebrate the fantastic array of environmentally-based projects and activities which have taken place across all sectors of the community in County Durham. This annual programme is managed by Durham County Council on behalf of the County Durham Environment Partnership and is now in its 26th year.
62. Again attracting a healthy interest, 67 applications have been received in total across a breadth of environmental categories. For example there were 13 schemes in the built and crafts categories, 11 entries made to the schools and colleges' category, 21 to the spaces and natural environment categories and 14 community and volunteering entries. Shortlisting and judging, involving a range of specialists and sponsoring bodies such as Groundwork, the Northern Echo and Sita UK, has taken place over September and the winners are to be announced at a ceremony at Durham's Radisson Hotel on 24th November.
63. For more information visit www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/awards or call 03000 265545.
64. Six of the County's parks have been awarded Green Flag status for 2015 by Keep Britain Tidy and voting has taken place. The closing date for nominations was 30 September, 2015. Judges from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) visited Durham City on 5 August to assess their 'blooming great' credentials. Durham in Bloom volunteers and partners have dedicated 4,972 hours over the last 12 months, working on a range of projects. The judge's visit included a tour of HMP Durham where horticulture is used as part of the education and rehabilitation process for offenders. Results of the Britain in Bloom competition will be announced in October.
65. Other updates from the sub groups include:
 - a. Chilton Green Energy Foundation hosted an event on 10 September to promote community energy projects. The event showcased successful projects that have been implemented across County Durham, outlining the

problems and pitfalls and highlighting the benefits of installing renewable technologies and energy efficient products.

- b. The County Durham Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) has recently held an information and activity session with 20 young people from Shildon Youth Group. The group were shown a new concept where stencils are sprayed onto pavements using a waterproof solution. When it rains, the water rolls off the letters leaving a message on the pavement. The CCU will work with the young people to spray the stencils onto the pavements in Shildon to create 'Rain Works'.
- c. A rolling programme of Community Action Team (CAT) work – work has finished in the Horden area and now focusing in Bishop Auckland.
- d. The Waste Group are developing plans to promote food banks and food waste reduction across County Durham.
- e. Continuing work in relation to the Nourishing Neighbourhoods project – three growing champions are working across the County to promote home growing via allotments sites, community centres and schools.

Recommendations and reasons

66. It is recommended that Cabinet note the report.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - Area and Neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the Council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the working practice of AAPs.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - Altogether safer is the responsibility of the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human Rights - None

Consultation - The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners and the establishment of a Sound Board to progress the recommendations and will continue this consultative approach.

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications – None