



*People
& Place*

Real Power for Real People
Handing over the Baton Report
March 2009

Real Power for Real People Handing over the Baton Report

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Real Power for Real People
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1. Introduction and Summary

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1. Introduction and Summary

Background and Purpose

1. The existing County Council and all Districts have been working in partnership towards setting up the new Unitary Council for the last year 18 months. Good practice exercised by the District Council has been shared with the County Council during this process. Some of this has already been recognised by the County Council in its preparations.
2. In handing over its powers and responsibilities the District Council feels it is important to set out how communities have worked with the council over the years. By doing this the District Council hopes that the new unitary council can build on the work the communities of Chester-le-Street have undertaken to improve the life of people within the District. It is hoped that the new unitary council can continue current working partnerships and relationships and take forward the existing and planned projects, plans and strategies which are responding to our communities' priorities and ambitions.
3. The purpose of this 'Handing over the Baton' Report is therefore to bring to the attention of the new unitary council, those priorities and ambitions and to encourage the County Council to continue where the District Council has left off. The District Council has made significant progress in improving its services over the last five years. The new County Council will need to ensure that it successfully manages the transformation to a single unitary council, reaps the benefits of greater coordination across services and designs services that are accessible and responsive to our communities needs. The District Council has been committed to continuous improvement and has developed its workforce and the relationships with our communities that will serve the new Council well in responding to this challenge.

Nature of the Report and how to use it

4. The 'Handing over the Baton Report' is effectively in four parts:
 - this written report which includes access to background documents and evidence in the electronic version;
 - a short film on **DVD** which summarises the main messages in this document directly presented by members of our community;
 - the **presentation made by the voluntary and community sector** to the County Council Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Chairs and principal officers on 27th February 2009; and
 - the final edition of Chester-le-Street's newspaper, '**District News**', which is intended to be the public version of the summary document.

5. This report's contents are designed to ensure that the measures of the communities' successes and their preferred style of working with the local authority are documented, explained and evidenced. The report is to be made available to our stakeholders and the new unitary council to act as a valuable reference document for future discussions and for consideration in the design of services, partnership arrangements and new strategies and policies.

6. The 'Handing over the Baton Report' is constructed to address important issues set in the context of the new unitary Cabinet Portfolio areas. These are:

- Corporate Resources
- Economic Regeneration
- Safer Communities
- Environment
- Local partnerships
- Healthier communities
- Children and Young Peoples Services; and
- Adult Services

7. Where appropriate, this report highlights cross cutting issues. The report contains certain words that are highlighted. In electronic versions of this document (on disk) these highlighted words provide 'hyperlinks' to supporting documents and evidence. Should the reader want more information on the issues then by clicking on these 'hyperlinks' additional information can be gained access to.

Issues

8. What is considered to be of particular importance are:

- how villages are being regenerated with communities ;
- principal projects underway and planned;
- the importance of the Town Centre Master Plan and the Local Development Framework;
- the importance of the Riverside and the leisure corridor to the Town Centre;
- the approach to community led regeneration within the district;
- the work of partners and businesses in respect of employment, and addressing the mismatch of skills and jobs;
- how people, particularly the young and old, are improving the quality of their lives through working with the council;

- community cohesion in the district , the work of the voluntary and community sector and the fragility of some of the partnerships;
- the commitment of the community to sustainability and neighbourhood environmental improvement
- how young people specifically have been engaged with the council;
- how the wellbeing of the most vulnerable are being looked after,
- recommendations of recent scrutiny reviews;
- the critical success factors to the improvement journey of the council over the last five years; and
- how diversity is celebrated in the District and the importance of customer excellence to improvement.

9. It is important to note at this stage the crucial role of the voluntary and community sector within Chester-le-Street. They can be seen as the glue that has helped to cement much of our community activity and capacity building. The district has not been blessed with a significant influx of resources as has been experienced in other parts of the County such as Easington and Derwentside. It has not been, for example, a Neighbourhood Regeneration Pathfinder area. Partnership has worked well in Chester-le-Street because of a genuine desire to improve. Partnership work has not been finance led but the council and other partners have worked with the voluntary and community sector in innovative ways to find solutions within this financial framework. The council has directly assisted financially a number of partnership organisations through service level agreements and has also given support like payroll, financial administration and accommodation to help sustain what in many areas are very effective but quite fragile partnerships which could otherwise disappear. The value of continuing to support the voluntary and community sector cannot be understated.

Responsibilities

10. The relevant Member and Officer responsibilities within the new unitary for the issues identified in this 'Handing Over the Baton Report' are identified on the attached table. The Handing over the Baton Report is, of course, addressed to the whole unitary council specifically and our stakeholders generally.

Issue	Portfolio Holder	Lead Corporate Director
Economic Regeneration		
Regeneration Strategy	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Community Led regeneration	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Town Centre Master Plan	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Business Improvement District	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
The Future of the Market Scrutiny Review	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Riverside, Cricket Club and Leisure Corridor	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Employability, Skills and Partnerships for Futures	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Tourism	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Decent Homes	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Positive Planning	TBA	Ian Thompson, Regeneration and Economic Development
Local Partnerships and Environment		
Community Development and Engagement	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Sustaining Community Facilities	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Work of the Local Strategic Partnership	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Active and Sustained Voluntary Sector	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Future of the Unparished Areas Scrutiny Review	TBA	Stuart Crowe, Director of Resources
Neighbourhoods	TBA	Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Other Environmental Issues	TBA	Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Proactive Enforcement	TBA	Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Healthier and Safer Communities and Adults and Young Peoples' Services		
Providing Safe and Healthy Opportunities	TBA	Director Adults, Wellbeing and Health
Looking after the Most Vulnerable	TBA	Director Adults, Wellbeing and Health
Youth Engagement including Youth Forum	TBA	Director of Children and Young Peoples' Services
The Future of Sports Marketing for Young People	TBA	Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Future Investment needs for Leisure	TBA	Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Outstanding Childcare	TBA	Director of Children and Young Peoples' Services
Community Cohesion	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Corporate Resources		
Cultural Change and Organisational Development	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Equality and Diversity	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Customer Excellence	TBA	Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Summary conclusions and recommendations

11. Chester-le-Street District Council has assisted its communities to make significant progress in their journey of improvement. It has ensured that it has built strong relationships with communities to enable them to have real control over their futures. In our community lead regeneration, the journey of improvement has been about putting new hearts into the town centre and villages, tailor making solutions based upon how our residents wanted to move forward. Community facilities have been built, supported and managed in a way to develop capacity within our communities. Supporting older people as the most vulnerable residents and increasing opportunities for young people has been a significant part of the council's contribution to community development.

12. The District Council has a wealth of experience in whole council cultural change and performance and improvement. It has put cultural change at the heart of its own improvement journey and through whole council organisational development, celebration of equality and diversity and a focus on customers; our workforce has valuable experience of transformational change. Greater interaction between people within and outside the council has not only improved council performance but has generated a greater sense of community spirit and pride.

The new unitary council is well placed to sustain our communities' journey and to develop further the best practice from our current services and community relationships. It is therefore recommended to:

Economic Regeneration

- share the council's experience in terms of regeneration in the District
- continue to support community led regeneration and development of social capital such as the work in Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacriston (paragraph 22- 33 page 18);
- continue to implement and as appropriate incorporate the existing Regeneration Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy into County strategies to ensure that their aims and objectives are built into future planning and ultimately achieved (documented throughout section 2);
- ensure that the Town Centre Master Plan is built into the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework District (paragraph 35 - 42 page 25);
- make progress on the Business Improvement District while implementing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Review of the Market and reconsidering the management structure for markets (paragraph 43 - 51 page 31);
- continue to support the development of Durham County Cricket Club and recognise and support the importance of the Leisure Corridor (paragraph 52 - 56 page 33); and
- commit to supporting 'Partnership for Futures' (paragraph 60 - 63 page 38).

Local Partnerships and the Environment

- share the council's experience in terms of local partnerships and environmental improvement in the District;
- Continue to support the approach to engagement and the support provided to community groups (paragraph 96 – 99 page 53);
- continue to sustain the community engagement projects established in the district (paragraph 96 -99 page 53);
- implement the recommendations of the Community Facilities Review (paragraph 100 -110 page 55);
- sustain the work of the Local Strategic Partnership policy groups (paragraph 111 -121 page 59);
- sustain and build upon the significant contribution to 'well being' made by the voluntary and community sector (paragraph 122 -126 page 64);
- implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the future of the unparished areas of the district (paragraph 127 -128 page 66);
- sustain the approaches to community engagement in environmental improvement (paragraph 134 page 68)

Healthier, Safer Communities and Adults and Young People's Services

- share the council's experience in terms of supporting children young people and older people in the District
- sustain the current projects which are aimed at improving well being (paragraph 145 -147 page 76);
- continue to implement the anti poverty strategy and review the affordable warmth strategy (paragraph 148 -161 page 88);
- support and sustain youth development in the District and in particular maintain the momentum of the Youth Forum (paragraph 162 – 164 page 94);
- implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the marketing of sports facilities for young people and the council's additional recommendations in respect of Audit Commission research and youth engagement (paragraph 168 -169 page 96);
- seek to undertake additional investment / seek alternative funding in leisure facilities including the leisure Centre, Roseberry Grange golf course and the Riverside (paragraph 170 -173 page 97);
- continue to support and sustain the outstanding Selby Cottage Child Care facility (paragraph 174 -175 page 98); and
- sustain the momentum of the Community Cohesion project including the extension of the Cestria Credit Union (paragraph 176- 177 page 99)

Corporate Resources

- Share the council's experience in terms of its improvement journey (paragraph 185 -191 page 106);
- builds on the council's 'One Team' approach and develops Altogether Better into an effective programme of holistic organisational development and cultural change (paragraph 192 -195 page 109);
- uses tools such as Action Learning Sets and Continuous Process Improvement (paragraph 194 page 112);
- mainstreams equality and diversity (paragraph 196 -198 page 114);
- ensures that customer excellence is a principal driver of organisational change (paragraph 199 – 200 page 116); and
- acknowledges and builds upon the performance of the council in its final year (paragraph 201 -207 page 117)

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2. Economic Regeneration

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2. Economic Regeneration

Summary

13. The fundamental improvement in the well being of the district over the last few years has been as a result of the approach adopted for economic and social regeneration. This has been aimed at developing 'new hearts' within our communities. It is therefore both natural and important that it is addressed early in this 'Handing Over the Baton' report.

14. Chester-le-Street District has a tremendous heritage and a superb location both of which it is important to celebrate. That very attractiveness is both a County and Regional asset and in developing the district the new unitary council will need to consider not only future community priorities but also the essence of what makes the area attractive to residents, developers and inward investors. There remains considerable untapped potential for such sensitive development.

15. The Regeneration Strategy for the District has been the product of much work by many people. Much of the work around the Regeneration Strategy has been ensuring that as many people, groups and organisations have been involved in meaningful and worthwhile consultation. It is important to recognise that the support for the Strategy has been earned more by our approach to community lead regeneration than simple bricks and mortar proposals. It has looked at areas that impact on the everyday lives of people such as heritage, tourism, leisure, housing, transport, location, health, enterprise and environment together with measures to build community capacity, celebrate diversity and support greater cohesion. The Regeneration Strategy document itself has emerged as a living, breathing document and *an approach* to implementation. It is not motherhood and apple-pie. This is not just Chester-le-Street District Council's strategy it's the communities' and partners' strategy. The delivery of this community lead approach has meant a lot of hard work at neighbourhood level but has yielded significant and sustainable rewards.

16. This section gives details of the approach to regeneration in Chester-le-Street. It highlights principles, evidences that approach and identifies the importance of sustaining active community engagement and involvement in responding to our community's vision for the future.

Making the Difference -The Regeneration Strategy

17. The communities' approach to regeneration goes back many years even though the council's written **Regeneration Strategy** was not adopted until March 2007. The Strategy sets out a 'big picture' vision about what will result from its successful delivery. Chester-le-Street will have:

- a reputation for making a significant contribution to the region and its growth;
- a reputation as an attractive place to live, work and visit;
- a successful tourism and leisure based economy building on its unique cultural heritage;
- a highly skilled workforce that is able to access jobs;
- a Local Development Framework which will help further progress;
- a revitalised town centre with a refurbished market and be a place where people want to visit;
- revitalised villages which are places where people want to live;
- no communities excluded from the regeneration process and all communities feeling safer;
- housing which is of a good standard and is affordable;
- high quality community facilities which are well managed by the most appropriate agencies;
- ensured that the skills of people in the district better match the skills that employers want; and
- a dialogue between business and the public sector and a better understanding of one another.

18. In achieving this, the successful implementation of the Strategy will ensure that the economic, social and environmental needs of communities within Chester-le-Street will be met. It is clear that this vision is consistent with the cross cutting work of the County Council's Cabinet portfolios and is consistent with the emerging priorities of the new unitary and the **Sustainable Community Strategy**.

19. The District Council has produced a **district profile** and subsequently detailed **neighbourhood profiles** for all wards. **Summary fact sheets** are also available. Using the information on which they are based the Strategy was developed in the context that:

- 45% of the people living in the District live in or near the town centre;
- only Sacriston has a population of over 5,000, all other villages have less than 3,000 residents;
- about 62% are of working age with higher than regional and national averages of economic activity;
- job density is low and there is insufficient industrial land to help address this,
- the district has a lower level claiming job seekers allowances against regional and national figures;
- the IMD shows pockets of deprivation set against a relatively advantaged District wide picture;
- there are social and economic issues in most settlements;
- Chester-le-Street has the lowest job density in the North East;

- 70% of the population travel outside the District to work;
- gross weekly pay is lower than regional and national averages;
- the number of businesses in the district is second lowest in the region;
- the district has GCSE attainment which is higher than the national and regional average but this hides significant variations;
- residents with qualification above NVQ4 are higher than both the national and regional average;
- there are still a third of residents without significant qualifications;
- the district has significantly lower rates for burglary offences, car crime and robberies; and
- 72% of houses are owner occupied and 27% of households have no car

20. To achieve this vision the Strategy sets out five objectives, each of which is supported by action points. Positive achievement has been made against many of the action points. There is still a great deal to be done. A feel for progress so far can be gained by looking at the highlighted achievements against the objectives to date:

1. To ensure that Chester-le-Street is at the heart of the growth of the region by doing such things as;

- progressing the **local development framework (LDF)**;
- promoting a **tourism and leisure** based economy;
- exploring the potential of the transport infrastructure;
- promoting the district as an attractive place to visit, live, work and invest; and
- reviewing access and management arrangements for open space throughout the district.

2. To fulfil the potential of the Town Centre by doing such things as:

- completing the refurbishment of the **market place**;
- completing **Mile House project**;
- developing a business plan for the market;
- developing a **programme of activities** for the market
- commissioning **the Town Centre Master Plan**;
- working with partners on the **Town Centre in Bloom** initiative;
- working with partners to develop the **Town Centre Ambassadors Group**;
- assessing the evening economy with a view to developing an action plan

3. To ensure that the benefits of wider regeneration are felt by all of our communities by:

- progressing community led regeneration at **Pelton Fell, Sacriston and Grange Villa**;

- developing an **anti poverty strategy**;
- disposing of **surplus council land** to further regeneration objectives;
- progressing **Edmondsley Carbon Neutral project**;
- working with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to maximise their contribution and achieve the **Decent Homes Standard**;
- promoting **affordable homes nominations** agreements in new private sector housing;
- **reviewing community facilities** in the District, drawing up plans for gaps;
- developing action plans to address the economic and enterprise aspects of the regeneration corridors;
- working with partners in implementing the **Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy**.
- developing a **housing strategy** and a **homelessness strategy**;
- better understanding needs by developing **neighbourhood profiles**;
- carrying out an **audit of community engagement** to develop an action plan to maximises inclusion; and
- working with the **voluntary sector** to understand their current and potential contributions to regeneration and creation of sustainable communities.

4. To maximise the learning and skills attainment of the District by:

- work with partners to research the **future skills** needs of employers compared with skills available;
- working on flagship project '**Partnerships for Futures**' aiming to increase skills and access to sustainable employment;
- working with partners to maximise the investment in Mile House ; and
- working with the District Learning Partnership in examining how the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy can encourage and facilitate wider participation in learning opportunities.

5. To maximise the economic performance of the District by:

- developing a plan for the management and maintenance of industrial estates provision;
- supporting the expansion of the **Drum** and Stella Gill Industrial Estates;
- identifying the need for **new employment sites**;
- developing a better understanding of the needs of businesses;
- arranging specifically targeted briefings and possible special interest panels including a developers panel;
- exploring the facility of a database and on-line directory of businesses;
- adopting and enforcing an **SME Concordat** for the procurement of services by local government; and
- examining with partners the potential for promoting a culture of small, medium and social enterprises;

21. Some important examples of progress against the Strategy are set out in more detail in the remainder of this chapter of the 'Handing over the Baton Report'. However, firstly, it is important to identify how community led regeneration has been crucial to the journey of improvement of communities within the district.

Planning for Real - Community Led Regeneration

22. As indicated previously communities have worked to build new hearts into their villages. Within the villages, communities have worked closely with the council and its partners to regenerate the places where they live on their terms. This has resulted in a different approach based on different needs and different capacities in different villages. In doing so the council has, through its links with the Local Strategic Partnership, invested in social capital to develop the pattern and intensity of networks among people and developed the shared values which arise from those networks. Greater interaction between people has generated a greater sense of community spirit. The District Council feels that this has been important to the success and sustainability of communities and it is an approach, which it urges the new unitary authority to continue. Examples are set out in the following paragraphs.

Pelton Fell

23. Pelton Fell has seen significant investment in the area in recent years, to enhance the quality of life for local residents. A big factor in the success of Pelton Fell is that the regeneration of the village is very much a community led initiative. It has been fundamentally about the physical regeneration of the village and the provision of new housing. In 2003 the council formed a consortium of partners including Pelton Fell Community Group, Nomad Homes, Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association (DAMHA) and Bellway Homes and tasked them to deliver the vision presented by the local community for the village. The partners each played their role in the development of the village, and more importantly through the partnership developed a joined up approach to regeneration encompassing the three principal themes to a sustainable community economic, social and environmental regeneration. The partnership to date has delivered a number of successes that includes the new Bellway's development at Glenside which has been delivered to meet the needs of 21st century living. The development will see the delivery of 250 new properties which will provide a range of two bedroom apartments and two, three and four bedroom houses creating a mixed tenure, and property type designed to meet local needs and reverse the issues of low property demand and neighbourhood decline.

24. To complement the new development, the community has worked with the council to orchestrate a scheme of environmental improvements to enhance the aesthetics of the village. These have included, but are not exclusive to, new drives and pathways, the enhancement of green spaces, boundary walls and fencing. The old street lighting has been

replaced with modern more efficient designs and in some areas new street lighting has been included in the scheme to provide local residents with a safer environment. More recently work has begun on Pelton Fell's Community Resource Centre (CRC), which has been supported through the Community Assets Fund (CAF), developers' contributions and council capital programme. This building project is designed to be a whole community resource, managed by local people. The CRC will deliver a range of service provision to meet local needs and encourage the development of a social enterprise and an entrepreneurial culture. The CRC is complemented by the development of a children's play area and a multi use games area (MUGA) which will generate income to contribute to the long term sustainability of the centre and the community. As with the new community centre at Sacriston and Grange Villa, together with community centres in a number of the District's villages and towns, there has been a significant amount of work with partners to develop these centres as 'community hubs'. The new unitary is able to utilise the new MUGA as a venue to provide localised sporting opportunities. To support the community group the new unitary will also need to inspect and maintain the new play area. On a general note the District Council strongly believes that using local and high quality venues like the MUGA's will enable it to design and deliver a variety of activity programmes for the local community that can help address wider issues such as anti social behaviour, social exclusion and obesity.

25. To oversee the long-term sustainability of the regeneration of the village the Pelton Fell **Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership** (NRP) board have established an **Integrated Regeneration Strategy** (IRS) a framework providing a working document for the NRP board to monitor the progress of the regeneration scheme. The document outlines the community's aspirations for the future which include further work on environmental improvements to Shelley Avenue and Tennyson Road and to develop a range of environmental improvements to the retail outlet of the village.



Steve Barr Pelton Fell

This new community centre, which is under construction, will be a huge vehicle for drawing the community back together again. If you can imagine disjuncture and fraction that has happened over the early years, this centre will be a means of not only getting communication going again in the village but also of finding new experiences together, of learning together, developing new skills together, having a good time, and something for all age groups.

Grange Villa

26. Grange Villa, is another village in Chester-le-Street that has seen significant investment. Again, the local community have played an important and productive role in the regeneration of their community and have been actively engaged in the decision making process on prioritising the District Council's recent successful bids for Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) funding. Regeneration has been about improving homes, rather than building new ones and addressing social issues within the village. This was the villager's choice. The regeneration of Grange Villa has seen the completion of the environmental improvement scheme to Front Street, which has enhanced the gateways to the village. Incorporated into this scheme is a range of traffic calming measures that were extended to Stone Row. The scheme also delivered the outcomes outlined in the North East Housing Strategy as one of the four main priorities to upgrade properties to meet the 'Decent Homes Standards'. 82 properties in Grange Villa benefited from the scheme a further 17 properties benefited from disabled facilities adaptations. This has enabled some of the villages more vulnerable elderly residents the opportunity to remain in their own homes. The community wanted to see the needs of the young people of the village being catered for. Events were held with the young people to identify their aspirations for their community and the future of their community. In response the council has endeavored to meet these needs through the provision of a children's play area, a ball wall and the more recent development a youth shelter and ball game area.

27. The council has worked closely with local residents and has held a number of consultation events and interviews with local residents to identify their needs. The council has listened to what our residents have said and developed a delivery programme to incorporate these needs within the remit of the funding criteria and budget allocation. Local residents have been included in the Project Management Group. As a result they have been actively involved in the decision making process. Workshops have been delivered in Grange Villa Community Centre with service providers and the local communities to address issues on the delivery of service provision, not just by the council but the county council, NHS County Durham and volunteer support, for example in skills development. In addition, the residents group has worked with the council's Customer Relations Manager to develop a Community Hub pilot scheme with members of the community working with the council to set up a **community website** for Grange Villa. This is also being extended to Sacriston and Pelton Fell Community Centres to allow communities to share from best practice, inform residents and have a joint room booking scheme. Grange Villa Community Enterprise Centre was constructed with the support of European funding, secured by the local community with the support of the District and County Council. The centre houses a range of resources to meet local needs including a community café, local youth club, detached health provision and Surestart establishment. The centre is managed and operated by dedicated members of the community who strive to make Grange Villa a community that local people are proud to be part of.

28. The regeneration of Grange Villa has had a significant impact on the quality of live for local residents. However, there are still a number of opportunities to develop the community and the village further. There is potential to enhance the use of the Surestart facility housed within the community centre to meet local needs through training opportunities. Further support is needed to explore the potential of a social enterprise for the community centre. Grange Villa Community Centre would benefit

from additional resources. In terms of physical regeneration local residents would like to see the development of new houses providing a range type and tenure to encourage inward migration of young families increasing the need for local service provision and the usage of the Surestart facility and local community centre stimulating local economic growth. Back lanes throughout Grange Villa are in poor condition and would benefit from environmental improvement schemes.



Anne Blewitt,
Grange Villa

“Regeneration has been extremely important to Grange Villa. It has provided the community with the much needed Enterprise Centre that has been enormously successful in providing a range of services direct into the community. The additional investment in the village to enhance the Front Street and improve the overall appearance and safety of the village along with the investment to bring the local residents properties up to “Decent Homes Standard” has made life easier and more comfortable for residents. Without this resource, we would not have been able to make essential repairs to our properties. The whole ethos of the regeneration investment has helped to re-ignite the community spirit back to how it was in the past, making Grange Villa a more pleasant and safer place to live, to encourage young families to stay in the village and help to instill a sense of community pride and encourage local people to get involved in community activities.”

Sacrison

29. Sacrison is a much larger village than Pelton Fell and Grange Villa and the approach to regeneration has had to be quite different in view of the culture of the village and the influx of new residents. A number of new houses have been built in Sacrison with residents working in Durham and surrounding areas. The retail offer is in need of significant improvement in parts of Front Street and the regeneration plans therefore look at comprehensive regeneration of housing, retail, business and the environment. Sacrison, like Grange Villa and Pelton Fell, has benefited from Single Investment Housing Pot funding to upgrade properties to ‘Decent Homes Standards’. 96 properties have benefited from the scheme with 11 Disabled facilities adaptations provided to improve the quality of life for some of our more vulnerable residents. The work was delivered in partnership with the District Council and the Home Improvement Agency and was completed in March 2008.

30. In December 2006 Llewellyn Davies Young were commissioned to carry out an **Area Development Framework** (ADF) for Sacrison. This was produced in 2007 and the document has provided Chester-le-Street District Council with a framework for the delivery of regeneration initiatives within the village. The ADF identified four intervention areas North, South, East and Central. Within each area a number of projects have been prioritised which will require long-term significant investment to meet the aspirations of the community and develop Sacrison to a level which will equip it to compete with its neighbouring counterparts. The area does however remain attractive for investors with it’s proximity to Chester-le Street and Durham City.

31. The District Council has endeavoured to address some of the action points detailed in the ADF and is currently delivering Sacriston's 'Heart of the Village' scheme in partnership with Durham County Council's Urban Renaissance team. The scheme will be completed in June 2009 and will deliver a new community square which will provide a gateway and parking facilities to complement the recently built community centre. The entrance to the square will provide a central paved area, incorporating the clock feature art project that will involve local people and the younger members of the community in designing the scheme. The aesthetics of the area will be enhanced by the grassed area, tree and shrub planting and the seating area will incorporate historical elements of the old community centre. By building the dedication stones into the new seating area, reminders of Sacriston's recent and more distant heritage will be preserved.

32. The long-term vision for Sacriston includes a number of innovative projects to create an even more attractive and lively main street:

- Provide new uses and facilities to create a **stronger mix and structure** along Front Street using vacant or underused sites;
- Build on the **strength of the present recreational and leisure offer** (Sacriston Cricket and Football Club) and enhance surrounding green space and develop connections and opportunities at Fulworth Wood;
- Develop a number of infill sites which can be **developed holistically to tighten the fabric** and improve enclosure in certain residential communities
- An opportunity to **strengthen the residential offer** and allow house prices to become more comparative with other destinations within the district (the council has used its development policies and land holdings to work with Barratt Homes and create a new area of housing in Holly Crescent. This has incorporated affordable housing for sale of two and three bedroom houses priced at just £80,000 and contractually linked to retain that stock of affordable housing for future generations); and
- Improve and create a **system of connections** through the town to take best advantage of the recreation spaces and parkland.
- To investigate the potential development of the cooperative workshops in Sacriston which would benefit from redevelopment to bring them or the land upon which they sit, back into public use.

33. Following completion of the new 'community centre, the council is continuing to work closely with Sacriston Community & Sports Trust in developing phase 2 of the project. This would see the creation of new outdoor activity areas, including a floodlit MUGA and artificial bowls green along with new indoor facilities i.e. a gym and changing accommodation. This new changing accommodation is essential as the existing changing pavilion for the site is closed due to health and safety concerns and is unlikely to re-open without very substantial and costly remedial works, an investment which makes little sense given the general condition of the building. County Durham Sport has undertaken a feasibility study that will underpin the business planning and grant funding process that the group will follow. The new unitary is in a position to develop these new facilities, when completed, to enable localised provision of sports opportunities to be delivered by sports development teams.



Linda Surtees
Sacriston

People knew what was going on, that we were in the process of building a new community centre and I think what happens is people are very unbelieving until they actually see it there. It's taken a lot of hard work but we are very proud of the building and we want the whole community to be proud. We just want everyone to have the use of it and enjoy coming in. We've had a lot of support from people round and about and obviously Chester-le-Street District Council and we look forward to having the same relationship with the new unitary Council. Any help that we can get from the unitary council, would be beneficial to us and hopefully to them as we are going to improve on the facilities we already have.

Community Focus – Other Regeneration Initiatives

34. A summary of the other major regeneration initiatives is set out below:

- **Civic Heart**

In June 2007 work was completed on the refurbishment of Chester-le-Street's Civic Heart and market place. The project was designed to deliver the start of renaissance of Chester-le-Street Town Centre and to build the foundations for a sustainable safe, commercially vibrant and physically attractive town centre where local people can live, work, learn, shop and socialise. The creation of the Civic Heart has provided a heart to the town centre re-establishing the identity of the town centre as a market town, welcoming vibrant continental, farmers and craft markets, supported by a diverse range of entertainment from different cultures, catering to the needs of all members of our communities. The scheme has provided a gateway to ambitious and innovative plans for the future of the town centre with objectives to provide an improved retail mix, to develop the leisure corridor running from Waldrige Fell past Pelton Fell, through the market place and onward to link the town centre to the

prestigious sports facilities at Riverside and Durham County Cricket club. This is been addressed as part of the masterplan for Chester-le-Street which the council sees as the first step forward to developing Chester-le-Street town centre as a jewel in the crown for County Durham.

- **MILE House**

In May 2006, Chester-le-Street completed work on the refurbishment of MILE (Mechanics Institute Learning and Enterprise Centre) House situated in close proximity to the Civic Heart and marketplace. The new facility is a modern learning shop that provides direction and advice on all learning opportunities available to individuals and houses service providers such as the Enterprise Agency, Learning Links, Acumen, Durham Business Club and the recently established 'Partnerships for Futures'. MILE house is a major contribution to the economic development and in particular the skills development necessary to address worklessness and business needs in the town and neighbouring communities. It is easily accessible being located in the commercial heart of Chester-le-Street.

- **Industrial Estates**

The district's job density is low and there is insufficient industrial land available to help address this. Industrial estate space is however in high demand with almost 100% occupancy. **Drum Industrial Estate** is the predominant industrial estate in the district offering prestige accommodation for manufacturing, warehouses and office businesses. The location of this industrial estate being in close proximity to Tyne and Wear and Durham City also has excellent transport links with the Tees Valley. The high demand for the site means that it is approaching capacity, yet it is the only estate in the district that serves a regional market. Further new development at Drum is only permitted if the units are of good specification and appearance to enhance its reputation as a prestige site. Businesses located at Drum serve a range of different sectors including construction, electronics, environmental and manufacturing. The Co-operative has recently secured a 27,000 square metres warehouse.

It is recognised that there is a lack of local employment opportunities in the district and the units at **Stella Gill** and **Sacrison Industrial Estates** do provide useful business accommodation to help both start-up companies and those with some growth potential. An example of a company undergoing expansion is AMBIC limited. AMBIC relocated their business from Newcastle to Chester le Street in 1999 and the council was able to provide them with four adjacent empty factory units on the Stella Gill Industrial Estate. The council has worked closely with the Managing Director of AMBIC over many years, providing additional units as and when the business has expanded and offering favourable lease terms to enable expansion plans to progress quickly. More recently, AMBIC has purchased 3.5 acres of land from the council on the estate, extending its business even further and providing more jobs which in turn, are supporting the local economy. AMBIC are also involved in education and training projects including 'Partnerships for Futures'.

The council owns and manages 53 industrial units. Of these 34 are at Stella Gill Industrial Estate and 19 at Sacriston Industrial Estate. All of the units are of a similar modular design and range from 800 square feet to 3000 square feet with there being many smaller units. Lease terms are favourable with the offer of 'easy in, easy out' terms being available and rent-free periods for expansion within the estate. Maintenance standards are high with all of the properties being legislatively compliant. The estates are swept and litter picked on a regular basis and patrols to identify any potential anti-social behaviour issues are carried out on a regular basis. This contributes to demand for the units which remain at a fairly constant 95% despite the recent economic downturn. Stella Gill is in close proximity to the A1(M) and Chester le Street Town Centre and is well know locally. It links to regeneration corridors and neighbouring land is safeguarded for employment development in the Local Plan. Sacriston Industrial Estate is located in the village of Sacriston and provides a number of local employment opportunities in a former mining community. Accessibility to public transport is good with regular bus services running between Chester-le-Street and Durham. The land is safeguarded in the Local Plan for employment opportunities.

Keeping the Heart Beating - The Town Centre Master Plan

Preparation

35. The council's work in the town centre beyond the Civic Heart has only just started. 'Investing in the town centre', following the physical improvements, was one of the components of the single priority of '**People and Place**'. It is considered to be of crucial importance to continue to improve the town centre. It has become even more necessary as we move into recession that the Civic Heart is kept beating and that the real potential of the regeneration of our market town is grasped by the new unitary council. The **Regional Spatial Strategy** (RSS) defines Chester-le-Street as a 'regeneration town' where regeneration and development should be supported. Priority 2 of the **Sustainable Community Strategy** for Chester-le-Street is to "develop Chester-le-Street as a thriving commercial centre". Objective 2 of the Chester-le-Street **Regeneration Strategy** is "to fulfill the potential of the Town Centre" and action point 10 was "to commission a masterplanning exercise for the town centre by May 2007". In view of this, in June 2007 the council appointed a specialist team of consultants to undertake the master plan development.

Consultations

36. The Consultants produced a baseline report in August 2007 undertook four public consultation exercises and submitted the final version of their report in June 2008. There followed some significant consultation and engagement with people in the District:

▪ **Stakeholder workshop**

A Stakeholder Workshop was held in August 2007 to engage with our residents, business and voluntary organisations. The following is a summary of the main issues raised:

- *Location of taxi ranks in relation to the town centre leisure i.e. nightclubs and venues.*
- *Improvement of access to the town centre from railway station.*
- *Front Street has poor signage for transport provision.*
- *Provision of Hackney licensed taxi rank at the railway station.*
- *Traffic congestion at North Burns with significant junction improvements.*
- *Concerns have been raised about the attractiveness of the entry to the town centre.*
- *Attractiveness and safety of the environment at the railway station.*
- *Dangerous bottlenecks at the Methodist Chapel Crossing.*
- *Further development of an evening economy at South End of Chester-le-Street.*
- *The Town's history should be exploited for tourism – Roman Heritage, Lumley Castle, Beamish Museum, Lindisfarne Gospel connections.*
- *Market Square is not seen locally as the heart, Middle Chapel is the heart.*
- *Riverside totally separate, create linkage.*

▪ **Business Survey**

A business survey was carried out to gather empirical evidence about the retail and commercial markets in Chester-le-Street, as well as to gain local traders' views of the town centre. 230 town centre businesses were interviewed face-to-face. Those unable to participate, were left with a questionnaire and pre-paid return envelope, to complete and return when convenient. A 46 percent response rate was achieved, with 107 completed questionnaires.

▪ **Public Drop In days**

Staffed public drop-in days were held in September 2007 to consider issues and options. The focus of the exhibition was the initial opportunity sites, land use proposals and supporting transport and environmental improvement projects. Following the drop-in days the display in the Library and Civic Centre was left for 2 weeks, with further opportunity to return questionnaires. The exhibition (and questionnaire) was also available on the council's website. Approximately 100 questionnaires were

returned (with far more people visiting the exhibition). Responses generally provided significant positive feedback. The highest priorities identified for projects were:

- *Station Approach*
- *Front Street West*
- *Market Place*
- *Improved bus routing*
- *Upgraded rail station.*

A second staffed exhibition was held in November. 2007 The purpose of this exhibition was to share the ideas contained within the four transformational projects; namely Chester Burn (East), Leisure Centre / Youth Centre, Station Approach and Front Street (West). The exhibition was also left on display for a further 2 weeks at the Civic Centre. The response was a generally positive consensus for the proposals, although the number of completed questionnaires was less than the 1st exhibition. The proposals outlined in the consultant's final report were presented to a meeting of Chester-le-Street Business Association in September 2008. The **Business Association's response** to the four transformational projects can be summarised as follows:

- the proposed leisure corridor would be an exciting development that would in time give a new much needed impetus to business in the North Burns area of the town;
- any regeneration of Front Street would be wholeheartedly appreciated;
- the area around the town's Railway Station is one where relocation of existing business and innovative use of land could add an exciting change to the dynamics of this part of the town; and
- more reservations were felt regarding the proposals for the South end of Front Street, since this looks as though it would have more impact on existing business requiring relocation, but once again members felt that anything that led to regeneration of the town as a whole was to be welcome.

Vision and proposals

37. The Town Centre Master Plan Report was subsequently developed taking into account the results of engagement and was **adopted by the District Council in January 2009**. It has already been identified in the **Draft Core Strategy** for the combined County Durham Local Development Framework. The Master Plan sets out the following **vision**.

“Chester-le-Street Town Centre will become the primary destination to serve the needs of the town's residents. People will be able to reach the Town Centre easily, either via attractive pedestrian routes, improved public transport access, or well located and co-ordinated car parking spaces.

The Town Centre will provide a comprehensive range of shops, services and leisure uses, with a strong independent sector and distinctive local identity. A series of distinct functional quarters will emerge in the Town Centre, each providing a different role and different character. The longstanding historical importance of the town will be realised by a series of heritage attractions to provide recreation opportunities for residents and attract new visitors to the town.

Linkages to the recreation facilities at Riverside, including the Cricket Ground, from the Town Centre will be enhanced, becoming attractive and convenient. As will links to the rail station, residential areas west of the viaduct and to an enhanced open space corridor around Chester Burn.”

38. The Master Plan Report also contains **an imagined visitor’s experience** of the town centre in 2020 that seeks to convey and illustrate the above broad vision in a more detailed and tangible way. **Proposals** are as follows

- **‘Policy Areas’**

The master plan divides the town centre into 50 “policy areas”. There is broad assessment of each of these areas within the document. Some areas are suggested to be retained as existing, and other areas are proposed for **intervention and enhancement**. The main focus of proposed intervention are the four transformation projects, which are summarised below:

- **Chester Burn (East)**

Chester Burn is an important east-west corridor, following the watercourse, relating to the heart and history of the town. The town developed from the crossing point of Front Street over the Burn. The intention is to introduce activity and new buildings along the corridor in order to achieve a strong and attractive east-west pedestrian route, linking Market Place to the Riverside. The project comprises a mixed use development, including quality bars / restaurants, offices and residential uses which are sensitively integrated into the existing townscape buildings. This will provide vitality and overlooking to a new adjacent pedestrian route following the alignment of the Burn. The proposals allow for bus and coach drop-off. Displaced parking spaces will be provided elsewhere in the town centre. Delivery of this project will depend on landowners’ wishes, financial viability and planning permission.

- **Leisure Centre/ Youth Centre**

The existing Leisure Centre and Youth Centre buildings sit in an attractive green environment. It may be that these uses could be provided elsewhere in new, higher quality buildings. Proposals for this site include a new Sports Centre and Arts Centre. The intention is to create high quality landmark buildings that maximise the green setting and historic importance of this site. A new Heritage Interpretation Centre is proposed as a major visitor attraction. This will be an iconic building which will be visible from the A167 and signpost the town centre to passers by. An archaeological dig is recommended in this area before development. This may result in the finding of historic relics that could be displayed in the Heritage Interpretation Centre. An objective is to provide an attractive and safe pedestrian route from the town centre to the Riverside. This will form a green link which will pass these buildings and extend over a new landmark footbridge across the A167

- **Station Approach**

The intention is to enhance the station approach, which forms a major gateway to the town centre, therefore creating a first impression to all visitors to the town. The proposals are to enhance the station forecourt and Station Road and upgrade public transport, with a new shuttle bus drop-off and taxi rank at the station. High quality new buildings are also envisaged to the north of Station Road. These buildings will raise the quality of the environment and provide activity to a new public square. The former Kwik Save site would be developed for a range of uses, making full use of the change of levels. A new retail unit and bus drop-off would be incorporated at the lower level, with new deck car parking provision at mid level for commuters, visitors and workers. At the upper level, adjacent to the station, will be high quality new offices and public space and a new taxi rank. The existing employment units south of Station Road could be replaced by new employment units.

- **Front Street (West)**

The aim of Front Street West site is to provide sites for high quality retail, leisure and hotel users in order to provide a strong southern anchor to Front Street, to complement Market Place to the north. The proposals extend the retail circuit to include West Lane, where new buildings will accommodate new retail and bar/restaurant uses. Office space is proposed on the upper floors of these buildings. A new high quality public space will be formed on Front Street, at the junction of West Lane, opposite an attractive Victorian building. The taxi ranks are also relocated to West Lane to provide improved access. At the southern end of the site space is provided for new leisure uses, these could include a town centre cinema or a new hotel. A new plaza is also formed on the southern end of the site that would form a strong setting for the War Memorial

39. There are two main requirements to enable the Master Plan to be implemented:

- ensure that the Master Plan is given sufficient weight and prominence in the LDF planning policy process; and
- excite the market to attract appropriate developers interest, and establish an appropriate delivery mechanism based on some form of public/private sector partnership.

40. The Master Plan Report is essentially about regeneration rather than a formal planning policy document. When considering planning applications relating to the town centre, the Master Plan now adopted by the District Council is a material planning consideration, but it would not have as much weight as the Local Plan or the new Local Development Framework (LDF). The emerging project plan for the unitary council LDF is indicating that the Chester-le-Street Town Centre Master Plan will be referred to in the Core Strategy, and that if the Core Strategy were not able to give sufficient detail and clarity, then a separate Chester-le-Street Town Centre Area Action Plan (APP) document would also be published. To help ensure that this happens, the District Council has formally adopted the Master Plan. The County Council may wish to ensure that the Master Plan does form part of the LDF Core Strategy and Chester-le-Street Town Centre Area Action Plan if necessary.

41. The Master Plan Report considers various types of “potential delivery vehicles” i.e. formal partnerships that could be created to implement the Master Plan proposals. The possible options outlined in the report are:

- Charity, Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Development Trust, Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Interest Company
- Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV)
- Joint Venture between the council and a single developer
- Site specific Joint Venture.

42. The report concludes that the most likely structure will be a joint venture with the private sector. Although it would be ideal for the council to work with a single developer, the complexity of the projects makes it likely that several developers may be required. The Master Plan report recommends that a special partnership body should be formed to implement the Town Centre Master Plan. This should be comprised of private sector partners, business and residential community, landowners and stakeholders. The County Council are in a position where it can develop this to support the achievement of the LDF as well as adopting the other **recommendations in the Master Plan Report**.

L. Spark
Business Association

"I think I can speak for all businesses when I say that we are in favour of the regeneration of the town. The proposed leisure corridor would be an exciting development that would in time give a much-needed impetus to business in the North Burns area of the time. Any development and introduction of new public area's for use by all the community, where residents of the town and workers can relax would be an exciting prospect.

Business Improvement District

43. Another specific initiative that can keep the heart beating is a project identified in the single **'People and Place'** priority aimed at supporting investment in the town centre. This was the proposed development of a **Business Improvement District** (BID).

44. BIDs are a proven means of enhancing the business environment; over 60 have been established across England and Wales since the enabling legislation was passed. A company, partnership or group manages a BID, which may be established by the business community, local authority or others. The BID will invest in specific projects and additional services over and above those already provided by a local authority and other public bodies. These bodies will enter into formal baseline service agreements with the BID organisation. The BID organisation, in consultation with businesses in the area, decides what its priorities are and produces a business plan. The revenue collected provides a flexible funding mechanism to improve and manage the commercial area. Funding is based on the principle of an additional levy on all defined non-domestic ratepayers following a simple majority vote. There are around 450 hereditaments in the Chester-le-Street town centre footprint yielding £3,650,000 in non-domestic rates; if a 1.5% levy was agreed in a vote this could raise around £55000 per year for the BID. The levy proposed in the BID business plan becomes mandatory on all defined ratepayers and is treated in the same way as the Business Rate, becoming a statutory debt. The business plan should specify how the levy would be paid and calculated but there are provisions within the legislation and regulations for smaller companies to contribute less. The council collects the additional levy in the same way as non-domestic rates but the revenue is held in a ring-fenced BID account. The BID runs for a defined period but it needs to be reviewed or renewed after five years, which will be the subject of another vote. In order to establish a successful vote the BID will rely on a certain amount of up-front funding to get it off the ground.

45. The proposal to develop a BID for Chester-le-Street has been discussed informally with members of the Business Association, who are in favour in principle and agree that the town centre is ripe for improvement. A more formal meeting was held with representatives of the Business Association and other business people in June 2008. The meeting endorsed the proposal to develop a BID. Those who attended the meeting are passionate about the town and have invested their own money to improve the business environment. They are keen to develop new projects. All the businesses in the BID area gain from the levy, which is a major selling point.

46. The new unitary council has an important role in developing the BID. It is vital that the BID has its support and necessary that a strong partnership is forged between it and the business community at an early stage. Officers from Durham County Council's economic Development Department and the Durham Economic Partnership have been consulted and have no objection to the development of a BID but have been unable to date to assist financially. The District Council's Executive considered a **report in October 2008** and agreed to develop a BID. Bearing mind the passion and support of the Business Association the BID is considered to be an initiative that the new unitary ought to take ownership of and drive for the benefit of businesses and residents in Chester-le-Street and the County.

The Future of the Market - Scrutiny Review

47. Chester-le-Street's market has been traditionally attractive to residents of the town and attracts people from all over the region. However people's habits change when faced with the development of other improved retail opportunities and experiences. In a nutshell the 'market' for markets is changing. The market has been subject to significant investment as part of the regeneration of the Civic Heart. Its attractiveness has been improved and the work of the **'People and Place'** Action Learning Set has developed a significant **programme of events** throughout the year to improve footfall and dwell time. Unfortunately, in line with many other markets, income from the market has not been achieving targets. It is therefore the right time to consider options for the market's future. To enable this, supported by consultancy advice, the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review into the market's future. The District Council's Executive agreed their final report, providing recommendations to the new unitary authority, in **February 2009**. In agreeing the report the Executive took the view that the new unitary ought to consider ensuring that the quality of the market stalls and offer should also be improved. They also felt that the area in front of the arch had greater value as a public space.

48. The review was undertaken by Scrutiny Members visiting a range of markets within the region as well as engaging a focus group of local traders. Members concluded that the market at Chester-le-Street is in a position where improvement and growth can be created. The review considered that in the short to medium term there remains justification for the market to be provided by the new unitary council. In the short to medium term a phased improvement plan based on the consultant's recommendations ought to be developed and the market managed accordingly. The review considered that should the improvement plan fail to deliver the required change then consideration ought to be given to outsourcing the market. The **consultant's recommendations** for the future are fully set out in section 6 of their report.

49. The market remains an important feature in the town both as a shopping destination but as a place where people meet up and converse. It needs some further investment to ensure that its future is sustained. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend a way forward for the new authority to achieve this.

50. Chester-le-Street established a market around the Cong Burn in 1850; many consider it the town's civic heart. The area underwent a major refurbishment in the summer of 2007 the market place was strengthened, new offices built and new stalls erected. The whole regeneration project, which includes the refurbishment of the Mechanics Institute has cost around £3m with more than 60% of the cost from external funding. The major feature of the market is the arch and the large paved performance and public space in front of it. The paved area incorporates the emblem of the town; St. Cuthbert's Cross, and the seats around the square are in memory of the collieries that shaped the history of the surrounding villages. The Civic Heart and Market has a significant part to play in the regeneration of the town centre and is included in the recently published Town Centre Master Plan. Chester-le-Street District Council appointed a Town Centre Development Manager to drive the implementation of the Master Plan and to ensure that the Market continued to thrive. During 2008 the area was used as the backdrop for many social and cultural activities, festivals and celebrations. The strategic use of funding for these activities has increased community involvement footfall and dwell-time in the town.

51. In the original new unitary proposals for restructuring, the management of markets was to be Town Centre Management in the Directorate of Regeneration and Economic Development. However, this has subsequently changed to place market management within the responsibilities of the Head of Regulatory Services in the Neighbourhoods Directorate. It is the District Council's view that the management, regeneration and future development of the town centre requires a holistic approach – incorporating the management of the market and civic heart. This council would urge that the management of markets should be returned to Economic Development under Town Centre Management.

The Importance of the Riverside Durham County Cricket Club to the Leisure Corridor

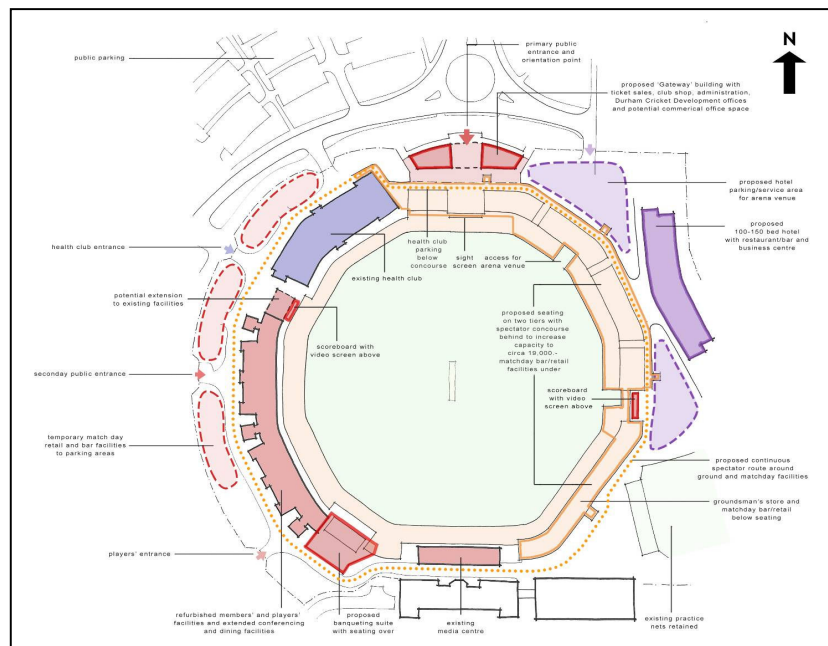
52. Durham County Cricket Club, located at the Riverside, is an international sporting venue. It is without doubt a significant tourism and sporting facility that is of major importance to the attraction of people to the area. It is vitally important to the County and the Region that the future of this asset and the relationship of this business with the local community is enhanced and sustained in the future. In order to secure a long-term agreement to stage international cricket, Durham County Cricket Club needs to complete the development of the Riverside Stadium up to the minimum standards required by the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board). With the support of One North East and the County Durham Economic Partnership, the club commissioned consultants to produce a **Master Plan Report**, which was completed in June 2006. The report confirmed that the development of the ground was required to secure future international cricket matches. In securing Test Match cricket the Riverside will play an effective role in projecting a positive image of the North East, attracting tourists and encouraging interest in cricket to benefit the region's economy. A planning application to implement the master plan proposals was submitted to the

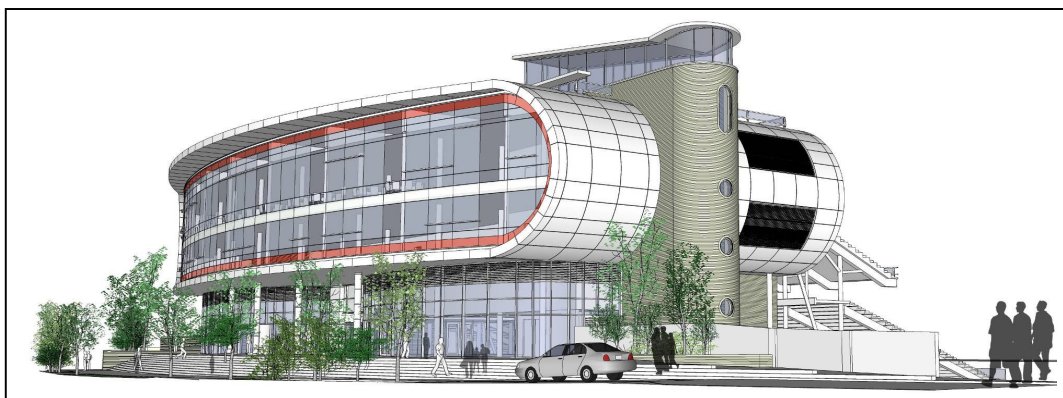
District Council in December 2008 but because of time constraints, this may have to be determined by the new unitary council. The Club has worked with the District Council and other partners to start to develop the ground into an improved business and entertainment destination by developing excellent conference facilities and developing the ground as a concert venue.

53. The **Planning Application** for the scheme, which has a development cost of around £45m, includes proposals for:

- New upper and lower tier seating to complete the enclosure of the pitch raising the ground capacity from 16,000 to 20,000 spectators;
- New scoreboards and replay screens;
- New floodlighting;
- New customer facilities including catering and toilets;
- New conferencing and banqueting facilities including extensions to the existing Don Robson Pavilion;
- A new Gateway building at the north end of the ground;
- A new Hotel; and
- Associated access, car parking and landscaping.

54 Comments raised by consultees following the application consultation process are currently being considered by planning officers.





David Harker
Chief Executive
DCCC

Our development plans over the next 2-3 years include something like £45 million worth of capital investment, which will create 150-200 jobs in the District itself. Also we have begun to establish Riverside as an important venue not just for cricket but for other events such as concert events and major music events but as a genuine destination for conferencing and banqueting. We hope to build a 150 bed hotel here and enhance our conference facilities. At the moment the A167 sort of cuts through our linkages between the Riverside itself and the town centre and it is important going forward that we link with the Master Plan for the Town Centre so that there is a connectivity between people who are using Chester-le-Street and are visiting the town centre on market day or for other reasons but also want to take advantage of the amenities and facilities not just at the cricket ground but the rest of the Riverside development

55. In addition to the cricket ground, the wider Riverside area, managed to 'greenflag' standard by the District Council is a strategically important leisure corridor. While the facilities provided by the council, which include a floodlit synthetic turf pitch, 6 lane floodlit athletics track, tennis courts and grass pitches are essentially local in scope the nature of the site has allowed it to be accepted as 2012 pre games training site for athletics. The council's Member Champion for Sport has been proactive in developing preparations in this respect. Only modest and ongoing investment is required to maintain the existing facilities, the opportunity exists however for the site to be considered as a regional sporting hub, building on the existing profile of the County Cricket Club and taking maximum advantage of its prime location for regional access and the existing road and parking infrastructure on the site.

This potential has been commented upon in the consultation stages for the development of the County Durham facilities strategy and should certainly be further explored. It is also worth noting that the council has secured a strong partnership with the County Cricket club, particularly in the requirements for staging international cricket and large scale music events. With the further developments taking place in the ground it will be the largest spectator facility within the County and offers a real opportunity to work with the County Cricket Club on developing an events programme of regional significance within the ground.

56. The Riverside provides facilities for a wide range of other sports and is an important gateway to a strategic network of countryside recreation routes and facilities for the whole Tyne and Wear conurbation and visitors from beyond the sub-region. The Weardale Way footpath to Durham and beyond to the North Pennines and the Coast to Coast national cycleway all the way to the Lake District are examples of nationally important recreation routes which pass through or close to The Riverside area. The Riverside Park is also close to and convenient for the A1 trunk road. The potential to promote Riverside as a 'stopping point' for the thousands of daily long-distance travelers using the trunk road should be investigated. At the moment, however the Riverside is not well linked to the Town Centre and its public transport facilities. If the linkages to the Town Centre could be improved hopefully visitors could then be enticed to visit the town centre as well. Together with visitor experience at Beamish Museum there is the real potential to encourage overnight stays in Chester-le-Street and a base from which tourists could explore other tourist attractions in the North East of England. Improving links between the town centre and The Riverside is therefore an objective of the Town Centre Master Plan, which contains a number of proposals to achieve this. The following plan illustrates this:

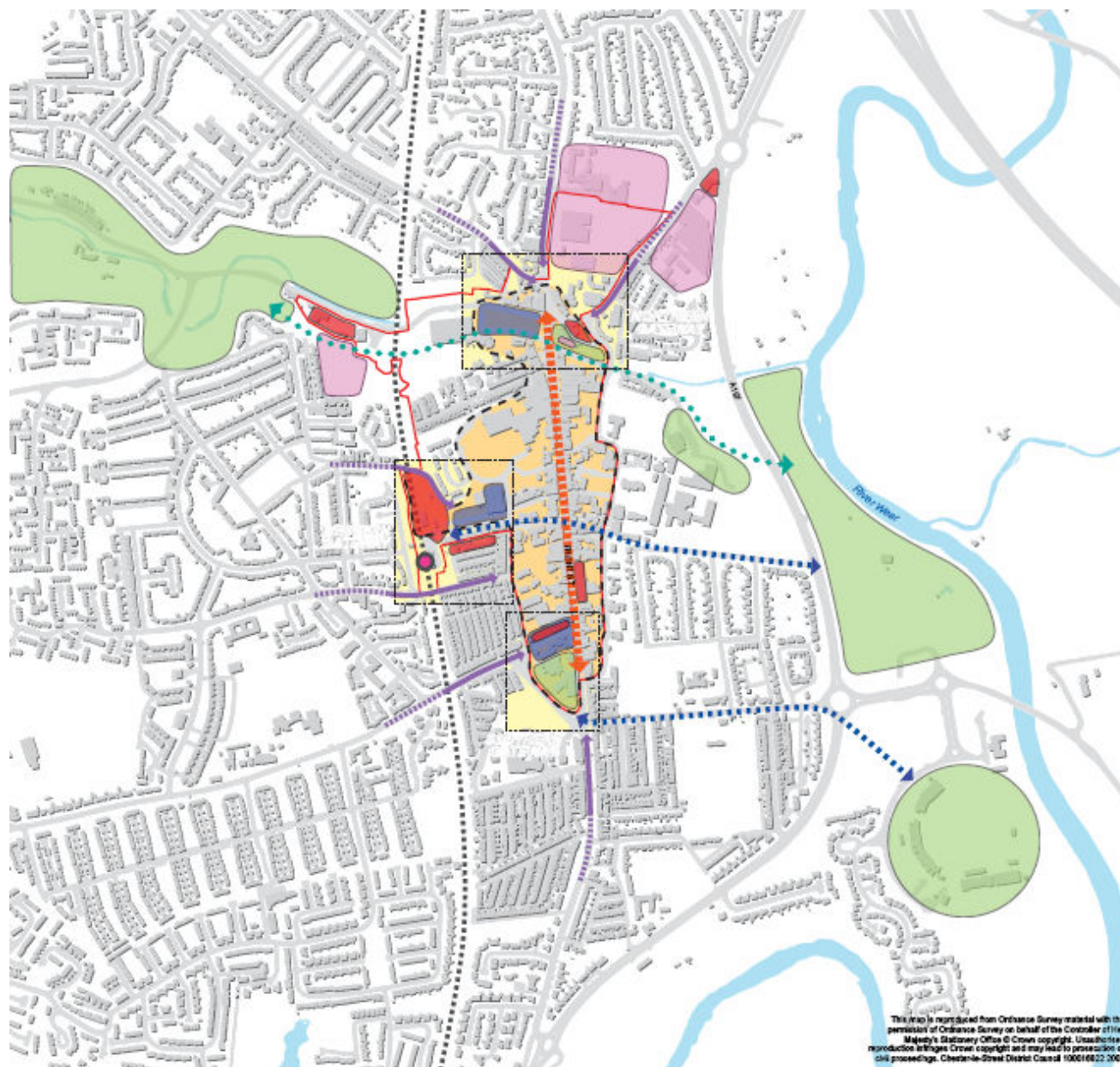


Figure 4.1 - Masterplan Linkages Framework

- Study Area Boundary
- Town Centre Core
- Retail Destination
- New Office / Employment
- New Residential
- Leisure Destination
- Gateway Area
- Consolidated Retail Core
- Enhanced Connection
- ◆ New Heritage Trail Route
- Linkage to Town Centre from Residential Areas

0 100 200 400
Meters

CHESTER-LE-STREET
MASTERPLAN LINKAGES
FRAMEWORK

1:8,000

job drawing rev
10/0/08 4/1/11 -

Employability and Skills

57. Chester-le-Street LSP Employability Forum has made significant strides in supporting people who live and work in the district into training and employment. The district, a non Working Neighbourhoods Fund or Deprived Areas Fund local authority area has ensured, through the work of its LSP that individuals living and working in Chester-le-Street have benefited from a number of initiatives despite no allocation of government area based grant to the district. The LSP Learning District Partnership office has in partnership with training providers and the council ensured that initiatives to support people into training and employment are delivered on a local basis to help reverse pockets of worklessness and deprivation. The progression of Chester-le-Street residents into training and employment is testament to the pro-active approach and effective partnership working of a number of agencies working together.

58. Projects that have supported the employability and skills agenda at a local level include:

- the implementation of **Hanlon Skills Register**
- JCP+ ESF Prime Contract for Sector Routeways is operating in the district through Working Links
- from February 2009 the LSC Co-Financing Contract for Sector Routeways will be delivered by Contact Centre Professional Working in partnership with Acumen Development Trust
- Test the Region, which provides an initial assessment of levels of literacy and numeracy, is also operating across the district through Acumen Development Trust.
- CfBT Next Step Information and Guidance Service offer their Universal Service, Differentiated Advice Service and Careers Advice Plus Service in the district.

59. The district, traditionally recognised as an affluent area also has severe pockets of deprivation most notably in parts of the wards in Pelton Fell, Pelton, Chester Central, Chester West, Sacriston, and Grange Villa. Allocation of area-based grant to these areas would support the future delivery of employability and skills initiatives.

Partnerships for Futures

60. 'Partnerships for Futures' is an innovative new project, designed to tackle head-on the skills shortages faced by many of Chester-le-Street's employers, and was identified as one of Chester-le-Street District Council's sub-themes of its corporate priority '**People and Place**' for 2008. A common aspiration exists between a number of business and education leaders to enhance the future prospects for both employers and the future workforce. 'Partnerships for Futures' seeks to work with both employers and the education sector to undertake a wide range of activity to enable employers to develop and keep their competitiveness through a skilled workforce.

61. The vision of 'Partnerships for Futures' is 'to harness and extend the collective efforts of Chester-le-Street's business and education communities to ensure that in the future local people are matched with identified real and sustainable local jobs'. The initiative aims to:

- focus on people and jobs
- connect employers, support agencies, prospective employers and trainees;
- improve links between employers and education and influences the curriculum to match the needs of employers;
- respond to individual or collective employer needs by designing and implementing innovative projects; and
- assist employers to improve the effectiveness of their existing and future workforce through developing the way they recruit and maximise the impact of their employees.

62. Areas of activity include workforce development and planning and delivering projects to meet employer needs. A vital aspect of 'Partnerships for Future's' will be to initiate new ways of working between the education sector and business to ensure the future workforce is able to meet the unique skills requirements of employers. Identifying employment opportunities and matching individuals with sustainable employment will be important outcomes of the initiative. To take the project forward a non-executive board was formed to provide strategic oversight to the delivery of the initiative. This is currently made up of:

- Ron Batty, Chief Executive, Chester-le-Street & City of Durham Enterprise Agency
- Roy Templeman, Chief Executive, Chester-le-Street District Council
- Len Stule, Assistant Director of Business Development, New College Durham
- Ian Robertson, Principal, Hermitage, A Specialist Technology College
- David Potter, Managing Director, Ambic Ltd
- Ann Latimer, Head of Personnel & Administration, Beamish Museum
- David Harker, Chief Executive, Durham County Cricket Club
- Councillor Mike Sekowski, Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Newly Appointed Executive Director- Phil Young.

63. Match funding has been agreed and governance arrangements are in place. To ensure sustainability of the project in light of local government review CDC Enterprise Agency have agreed to manage this project, however it will be important that 'Partnerships for Futures' receives the continued support of Durham County Council in order for it to achieve its goals in the longer term. The new unitary council is in an ideal position to be able to sustain this important local initiative and consider its value across the County.



Partnership for the Futures will form a backbone where we can put a structure in place within which to work a tripartite agreement where we have education, business skills needs and social responsibility coming together. We need to run this out to a larger area; It isn't just AMBIC Ltd that needs to be involved in this we need to involve the local business community.

David Potter
Ambic Ltd.

Tourism Issues

64. The importance of tourism to the district is significant. The Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model (STEAM) identified that in 2007 tourism was worth £69.19m to the local economy and 1,346 full time equivalent jobs were supported. Chester-le-Street has a unique tourism offer. Beamish Museum is an internationally renowned visitor attraction that vividly recreates life in the North of England in the early 1800s and 1900s. Major successes at Durham County Cricket Club at Riverside have also placed the district firmly on the regional, national and international sporting map and its planned re-development will ensure it continues to attract high profile matches. It was also in Chester-le-Street that the Lindisfarne Gospels were first translated into English. Plans for the town centre will continue to boost Chester-le-Street as a modern market town that would continue to boost the tourism economy.

65. Maximising the tourism potential of the district is a major priority in the continued regeneration of the district and to ensure that clear priorities are in place a draft tourism strategy has been developed in partnership with local businesses, residents and various groups and societies. The development and delivery of a **tourism strategy** has immense local support from the community and consultation has identified the following areas as tourism priorities for the district:

- Marketing and branding
- Information provision for visitors
- Product development and encouraging investment
- Raising quality and improving the visitor experience
- Tourism business support and growth
- Workforce development

66. The Strategy has identified the following vision:

“To develop and promote Chester-le-Street as a tourism and leisure based destination that will maximise the economic and cultural contribution the tourism sector can play in the regeneration of the District.”

67. In order to ensure this vision can be realised, the strategy and action plan will be structured around seven principal themes, which will address how tourism can be best developed, managed and communicated:

- Research and Monitoring
- Developing Tourism in the District
- Communications
- Information Provision and Access
- Quality
- Skills Development
- Infrastructure and Facilities

68. The Strategy sets out a clear action plan to achieve this vision. Through the delivery of this strategy and action plan, the district of Chester-le-Street will be recognised as making a significant contribution to the tourism product of the County and the North East. This document sets out actions that will be delivered locally to ensure that there is a more co-ordinated approach to managing the visitor experience within the District. The regional and sub-regional marketing campaigns undertaken by One NorthEast and County Durham Tourism Partnership are reaching bigger audiences than ever before and this presents an opportunity for the District to fully realise the economic benefits tourism can bring. Delivery of the tourism strategy and action plan aims to provide:

- an attractive place to visit, offering a cultural and educational experience for all age ranges;
- a first-class visitor experience by offering only the best in quality standards and service;
- a highly skilled work-force, with employers recognizing the importance of training and skills;
- a high quality visitor information that entices people to visit the District and explore everything we have to offer; and
- a District that welcomes visitors, is easy to access, and navigate around.

69. The **draft tourism strategy** is a valuable tool to understand Chester-le-Street’s current tourism offer and where there are areas that need further action through partnership working. Given the uncertainty at present of how tourism will fit into the structure of the new unitary authority, the document has not been adopted by Chester-le-Street District Council as there will need to be a clear framework in place to ensure its objectives are implemented. The draft tourism strategy is an important way

of ensuring focus and prioritisation is given in the development of tourism in the wider regeneration of the district, therefore Chester-le-Street District Council requests the new unitary authority to consider how it can be taken forward.



Sue Parkinson
Enterprise Agency

There are some tools that we have in our toolbox; we have a Regeneration Strategy, which is being implemented and which is working. If it continues to be implemented there is no reason why it can't continue to work. There is a lot of work needed to maximise the impact of this town centre. It has marvelous accessibility, it is easy to get into and easy to get out of so it faces competition from the Arnison Centre, it faces competition from Washington Galleries over in Tyne & Wear. It is disjointed from our 2 tourism assets. It's disjointed from the Riverside, it's disjointed from Beamish. Its retail offer could be better, the market could be improved, the nighttime economy could be maximised. How that could be done is contained within a full Town Centre Master Plan, which has recently achieved full consensus and consultation. It's a brand new shiny tool in the box, someone just has to pick it up and use it!

Decent homes – Housing Issues

Housing Strategy

70. During 2008 the District Council reviewed its Housing Strategy to cover the five year period up until 2013. It has been the responsibility of the District Council to strategically monitor housing related issues across all tenures within the District. The **Housing Strategy** document aims to assist in this process by shaping housing and planning policies to ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of the residents of Chester-le-Street District are met. The council recognised the need to deliver sustainable communities and the actions within the strategy require partnership working. Housing has significant impact on other service delivery and particularly issues such as health, anti social behaviour, social exclusion and employment opportunities. A multi agency approach is necessary to secure success.

71. There are now over 24,000 dwellings in the area. Chester-le-Street District has one of the highest numbers of Owner Occupiers in County Durham at 77%, with a further 20% of stock owned and run by Registered Social Landlords. 40% of the total housing stock is Semi-Detached properties and the District has a diverse range of properties in different age groups. House prices vary amongst different house types and locations and range from an average one bedroom flat selling at £87,000 to a three bedroom detached house at £155,000. Rental prices average between £425 and £450 again depending on tenure type and location. Current demographics include a population of 53,200 residents with varying age groups depending on

settlement location. Household composition is now changing as one-person households and lone parent families are now starting to increase at the expense of family households, this has caused increasing pressure on housing stock creating greater demand for properties. Whilst the District is located within the County Durham Authority boundaries a recent study concluded that the District's housing market is more clearly linked to Gateshead, Derwentside and Tynedale. Inward and outward migration is well balanced with very little pressure from international migrants. The future population of the Chester-le-Street District is expected to increase by a total of 3% up to 2021 especially within the 65+ age group. The council's current Social Housing register has been used to assess the housing need for the District. Over 41% of the people on the register aspire to owning their own home but are willing to consider social rent until conditions become more favourable to purchase. All age groups are applying onto the register but there are an increasing number of younger people within the 16-44 year old age group joining. Over 40% of the people applying are one-person households with a further 22% being lone parent families. Houses are in the most demand but larger two bedroom bungalows are also required indicating the needs for the older population. 66% of applicants require two-bedroom accommodation.

72. The Strategy has focused on the four objectives stated in the Regional Strategy. It provides action plans to address these four:

- **Decent Homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing**
- **Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice**
- **Meeting specific community and social needs**
- **Rejuvenating the housing market**

The new unitary council should continue to deliver the strategy for the district and take over from the progress made by the District Council. Relevant detailed issues are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Stock Transfer

73. In February 2008 the council transferred its housing Stock to **Cestria Homes Limited**. While this was a very difficult decision for the council it was considered that it was the best way for the service to deliver the decent homes standard and to secure long-term major investment in the maintenance and improvement of tenants' homes. In doing so we were responding to the wishes of the former council tenants who in October the previous year **voted in favour** of the stock transfer. Cestria Homes have already made significant achievements against what they set out to do, not only in terms of improving the standard of their houses but in terms of neighbourhood improvements and contribution to community cohesion. Cestria Community Housing is undertaking a major programme of improvement and repair to bring all homes up to a decent, modern standard. This was the promise the Council made to tenants when they voted for transfer. It will ensure homes will be comfortable and warm with modern kitchens and bathrooms. It will take Cestria Homes around five years to get all our homes up to standard. In **Year 1** and **Year 2** they are going to provide new doors and windows in over 3,000 homes and new heating systems in over

1,000 homes (The heating programme will continue to 2012 by which time the housing association will have fitted new heating systems to over 2,300 homes).

74. During this year 2009 Cestria will commence with their internal improvement programme. In the following 3 years the housing association expects to improve over 1100 kitchens and bathrooms. Once these are done they will move onto boundary improvements such as new walls and gates and estate improvements such as off street car parking. Cestria have set out clearly the standards they are working to and **what tenants can expect**. The new authority has the opportunity of working closely with this new housing association to help them achieve their vision.

75. The new unitary will have an important part to play in the continued governance arrangements for Cestria. It will also need to be responsible for the ongoing monitoring of its performance and achievement of its promises. This will include ensuring that there is a role for Scrutiny in this process.

Affordable homes

76. In recent years the District Council has been successful in delivering significant numbers and proportions of affordable dwellings. In 2007-08, 39 affordable dwellings were built, 28% of all housing completions in the District and 33% of all affordable dwellings built in County Durham that year. This has been achieved by a combination of the following factors:

- A policy in the adopted local plan which states that the provision of affordable housing will be sought on the basis an initial indicative target of 30% on sites of 15 or more dwellings and 0.5 hectares or more in size.
- A willingness to agree all types of affordable dwellings; i.e. 'intermediate housing' in order to create a good balance of housing tenures and safeguard viability, rather than insisting on high proportions of social rented dwellings in localities which already have high proportions of socially rented dwellings.
- Partnership working with developers through the sale of council owned land at less than full market value in order to partly subsidise the cost of providing the affordable dwellings.
- Higher land values than some parts of County Durham.

77. Details of the provision at April 2008 are set out as follows:

Affordable Dwellings on sites where development has commenced, at April 2008

Site	Developer	Number of affordable dwellings	%	Type of affordable dwelling	Housing Corporation Funding	Council owned
Poets Estate, Pelton Fell	Bellway	91	37%	social rent	yes	Sold to Bellway
Holly Crescent, Sacriston*	Barratts	50	30%	Intermediate-discounted market housing	no	Sold to Bellway to fund affordable homes and generated capital receipt
Vigo Lane, North Lodge/Birtley	Bellway	15	30%	Intermediate - shared equity scheme	probably	No
Lingey House Farm , Sacriston	Persimmon	11	30%	Intermediate - shared ownership	yes	No

Total affordable dwellings on sites where development has commenced = 167. Of this total 39 dwellings were completed during 2007/ 08.

* An almost unique nationally recognised initiative to secure two and three bedroom homes for £80,000 was negotiated by the Council at Holly Crescent. The affordability with successive house sales has been secured contractually to ensure affordable houses for sale are available for future generations

Affordable Dwellings currently being agreed at submitted planning application stage – April 2008

Newfield/Pelton	Persimmon	81	30%	Intermediate – mix of shared ownership and discounted market housing	Not yet known	No
Waldrige Lane Chester-le-Street	Holmside Construction	9	30%	Still to be agreed	Not yet known	No

Total affordable dwellings currently being negotiated = 90

Overall number of affordable dwellings currently 'in the pipe-line' = 257 dwellings

Homelessness

78. During 2005/06 there were 586 households who presented themselves to the Housing Options Team claiming that they were either currently homeless or could become potentially homeless in the near future. This figure rose in 2006/07 to 737, with an increase in presentation of 26%. Trends are shown in the following table.

Year	Homeless Presentations	% Increase In Presentations	Homeless Applications	% Increase In Applications	Accepted as Homeless	% Increase/decrease in Acceptances
2003/2004	N/A	N/A	239	N/A	122	N/A
2004/2006	N/A	N/A	231	-3.00%	103	-16%
2005/2006	586	N/A	273	28%	81	-22%
2006/2007	737	26%	322	18%	82	0%

79. To address trends the council produced its **Homelessness Strategy** in 2007. The strategy incorporates the councils' plans for:

- the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness;
- ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless; and
- Ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

80. The strategy has five objectives

- preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness in the district;
- reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation;
- improving Support Services for Homeless Households;
- implementing Service Improvements; and
- raising Homeless Policy issues with Central Government

81. It is suggested that the new unitary continue to deliver the strategy within the districts in order that its objectives can be achieved.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

82. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a vital part of the evidence base to inform the unitary council's Local Development Framework (LDF) and Housing Strategy. Some aspects of the housing market are continuously changing therefore the SHMA requires on-going monitoring with a combination of quarterly and annual updates. A Countywide project management group is currently working on establishing a monitoring framework, and officers from the District Council are leading on this project

Private Stock Condition Survey 2008

83. The **Private Stock Condition Survey 2008** has been used as a strategy document to identify levels of non decent dwellings within the private sector throughout the District. In 2003 Chester-le-Street District Council appointed David Adamson and Partners to carry out a Private Stock Condition Survey of the Chester-le-Street area of over ten percent of all properties (or 1700 properties) in the District. This gave the authority an understanding of dwellings in poor condition split by ward, tenure, Dwelling type, configuration and age on construction. The results at that time stated that 2297 dwellings presenting 12.2% of all private sector dwellings) failed the Decent Homes Standard and were therefore classified as non-decent and it was estimated that to make these homes decent would cost £5.153m. As part of this figure properties were assessed using the fitness standard and a total of 317 dwellings were classified as unfit to live in under section 604. The consultants believed that repairing these homes alone would cost approximately £3.279m.

84. In 2008 the council re-commissioned the consultants to update this survey as the Health and Safety Rating System (HSRS) had now replaced the previous fitness standard in. The HSRS is designed to consider the number of hazards that an occupier could face in his or her home and a total of 29 possible hazards are assessed on each property and it is then given a hazard banding. The highest band is "Category 1 hazards" where the occupier is in real risk if the hazard is not addressed. A total of 2158 dwellings now possess a category 1 hazard where a risk is present representing 11.2% of all homes in the District and the new estimated cost to repair these hazards has now risen to £8.35m (based on an average repair costing £3873 per dwelling). As the HHSRS standard contributes to the total level of non-decency it is not surprising that the total number of properties considered "non-decent" have also risen to 3352 dwellings or 17.4% of all private sector stock. Repairing all levels of non-decency has therefore rise to an estimated £11.619m

85. Both the North East Regional Housing Strategy and the Durham Sub - Regional Housing Strategy have highlighted the importance of local authorities introducing Private Sector Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policies that promote loans as well as grants in order to make effective use of available resources and maximise the number of property improvements through public sector intervention. A Private Sector Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy for Durham has been drafted and is available to be adopted by the new unitary council. The fundamental basis of the proposed policy is to offer

practical assistance and advice for those who have their own financial resources or are able to access finance themselves and also subject to available funding provide financial assistance for those who are financially excluded or in some circumstances where works are not financially viable. Strengthened 'private sector' staffing structures must also be in place in the new authority to deliver the above policy and to work on other initiatives within the private sector for example Landlord accreditation schemes and bringing back into use empty properties.

Private Sector Housing - Empty Property Management

86. The council's private sector housing team has been actively managing the council's empty properties since 2007. The District on average has in excess of 300 long-term empty private sector homes at any one time. The properties not only represent a wasted resource putting pressure on the housing market to build new houses but also can often act as a focus for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Since 2007 the team has accurately tracked these properties working with the owners to bring the properties back into use. To enable the team to offer a wide a range of potential alternatives to owners, the team developed a range of partners including charities, property developers and builders.

Private Landlords Accreditation Scheme

87. The Chester-le-Street **Private Landlord Association** (PLA) has been operating very successfully since 2004 with membership continuing to grow. The Chester-le-Street Private Landlords Association is a voluntary organisation that has been set up to recognise and reward landlords who manage their properties to a good standard. Working together, private landlords on the scheme have developed a set of easily achievable standards that enable properties to reach Decent Homes Standards and assist with the effective tenancy management service. Landlords who join the scheme and abide by the standards are given a "Certificate of Accreditation". There are long standing problems of poor condition and management in some parts of the sector. In particular, areas of low housing demand have become associated with falling prices/rents, empty properties and above all crime and anti social behaviour. The scheme encourages landlords to take preventative measures to protect themselves and neighbours by checking references and dealing with complaints. It will also involve landlords in local strategies to re-stabilise communities in partnership with other agencies.

88. The Scheme has the following benefits for landlords:

- there is an appointed PLA Officer available on hand to answer queries, deal with any issues etc.;
- free membership packs covering the landlords guide to legal standards; model tenancy agreements including associated paperwork and more;
- regular, friendly, informal relaxed meetings – a great opportunity to meet and network people to share good practice. Guest speakers invited;
- free advertising of properties to let;

- vetting of tenants;
- updated and regularly maintained waiting list of tenants looking for accommodation;
- help in negotiating and assisting with issues such as Housing Benefit Claims, Anti Social behaviour etc.;
- accreditation of properties is simple and enables landlords to have a market advantage;
- tenant/Landlord mediation is available; and
- tenancy support from the Housing Options Team

89. Tenants who apply for properties, which have gained a 'Certificate of Accreditation', have the assurance that the council and the landlords are continuing to work in partnership. This will ensure that properties are maintained to a suitable standard according to government legislation. The council also offers supporting services to tenants with vulnerability issues throughout the community and the association works very closely with the Housing Options Team to achieve the prevention of homelessness. At present there are 46 accredited landlords involving 147 properties. 77 of these are accredited and landlords are working towards the accreditation of the remainder. The County Council may wish to sustain and build on progress so far made.

Positive Planners – The Value of a Proactive Planning Service

90. It is important to note that the provision of a positive, receptive, efficient and helpful planning service has been an important part of improvement and regeneration achievement at Chester-le-Street. The service at Chester-le-Street has commanded the confidence of major developers to support housing and other regeneration initiatives in the district. The new unitary can learn a great deal from the experience at Chester-le-Street. The features of this service have been:

- a positive, performance managed service which has achieved best in region and top quartile performance, not only in relation to speed of decision but customer satisfaction levels as well;
- a service which is committed to resolving issues but achieving the highest standards of development, providing a 'can do' approach to resolving minor technical planning issues;
- high levels of openness through community engagement to help communities understand the importance of proposals yet allow them the opportunity to influence decisions, including public speaking at committee;
- committee procedures which have been developed to ensure Members are provided with the highest possible level of information in order to deliver quality decisions;
- developers forum for engaging customers in service development and improvement;
- strong working relationships with the policy and regeneration teams to understand the big picture of the council's overall regeneration strategy;
- positive enforcement and multi disciplinary team working to maximise efficiency of the councils enforcement function;

- a planning enforcement function which delivers a service where complaints are prioritized not only by traditional planning factors but also community requests for action;
- a proactive approach to the recycling of planning obligation (S106) monies, ensuring a high level of spend out of monies received with elected Members being given a role in ensuring recommended schemes are in line with priorities for their Ward areas;
- a Building Control service which is fully signed up to the importance of performance management and uses such intelligence to obtain work in the face of challenging private sector competition; and
- a Building Control service which takes a pro-active approach to engagement, including through the hosting of free technical seminars to regular customers of the service.

91. It is suggested that the new unitary council considers areas of the above best practice in developing their new planning service

Conclusions

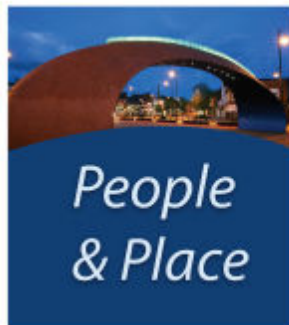
92. Communities have worked hard over the last five years or so to improve the places that they live and work. They have been given opportunities to work with partners to improve their well being. The new unitary is well placed to sustain the progress they have made so far in particular the new unitary is recommended to:

- **share the council's experience in terms of regeneration in the District**
- **continue to support community led regeneration and development of social capital such as the work in Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacriston (paragraph 22- 33 page 18);**
- **continue to implement and as appropriate incorporate the existing Regeneration Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy into County strategies to ensure that their aims and objectives are built into future planning and ultimately achieved (documented throughout section 2);**
- **ensure that the Town Centre Master Plan is built into the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework District (paragraph 35 - 42 page 25);**
- **make progress on the Business Improvement District while implementing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Review of the Market and reconsidering the management structure for markets (paragraph 43 - 51 page 31);**
- **continue to support the development of Durham County Cricket Club and recognise and support the importance of the Leisure Corridor (paragraph 52 - 56 page 33); and**
- **commit to supporting 'Partnership for Futures' (paragraph 60 - 63 page 38).**

Real Power for Real People
Handing over the Baton Report

3. Local Partnerships and the Environment

Handing
over the
Baton



3. Local Partnerships and the Environment

Summary

93. This chapter of the document addresses a range of cross cutting issues all of which have significant importance in terms of community engagement in service delivery. It addresses the formal and informal partnerships that are or have been important to the lives of people in the area. It shares our experience in improving the environment in our area. The chapter also addresses the work undertaken by the council, in partnership, to address health and community safety issues in the District.

94. The development of Action Area Partnerships (AAP's) is a part of the new unitary authority's approach to local partnerships and community engagement. Chester-le-Street considers that it has a strong track record of **community development and engagement** in partnership with others. Action Area Partnerships are not a replacement for the District Partnership, the area's Local Strategic Partnership and will have a different focus and role. What also needs to be high on the new unitary authority's agenda are the levels of engagement below the AAP's. There are networks of small groups, local partnerships and engagement that the District Council has supported in the past and which have been fundamental to communities supporting themselves. This chapter:

- highlights the importance of community development and engagement;
- highlights the importance of sustaining community facilities that support engagement; and
- provides the County Council with details of the work of the District Partnership and its policy groups as part of an exit Strategy ;

95. Communities within the district have significant pride in the places that they have live and work. They also have a significant desire to engage in making their areas a better place in which to live. The district also has significant environmental resources across the whole area and these include Regionally as well as locally important areas such as the Riverside and Waldrige Fell. Over the last five years or so the council has worked to harness this pride and enhance the natural environmental resources it is blessed with.

Real Power for Real People: The Importance of Community Development and Engagement in Chester-le-Street

96. Chester-le-Street considers that it has a strong track record of **community development and engagement** in partnership with others. Community development and engagement has been the driver of service delivery. The council developed a **community engagement strategy** which was subsequently adopted by the Local Strategic Partnership. It then reviewed its **regeneration service** to draw together direct services involved in community development within the council. Examples of community development and engagement across a wide variety of services, some of which will be expanded upon in this chapter and the next, include:

- **Communities for Health** – providing a range of initiatives for health improvement, including mental health
- **Community Sports Coaches scheme** – providing enhanced sports coaching opportunities for children and young people;
- **Positive Futures**- engaging young people through sport;
- **Footsteps to Fitness**- engaging older people in healthier life styles;
- **Exercise referral** and **Specialised Referral schemes** which **engage otherwise excluded people in fitness**;
- **Lifestyle Walks** – engaging older people in exercise;
- **FISCH** – supporting families in exercise and nutrition;
- **Hedge Project and Biodiversity and Community Strategy Project** – engaging local environmental groups in promoting awareness;
- **Pelton Fell Lottery Bid** – supporting the delivery of funding to support community facilities development;
- **Homeless Young persons Service** – supporting vulnerable young people;
- **Streetsafe, Sacriston** – working with communities and the police to improve community safety;
- **Safer Food Events** – raising food safety awareness across the community;
- **Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Working Group** – engaging taxi operators in service development;
- **Lilac House** – providing a community house and supporting activities for families in Sacriston;
- **‘It’s a knock out’** – working with people who have physical and learning disabilities to engage in sport; and
- **Neighbourhood Charters** – working with communities to develop standards and action plans

97. Outside of the residents and community associations the council has supported the **Community Partnerships**. These provide resident representation in the District Partnership (LSP) and have been crucially important to community engagement in the work of the LSP. They will not exist once the Local Strategic Partnership comes to an end. The Community Partnerships act as a community forum where partners and communities can address issues that affect their neighbourhoods. There have been four across the District with different scales of participation and success. They have met

quarterly in the past. It is considered that there is a clear rationale not to abandon these but to continue to support them to act as a link between communities and the Action Area Partnerships.

98. At the grass roots level of engagement there is a network of small groups including 23 Residents and Community Associations within the District. These are fully supported by the council's Community Development Team. Significant positive relationships exist between the council and these groups, which are important foundations for community capacity building within the district. These associations will provide an important link in the chain between communities, the District Partnerships through to the Action Area Partnership. As such it is considered important that their futures are sustained. The groups have worked with council support to:

- set up and sustain the associations which cover the districts various geographical locations
- provide direct and tangible improvement to community spirit
- Provide direct and tangible improvement to the environment through the provision of play, the development of environmental projects, diversionary activities for young people and activities for older people
- Involve communities in the decisions that affect them;
- Help communities feel that they can achieve and have achieved; and
- Help communities to find ways to improve their capacity

99. It is vital that the new authority continues the support to these and other important **voluntary groups and organisations**. This support and capacity building has been crucial to the communities improvement journey. The new unitary may wish to sustain the support that has been provided in the past.

Fencehouses Resident Association Member

I can't believe that such a small group could achieve such a big scheme, people power is great

Real Power for Real People: The Importance of Sustaining Community Facilities - Community Facilities Review

Nature and Importance of the Review

100. Without community buildings, places to meet, learn and be entertained, community engagement can be difficult. Many community facilities, which support engagement and improvement to well being, will be transferred to the new unitary in April. These have previously been managed by the District Council who have also had an overview of other community facilities including those that are owned by the County Council and Parish Councils. During 2008 as part of the **Regeneration Strategy**, the council undertook a Community Facilities Review. This was carried out by the Community Facilities Review Working Group with a view to understanding the nature and value of facilities while making recommendations for options on the future development and management of the facilities. It set out to identify information about the issues that affect the facilities, their potential and their future sustainability within their communities.

101. The Working Group involved voluntary groups, council Members and officers from both the District and County Council. Extensive and comprehensive research was undertaken over a period of a year and consultation with community leaders was undertaken involving over 20 community and voluntary organisations. The final Report took into account the Government White Paper, Real People, Real Power and its implications for future community assets.

102. The Working Group found that Chester-le-Street District has the lowest number of community buildings per 5000 of the population of any district in the county. The county figure is 2.76 buildings, with some districts [Teesdale at 7.56 per 5000] having significantly higher than Chester-le-Street's 1.77. The level of active involvement of management committee members is the lowest in the county. Under the new Government assessment regime this is likely to be one of the performance indicators. However, the District does have a number of notable success stories with the council promoting and supporting an approach of transferring community facilities to communities that have developed their management capacity and **sustainable business plans**. Recent examples include the new Sacriston Community Centre and Pelton Fell's proposed new community centre and Multi Use Games Apparatus (MUGA). The District Council believes that this approach to active engagement of the community in the management of a sustainable business plan is more likely to ensure that our communal facilities are developed for the benefit of all sectors of our community in the future.

Background, Management and Investment

103. At a national level, the Community Facilities issue is recognised as being of increasing significance. The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets has been the basis of the review process. The presumptions contained within this Review were based on the notion of Asset Transfer to the community. However, the Working Group felt that the Quirk Review failed to acknowledge, national long-term under investment in community buildings and to account for legal nuances that frequently apply to areas such as County Durham, where buildings have been inherited from Miners Welfare Associations and other benefactors. The Review stressed that community facilities are a way of achieving various economic, regeneration, health, social and environmental outcomes rather than an end in themselves.

104. In Chester-le-Street, all larger buildings are run by volunteer management committees; supported in some cases by small numbers of part-time workers. Many groups identified the need for additional training, support and development for committee members who are under pressure of time commitments and competing priorities. Many community buildings in Chester-le-Street are in need of significant review / development and support in terms of:

- business plans;
- policies and procedures,
- health and safety legislation;
- Insurance and Licenses; and
- Welcome packs and training manuals for Trustees, Volunteers and paid staff.

105. The council's structured approach to supporting major facilities such as Bullion, MILE House, Sacriston and Pelton Fell in injecting significant resources and transferring leasehold contracts has helped to secure a good future for these facilities. Other facilities continue to be supported by the council but it is acknowledged that they are in need of a more thorough review on a premises by premises basis.

106. In terms of funding there is significant confusion over ownership versus management responsibilities for some buildings. This creates practical problems. Historically, there has been a range of informal arrangements in place with the District Council operating on a basis of good will on a number of occasions. Repair and maintenance issues were of concern in most buildings, along with the subsequent potential health and safety issues. Many of the buildings have some large capital spending requirements in the future if the aspirations of the communities are to be met. These needs include car parks, disability access and internal / external refurbishment. The voluntary and community sector is experiencing something of a crisis in relation to revenue funding and this is demonstrated in the current position of some buildings in the district. Hence the recommendation that a structured 'business plan' approach needs to be adapted to identify the issues relating to need and sustainability for each facility. This would be in line with the approach we have taken on the major community centre refurbishments / replacements as outlined previously.

Building on good practice and sustaining the future

107. In September 2008 and February 2009 the Districts Council's Executive considered two confidential reports (the confidentiality relating to financial information relating to individual buildings). The latter has already been provided to relevant County Council Cabinet Members and appropriate Members of the new Unitary's Corporate Management Team. The Community facilities report:

- Identifies the issues that affects community facilities in the district;
- Identifies the importance of facilities to community learning in the area; and identified models of good practice within Chester-le-Street; and
- highlights good practice, particularly at Bullion Hall and Chester-le-Street Methodist Church

Bullion Hall

- Comprise a dedicated team of paid staff all trained and qualified in relation to Health and Safety, First Aid and Food Hygiene.
- Paid staff carry out a range of repairs reducing the costs of external service providers.
- Paid workers are drawn from the local community which contributes to economic regeneration.
- Through the CVS and Volunteer Bureau, the hall benefits from strong and experienced management and leadership.
- The hall benefits from extra facilities [buggy park, ICT suite, café, crèche, wireless broadband which supplement the room hire experience.
- Positive welcoming atmosphere created by paid staff gives a sense of community to the building which is vital to the retention of more disengaged users of the building [e.g. young men].
- Regular attention to policies and provision enables a responsive approach to the changing needs of customers.

Methodist Church

- Is a town centre facility located in busy area.
- Is experiencing an increase in use [includes church, community, charitable and statutory groups and agencies]
- Has recently succeeded in attracting substantial funding from the Lottery to rebuild community facilities .
- Has no paid staff currently [included in the lottery bid to provide full time staff member] .
- Has many dedicated voluntary staff from the Church who open building to the community and run some services.
- Benefits from widespread Church support, so room hire is not the only source of income.

108. There are common elements to both of these successful buildings:

- Sound management and leadership;
- Committed Staff/ Volunteers / facility;
- Mixed Income Sources;
- Commitment to Development which meets Community Needs;
- Good Financial Management and Planning; and
- Transport Links

The report goes on to set out possible options, consider possible models for delivery and considers issues of resources. Community buildings are essential components of successful community engagement and neighbourhood development within the district. The loss of community buildings would undermine the achievement of the communities' strategic objectives in relation to engagement and cohesion. Furthermore, well-managed and maintained community buildings serve as pivotal community anchors and provide the basis for community hubs. There are a number of success stories in the District but there is also a need to address the needs of local communities and the potential of some of other facilities to ensure that appropriate facilities are in place to serve community needs now and in the future.

109. The District Council has no doubt that sustaining community facilities, as part of an overall approach to community engagement, will be vitally and crucially important to Comprehensive Area Assessment. The District Council would commend the report to the new unitary and urge it to:

- support the model outlined in the Review Report for supporting **new** facilities in the District at, for example, Bullion Hall, Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacriston;
- consider the potential for community hub model and the individual community centre model to enhance and develop community facilities within Chester-le-Street and County Durham.;
- review on a premises by premises basis those community facilities not yet subject to major improvement programmes and consider how they provide community access and promote inclusion; and
- consider whether the new Unitary should consider provision of dedicated support services to volunteer management committee members? This could be in the form of the new Hallmark Accreditation, developed by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), which can be utilised through a 'peer group system', where Groups are supported with training and development and can then assist other Groups. This accreditation is currently being considered by the Charity Commission as a national standard.

110. The new unitary is asked to recognise that, to date, the further detailed review work relating to individual needs and requirements of community facilities has not been done in partnership with community facilities management committees and users themselves. Therefore, it is critical that, should the recommendations outlined in the Reports and summarised above, be developed into a strategy, representatives of community facility management committees and community leaders are fully involved in the process.

The District Partnership and work of the Policy Groups

111. The District Partnership, Chester-le-Street's Local Strategic Partnership will shortly be abolished. The Partnership developed its first **Community Strategy** in 2004 and developed its reviewed **Sustainable Community Strategy** and **Summary** in November 2006. The focus of the District Partnership has been to deliver this strategy through seven Policy Groups:

- Learning District (Life-Long Learning)
- Environment, Housing and Planning
- Community Safety
- Economic Regeneration
- Health Improvement
- Culture and Creativity
- Children and Young People

112 This work has been a true partnership between the communities within Chester-le-Street and organisations such as the Police, Fire Brigade, the Primary Care Trust; the CVS and both the District and County Council. The work of the policy groups and has supported the activity and related implications for the new authority identified throughout this report. The County Durham Partnership will take a significant strategic role in the co-ordination of the work Local Strategic Partnerships across the county currently undertake. The following paragraphs set out the current position of the policy groups that have delivered the work of the District Partnership.

Learning District (Life-Long Learning)

113. This work of this policy group has been delivered through the Learning District Partnership. The contact is **Jo Forster** Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator. The following has been achieved:

- Research at a local level to identify gaps in provision and mapped provision
- Developed and monitored (with stakeholders) the Sustainable Community Strategy for Lifelong Learning that has achieved its objectives
- Made valuable contributions to the development of the LSP Sustainable Community Strategy for Economic Development to ensure social regeneration of our communities
- Brought funding into districts for the delivery of training for social, health and economic inclusion
- Brought public, voluntary, community and private sectors together at a local level through stakeholder groups as identified in the attached structure
- Established a strong and effective partnership at local level
- Established strong and effective links at a strategic level across:
- The Increasing Participation of Education, Employment and Training Working Group to meet gaps in provision for young people who are NEET or potential NEET with projects shortly to be funded through the LSC Co-Financing Youth Participation Project
- The Teenage Parents Working Group and the service that this is now based at Sure Start providing in engaging teenage parents and those to be by offering a drop in service and education and training for sexual health, health, social and economic inclusion
- Family Learning activities average minimum of 40 per annum (currently 39 across pre-school settings, include clinics, community venues, primary schools, junior and secondary schools.
- The development of the Learning in Community Forum that brings together stakeholders from the Adult Education and Health Improvement Sectors to work together at a local level for the benefit of our communities
- The Employability Forum where stakeholders who have funding for Employability Initiatives and Post Employment Support work in partnership for the benefit of our communities
- Effective working relationships have been established with Tyne and Wear City Regions to bring in Single Programme for post employment support which was gap in the district and also for the implementation of the Hanlon Client Tracking System which seeks to ensure that clients engaged in activities from engagement through to post employment support are progressing and achieving
- Ensured Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Funded projects are established across the district to meet gaps in mainstream provision. Projects established currently in the following wards of Sacriston, Pelton Fell, Chester West, Pelton, Grange Villa. Additional projects will be established from January 2009.
- Established Electronic Network for Communicating the Lifelong Learning Agenda Economic Agenda and Health Agenda to stakeholders

- Established an information centre in the district for stakeholders to access information to inform their practice and funding applications
- The LDP Office has developed the Learner Voice that enables learners to electronically complete an evaluation questionnaire on the completion of any length of course or taster session and inform the LDP of the quality of delivery and what future programmes (including level of qualification) the learners wish to progress to. The data is collected through New College Durham electronic systems. Report is then compiled on this evidence to inform the LDP Management Group. In addition through open consultation annually at the LDP Annual Review where in 2008, forty learners were consulted on how participating in learning activity had improved their well-being and health. This consultation informed the national NIACE Consultation on 'How Adult Learning Improves Well-being and Health'.
- Adult Learners' Award Celebration Evenings are annual events to give recognition to learners who have achieved through grassroots community provision including Sure Start Children Centres. Each year an average of 80-100 learners are nominated for individual or group award. A minimum number of 80 learners attend the event each year with their families and tutors.
- Consultations are responded to collectively through central co-ordination
- Central co-ordination has enabled research, information, mapping, curriculum planning, joint promotions, prevented duplication of provision, provided funding, giving clarity to partners of what is being delivered and achieved in the district through the lifelong learning, economic and health agendas across the district
- One of the significant achievements of the LDP has been its ability to work across a wide range of agendas thus bringing together stakeholders accountable for different agendas who would never previously have had the opportunity to meet if the LDP had not been in existence
- Despite the lack of Working Neighbourhood Funding and Deprived Areas Funding **this is an achieving district** through the work of the LSP/Laps effective partnership working to bring in funding through its stakeholders and to work with consortiums to ensure that our wards of deprivation and super output areas have the same opportunities as WNF and DAF areas as Tyne and Wear City Regions. Skills and qualifications statistical shows that of Chester-le-Street's working age population:
 - 82.5% have achieved a level 1 qualification at December 07
 - 67.7% have achieved a level 2 qualification at December 07
 - 47.5% have achieved a level 3 qualification at December 07
 - 27.7% have achieved a level 4 qualification at December 07

- 114** The new unitary council needs to consider how the work of the Learning District Partnership can be sustained after April 2009 and particularly the following:

- Single Programme Funding for Post Employment Support Project in partnership with CVS Volunteer Bureau, The Wise Group, Groundwork, Skill Training, JCP+ and Connexions Service
- Hanlon Skills Register Project for Client Tracking with CVS Volunteer Bureau, New College Durham, The Wise Group, Partnership for Futures, Skill Training, Acumen Development Trust, Bridge Women's Education Project
- NLDC Projects:
 - WEA/ Sure Start Course Support at Sure Start Bullion and Pelton Children's Centres
 - Supporting Community Education – Bridge
 - Pelton Computer Learning Suite – Pelton Community Centre
 - Care Workers Skills for Life at Grange Villa Community Enterprise Centre- EiC Return to Learn
 - WEA/ Sure Start First Aid at Sure Start Bullion, Pelton and Sacriston
 - New College Durham Outreach Project at Sacriston, Pelton Fell Community Group and Pelton Community Centre
 - Mobile Creche to support SFL, ESOL and Family Learning across Chester-le-Street wards – EiC RtL
 - Teenage Parents Engagement/ Drop In and Programmes for Being a Parent and for wider social and economic Inclusion – Teenage Parents Working Group Partnership
- Projects funded through Co-Financing 14-19 Youth Participation Project Funding on the 4 Strands need to be sustained for young people 14-16 who are becoming disengaged from school and those who have become NEET- Increasing Participation in Employment Education Training Action Group Partnership
- Year 8 Project in Hermitage and Park View School to prevent disengagement
- Family Learning activities with statutory and VCS co-ordinated and timetabled
- Adult Learners Award Ceremony (as outlined in previous section)
- Learner Voice (as outlined in previous section)
- Map of Provision of Learning Activity across the district (300 + activities pa)
- Electronic Network of Intelligence on Learning, Economic, Health Improvement, Children and Young People and Tackling Teenage Pregnancy Agendas
- Promotion of learning activity and achievements of learners into newsletters/media

Environment, Housing and Planning Policy Group

115. The work of this policy group is important to the achievement of the countywide Sustainable Community Strategy. This groups work therefore ought to be sustained through the County Durham Partnership, mainstreamed unitary authority strategic planning and in particular the development and implementation of the following important planning documents:

- Local Development Framework;
- Housing Strategy; and
- Local Transport Plan.

Community Safety Policy Group

116. The work of this policy group will be naturally taken up by the Durham and Chester-le-Street Community Safety Partnership. The Partnership's Plan for the next three years is set out in Paragraphs 179 to 180.

Economic Regeneration

117. Following consultation with the LSP Economic Regeneration Policy Group in October 2008 to understand the priority areas for the future economic regeneration of the district, the group considered a range of pertinent issues and identified five local priorities for the district with regard to economic regeneration. This includes:

- Development of vibrant Town Centre;
- Full Employment / Training Opportunities;
- One stop shop for young people;
- Create a hub for high tech businesses;
- Tourism Leisure offer; and
- Business Engagement.

118. More detail on these are set out in the Policy Groups **Handing over the Baton Report contribution**.

Health Improvement Policy Group

119. The contact for the work of this group is Iain Miller of the NHS County Durham. There are two documents that set out the work of this group that needs to be sustained. These documents are the **Health Improvement Plan 2008/2010** and the Joint **Strategic Needs Assessment**.

Culture and Creativity

120. The work of the Culture & Creativity Policy Group has come to an end in relation to its original objectives and can rightly be subsumed into the cultural work of the new council. The summer Festival programme 2009 and the cultural calendar could be picked up and incorporated into the work of the county events team and be part of the county wide promotional programme of events with a local emphasis on Chester-le-Street. The need for heritage, cultural and leisure facilities for the district are enshrined in the Town Centre Master Plan. These can be delivered as the plan is adopted and rolled out. The need for a district wide cultural Strategy ought to be picked up through the Arts and Leisure Officers forum. The Chester-le-Street Action Area Partnership could provide the local vehicle through which delivery of the above could be monitored.

Children and Young People

121. The work of this policy group is now been delivered by the Children's Trust. The contact person is Alison Underwood

The Importance of an Active and Sustained Voluntary Sector

122. Central Government has placed increasing emphasis upon the significance of the voluntary and community sector, recognising that the sector offers; amongst others things, a mechanism by which to engage the hard to reach, a strong focus on the service user and an ability to be flexible and provide joined-up approaches to service delivery. The voluntary and community sector in Chester-le-Street is both complex and diverse, comprising of approximately **360 voluntary and community organisations** ranging in size from neighbourhood projects to sub regional, regional and national organisations. These organisations provide vital services and support individuals, local communities, and specific groups across a wide range of areas, and include sports clubs, environmental groups, resident associations, agencies providing skills training and business planning and support groups for the most vulnerable members of the community. A number of **case studies** have been produced to provide a flavour of the work undertaken by some of these groups and their impact upon the end users. **Chester-le-Street & District CVS and Volunteer Bureau**, which has accommodation at Bullion Hall and the Volunteer Centre, provides the underpinning support to the voluntary and community organisations so they can:

- Provide quality services to their clients
- Be an independent voice on behalf of their client groups, especially those who are disadvantaged
- Be informed and confident and participants within local partnership arrangements
- Help their volunteers and paid workers make a real difference in their communities

123. Some of the important outputs from this service are as follows:

- It is estimated that as employers the Voluntary/Community Sector for Chester-le-Street directly employs some 160 full time equivalent posts.
- Bullion Hall – an estimated throughput of 35,000-40,000 people per annum.
- Volunteer Bureau - deals with over 300 volunteer enquiries per annum, and currently holds details of 750 active volunteers from the district.
- “CVS News” – distributed bi-monthly to 350 voluntary and community groups, the newsletter covers all of the themes Fundraising, Strategic policy issues, employment law etc.
- Funding - Each year around 60 groups are supported with a year on year investment of £1 million into the districts voluntary/community sector from charitable trusts.

124. Although the voluntary and community sector have in the past been good at attracting funding, changes in the funding environment, which has resulted in increased competition for funding and the impact of the current economic climate, means that there is a risk that some of these organisations may have to either reduce their services or close down completely, due to lack of funds. These organisations provide valuable services to members of the community and there are often no alternative services available should this happen. In order to provide an insight into some of the innovative work undertaken within the voluntary and community sector in Chester-le-Street District and to demonstrate how the sector contributes to local priorities and outcomes, a **presentation** took place by representatives of the voluntary and community sector to Durham County Council Cabinet members, Overview & Scrutiny members and relevant Officers on 27 February 2009. The County Council is urged to recognise the importance of the contribution of the voluntary and community sector to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of individuals and communities in County Durham; the fragile funding environment and the importance of sustainable funding. It is recommended that further dialogue is undertaken with the sector to develop and sustain a longer term relationship, working in partnership with them and other organisations to achieve the priorities of County Durham.

125. The council has built **formal and informal relationships** with the voluntary and community sector. Some of these relationships have included things like:

- Provision of payroll services
- Free or discounted room or building hire;
- Free wash facilities;
- Building maintenance;
- Grass cutting and landscape maintenance;
- Grant aid;
- Specialist advice and expertise;
- Building insurance cover;
- Furniture supply; discretionary rate relief and banking services; and
- ICT support including GIS.

126. The new unitary needs to give consideration to sustaining this support.

The Future of the Unparished Areas - Scrutiny Review

127. Representations have been made to the District Council during early 2008 about establishing a town council in the centre of Chestier-le-Street. In order to support the Strengthening partnership element of the single priority of '**People and Place**' the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a Review into the Unparished Areas of the District. The District Council's Executive agreed their Final Report in February 2009. In undertaking the Review, Scrutiny Member's visited existing and developing town and parish councils, including those with 'Quality' status within the county. They undertook a community engagement exercise with a sample questionnaire to residents within the unparished area of the District. A Focus group was also engaged to secure some face-to-face views and debate.

128. Members found that there was a slight majority of people in favour of a fully parished district although potential cost was an issue to people. While members did not feel that strongly supported new governance arrangements they did suggest that a 'community governance review' was well worthwhile undertaking. Taking into account that the County Council's bid document identified a new town council in Chester-le- Street as a possible proposals the Final Report recommends that the new unitary undertakes an inclusive community governance review. The new unitary is therefore recommended to undertake this piece of work.

Neighbourhoods and Engagement

129. Based on what communities were telling the council the District Council has re focused its priorities in 2008/9 to ensure effective Neighbourhood management resulting in its current 'Pride in our Neighbourhoods' approach. The council's 2004 Residents Opinion Survey identified environmental services and in particular the streetcare service as one the residents' priority areas for service improvements. Feedback from the survey revealed that the environment and environmental crime were the number one priority for residents and that only 52% of the District's residents were satisfied with the level of service provided in these areas. In response we took a conscious decision to redirect an additional £78,000 of the 2005/2006 budget into the streetcare service to address the identified community need. The funding was used to restructure the streetcare service to deliver its services on the basis of 5 zones, each zone had its own team of dedicated staff who were trained to be multi skilled and multi tasked. The purpose of the zonal approach was to provide a high profile, consistent, recognisable and approachable council presence in each of the zones and to encourage greater public engagement and feedback with council staff on streetcare issues. This zonal approach was further developed with the introduction of a neighbourhood management pilot scheme in the Wards of Chester West and North Lodge. Here our environmental services streetcare staff worked along side colleagues from the housing, leisure, environmental health, planning and community safety departments and external partners including the police, the fire and rescue service and Durham County Council. Working jointly and collaboratively a more holistic approach to tackling streetcare issues at the neighbourhood level was provided. The multi agency task force implemented the actions identified within the Action Plans and reported back to the Monitoring Board on a regular basis. During the course of 6 months a number of activities were undertaken including Womble Days in which local residents and staff co-operated in a clean up of the area, diversionary activities through the Leisure Services Department and action against anti social behaviour. The pilots encouraged local residents to engage in the process and influence local service delivery through the production of bespoke action plans reflecting local needs. Overall 51% of the residents in North Lodge who responded to a pilot survey and 53% of those in Chester West said they thought the pilot schemes had been a success.

130. To support the implementation of the pilots the council ensured a pro-active **Environmental Services** team that in May 2006 was judged to be a good service with promising prospects of improvement. Using local and national comparators has shown the service to be a low cost high quality service. The Inspection report made only four recommendations for Environmental services to address. The council has improved national performance indicators on waste recycled, amount of waste collected per head, score against environmental checklist, number of domestic burglaries, number of domestic refuge places and number of racial incidents recorded. The council compared well against other councils (top quartile in terms of percentage of households served by kerbside collections, clean streets and flyposting). Performance has been improved by the use of technology. A Continual Process Improvement (CPI) pilot has further improved the response to enforcement and flytipping.

131. Following on from the two Pilot Schemes the "Pride in our Neighbourhood Campaign" was introduced in which residents were encouraged to engage with the council and to report environmental crimes such as graffiti, fly tipping, abandoned

vehicles, litter and dog fouling to the council. This was done via a dedicated hotline number and also through an online reporting toolkit on the council's website. Staff and Members of the council were also encouraged to participate in the campaign through the use of a reporting card. They were encouraged to use the card to report environmental crime whilst out and about in the District. A Member Ward Profile was also produced in which the number and type of environmental crimes incidents as well as police crime was recorded in each Ward and distributed in the form of an A4 report for all Ward Members on a monthly basis. Members were encouraged, through their community leadership role, to engage and work with local residents to reduce the incidents of environmental crime within their locality.

132. To further develop the Pride in our Neighbourhood Campaign a Pilot Scheme was instigated within a village (Waldridge) within the District. The focus of this was to produce a **Neighbourhood Charter** for the area. The Neighbourhood Charter was produced by the local residents following an extensive consultation processes involving a variety of engagement mechanisms. With the help and guidance from council officers priorities for improvement for the village were identified. The District Council and other partners have supported delivery of these priorities. The Neighbourhood Charter is an agreement between the residents and partners including the council outlining how each (residents and partners) agree to work together to address and resolve local issues of concern.

133. Resulting from the success of the Pilot Scheme in Waldridge, and as part of the **'People and Place'** single priority, the council has produced **a toolkit**. This identifies best practice in a number of areas from the three pilots that community groups, associations and individuals can use as a framework for addressing environmental issues of concern in their own neighbourhoods. The toolkit is being rolled out as a means of each locality within the District being able to address its own particular issues. It provides guidance and advice on a range of topics including:

- how to set up an Environmental Project Group ;
- how to access funding for an environmental project; and
- how to run a consultation exercise or event.

134. The council has engaged significantly and consistently over the last seven years with the community on environmental issues. The council's experience demonstrates that community empowerment and involvement in local environmental issues is crucial to environmental improvement, sustainability and improved well-being. Our approach has been **recognised nationally** as being cutting edge and best practice. Examples of successful community engagement in the environment are set out in the following table.

Theme	Description	Nature of Community Engagement
Northumbria in Bloom	For community cohesion using horticulture and open space as a media	Approached residents groups, parish councils. Householders, schools and businesses to raise profile of the regional competition. Invited the community to participate in a community effort to improve their local neighbourhoods. This included co-ordination, providing low level support for the community to carry out their own aspirations. As a result the community won 3 golds, two silver and one bronze awards in the 2008 event. Communities are now managing their own application process for 2009.
Council approach to Biodiversity	International recognition of best practice in developing community cohesion using open green space	Biodiversity has been integrated in to open spaces management of the council through the Parks to Larks Strategy (2004). This relates to work in developing awareness of biodiversity in school based settings. The council worked with individual schools, pupils and parents to raise the importance of open green spaces and the necessity to maximise value to current well being and that of future generations. This built on the council's overall approach to biodiversity and local environmental citizenship and sustainability. This included growing local produce, change management in council grasscutting working practices and getting people to take responsibility for looking after the environment. This example is now internationally promoted as best practice through The Green Organisation . The council received a Green Apple award for this work
Riverside	Custodianship of the Riverside Park	As part of the overall custodianship of the open spaces at the Riverside, a regional sporting, leisure and environmental venue, the site offers 'something for all' . It provides open space, riverside walks, meadows, woodland and open water features which are accessible to visitors and offer excellent outdoor experiences. The council has a consistent programme of landscape management for nature conservation. This utilises local school inputs, local resident association engagement and is supported by Durham Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Grasslands Trust. Community effort has enabled the site to be recognised as regionally significant and has been awarded Best local conservation project (Riverside wild flower meadow). In addition the nature conservation element has been awarded a gold medal in the Northumbrian in Bloom competition for 2008. The site is overall recognised as a Green Flag park and this has been achieved annually over the last five years.

Ropery Lane Cemetery	Custodianship of the Cemetery	The same principles of high quality custodianship have been adopted for the management of the Ropery Lane Cemetery. In addition the community through the Friends of Ropery Lane Cemetery have provided a community commitment to high quality stewardship of the site. This has resulted in the cemetery receiving a ' Green Flag ' status in 2008 and runner up in the Cemetery of the Year in 2006/2007
Developing schools grounds and instilling environmental education citizenship	Developing schools grounds and instilling environmental education citizenship	For the last seven years the council has proactively built relationships with head teachers and been able to consistently deliver presentations and events and pupils to a broad range of environmental stewardship issues. This has included a varied approach in terms of subject and theme, nature of presentation, inter-agency approach, linkages to other issues including sustainability, recycling, local democracy, fire safety and anti social behaviour. This has been a consistent approach which has not only connected with children and young people but also through to parents and school teachers as part of citizenship curriculum activities. This approach has been further been recognised through the green organisations award of a ' Golden Green Apple '. This is of international significant because it is the country's award for best practice which was entered into the European Awards.
Federation of Environmental Associations	Community led environmental stewardship	The council alongside Durham Wildlife Trust and Natural England developed an innovative approach to stimulating and developing a network of members of the community who had a passion and desire to build their own capacity to improve the environment of their communities. This partnership approach brought these individuals and groups together to ensure that their capacity to make a significant difference to environmental improvement and sustainability within the district could be achieved. As a result the network established a Federation to deliver this capacity building. The Federation now exists in its own right with limited council support. Results of their efforts have included the development and signposting of countryside walks, habitat management and their own local environmental education programmes to schools and other groups.

Conservation Group Case Study	Community Led conservation	<p>The Bournmoor Conservation Group was formally constituted in 1986 as a community group working towards a better natural and built environment in and around the village of Bournmoor in County Durham. The Group was formed by local residents who were keen to put something back into the village by making local environmental improvements. One of the early successes of the Community Group was the clearing of the Lumley Park Burn (which flows through the village). Following this, regular community litter picks were organised to improve corners of the village which were normally hard to reach areas. Local hedgerows were brought back into good repair and small areas of reclaimed industrial areas were turned into havens for local wildlife.</p> <p>Following the formal constitution on the Group, community action continued to improve the village and the District Council agreed to a management arrangement for the major reclaimed area within the village which has prospered for over 20 years under the Group's management. Regular training courses and practical project work is carried out but a major facet of the Group activity is to respond to issues that arise.</p> <p>The Group works in primary schools and secondary schools which serve the village and this enables young people and residents of the village to know who and where the Conservation Group is and what they do. The Group participates in District wide activity to benefit other communities and also assists with National, County and District government decision making. This work has enabled the Group to be recognised as a best practice example for sustainable community action for the environment The Group take pride in being accountable for delivering good practice and work with a range of partner organisations such as the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water. The Group was a leading partner in the development of the Chester-le-Street Federation of Environmental Groups which helps and supports other like minded residents across the District to improve their local environments.</p>
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Other Environmental Issues

Food Safety

135. Increasingly the District Council has offered a range of educational activities and programs to complement its regular enforcement work. The council currently plan a number of events to raise awareness of food safety including those around Food Safety Week, promoting serious health messages in a fun way with the overall aim to increase lifelong learning skills. As part of this program 15 children participated in the 'Kitchen of Horrors' food safety event at Holly House in June 2008. (. This educational theme has also been seen in two other examples of the councils work; the involvement in the National Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) Campaign and the continued delivery of Food Hygiene training in the District. The council's Food Safety Team has made a major contribution to SFBB within the County with almost a third of the overall coaching sessions being undertaken in businesses within the District together with the Team hosting a SFBB seminar for members of the local Chinese community. This event which took place in October 2008, was attended by over 50 businesses from across the County Chester-le-Street continues to be the only District Council to offer accredited Food Hygiene Training. 2008-9 has seen a further 70 people successfully complete the Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering.

Managing the nighttime economy

136. Since the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 a major part of the Licensing Team's work has been the regulation and monitoring of the night-time economy. The District Council's role in entertainment, alcohol and taxis licensing puts them in a central role in an area which is not only critical for the financial and social wellbeing of the District but also has a significant potential to adversely affect both peoples lives and the environment via litter, noise and anti-social behaviour. A major task for the council has been to develop a robust monitoring regime to ensure compliance with license condition and to identify and react effectively to problems and complaints. The council's response, a council officer led unit undertaking risk based inspection outside of usual office hours, has been used as the basis to collaborate with a number of other agencies. The licensing team now regularly sees Police, Fire and Security Industry Agency Officers joining them on exercises leading to a more joined up, efficient and effective service. Members of the council's Licensing Committee have also taken part in the exercises to gain first hand knowledge of the issues posed by the late night economy. The team have also sort to increase the public understanding of the night time economy and increase the public's participation in the decision making relating to it via public meetings and attendance at community groups, parish council and resident association meetings.

137. Communication with the business sector has been dramatically improved through Officers attending the local Pubwatch scheme and via the council's flagship Taxi and Private Hire Working Group (TPHWG). This group was set up in September 2004 to help improve the relationship between the council and trade. Meeting monthly, the group is chaired by the Chair of the Council's Licensing Committee and has 10 representatives elected from both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades. The

group has proved to be a phenomenal success providing both a body for formal consultation with the trade but also a forum for discussion and dispute resolution. The council firmly believes that the group offers a model for the new unitary authority.

Contaminated Land

138. The contaminated land function has progressed rapidly in the past two years. Specialist staff have been recruited and produced a fully validated and up-to-date list of sites of potential concern. This list has been further refined to remove any inaccuracies or duplications, taking the number of sites from over 700 to 136. The **Contaminated Land Strategy** has been updated, to take account of policy and legislation changes. This revised Strategy formed the basis of the Contaminated Land Strategy for the new unitary authority. A strong partnership has been formed with the Planning Department. The Contaminated Land Team has worked closely with the Planning Officers to ensure that all developments within the district are appropriately investigated, and suitable for the use intended. This has resulted in many sites, which would not otherwise have been investigated, and some sites that were on the priority list, being investigated and, where necessary, remediated without the need for regulatory intervention. The council has developed a close association with the University of Sunderland, with students joining the team for two months periods. The students each look at real sites and produce a Desk Top Study of each area. Some of the students continued their study into their dissertation, taking samples from the site, analysing them for contaminants of concern and allowing them to be removed from the priority list. The council's last student having completed their studies, returned to their native Nigeria, in the hope of using their experience with Chester-le-Street District Council.

139. Finally it is not by chance that Chester-le-Street's District Council's Civic Centre is the most energy efficient public building in the county having achieved a **B grade rating** in recent government published survey results.

Open Your Eyes - A Proactive Approach to Enforcement

140. One of the council's mainstreamed approaches to the improvement has been through Action learning Sets. A specific **Action Learning Set** was undertaken to consider the benefits of a co-ordinated approach to enforcement. The new unitary council has a number of new enforcement functions being transferred to it. While there is a Head of Regulatory Services in the new council some enforcement functions, e.g. planning are in other directorates. The Action Learning Set found that enforcement could be more effective if relevant enforcement teams worked together. Their recommendations have been implemented and a corporate enforcement team regularly meets and communications between the teams has increased. This has improved both efficiency and effectiveness. This is an approach which the new unitary authority may wish to consider.

141. One of lasting impacts of the Action Learning Sets and the training that supported them is the confidence building and empowerment in individuals. In the context of enforcement this manifested itself in the environmental enforcement team developing their own environmental awareness publicity campaign, 'Open Your Eyes'. The council as part of its Pride in your

Neighbourhood approach adopted this as a method of engaging our communities in improving environmental responsibility. The team has rolled this campaign out to schools through the Neighbourhoods element of the single priority of ***'People and Place'***. They are currently planning delivering this awareness campaign to parish councils and community groups. The campaign is supported by a promotional / educational DVD

Conclusions

142. Communities have worked hard over the last five years or so to develop local partnerships and improve the places that they live and work. They have been given opportunities to work with partners to improve their well being. The new unitary should consider sustaining the progress they have made so far. In particular the new unitary is recommended to:

- **share the council's experience in terms of local partnerships and environmental improvement in the District;**
- **Continue to support the approach to engagement and the support provided to community groups (paragraph 96 – 99 page 53);**
- **continue to sustain the community engagement projects established in the district (paragraph 96-99 page 53);**
- **implement the recommendations of the Community Facilities Review (paragraph 100 -110 page 55);**
- **sustain the work of the Local Strategic Partnership policy groups (paragraph 111 -121 page 59);**
- **sustain and build upon the significant contribution to 'well being' made by the voluntary and community sector (paragraph 122 -126 page 64);**
- **implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the future of the unparished areas of the district (paragraph 127 -128 page 66);**
- **sustain the approaches to community engagement in environmental improvement (paragraph 134 page 68)**

Real Power for Real People
Handing over the Baton Report

4. Healthier, Safer Communities and Adults, Children's and Young Peoples' Services

Handing
over the
Baton



4. Healthier, Safer Communities and Adults, Children's and Young Peoples' Services

Summary

143. Services for adults, children and young people are normally associated with the County Council. However the District Council is engaged in a significant range of services that support and develop the community from children, through adulthood through to the most vulnerable. It includes services to those who have sometimes been excluded from service delivery through their race, gender, sexuality, belief, disability or age. There is a close relationship of these services in contributing to develop healthier and safer communities. The work of Leisure and Community Development, which incorporates community safety and community health teams, are synonymous with healthier and safer lifestyles. However and part and parcel of addressing social exclusion and celebrating diversity there is a whole council approach to contributing to partnership working in supporting adults, children and young people in Chester-le-Street.

144. This chapter identifies the range of projects and initiatives currently engaged in within the District which need to be sustained into the new unitary.

Providing Safe and Healthy Opportunities for Adults, Children and Young People

145. Communities have been successful in taking up opportunities provided by the council and its partners to provide safer communities and healthier lifestyles for all members of the community, particularly the most disadvantaged or vulnerable. Some of these were identified briefly in the last chapter but are set out in more detail here. Examples of projects are identified on the following pages.

■ **Community Sports Coaches Scheme**

Working with the School Sport Partnership this has delivered Multi Skill, Tennis & Rowing opportunities to 758 young people from the start of the new school year in September 2008. This has provided enhanced sports coaching opportunities for children & young people - strengthening the link between school and community sport. The Community Coaches work with the CLS School Sports Partnership to deliver foundation activities in schools and have established a development pathway for interested and talented children from school to community (club) sport.

■ **Positive Futures - Youth Engagement through sport and leisure.**

The project is currently delivering in Pelton & Lumley with partner agencies. The project regularly engages with around 60 young people each week. It provides enhanced leisure opportunities (positive activities) for children and young people. Working with a number of partner agencies the initiative has created opportunities to participate in activity that did not previously take place i.e. The Coalfields Regeneration Trust 'Game On' Football League on a Friday & Saturday evening.

■ **Access to Sport Initiative**

This is a new project – proposed outputs include: -

- Recruitment of a Sports Development Officer to promote access to and participation in sports and active recreation.
- A range of new opportunities for young people aged 16+, women and girls and older people.
- Improved access to fitness, swimming, golf, bowls, squash, badminton and rugby league.

Variety of sports development outcomes identified. Will further enhance sports and physical activity participation opportunities across a range of sports and communities

- **Chester-le-Street Sport & Activity Network**

This is a new project and therefore has limited output at present. Early successes include two Sports Lottery Fund applications:-

- £103,000 to develop an 'Access to Sport' Initiative - this aims to break down the barriers to regular adult participation in sport and physical activity
- £292,000 to develop CLS Riverside as a Multi-Sport Environment and local sporting 'hub' this aims to improve development 'pathways' for children and young people as they move from school to community sport, encourage cross-sport collaboration, support the development of community sports clubs, and promote the broad range of sport and physical activity opportunities available at the Riverside site.

Both projects will strengthen local sporting partnerships and are due to commence in early 2009.

- **Exercise Referral Scheme**

The number of new referrals starting the programme between April 2007 and March 2008 was 512, with referrals coming from 41 registered groups including GP Practices and various community and hospital based teams. On average, 24 (58%) of the registered referring units referred on a regular basis (i.e. once a month) Core investment from NHS County Durham in this programme has more than doubled in the last 2-3 years.

Outcomes include reduction in NHS cost, which is a well-recognised benefit of the delivery of the Exercise Referral programme. The programme results in increased use of leisure facilities & services by individuals who might otherwise not have felt able to participate in health enhancing activity. Participants regularly report improved personal health & well being as a result of participation in the programme.

- **Specialised educational programmes**

Incorporating diet and nutrition, stress management and exercise are delivered by health care teams, working alongside specialist exercise instructors employed by the Lifestyle Initiative to provide enhance support to clients with medical conditions. (e.g. Cardiac Rehabilitation, Diabetes Management, Intermittent Claudication and Pain Management)

Last year 124 people benefited from these specialist programmes, offering greater choice and improved access to this valuable service outside the traditional hospital setting. This has direct links to the Lifestyle Initiative to help the transition from Phase III to continued community activities.

The outcomes are similar to those for the Exercise referral scheme

- **Lifestyle Walks (Footsteps to Fitness) programme.**

The scheme has operated an annual programme of walks across Durham and Chester-le-Street for the past 5 years, supporting the development of a number of volunteer walk leaders who deliver the programme in conjunction with Leisure Services staff. Linked programmes 'Next Steps' (introductory walks) and independent walk packs have been developed as part of the overall package of support for individuals.

There were 53 new participants to walks last year, with over 100 other regular participants making 856 visits to the programme. 53 led walks took place during the year, being delivered by a core group of 6 volunteers. The programme was the first in the country to be awarded the Walking for Health Initiative accreditation as an indication of its quality.

Outcomes are reduction in NHS costs; increased use of leisure facilities & services; improved community & personal health and well being. Accessible to all ages and abilities

- **Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH) & MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition Do it!) programmes.**

Delivered in partnership with NHS County Durham Specialist School Nursing Team and primary schools with a specialist physical activity officer delivering alongside a registered school nurse.

745 children benefited from the project in 2007/8, with over 498 activity sessions delivered by the Lifestyle Initiative both during and outside curriculum time. 91 families were offered support following identification. The model has recently been used by NHS County Durham and is being applied from 2008-2009 across all other localities in County Durham - a reflection of the high esteem in which the initiatives are held.

Benefits primary schoolchildren in the District and their families involved in the programme in terms of improved health and education. Over the last 3 years of delivery FISCH has worked in 86% of eligible schools with new schools earmarked for delivery in 2008/9.

- **Healthy Horizons Project**

Partnership working between Durham and Chester-le-Street Lifestyle initiative and Age Concern, Durham County to provide physical activity opportunities in community and residential venues for people aged 50+ aimed at enabling older people to lead healthier, more active lifestyles.

In total between the Lifestyle Class and Healthy Horizons programmes, 330 exercise sessions/opportunities were delivered in 2007/08 mostly in community venues located in the top 20 most deprived wards in Durham & Chester-le-Street. The project has seen over 700 new people participating in activities, resulting in over 10,000 visits during each year.

Benefits include reduction in NHS costs; increased use of leisure facilities and services; improved community and personal health and well being. The project benefits older members of communities in Durham & Chester-le-Street in terms of improving health and well being. Volunteer involvement is a strong aspect in delivery, seeing volunteers helping with the setting up of classes, taking registers, right through to actually delivering exercise sessions themselves. The project was established as a time limited (3 years) initiative funded by Sport England and has been so successful that extended support has been offered through NHS County Durham until 2008_09 with the scheme being extended into Derwentside District. Consideration also being given to mainstreaming the project from April 2009 and extending it further across the County.

- **Children's Play Areas and Outdoor Recreational Facilities**

Development and adoption of a Play Areas Strategy and subsequently a wider Children's Play Strategy.

In the past 6 years exceptional progress has been made in improving or renewing children's play areas throughout the district using a mix of direct and indirect funding. A successful application has recently been made to the BIG Lottery Fund to support extended provision for older children at 5 separate community locations.

Outcomes are higher play value and increased safety in children's play areas/outdoor recreational facilities.

- **New Leaf Project**

The New Leaf project is a tenancy support programme for individuals who engage in substance misuse (drugs and / or alcohol). The project can provide help and support on any aspect of an individual's life that is affecting their tenancy. This may include for example, substance misuse, physical health, mental health, anti social behaviour, education, employment, relationships with family and friends, finance and hobbies and interest. Support Workers work alongside individuals to provide a range of help, advice and support

If a referral to the project is successful, a meeting will be arranged with the support worker, to identify the needs of the individual and what support they require. An individual support plan will be developed as part of the needs assessment which will identify issues that need addressing and actions required to resolve these issues. The project is aimed at the following:

- individuals who engage in substance misuse.
- adults aged 18+ (under 18s can be referred into appropriate services).
- individuals who are having problems maintaining their tenancy or
- individuals who are currently homeless and are looking for accommodation.
- individuals living in the Chester-le-Street District;
- individuals who are motivated to change.

- **Health Trainer Programme**

This is undertaken in partnership with PCT County Durham. One to one support around the issues of smoking, physical activity and healthy eating. HTs will work with clients to bring around behaviour change and improve their health and wellbeing. The Health Trainer programme launched officially on February 11 with an event at the lamplight centre in Stanley (the launch is for North PDA). A series of smaller launch events will take place around Chester-le-Street over February and March 2009. The project is funded until February 2010. These events are for the public and will provide people with the opportunity to meet their local health trainer.

When the project is running it will lead to improvements in health, reduction in obesity, reduction in smoking, reduction in conditions such as heart disease, respiratory disorders etc, and increased confidence and activity in individuals

- **Lifecheck Programme**

To prepare for the roll out of NHS Lifecheck - Early years and Teenagers. Lifecheck is a online programme to help parents or young babies and teenagers to assess their behaviour in terms of health and wellbeing and offer positive advice and guidance.

The Lifecheck Co-ordinator for early years' Lifecheck is now in post. They are now working on promoting the early years Lifecheck programme in the District, working with partners to merge the programme into existing work/services, as well as looking at IT infrastructure and setting Lifecheck points throughout local communities. Interviews for the Teen Lifecheck co-ordinator will take place in February 2009. When the project is up and running it will impact on Improvements in health of young babies and teenagers, increased levels of knowledge and awareness, more informed choices and decision making

- **Days of Action Programme**

Multi Agency rolling programme of 'Action Days' throughout the District to provide community reassurance in the various villages and areas of Chester-le-Street.

11 action days held June 08 – April 09 (as above)

The Community Safety team is involved in 'walkabouts' within the identified area to listen to communities and get their views about crime and anti-social behaviour. The Community Safety Team developed banners to promote a positive message to communities, where people can feel confident, involved, safe and reassured about their communities

- **Chester-le-Street Homesafe Initiative.**

The aim of the project is to develop, launch and promote a home security scheme to enable victims of domestic violence, racially motivated violence homophobic violence to remain in their homes through added security measures. Research into Sanctuary Schemes nationally has proven to contribute to reduction of repeat victimisation and increased safety, and also to contribute directly to reduction in homelessness presentations for victims of domestic violence and abuse.

- To increase provision and effectiveness of services to assist victims of domestic violence and abuse within Chester-le-Street district.
- In 2007/08 there were 685 incidents of domestic violence in the Chester-le-street area reported to Durham Constabulary; of those 319 were repeat victims.
- To improve security to dwellings, thereby reducing the fear of crime and increasing confidence and reassurance to victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- To contribute to targets to reduce incidents of repeat victimisation.
- Reduction of repeat victimisation for domestic violence victims is a priority for Durham Constabulary and the Community Safety Partnership.

- **Night-time Economy Initiative**

All licence holders have been issued with an Alcohol Harm Reduction Action Plan which outlines actions to ensure preventative measures within the nighttime economy. A Social Responsibility hand book was also issued to all licence holders outlining their responsibilities in selling alcohol. Both the action plan and the hand book been produced by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in conjunction with the Community Safety Team.

An initiative to enable visitors, residents and workers in the district feel safe within the nighttime economy. As part of the Nightsafe initiative public houses in Front Street were supplied with polycarbonate glasses as a drive to minimize incidents of violent crime. Bouncers in Chester-le-Street were amongst the first in County Durham to be issued with paddle-shaped metal detectors, designed as a preventative measure to stop people carrying knives entering licensed premises to help reduce violent crime in Chester-le-Street.

- **Chester-le-Street Homeless Young person's service.**

Joint working with YMCA, Sunderland to develop services for 16-25 year olds threatened with Homelessness. CLG Funding obtained to fund YMCA to improve services for homeless young people in CLS – peer education.

Over 100 people have been influenced through this work. Peer educators have gained sufficient confidence in themselves to find fulltime employment and enroll in University

Improved services and knowledge for young people and increase in supported housing in CLS are the outcomes.

- **Safer Food Events**

Planning and delivery of activities and programmes to raise awareness and celebrate Food Safety week and to promote serious health messages with the overall aim to increase lifelong learning skills.

70 people have successfully achieved the Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering.
15 children participated in the food safety event at Holly House this year.

Contribution to the Food Standards Agency's mission to reduce food borne illness and improve food safety in the community with particular emphasis on 'vulnerable groups'. Reinforced and heightened awareness of safer food and to increase lifelong learning skills.

- **Mother & Toddler Group - South Pelaw.**

The aim was to set up a mother and toddler group in South Pelaw as there was previously no service.

- South Pelaw Resident Association consultation with the community by leaflet drop
- Funding Strategy to support the development of the mother and toddler group through the Resident Association
- Provision of a service that was needed in the area (limited to 26 children + parents / guardians / carers).
- The Association has achieved its target of signing up 26 children from South Pelaw and the surrounding area in the Mother and Toddler Group
- External funding was sourced to support the Group in its first year and have received external funding to support its 2nd year
- Working to achieve a better quality of life for their charges by introducing a healthy eating club and outings

- **Streetsafe Sacriston - Public Reassurance.**

- Community consultation on what residents would like to do
- Womble Day
- Funding Strategy for Fun Day
- Fun Day – over 500 residents in attendance
- Funding Strategy for Community Safety Estate Agreement
- Consultation with Lilac House Tenants and Residents Association to develop the Agreement
- Estate Agreement and associated Action Plan
- Reporting and monitoring of Action Plan to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Direct tangible improvement to gardens and open spaces of those properties on the Holly Crescent Estate
- Greater understanding of crime and disorder issues
- Greater communication with community safety agencies
- Residents are now more likely to report incidents and talk to the police about issues
- On-going rapport with the young people on the estate and a sense of respect between both

- **Streetsafe - Pelton - Public Reassurance**

- Partner meetings
- Funding Strategy for the Community Safety Fun Day
- Community Safety Fun Day with partners – over 350 residents in attendance
- Consultation regarding Youth Programme
- Funding Strategy for Youth Programme
- Working with Pelton Residents Association - Youth Programme
- Future funding for youth workers – parish council
- Developing a sustainable youth initiative in Pelton with partners
- Greater understanding of crime and disorder issues
- Greater communication with community safety organisations
- More partnership working because of the issues that have been raised throughout the process
- Young people now engaged and working with youth to assess their needs

- **Its a knockout**

Annual event involving physically disabled and able bodied people, providing the opportunity to engage in sport while increasing the understanding of the issues that effect physically handicapped people

Event stated as an outcome of and Equality and Diversity Action Learning set. Now mainstreamed as part of the work of the council. Engages a range of staff across the council and Cestria Homes as well as their families. Sponsorship is sought from local business to provide tee shirts and give aways. More than 50 disabled people take part in the It's a knockout events largely from Chester-le-Street PHAB. They are day long series of sporting events for fun held at the Riverside Pavilion. These have resulted in the provision of opportunities to engage in sport. It has also led to a greater understanding by those who took part of the issues that affect physically disabled people and a way to bring everyone together to understand each others issues

- **Junior Olympic Games/Flag Raising Event**

To enable young people take part in sporting activities and celebrate the handover of the Olympics

Over 90 children took part in a variety of activities

Improve awareness of what is available throughout the district to young people through sport and leisure activities.

Open doors to those young people who have an interest in sport and leisure from across the district. Improved awareness of the success of the olympics and the links with community sports and celebrate the handover of the flag from Beijing to the U.K.

- **Paralympics Flag Raising Event**

To enable young people of mixed ability to enjoy a morning of fun sporting activities and to celebrate the handover of the Paralympics

Similar to the It's a knock out event, 45 young people from 3 schools in the area (Fencehouses Woodlea Primary, Park View Comprehensive, Durham Trinity) took part, both able bodied and disabled, together with members of the Chinese Community.

Raised awareness of the 2012 paralympic games; enabled young people who wouldn't normally interact to come together in a safe environment and fun way; raised awareness of disability with able bodied children and help break down barriers to social inclusion.

- **Chester-le- Street's School Initiative**

In December 2007 three students, representing many others, expressed views and concerns about matters of safety within their schools and community. They asked for their views and concerns to be recognised by professionals working within community safety. As professionals the council recognised more could be done to engage with and listen to young people.

In response consultations were carried out with young people by means of a survey, over 1500 completed questionnaires were analysed and an action plan was devised to tackle their concerns. One student created his own 'ASB' DVD which was shown within school assemblies. Presentations and workshops were carried out with students to raise awareness about personal safety and safety within the community. A 'Safety Awareness Day' was held in October 2008 for 170 students and currently surgeries are being held within schools to offer students direct access to information about safety issues.

However, the job is not yet finished, our work is already set to continue for years to come; more presentations and learning based workshops; a computerised survey intended to reach over 35000 young people and students taking the lead and delivering anti-social behaviour assemblies within their own schools.

- **Lifestyle change**

Durham & Chester-le-Street Lifestyle Initiative's Lifestyle Change – supporting changes in physical activity participation. A £122,000 project funded by NHS County Durham.

This is a new project which has been funded as a pilot by NHS County Durham, to test a new way of supporting and encouraging individuals who need to be more active to benefit their health. 200 people each year (2 year pilot) will be supported by the programme. With outcomes being increased physical activity participation. As a result of years of delivering physical activity programmes, providing opportunities for local people to be more physically active, the data gathered has pointed towards specific groups who seem to require additional support, motivational prompts and reminders to further encourage participation in regular physical activity.

This pilot will involve the commissioning of an experienced customer contact centre to deliver regular telephone support to clients identified by the Lifestyle Initiative. Where relevant motivational messages in the form of SMS, e-mail and printed literature will be sent at regular intervals to educate and remind clients of the need to be more active and live a healthy lifestyle. The Lifestyle Initiative will provide the expertise in building up the knowledge base of the contact centre around physical activity opportunities, do's and don'ts etc.

146. Due to other priorities, scarce resources, the age of the associated vehicle and costs just keeping a vehicle on the road the council had to bring to an end the Youth Health and Cultural change Project in 2007. This had been a significantly successful project largely based around the 'ERIC' Bus. The ERIC bus was a mobile facility that travelled around the Chester-le-Street district, working with young people between the ages of 11 – 25 years. The project was successful in delivering its aims to engage, help and support young people, in an attempt to combat health inequalities, crime, antisocial behaviour and substance misuse. The project offered an information and support service to young people and a team of youth workers and peer supporters are on board to help and answer any questions. A wide variety of posters, leaflets and helpline numbers were also available. The bus was also equipped with televisions, playstations, music centres and computers (with internet access), providing young people with a safe and fun environment to socialise in. The ERIC bus visited the local community, each week night between the hours of 6 – 9 pm. Locations were changed 3 times a year, to ensure that the project was delivered across the District. During the day ERIC visited Roseberry Sports and Community College, where pupils were able to access the bus during free time and allocated lessons. The project also ran a peer education course with a small group of pupils. The course informed the group on health and social issues, so that they had the knowledge and confidence to help and advise other young people. At the end of the course the peer educators were invited to gain work experience on the bus, whereby they work out in the community alongside the other youth workers.

147. The county operates something similar in the DERIC bus and the new authority may wish to consider re-establishing this project within Chester-le-Street as it was extremely popular to young people in the district and is sorely missed by them.

Looking after the Most Vulnerable

Addressing Social Exclusion

148. Underpinned by an innovative Benefits Service the District Council has taken social exclusion seriously in implementing its **Anti-Poverty Strategy**. The Strategy's vision and objectives are clearly set out as:

Vision

‘To ensure that the whole of the District benefits from wealth creation and to work with our partners, stakeholders and other organisations to provide a staircase out of poverty’

Objectives

1. To address health inequalities within the District, specifically those associated with smoking, obesity, binge drinking and drug dependency
2. To ensure we maximise income from benefits and entitlement to discounts and exemptions for people within the District
3. To work with partners to promote opportunities for training and education and help, lead and support people through the transition period into work reducing their dependency on benefits
4. To work with partners to help start and sustain businesses and promote economic growth within the District
5. To ensure that less affluent or disadvantaged people are not excluded from initiatives to address crime and disorder
6. To work with partners to promote culture and leisure activities and ensure that those people on low income are not excluded from participating
7. To work with partners to ensure people have access to housing that is of a decent standard and affordable

149. The District Council and its partners carry out a significant amount of work to address poverty in the district and the Strategy has an action plan to build on the following initiatives it has already undertaken over the last few years:

- signposting people to other organisations and agencies for advice help and support in numerous areas;
- offering a Telecare support service for residents in the District;
- offering furniture packages, decorating vouchers and low cost contents insurance allowing tenants the best possible start into their property;
- working in partnerships with the voluntary sector and our customers to agree payment plans;
- offering tenancy support to avoid evictions and homelessness as well as helping people to find accommodation;
- carrying out Housing Needs Surveys to inform us that housing meets people’s needs in type, affordability and location;

- having dedicated Officers that address anti social behaviour issues and support tenants suffering from domestic violence;
- providing access to an interpretation service / language line and offer home visits as well as customer care packs including magnifying glasses;
- helping to build and develop life skills with people including financial management, allowing individuals to become independent and able to manage their lives successfully;
- having provision for affordable leisure and the 'One Card' scheme awards discounts for people in receipt of benefits, senior citizens and students;
- facilitating community leisure programmes including footsteps to fitness within the 'walks' programme and the FISCH project (Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health) linked to local schools;
- having a unique new pricing structure aimed at encouraging people aged 18 to 24 to use leisure facilities;
- offering free swimming for children under 18 in school holidays leading towards healthier lifestyles;
- having a GP referral programme specifically to rehabilitate people after major injuries, illness or health related issues enabling them to carry on with regular day to day activities;
- having designed and built high quality and modern play areas and ball courts giving the opportunity for play in a safe environment at no cost ;
- offering a high quality childcare service with provision for emergency and long term placements from social services, work place redemption vouchers;
- utilising child tax credit scheme, a limited number of free government sessions for 3 and 4 year olds as well as discounts offered for older children attending all week; promote and facilitate events for people with disabilities such as "It's a Knock Out" event ;
- providing advice to residents on smoking cessation, food hygiene and food safety; have a comprehensive affordable warmth strategy ;
- allowing a 3 month rent free period to new businesses in industrial premises offer online and telephone payments and online access to benefit and council tax accounts reducing the time and cost of people visiting the civic centre ;
- having revenues and benefits take up strategies which are designed to maximise the income of residents in Chester-le-Street ; and
- provide funding for the local Citizens Advice Bureau in Chester-le-Street and work in partnership with them on many initiatives.

Concessionary Fares

150. As part of a national scheme, all residents (England) who are aged 60 and over, plus eligible disabled people, are entitled to a bus pass which gives free travel on local buses anywhere in England. The pass allows free travel on all local public services in England for any journey between 0930 and 2300 Mondays to Fridays and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. To ensure that the needs of Durham residents' were fully taken into account, a decision was made to add a

number of enhancements to the national scheme. It was also agreed that this would be provided collectively across all Durham authorities and as such Chester-le-Street. Therefore, the residents of Chester-le-street have the additional benefits of the local scheme where they can:

- make local bus journeys starting in County Durham at any time;
- travel free on Durham City Park and Ride;
- have free travel for a companion if eligible; and
- use their pass on some train services for half fare.

151. The new national scheme and enhanced local scheme is proving very popular to local residents, leading to a 17% increase in the issuing of passes in 2008 / 2009 compared to previous years.

- local residents can now travel across regions (on local buses) free of charge reducing the impact of fuel poverty on qualifying households;
- more communities become less isolated as residents find it easier and less costly to travel across the district and the county, bringing communities closer together; and
- more people using public transport leads to fewer car journeys, having a positive impact on the environment.

Benefits take up

152. In delivering an innovative, 'good' **benefits service** the council has:

- undertaken a joint benefit take up exercise with the Pension Service, which resulted in an additional £19,000 of benefit being awarded in 2007/2008;
- undertaken a joint take up campaign with Welfare Rights, which resulted in an additional £4,000 of benefit being awarded in 2007/2008;
- undertaken a dedicated take up campaigns have resulted in an extra £30,000 of additional benefit being awarded in 2007/2008;
- undertaken a dedicated small business rates campaign has resulted in an additional £230,000 being awarded in small business rates relief since April 2006;
- introduced E Payments allowing customers to pay council tax, overpaid benefit and business rates through the website;
- introduced E Billing, which is the cheapest method of issuing council tax, and business rates bills;
- introduced online access to local taxation and benefit accounts;
- introduced an online benefits calculator allowing customers to estimate their entitlement to benefit;
- introduced benefit payments via BACS transfer, the most cost effective and secure way to pay benefit;

- introduced paperless direct debit allowing customers to set up their direct debits over the telephone;
- implemented a new overpayment recovery strategy and introduced new methods of recovery including benefit attachments from Department for Work and Pensions benefits;
- introduced a new debtors system specifically for benefit overpayment recovery and since September 2005 have recovered in excess of £226,000 in overpaid benefit;
- further recovered in excess of £488,000 in overpaid housing benefit by introducing new and robust methods of recovery;
- merged council tax bills with benefit notification letters to reduce cost of postage and maximise information to customers, timely ensuring that customers know exactly what their benefit entitlement is and what council tax payments are due as a result of benefit assessment without delays; and
- worked in partnership with three other Durham Districts to pilot the Voice Risk Analysis system

Fuel poverty

153 Chester-le-Street District Councils Affordable Warmth Strategy “Warm and Healthy Homes” was first implemented in 2003 and officially launched in 2004. In that time the strategy has been responsible for directly improving the thermal standards of around 6000 homes, brought in around £1.5 million worth of additional funding from partner agencies and increased benefits uptakes to over 300 residents. It was the first scheme in the North East to specifically target residents over 60 and families with children 5 and under. The benefits of the scheme have recently been shown in several studies where Chester-le-street not only has the lowest carbon emissions per capita in the North East but is also the only District in County Durham where excess winter deaths have declined rather than increased. Part of the success of the scheme was the ability to sell itself. Self-referrals by residents onto the scheme ensured that approximately 70% of the budget was allocated prior to the start of each financial year with very little advertising or selling by the council and its partners.

154. The council is fully signed up to the Fuel Poverty Campaign. Fuel Poverty has been identified as a high priority for the New Authority and the commitment has been given to develop a County Wide Fuel Poverty strategy and Action Plan to replace those held by the districts. The development of this plan is underway and officers from Chester-le-Street DC are involved in the working group developing the policy. The new unitary council may wish too ensure that the same high levels of service experienced by residents over the 5 years of the Chester-le-Street strategy “Warm and Healthy Homes” will be continued into the new authority.

Communities for Health

155. Communities for Health was launched in 2005, shortly after the publication of the Choosing Health White Paper. The aim of the programme is to support local authorities and their partners to encourage the involvement of the local community to take action against reducing health inequalities and improving the health of the District. Initially, Communities for Health operated on a pilot basis, with 21 local authorities taking part. Pilot projects tackled a range of public health priorities including sexual

health, smoking cessation and obesity. The programme is now ready for national rollout to all health inequality spearhead areas. Chester-le-Street District Council has been invited to take part in the programme and has been granted the sum of £100,000 for projects taking place during 2007/08.

156. There is a significant need for health based projects in the District, as according to the Durham and Chester-le-Street the then PCT Public Health Annual Report 2005/06, health in the Durham and Chester-le-Street area is poor compared with England. Life expectancy at birth is slightly lower in Chester-le-Street compared to the rates for England, with smoking being identified as being the biggest, single contributor to this shorter life expectancy. Sexual health is a growing concern in the District. Despite a significant reduction in under 18's conception in County Durham (11.6%), the reduction level in Chester-le-Street is less positive, with only a 7.8% reduction occurring between 1998 (baseline) to 2003. Furthermore, although reliable data is not available for the Chester-le-Street area, there has been a rise of almost 40% in cases of Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, syphilis, herpes and genital warts, across County Durham and Darlington between 2000 – 2004. Durham and Chester-le-Street also has the highest rate of HIV in the County. Drug misuse remains a serious and growing problem in the community and Chester-le-Street has a higher percentage of excessive alcohol consumption than neighbouring NHS County Durham regions, with over 30% of men and almost 15 % of women drinking excessively. Finally, issues surrounding mental health also need addressing as it is estimated that approximately 1000 people living in Durham and Chester-le-Street are cared for by the specialist mental health trust and general practice for severe mental illness.

157. There has been significant progress made in Chester-le-Street since the initial report to the council's Executive in **May 2007** when grant aid of £100,000 was made available. The **Health Trainer** and Life Check programmes have already been referred to above. In the first year of the project the council commissioned Chester-le-Street Mind to deliver the Mental Health Project within the Chester-le-Street locality. The project worked with local employers, support groups and voluntary and community sector organisations in the Chester-le-Street District, to increase knowledge and awareness of mental health issues. Mind worked in partnership with these local service providers to assess their needs in terms of mental health awareness. They then delivered a series of education and training sessions specific to their needs. This included the delivery of Mental Health First Aid, a new national training programme. Delivery of training to local service providers will equip them with the knowledge and skills to address mental health within the workplace as well as helping to meet the mental health needs of customers and service users. This project is a unique mental health promotion service within Chester-le-Street; however, it extends the scope of the work delivered by Chester-le-Street Mind who provides a variety of services across the District, including counselling, psychotherapy, support groups and advocacy. The council set up a monitoring group to oversee this project; members include elected members and officers from the council, Local Strategic Partnership and Primary Care Trust. Quarterly performance meetings take place, in which quarterly reports detailing performance measures and expenditure are submitted. Performance measures were agreed at the start of the project, by both parties (council and Mind).

158. At the end of the first year of the project over 150 local service providers have been contacted to take part in the project, over 100 of which (across all sectors) have engaged with the project and received either training, information or

support. Over 20 training sessions have been delivered to date, to over 35 different agencies. From the training that has been delivered, over 80% of attendees have rated it as excellent or good, with 100% of people reporting an increase in knowledge and understanding of mental health issues, following attendance. A full evaluation of the project is currently being undertaken. Chester-le-Street Mind has again been commissioned to extend the work of the first year. As well as undertaking a full evaluation of the project, they will be providing further support to some of the organisations engaged in the first year. A select number of these organisations will work with Mind to look at their individual service requirements with regard to mental health practice and policy. Specific goals will be agreed for each organisation to work on in order to embed mental health awareness and improvement into their work.

159. The council's Executive reviewed progress and proposals for an additional grant of £50,000 in **May 2008** and there has been a further Executive review in **February 2009** to utilise a further £120,000 of grant aid. It has since been decided that the further **series of projects** be undertaken.

Health Promotion Events

160. The council engage in a yearly programme of health promotion events throughout the District that aim to reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local community members. In 2008/09 events took place for various events including No Smoking Day, Sexual Health Week, Contraception Awareness, Word Mental Health Day and World Aids Day. Events took place in the local community and give local residents the opportunity to access health information and advice as well as taking part in activities, getting free health resources and contacting specialist health services.

Cestria Credit Union

161. As part of the Community Cohesion Project (See Para.176) under the Strengthening Partnerships part of the **'People and Place'** priority the council is working to help residents respond to the current credit crunch and recession. It is investigating setting up a partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Cestria Credit Union. Funding is being sought and agreed by the Executive to fund an outreach worker who will perpetuate a partnership across the 3 communities of Grange Villa, Sacriston and Pelton Fell. The new partnership will facilitate the extension of the Credit Union into the community and provide the community with debt counseling, financial and general advice.

Engaging Young People – Youth Development

162. The youth development programme is a programme for young people aged 11 – 19 years that aims to provide them with a safe, fun environment to socialise in. Sports, arts and leisure activities will be provided as part of the programme and excursions in and around the region will take place over holiday periods. In additions to activities, games etc, young people will

be able to access specialist services such as C-card (condom distribution) and Chlamydia screening. Support and advice on a range of health and social issues, including drugs and alcohol, sexual health, mental health and education/employment, is also available. The programme is currently running in Nettlesworth, based within the Community Centre and will be launching in Grange Villa on the 16th March with a pizza and games night. Plans are in place to deliver the programme in Pelton, and the youth workers are currently delivering detached work in the village, whilst the programme is in development.

163. The programme is going well although it is early days. A small group was taken to a dance night at the Gala Theatre and have delivered sessions around smoking cessation and teenage pregnancy (with training being organised for 'ready or not tots' programme). It is anticipated that the outcomes of the programme will be a reduction in ASB, improvement in health, increased knowledge and awareness of health issues, acquisition of new skills, reduction in teenage pregnancy and STIs, empowerment of young people, increased self esteem and enjoyment of those young people accessing the project.

Youth Forum

164. The success of Local Democracy week and the lack of a formal forum within the district for young people to influence local decisions has resulted in the establishment of a Youth Forum. This involved initial visits to schools to raise awareness and to seek views about how young people wished to become engaged in decision making. This encouraged young people to come forward following a **publicity campaign** involving posters and local events. The first meeting of the Forum took place in January 2009. The Forum is now a foundation for the involvement of young people in decision making and could in future feed in to the Action Area Partnerships. It is a forum that the new unitary council ought to seek to sustain and ensure some young persons engagement with the AAP's.



"Youth representation is essential within the Action Area Partnerships; the decisions made today will reflect and affect the young people of the community in years to come. Improved services and responsible local government can only function with a willing community. Young people form possibly the most dynamic group of that community and via their inclusion in the action area partnerships the new unitary authority and the communities themselves will achieve a greater understanding of issues facing them in the future."

Craig Dawson
Member of the Chester-le-Street Youth Forum

Local Democracy Week

165. The council has made particular efforts over the last few years to raise awareness about local democracy. It invested heavily in Local Democracy Week in October 2007 engaging over 1,500 children in things like democratic and environmental awareness, democratic ‘speed dating’, ‘Big Issue’ debates, respect and dignity awareness through performances by the Sunderland based Rap Group ‘The Word’ and tours of the council offices. Councillors and council officers have engaged with children and young people with both learning and enjoyable life experiences on both sides.

166. The success of that year resulted in the approach being mainstreamed as part of this year’s single priority of **‘People and Place’**. Local democracy week has turned into local democracy year. As well as the successful events identified above more school visits have been undertaken with ‘The Word’ appearing at local schools, local school elections have been facilitated and a theatrical performance ‘Who runs this place’ was presented to 200 children at Park View School. Democratic engagement with young people is considered crucial to democratic renewal and the new unitary can sustain such engagement in the future

Young Entrepreneurs Project

167. To support young people in the development of enterprising skills, the council in partnership with CDC Enterprise Agency invited all local secondary schools to participate in Chester-le-Street’s first ever Young Entrepreneurs competition in Autumn 2008. The competition involved each secondary school submitting a team of year 8 pupils to come up with a business idea and to put it into practice for the day at Chester-le-Street market. Each team was equipped with a market stall, a budget and enterprising advice from the Durham and Chester-le-Street Enterprise Agency to support the young people in the development of enterprising skills such as team work, project management, marketing, finance and presentation. Each team was then invited to present to a panel of judges who then made a decision on the overall winning team. The project was such a major success it is hoped the new unitary authority will share Chester-le-Street District Council’s vision of making this a bigger and better event for 2009.

The Future of Marketing of Sports Activities for Young People Scrutiny Review

168. Over a period of time parents had approached local councillors to express concern about the lack of activities for young people when the truth was that the council provides a significant amount of activity for a range of age groups. It was considered that the issue was not likely to be about service provision but about the way they were being marketed. In view of this a Review

into the Marketing of Sporting Activities for Young People was undertaken by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2008. The review was undertaken by visiting a range of providers across the region and an analysis of best practice.

169. The Task and Finish Group, lead by the council's Member Champion for Sport, produced their **Final Report** in January 2009 and this was agreed by the council's Executive in March 2009. The review recommends the new unitary to consider a range of improvements in marketing young people's activities. The Executive had a strong view that the new unitary council ought to engage young people in the provision of and the marketing of sports activities for young people. The Executive also recommended to the new unitary that they take into account the recent Audit Commission reports 'Tired of Hanging Around'. This is a report on using sport and leisure as a distraction to prevent anti social behaviour by young people. It focuses on activities like music, filmmaking and football. The new unitary council is asked to take these issues into account in the County Council's current Scrutiny Review and in the future design and marketing of services.

Future Investment Needs in Leisure

170. While a great deal has been achieved by the council's sports development team within local communities the present level of mainstream investment is acknowledged to be low. There is an over reliance on external funding to support programmes for example Positive Futures, Game On league, and community coaches. So much more could be achieved if an increased level of mainstream funding was available to employ coaches, hire venues and provide equipment. As such this is seen as a priority area for increased investment.

Chester le Street Leisure Centre

171. Opened in 1974 this is the major indoor facility for Chester-le- Street and provides crucial services to the local population. No major refurbishment has taken place since the centre opened although new ceilings and lighting systems were installed in the pool halls in 2004. The centre is extremely well used, over 280,000 visits per annum, but customer feedback continually comments on the tired and worn condition of the changing rooms. There is no doubt that with investment to refurbish the changing, reception and pool hall areas the satisfaction of our current users would increase and new users would be attracted. A capital programme bid, based on costed architectural plans, has been submitted and if approved would quickly give the centre a new lease of life for a relatively modest sum of around £500,000. The County Durham Facilities Strategy, which is currently being developed, does note that pool provision in the area is lower than the regional and national average. As such this council considers it essential to retain and invest in the leisure centre so that it continues to provide quality leisure opportunities to the local community.

Roseberry Grange Golf Complex

172. This facility was developed on an open cast site in the mid 1980's to not only provide golfing opportunities at an affordable cost within the area but also as a major environmental improvement scheme. The complex has undoubtedly achieved both these aims, and over the last 20 years has enabled hundreds if not thousands of people to take up and enjoy the sport. Competition from other courses in the County and wider region is tough but the complex is keeping a strong user base (still over 600 members) which demonstrates its value. After 20 years however investment is needed in refurbishing the clubhouse and the course / range infrastructure i.e. irrigation and drainage systems.

Riverside

173. Without doubt the primary leisure site within the district, balancing passive and informal leisure space to the north with outdoor and indoor leisure facilities to the South. While the facilities provided by the council, which include a floodlit synthetic turf pitch, 6 lane floodlit athletics track, tennis courts and grass pitches are essentially local in scope the nature of the site has allowed it to be accepted as 2012 pre games training site for athletics. Only modest and ongoing investment is required to maintain the existing facilities. The opportunity exists however for the site to be considered as a regional sporting hub, building on the existing profile of the County Cricket Club and taking maximum advantage of its prime location for regional access and the existing road and parking infrastructure on the site. This potential has been commented upon in the consultation stages for the development of the County Durham Facilities Strategy and should certainly be further explored. The council has ensured a strong partnership with the Durham County Cricket Club, particularly in the requirements for staging international cricket and large scale music events. With the further developments taking place in the ground it will become the largest spectator facility within the County, and offers a real opportunity to work with the County Cricket Club on developing an events programme of regional significance within the ground.

Providing Outstanding Child Care

174. Unusually for a District council Chester-le Street operates a childcare facility. But this is not any childcare facility it is **Selby Cottage** childcare facility. During inspections in 2005 and 2008 it achieved '**Outstanding**' **Ofsted Inspection Reports**. Selby Cottage is a secure purpose-designed childcare centre with gardens, outdoor facilities and nearby parking, situated within a quiet residential setting close to Chester-le-Street town centre. Qualified and highly experienced staff are committed to the care and development of each child. Their professionalism coupled with the centre's superb facilities has helped Selby Cottage to create an environment where every child can develop to his or her full potential. Selby Cottage place great emphasis on working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that cultural backgrounds and the wishes of parents and children are respected and valued. It provides a range of opportunities for children aged 0-14 years of age and staff are

committed to achieving high standards at all times. There are 17 permanent staff who work with the children. All hold recognised qualifications. The comments of the Ofsted Inspectors include:

‘All staff have a high regard to helping each child fulfil their potential, as they recognise the uniqueness of each one. Excellent partnerships with parents and external agencies are in place, which supports children with their transition very well. The manager and staff also strive for continuous improvement, so that children’s care, learning and progress are effectively promoted throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).’

‘Self-evaluation and reflective practice is given high regard. The manager and staff regularly monitor the provision to support children’s learning, linking this effectively to the Every Child Matters outcomes and the EYFS framework. ‘

‘The manager is highly innovative and committed to good quality care, striving for continuous improvement through plans, projects and developments. ‘

‘Parents are highly involved with the nursery and home-nursery links are exceptional. Parents and children benefit from a home visit from nursery staff, where parents can talk about their children in a safe environment’

‘Many of the staff are longstanding, as they have been in post for a number of years. They work extremely well together and are excellent role models for the children. They are highly motivated, competent, enthusiastic, exceptionally caring and dedicated to all of the children. Therefore, children are settled, highly animated, confident and secure in their environment, because adults meet their needs extremely well.’

‘The outdoor environment is exceptional and continues to expand, so that children’s learning opportunities are greatly increased. Although the outdoor area is already fantastic, the manager and staff work hard to continue to develop this area.’

175. Selby Cottage is an exceptional service. The new unitary council are able to sustain it and use it as a beacon of best practice in other publicly provided child care facilities.

Community Cohesion Project

176. As part of the council’s single priority of **‘People and Place’** the council engaged with the Chester-le-Street CVS to deliver a community cohesion project. Funding for this was grant aided by the CLG. The aim was to help build further capacity of the communities of Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacristion in the run up to vesting day. The following has been achieved:

- This project has centred around 3 communities in Chester-le-Street district; Grange Villa, Pelton Fell and Sacriston;
- A part-time community cohesion officer has worked closely and supported the trustees at the 3 community centres and has successfully worked as an intermediary between the community centres and the District Council encouraging a collaborative approach to project development across the 3 centres;
- Cross cutting work has taken place with other projects – The Youth Forum project required a suitable location within the community to meet young people regarding the youth forum work. Youth Forum leaders wanted to meet young people at Grange Villa Community Centre, but the centre had not had a fire risk assessment. This was organised as part of the community cohesion project and enabled youth forum workers to meet young people at that centre;
- Sacriston held a ‘Sacriston Gets it Together’ day which brought together multiple agencies who manned stalls promoting their services at the Fulforth Centre. The events allowed local residents to go along to the centre and see what the various agencies do. The agencies that attended the meeting were the District Council, the County Council, police, NHS County Durham, Surestart, library, Cancer Research and Age Concern;
- Officers worked with Sacriston Community Centre to investigate different sustainable models for running a kitchen franchise. However, Sacriston community Centre eventually put in place their own preferred model for provision of the kitchen;
- Officers have assisted Grange Villa in it’s application for new sporting changing facilities; both by helping with the planning process and providing top up funding to improve the seating facilities in the proposed sporting facilities and to assist with architects fees;
- A regular meeting to bring together the 3 community centres is being held. The first meeting was held on 17th November and best practice and experiences are now being shared between villages; ICT facilities have been provided for the following centres :-
 - a) Grange Villa
 - b) Sacriston
 - c) Chester-le-Street and District Council for Voluntary Services.
 - d) Pelton Fell (equipment will be ordered in January 2009 and held while the community centre is being refurbished)
 - e) Lilac House
- In order to help sustain the ICT facilities, the authority has put in place a formal **service level agreement** for ICT support. ICT support will be provided by the authorities ICT service for the 5 community centres and associations named above.
- Additionally, an SLA and financial support are being provided to fund a capacity worker at Grange Villa Community Centre. This worker will play a role in encouraging more local people to attend the community centre.

- In order to encourage community centres to work together a number of websites have been provided. These use a common style to promote and encourage a joint approach to working. The websites produced are :-

www.thefulforthcentre.org.uk

www.peltonfellcommunityresourcecentre.org.uk

www.grangevillacommunity.org.uk.

www.Chester-le-streetcommunitycentresonline.com

- This latter website is being developed to provide a portal into all community centres in the district. It is expected to contain summary details of all community centres and their facilities and equipment) Users of the website will also be able to use this site to gain access to the community centre booking system;
- The authority is providing training on how volunteers from the community centres can maintain their own websites. This training took place in January/February 2009;
- Further working is being carried out to extend Cestria Credit Union to Sacriston and Pelton Fell. A number of volunteers have been identified who will support this project;
- An online booking system is being put in place to enable the community centres to make use of and book each other facilities and rooms. Ten community centres across the district have been circulated the information about the booking system and we await decision on which other centres would like to be involved;
- A food co-operative is being set up as a constituted body to enable volunteers to lease an allotment in Stella Gill. The project will make use of derelict plots and bring these back into use. The council will provide funding to assist with the clearance and readiness of the site. The allotment can provide local food that can be used in the community centres and has potential to provide training to young people or people with special needs; and
- Links have been developed with local schools to participate in the allotment scheme and with the NHS County Durham to help promote healthy eating from the future allotment scheme

177. It is suggested that the new unitary council continue with such support in order to continue helping communities help themselves.

What Wonderful Women Project

178. Again as part of the council's final year the council undertook work to celebrate the lives and achievements of women in Chester-le-Street. A website has been set up, www.whatwonderfulwomen.org.uk. The outcomes also include a DVD of celebration and a research library about women who have contributed so much to Chester-le-Street over the years. This has been made available to schools, local libraries and the Chester-le-Street Heritage Group who have assumed responsibility for keeping the information and web site up to date.

Community Safety

179. The council works in partnership in terms of Community Safety. The County Councils attention is drawn to the **Chester-le-Street and City of Durham Partnership Plan 2008/2011**. A **Summary** leaflet is also available. The Plan sets out the following aim and priorities:

Aim: To reduce crime and Disorder and to ensure that Chester-le-Street continues to be one of the safest places to live, work and visit in the country

The priorities for community safety in Chester-le-Street, which are reviewed annually, have been identified as:

- Increasing public assurance and tackling anti-social behaviour;
- Reducing violence against the person
- Reducing Criminal Damage
- Tackling drugs, substance and alcohol misuse; and
- Tackling Domestic Violence

180. The Plan provides a strategic assessment on all of these issues and includes a partnership action plan to address them.

Conclusions

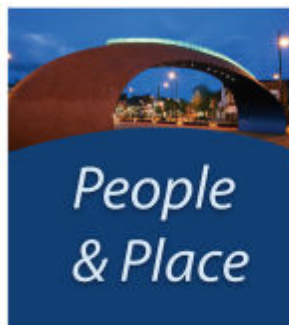
181. The council has worked hard over the last five years or so to contribute to the improvement of the well being of the young and the old alike. They have been given opportunities to work with partners to improve their well-being. The new unitary should sustain the progress they have made so far. In particular the new unitary is recommended to:

- **share the council's experience in terms of supporting children young people and older people in the District**
- **sustain the current projects which are aimed at improving well being (paragraph 145 -147 page 76);**
- **continue to implement the anti poverty strategy and review the affordable warmth strategy (paragraph 148 -161 page 88);**
- **support and sustain youth development in the District and in particular maintain the momentum of the Youth Forum (paragraph 162 - 164 page 94);**
- **implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the marketing of sports facilities for young people and the council's additional recommendations in respect of Audit Commission research and youth engagement (paragraph 168 -169 page 96);**
- **seek to undertake additional investment / seek alternative funding in leisure facilities including the leisure Centre, Roseberry Grange golf course and the Riverside (paragraph 170 -173 page 97);**
- **continue to support and sustain the outstanding Selby Cottage Child Care facility (paragraph 174 -175 page 98); and**
- **sustain the momentum of the Community Cohesion project including the extension of the Cestria Credit Union (paragraph 176- 177 page 99)**

Real power for Real People Handing over the Baton Report

5. Corporate Resources

Handing
over the
Baton



5. Corporate Resources

Summary

182. In June 2007, the Audit Commission issued its **Comprehensive Performance Assessment Inspection report**. In doing so it announced that the District Council had moved from being a 'poor' to a 'good' council. It was the first council in the country ever to do this. In July 2007 the Government announced that the council would be abolished in April 2009. Despite a difficult final year in terms of transferring its housing stock and dealing with the budgeting implications of that while managing the transitional period the council has since ensured a positive direction of travel. In terms of performance and improvement leading to positive customer outcomes, the District Council hands over the baton to the new authority with a clean bill of health.

183. It is the outcomes from the work and projects undertaken in Chester-le-Street and outlined in the previous chapter's that has made the true difference to our communities. However it is important to note the nature and scale of improvements made within the District which has helped communities achieve sustainable change. The District Council has transformed itself in a relatively short period of time and it does have experiences to share. It has been a matter of whole organisation improvement. As a committed Learning Authority it is considered that the new unitary authority can benefit from an understanding on how much progress was made over the last 5 years so it can learn from the policies, procedures and practices which made the difference. While best practice has been shared during the transitional arrangements there is clear scope for the new authority to learn what has made Chester-le-Street, Chester-le-Street.

184. This final chapter identifies:

- The evidence of improvement and positive direction of travel;
- what were the drivers of change and the tools and techniques used;
- specifically highlight the importance of holistic organisational development;
- highlights the importance of giving time and resource to celebrating diversity;
- stresses how focusing on customer excellence is to transformation and
- traces performance over the final year through the transitional period.

The District Council's Improvement Journey

185. In March 2004 The Audit Commission reported on their **first Comprehensive Performance Assessment** of Chester-le-Street District Council. They judged the council to be 'poor'. The council reacted extremely positively to address the weaknesses identified in that report. It was not because it had to, it was subject to intervention, it was because it wanted to. The outcome of the inspection sparked a passionate and determined improvement journey. How the council went about this is detailed in our **storyboard**.

186. Our focus on improvement was twofold. Firstly in order to deliver excellence, we needed to ensure that the organisation was 'fit for purpose' through internal structure, process and organisational development. This enabled the council to focus on its primary ambition, namely to keep an outward focus on understanding, raising and meeting the aspirations of its communities. The council's journey has therefore by necessity been about putting in place the building blocks and processes needed to improve the corporate health of the council. The drivers for change, agreed by the Government's **Monitoring Board** were as follows:

Vision into action There is clear focus on priorities and the Sustainable Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, service plans and individual plans are aligned

Decision making Decisions are made and implemented by the right people at the right time, at the right level, to ensure an effective response to our communities' needs.

People and Performance Ensuring that Members and employees have the capacity, knowledge and tools to deliver efficient Services

Improving Services Ensuring continuous service improvement within council services and those delivered in partnership, that are targeted to address customer needs and council priorities.

187. The milestones of improvement were set out in more detail in our **Organisational Development Strategy** and our **Storyboard** and have included:

- Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive in May 2004 the council worked with Monitoring Board support and the Audit Commission to plan the council's recovery
- Development of an **Improvement and Recovery Plan** which Monitoring Board approved in September 2004 and Implementation started in October 2004 and the council was able to prove **significant achievement**
- Convinced the **Housing Advisory Board** that further intervention was unnecessary and the Housing Advisory Board ceased to exist in August 2004 with the Chairman stating that the council were showing sufficient capacity to manage the ongoing improvements
- Worked with stakeholders in a **Partnership Board** composed of local business and community leaders to understand their needs and to act as a sounding board for improvements in the first year (2004/5).
- Worked with partners through the District Partnership to understand their priorities, driving the LSP and the

March 2004 Community Strategy

- Commenced an annual citizens survey to assist in developing our priorities building on other areas of community Engagement including a community conference in October 2004
- Introduced a new Corporate Management Team by February 2005
- Developed our first Corporate Plan in June 2005 with clear ambition, focus and priorities supported by a clear drive to be an excellent council
- Reviewed the Improvement programme (IRP2) approved in November 2005
- Launched the Organisational Development Programme in September 2005 developing Action Learning Sets and Continual Process Improvement Projects.
- Worked in partnership to develop a Local Area Agreement in March 2006
- Positively approached a Benefits Fraud inspection in 2004, volunteering for further work in February 2007, and Audit Commission service inspections in environmental services and housing in March and May 2006 resulting in improved categorisations in both
- Reviewed the Corporate Plan in June 2006 maintaining our priorities to retain focus and sets out our long term vision to become an excellent council
- Led the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy for 2006-2016 which was published and launched in November 2006 with clearer, more measurable action plans.

188. In October 2006 the council were given the opportunity to make a submission to the Audit Commission's Regional Panel for consideration for re-inspection in the first tranche of the Commission's new regime for CPA. The council had to convince the Panel that if re-inspection took place there was a reasonable prospect that re-categorisation would result. The submission was successful and in January 2007 the council submitted its self assessment. A very positive and enjoyable inspection followed in the following March. In June the Audit Commission published their report on its findings. The District Council had become the first council to move from a poor category to being good, leapfrogging the 'weak' and 'fair' categories in one attempt.

189. The council was committed to excellence and despite the issues posed by local government review and the strong contribution of Chester-le-Street to the transitional process it has continued its positive direction of travel. The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter published in March 2008 was arguably the most positive such letter in the council's history. The council continued with its ambition and February 2008 saw the transfer of its housing stock to Cestria Homes Limited, completing a major priority in the council's 2007/2010 Corporate Plan. The most up to date Ombudsman Annual Report is that for 2007/2008 dated June 2008. This shows that very few complaints are made to the Ombudsman, none have recently been found to amount to maladministration and injustice and the council perform exceptionally well in terms of response times. The last RIPA report by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners was made in 2008 and again this is extremely positive.

190. In view of Local Government Re-organisation the council had to refocus its priorities and ‘slim down’ its ambitions. In February 2008 it set its budget on the basis of a single priority known as ‘**People and Place**’. In the following March it approved its **Transition Plan** which set out a commitment to:

- continue to deliver the best possible services;
- commit resources to playing a role in setting up the new organisation; and
- continue its improvement journey.

191. ‘**People and Place**’ describes what Chester-le-Street’s improvement has been about, working together to improve the well being of people and the quality of the places the live and work in. The priority set out to deliver a diverse range of proposals and projects to improve engagement and access to services while improving the town centre and neighbourhoods. The priority has been successfully delivered through the mainstreaming and application of Action Learning Sets to direct service delivery. The components of the priority have been:

- **Strengthening Partnerships;**

This has involved working with partnerships within the area to ensure they are best placed to have sustainable futures. The council had worked to support the community and voluntary sector to help them sustain their network. It has undertaken a community cohesion project in the villages of Pelton Fell, Sacriston and Grange Villa building capacity and self sufficiency. This has been supported by assisting in IT resources, community web site development, considering sports provision, extensions of credit unions and development of a food co-operative. To celebrate diversity the council has worked with the local heritage group on the project called ‘What Wonderful Women’ that recognises the lives and achievements of women in Chester-le-Street. The Scrutiny Reviews into the Unparished Areas of the District and Marketing of Sporting Activities for Young People supported the delivery of this part of the priority

- **Investment in the Town Centre;**

This has included progressing the Town Centre Master Plan, the implementation of a programme of celebratory events throughout the year around the civic heart, improvements to the market and the front street during the annual festival and the development of locator boards for visitors. The Scrutiny Review into the Future of the Market supported the delivery.

- **Partnerships for Futures**

This has focused around working with business and partners agencies to balance skills and jobs,. It also included the young entrepreneur competition event.

- **Neighbourhoods**

The focus of this part of the priority has been around improving community engagement, particularly with young people in terms of environmental, anti social behaviour and local democracy. The work undertaken with communities has seen significant engagement with schools, a comprehensive local democracy week, the development of the Open Your Eyes campaign, successful Northumberland in Bloom engagement and the development of a community neighbourhood toolkit.

The Importance of Cultural Change and Organisational Development

192. There are high expectations from the government that the new unitary ought to become a flagship council within the next two years. This will require transformational change. The District Council has come a long way because of the quality of its members and staff. With their commitment the District Council has achieved transformational change in recent years as its improvement journey has shown. It therefore considers that it is important to outline what are the major contributory factors to the council's achievements in order that the new Unitary can incorporate best practice alongside that from other councils in learning from its experiences. It is considered that the most significant success factor has been the council's holistic approach to Organisational Development captured in the 'One Team' ethos. This has been the driver of corporate improvement and has not just simply been a human resource issue. It has delivered what was necessary – whole council cultural change.

193. The council required a significant shift in its culture. It required the council to do things together while empowering employees to make changes and provide them with the confidence to achieve. This entailed a holistic approach to improvement which included an Organisational Development Programme aimed at building the skills and confidence to make the necessary changes. It involved regularly 'sharpening the saw' to ensure the improvement plan was up to date and relevant. As a part of the councils' **One Team**' approach to improvement in service delivery every member of staff within the council has played an individual, team, service and corporate role in this achievement improving the quality of life of our communities. Through the development, implementation, monitoring and review of our improvement plans, the overall contribution of individuals and teams has ensured the achievement of a 'good' council focused on the following.

Ambition

- The development and implementation of a **Sustainable Community Strategy** linked to a **Local Area Agreement**;
- Sound strategic plans based on well established **community engagement** including young people;
- Sound understanding of who customers are and needs including data from **district and neighbourhood profiles**;
- Strong **partnership** working and engagement within the north east region and nationally;
- Effective community leadership through working with different communities in different ways in terms of regeneration, capacity building and environmental improvement;
- Taking difficult decisions and implementing them at front line level;

Prioritisation

- Developing **new priorities** based on what the communities and partners said to us and what central government expects;
- Communication of the new priorities and driving change across them under the 'One Team' banner;
- Focussing on what was important;
- Working well with **minority groups** to ensure their needs are addressed;
- Ensuring that financial and human resources were directed to achieving what we set out to do;
- Using **action plans and improvement plans** to improve how we deliver services with staff at all levels involved in improvement activity;

Capacity

- Improving the **leadership and management** of the council;
- Promoting and implementing a 'Can do' 'Will do' and 'Thank you' culture with strong personal development practices and well developed and motivated employees;
- Modernising and extending human resource capacity to pro-actively support staff and members including improved policies, procedures, Training and Development and support through Investors in People and Member's Charter Accreditation;
- Improving in terms of **corporate governance**, finance, **IT**, risk management, partnership working, **scrutiny**, **diversity** and **value for money**;
- Improving the culture of the organisation and providing tools to help improvement such as the **Organisational Development Programme**, 'Inspirers', 'Rising Stars', **Action Learning Sets** and **Continual Process Improvement**;
- Empowered staff with the confidence to make decisions and secure change;
- Promoting achievements through **communications** and **annual awards**.

Performance Management

- Having **robust systems** so that employees know how well they are performing and understand their role in the performance of their team and the council
- Having a strong **corporate plan** and **service plans** in place which have engaged staff, supported by strong strategies such as the **Information Management**, **Equalities Plan**, **Customer Excellence**, **Housing**, **Homelessness**, **Anti Poverty** and **Regeneration**;
- **Regular monitoring and reporting of performance** to understand where remedial action is necessary together with the use of accurate and reliable information;
- Being receptive to external challenge from the Audit Commission, GONE and external accreditation such as **Charter mark**, **Investors in People**; **Members Charter**; **Ofsted Outstanding for Selby Cottage**; **Quest**; **Green Flag Awards**; **Cemetery** and **Loo of the year** Awards; **Northumbria in Bloom** and the regional **ShiNE** awards
- **Involving customers** in service improvement;
- Undertaking **joint performance management** with partners.

Achievement and Improvement

- **significant performance against national averages** for performance improvement;
- **Top Quartile performance** higher than the national average;
- Improvement performance higher than the national average including services of Benefits, Environmental services and Planning;
- Securing 'good' results in service inspection from the Audit Commission including **Environmental Services** and **Benefits**;
- Improving the customer focus of the council through a customer care culture, **improving complaints handling**, developing one stop shops, **improving ICT** and making significant progress on e-government such as **website development**;
- Working effectively with partners, including the LSP, crime and disorder, Streetsafe while undertaking significant engagement with young people including very successful **Local Democracy weeks**;
- Engagement in all levels of **community led regeneration** schemes including housing and environmental improvement across the district and town centre improvements;
- Helping to **transfer the councils housing service** so it can achieve the capacity to significantly improve;
- Improving the leisure service through improving customer focus, refurbishing leisure facilities and working in partnership to provide new facilities and resources such as the Riverside and promoting health through things like the '**Lifestyle Initiative**';

- Implementing **neighbourhood management** projects, improving street cleanliness and the quality of opens spaces;
- Improving efficiencies through good performance management, organisational development programme engagement and focus on value for money while securing significant external grant aid to deliver services within the district.

194. In considering the above components of successful transformation there are a number of important areas of the council's One Team approach which warrant particular emphasis:

▪ ***Members Charter***

It is the programme of support and improvement which led to the council being the first District Council in the region to achieve a **Member's Charter**. The council secured the support of the I&DeA to help provide the skills to new members to become community leaders. The Charter was achieved in **July 2006**. Councillors have played roles in corporate improvement and Member Champions have been particularly influential. The council has had Member Champions for Older People, Young People, Equality and Diversity, Data Quality, E-Government, Sport, Mental Health and Design. This has been in addition to the day to day championing roles of successive Executive Members. This has been crucial to the council's success.

▪ ***Organisational Development Programme.***

This was a phased approach, supported by Q Learning, which engaged all directors, managers and supervisors across the council in driving the 'One Team' approach. The approach also included volunteers or change agents in the organisation who wanted to develop themselves to become future leaders in the organisation. These were known as 'Inspirers' in the first phase and 'Rising Stars' in the second. It involved bespoke training and development on managerial competencies based on sound NLP delivery techniques. It introduced 360 degree appraisals and leadership diagnostics to third tier management for the first time. It also had a practical side as it introduced the concept of **Action Learning Sets** that in the first and successive years supported the delivery of council objectives. This programme has had a marked impact on the confidence of people within the organisation. Not only has it given people the confidence to do things differently but empowered them to carry out their proposals. There are numerous notable individual successes as a result of the programme including the enforcement team development of the 'Open your eyes' campaign.

▪ **Action Learning Sets**

Action Learning Sets have become mainstreamed in the organisation. As indicated above they have been used to deliver the council's single priority over its final year. They were particularly successful in addressing issues rather than performance. In effect they are multi disciplinary Working Groups which engage customers to deliver improvement. They have given the confidence to staff to engage in issues outside of their comfort zones and empowered them to make necessary change. The Action Learning Sets had Director sponsors and were supported by coaches trained as part of the first phase of the organisational development programme. They established their own leaders and action plans. They concluded with celebratory presentations to Members and customers. As indicated they delivered against council priorities. For example the council's approach to achieving **Investors in People**, its **Customer Care programme** and its approach to **value for money** were all developed through Action Learning Sets. These were all fundamental components of the council's improvement journey.

▪ **Continuous Process Improvement**

This was a principal tool of the council in improving business processes to improve organisational performance. They came about as the council addressed the governments Priority Service Outcomes. Through an I&DeA ISU grant the council sought the services of Simmons Dickinson consultants, one of the companies that tendered for the council's Organisational Development Programme. The approach was championed by the Assistant Chief Executive and had transparent Corporate Management Team Support. In the first phase the pilots addressed under performance in terms of the **paying of invoices** in 30 days, **the time taken to let voids** and the **time taken to respond to fly tipping** cases. The process includes engagement with service deliverers and customers to change and improve processes with the aim of removing the barriers to performance improvement. The process required understanding data and was supported by appropriate **software** to analyse trends and produce results. As with Action Learning Sets all projects concluded with celebratory presentations on results with members and customers. **Additional phases** have been rolled out and the last phase was undertaken in house without consultant's direct support. 'Train the Trainer' skills development was built in as part of the process. In all CPI projects undertaken, sustained performance improvement has been achieved, with costs savings at the same time. The project on voids led to savings which covered the initial investment with the consultants. All staff engaged have indicated that the CPI training was one of the most rewarding learning experiences they had had.

195. The District Council understands the amount of work that needs to be undertaken to achieve the high expectations of government. It knows how difficult it is to change culture but it also is experienced at delivering cultural shift successfully. To be successful and achieve what is required a cultural change between the old County Council and the new unitary is necessary. The council, therefore strongly suggests that the new unitary council to undertake a holistic organisational development approach to improvement and learn from the District council's achievements. The District Council is pleased to see that a similar One Team approach has already been taken up through the County Council's 'One Organisation' commitment and the 'Altogether, Better' programme. To bring together all the councils in Durham presents a unique opportunity to build excellence into the cultural values and behaviors of the new unitary council. We know from experience that this is extremely hard to

achieve and it is crucial that this becomes an effective programme of change and not simply a strapline. The District Council respectfully suggests that the new unitary ensures that the 'Altogether, Better' programme is a whole council improvement programme and is used to drive the new organisation along its own journey towards excellence.

“Strong leadership and the commitment of staff have resulted in a significant cultural change within the Council over recent years. Staff have been empowered through the ‘one team’ ethos and have contributed to improved access to services; The Council successfully strives to enhance capacity through its 'one team' ethos. It has achieved a further programme of action learning sets and continual process improvement projects with achievements

The Audit Commission
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter March 2009

The Importance of Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity

196. A significant amount of our success can be put down to how we have based our improvement work on celebrating equality and diversity. While this has been a firm building block of the ‘One Team Approach’, it is worthy of being highlighted as an important part of the cultural shift of the organisation. It was a fundamental part of the initial Improvement and Recovery Plan (**IRP**) and our reviewed Plan, **IRP2**.

197. The council engages staff **across the council** in not just equality and diversity training but celebrating events to improve their understanding and to bring new life experiences. In doing so it brought together a multi disciplinary improvement team called the Equality and Diversity Working Group with significant engagement from local race, LGBT and disability organisations. This has been led from the top the group being supported by the Leader as Member Champion and the Assistant Chief Executive as officer champion. It has been driven by the council’s Performance, Improvement and Equalities Manager who led the improvement work (including development and implementation of the council’s **Equality Plan**) that took the council from a Level 0 on the national equality standard for local government to the verge of level 3 inside three years. Only Local Government re-organisation has interrupted this journey. Along the way through the development of a **cultural calendar** the council has been able to celebrate difference both within and outside the council. This has included:

- engagement with local schools in a range of cultural events;
- maximising opportunities within the town centre to celebrate important cultural dates during the year, enriching lives of the community through new life experiences;
- supporting individual services to celebrate diversity such as the regular celebration of festivals, support for fair trade and environmental awareness at Selby Cottage Child care Centre;
- supporting Chester-le-Street to become a Fair Trade Town;
- providing opportunities for staff to understand different cultures such as visits to a mosque;
- undertaking projects to celebrate the lives of women and signing up the **European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**;
- working with young people in terms of environmental and anti social behaviour awareness while providing opportunities to the elderly to improve health and lifestyle;
- engaging the Sunderland based rap group '**The Word**' to engage young people in the Respect agenda;
- Working with the Chinese community on '**Safer Foods, Better Business**';
- celebrating the dance culture and providing facilities for young people;
- engaging local schools in cultural events such as Chinese New Year and Diwali;
- putting effort into and celebrating its cultural calendar including **World Aids Day**,
- mainstreaming the annual '**It's a knock out**' competition engaging different groups and cultures;
- undertaking community cohesion projects as part of the councils priority;
- celebrating the achievement of Action Learning Sets and encouraging innovation in presentation of results;
- celebrating the achievements of individuals through an **Annual Evening of Achievement Awards** including specific individual and team awards for equality and diversity; and
- support to individuals to secure and share skills such as I&DeA peer challengers.



Freda Mulvey
PHAB

"Everybody comes up to me in the street to ask me when the next 'It's a knock out competition' is going to be. My group and others now have access to sporting facilities that they did not have before. They also know more about the council and who people are. They are enjoying better experiences as a result. It would be a feather in the cap of the new unitary council if they could develop this prestige event

198. It is suggested that the new unitary treats equality and diversity seriously and listen to the Chester-le-Street experience. Equality and diversity must be mainstreamed in the organisation and not be seen as the job of others. All services need to be held to account and prove their contributions. It will enrich the lives of employees as well as the community. It will be seriously important in terms of Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The Importance of Striving for Customer Excellence

199. The District Council has from day one taken the view that it wanted to be an excellent council. It has made this clear in its **Corporate Plans**. This has been excellence in the wider sense. Developing services which can achieve recognition will be as important to the new authority as it has been for the District Council. The council provided a particular focus to customer excellence as part of its improvement and recovery:

- it established a customer champion and Assistant Chief Executive level, providing strategic leadership;
- it established a Customer Manager Role at Service Head level which included the responsibility to drive cultural change;
- it incorporated customer Excellence as its number one **priority**;
- it developed a **Customer Excellence Strategy** which drove improvement in terms of process, culture as well as technology;
- in terms of process it developed a one stop shop, resisting pressure for a call centre approach, while establishing anew **compliments, comments and complaints policy and procedure** which was performance managed. A **Continuous Process Improvement project** then revisited the procedures to asses their effectiveness and make necessary improvement;
- in terms of culture an **Action Learning Set** worked on improving the importance of customer care and established a council wide **customer care programme**, backed up by Ombudsman provided **complaints investigation training** while setting up a network of customer champions throughout the council;
- in terms of technology worked to make significant progress against BVPI e-government and Priority Service Outcomes while playing a role in setting up and operating the County wide CRM system; the IT section making so much progress that it achieved its first Chartermark in **2007** and improved on this in **2008**; and
- developed a LGA Reputation approach to its **Communications Strategy**.

200. As a result of the above and the council's overall improvement the number of complaints has decreased and the number of compliments received has increased. There is still an issue at the council in terms of overall satisfaction but the new authority has an opportunity here to learn from the things that have made a significant difference in a council that has achieved

transformation over the last few years. A culture of customer focus will not happen by accident. It is a choice which must be made and driven throughout the organisation.

Performance 2008/2009 – A Clean Bill of Health

201. As indicated above the final year of the council has shown a continued positive Direction of Travel. 2008/2009 has been a difficult year. The council has been faced with:

- the financial auditing and reporting challenges of the impact of housing stock transfer;
- changes in auditing advice and guidance which when added to stock transfer issues had an impact on ability to close the accounts for the previous year;
- the impact of LGR and the council's commitment to resourcing the process;
- reduced capacity as staff have left to take up other opportunities elsewhere as a result of LGR;
- difficulties in improving performance in the face of reduced capacity while focusing on the council's single priority

202. The March 2009 **Audit Commission Annual Audit and Inspection Letter** which was reported to the council meeting on **19th March 2009** confirms that:

- The council moves towards its demise having made notable progress over the past few years
- The prospect of abolition through local government reorganisation (LGR) has also not distracted it from keeping a focus on its priorities and providing quality services;
- Despite some dips in service performance in 2007/08 there are 40 per cent of performance indicators in the best quartile, compared to only a 33 per cent for district councils nationally;
- The council has made changes to bolster its capacity leading up to LGR such as restructuring the senior management team and through using its 'one team' ethos to support service improvement;
- Progress against the council's priorities and contribution to wider community outcomes is positive. The Council has made steady progress against its previous seven well established priorities and its new single priority of 'people and place';
- The council continues to work closely with communities and partners in delivering improvements;
- The council engages well with its communities;
- The council has kept a clear focus on its priorities including economic and social regeneration, good neighbourhood management, better social housing and good leisure opportunities;
- Strong leadership and the commitment of staff have resulted in a significant cultural change within the Council over recent years. Staff have been empowered through the 'one team' ethos and have contributed to improved access to services; The Council successfully strives to enhance capacity through its 'one team' ethos. It has achieved a further

programme of action learning sets and continual process improvement projects with achievements in establishing a corporate enforcement team, improving time to respond to customer complaints, improving the efficiency of the building control team.

- As a result of LGR the corporate plan has been changed to a one year 'Transition Plan'. This single improvement plan aims to ensure successful handover to the new unitary council. The 'Transition Plan' is the overarching plan during the transition period, and as such sets out how services and projects will be facilitated, delivered and resourced. It is a rationalisation of the council's corporate plan and associated medium term financial plan, organisational development strategy and corporate improvement plan. It sets out the council's new single priority of 'people and place';
- The council is investing in clear priorities through its Transition Plan. The council is aiming to leave local communities with sustainable mechanisms for engaging with new unitary council;
- During the period leading up to LGR Members and officers have worked hard to keep disruption to services to a minimum. Where it has the capacity and expertise the council is also playing a role in the LGR workstreams, for example policy and partnerships.
- The council faced a number of challenges in 2007/08, including the uncertainty created by LGR and the transfer of council housing to a new registered social landlord (RSL), Cestria. These challenges impacted upon the 2007/08 accounts preparation process and our audit identified a number of errors that needed to be addressed and delayed the opinion until October 2008. Despite this an unqualified opinion was issued along with an unqualified conclusion on arrangements for securing value for money.
- The council's continues to maintain a robust performance management framework which includes: a quarterly corporate performance report summary reported to Executive and overview and scrutiny backed up by a detailed corporate performance report; a quarterly Programme Management Board which monitors progress against Strategy; a quarterly Performance Clinic which engages Executive members and officers in driving improvement; and a monthly Corporate Governance Group which drives improvements in the council's corporate governance arrangements; Scrutiny arrangements remain effective. Overview and Scrutiny was reviewed and there is now one single overview and scrutiny committee focused on supporting the delivery of the 'people and place' priority;
- The council has continued to make improvements in its approach to data quality and overall management arrangements are generally sound; and
- One of the risks to the new unitary is the loss of knowledge and expertise as a result of senior officers moving elsewhere.

203. In terms of other important Audit Commission conclusions the Commission has regularly reported on the council's **Data Quality** arrangements. The council has ensured that it has a Member Champion for Data Quality who has played a role in driving improvements with the officer Data Quality Champion. The last report concluded that:

- The council has continued to make improvements in the approach to data quality and overall management arrangements are above minimum requirements.

- analytical review work at Stage 2 identified that the PI values reviewed fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence; and
- because of the findings at stages 1 and 2, detailed spot checks of the indicators were limited to the Audit Commission mandated HB PIs, BVPI 78a and BVPI 78b and that both indicators were fairly stated and the data was appropriately supported by the HB system.

204. In terms of financial performance the council's Executive considered a **final budget monitoring report** at its meeting on 2nd March 2009. This report indicated that the council was on course for a small underspend on its revenue budget. At the end of the year the council expects reserves to be higher than initially planned. While there are risks to the final outturns set out in the report the council are able to report positive financial performance during its final year.

205. Corporate Management Team Reports quarterly to the Executive on a holistic approach to corporate performance. The council's Executive considered the council's **last corporate performance report** on 2nd March 2009 which was generally positive. Performance against the new National indicator sets has been mixed although it is difficult to make any judgments on performance to date in view of a lack of historical data on many of the new indicators. Current information suggests that the council is **performing well against other county districts** in general terms.

206. The council has produced its final **Annual Governance Statement** which emphasises its sound corporate governance arrangements. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also agreed its final **Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report** which shows that it achieved what it set out to do in its final year.

207. On balance and taking into account all of the above; it is considered that the District Council is handing over the baton to the new authority with a completely clean bill of health.

Conclusions

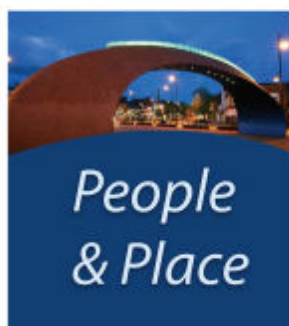
208. It is concluded that in view of the council's journey it has a great deal of experiences and learning to share with the new Unitary. This experience and learning has been set out generally in this document. Specific learning about the council's improvement journey has been set out in this chapter. The new unitary council is able to take advantage of this experience and learning in making the steps it need to take to become a flagship council. It is recommended that the new unitary:

- **Share the council's experience in terms of its improvement journey (paragraph 185 -191 page 106);**
- **builds on the council's 'One Team' approach and develops Altogether Better into an effective programme of holistic organisational development and cultural change (paragraph 192 -195 page 109);**
- **uses tools such as Action Learning Sets and Continuous Process Improvement (paragraph 194 page 112);**
- **mainstreams equality and diversity (paragraph 196 -198 page 114);**
- **ensures that customer excellence is a principal driver of organisational change (paragraph 199 – 200 page 116); and**
- **acknowledges and builds upon the performance of the council in its final year (paragraph 201 -207 page 117)**

*Real power for Real People
Handing over the Baton Report*

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Handing
over the
Baton



6. Conclusions and recommendations

Summary conclusions and recommendations

209. Chester-le-Street District Council has assisted its communities to make significant progress in their journey of improvement. It has ensured that it has built strong relationships with communities to enable them to have real control over their futures. The communities' journey of improvement has been about putting new hearts into the town centre and the villages, basing renewal on how residents in villages wanted to move forward. Strong partnerships in the area have assisted the improvement journey including the involvement of pro-active voluntary and community services. Community facilities have been managed in a way to support community capacity building. Community engagement has been a crucial part of environmental improvement and sustainability. Supporting older people as the most vulnerable residents and increasing opportunities for young people has been a significant part of the council's contribution to community development. The District Council has a wealth of experience in whole council cultural change and performance and improvement. It has put cultural change at the heart of its own improvement journey and through whole council organisational development, celebration of equality and diversity and a focus on customers, has valuable experience of transformational change. In doing so the council has, through its links with the Local Strategic Partnership, invested in social capital to develop the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values which arise from those networks. Greater interaction between people has generated a greater sense of community spirit. The new unitary is well placed to sustain the communities journey while sharing the collective experiences. It is therefore recommended to:

Economic Regeneration

- share the council's experience in terms of regeneration in the District
- continue to support community led regeneration and development of social capital such as the work in Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacriston (paragraph 22- 33 page 18);
- continue to implement and as appropriate incorporate the existing Regeneration Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy into County strategies to ensure that their aims and objectives are built into future planning and ultimately achieved (documented throughout section 2);
- ensure that the Town Centre Master Plan is built into the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework District (paragraph 35 - 42 page 25);
- make progress on the Business Improvement District while implementing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Review of the Market and reconsidering the management structure for markets (paragraph 43 - 51 page 31);
- continue to support the development of Durham County Cricket Club and recognise and support the importance of the Leisure Corridor (paragraph 52 - 56 page 33); and
- commit to supporting 'Partnership for Futures' (paragraph 60 - 63 page 38).

Local Partnerships and the Environment

- share the council's experience in terms of local partnerships and environmental improvement in the District;
- Continue to support the approach to engagement and the support provided to community groups (paragraph 96 – 99 page 53);
- continue to sustain the community engagement projects established in the district (paragraph 96 -99 page 53);
- implement the recommendations of the Community Facilities Review (paragraph 100 -110 page 55);
- sustain the work of the Local Strategic Partnership policy groups (paragraph 111 -121 page 59);
- sustain and build upon the significant contribution to 'well being' made by the voluntary and community sector (paragraph 122 -126 page 64);
- implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the future of the unparished areas of the district (paragraph 127 -128 page 66);
- sustain the approaches to community engagement in environmental improvement (paragraph 134 page 68)

Healthier, Safer Communities and Adults and Young People's Services

- share the council's experience in terms of supporting children young people and older people in the District
- sustain the current projects which are aimed at improving well being (paragraph 145 -147 page 76);
- continue to implement the anti poverty strategy and review the affordable warmth strategy (paragraph 148 - 161 page 88);
- support and sustain youth development in the District and in particular maintain the momentum of the Youth Forum (paragraph 162 – 164 page 94);
- implement the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review of the marketing of sports facilities for young people and the council's additional recommendations in respect of Audit Commission research and youth engagement (paragraph 168 -169 page 96);
- seek to undertake additional investment / seek alternative funding in leisure facilities including the leisure Centre, Roseberry Grange golf course and the Riverside (paragraph 170 -173 page 97);
- continue to support and sustain the outstanding Selby Cottage Child Care facility (paragraph 174 -175 page 98); and
- sustain the momentum of the Community Cohesion project including the extension of the Cestria Credit Union (paragraph 176- 177 page 99)

Corporate Resources

- Share the council's experience in terms of its improvement journey (paragraph 185 -191 page 106);
- builds on the council's 'One Team' approach and develops Altogether Better into an effective programme of holistic organisational development and cultural change (paragraph 192 -195 page 109);
- uses tools such as Action Learning Sets and Continuous Process Improvement (paragraph 194 page 112);
- mainstreams equality and diversity (paragraph 196 -198 page 114);
- ensures that customer excellence is a principal driver of organisational change (paragraph 199 – 200 page 116); and
- acknowledges and builds upon the performance of the council in its final year (paragraph 201 -207 page 117)