



Cabinet

Date **Wednesday 21 April 2021**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Remote Meeting - This meeting is being held
remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the public and press

1. Public Questions
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2021 (Pages 3 - 14)
3. Declarations of Interest

Key Decision:

4. Proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024 - Report of Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services [Key Decision: CYPS/03/2021] (Pages 15 - 32)

Ordinary Decisions:

5. High Needs Block Funding for SEND and Inclusion Support - Joint Report of Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 33 - 60)
6. Health Protection Assurance Annual Report - Report of Director of Public Health (Pages 61 - 82)
7. Workforce Strategy - 2021-23 - Report of Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 83 - 110)
8. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
9. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

10. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
13 April 2021

To: **The Members of the Cabinet**

Councillors S Henig and A Napier (Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council) together with Councillors J Allen, O Gunn, L Hovvels, C Marshall, A Patterson, K Shaw, B Stephens and A Surtees

Contact: Ros Layfield

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday 17 March 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor S Henig (in the Chair)

Cabinet Members:

Councillors J Allen, O Gunn, L Howvells, C Marshall, A Napier, A Patterson, K Shaw and A Surtees

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Stephens

Also Present:

Councillors J Clare, J Shuttleworth, T Tucker and M Wilkes

1 Public questions

There were no public questions.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

**4 Leisure Transformation & New Build Site Selection Update
[Key Decision: REG/02/21]**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the leisure transformation programme approved by Cabinet in January 2020. The report set out progress to date including the next steps for the full development of the programme, and, sought approval for three preferred sites for new build leisure centres for Seaham, Chester-le-Street and Bishop Auckland (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Tucker, local member for Woodhouse Close division referred to the concerns raised in the report regarding the Tindale Crescent site. She commented that to move a leisure centre out of a deprived area would make it more difficult for people to access it, and, in an area where the infrastructure is not in place, this was not a cost effective, viable option for Bishop Auckland. She requested Cabinet to reconsider the proposal in the interests of the health and wellbeing of the residents of Woodhouse Close and the people of Bishop Auckland in general.

Councillor Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked Councillor Tucker for the question. He confirmed that detailed site evaluations had been completed, the matters raised had been considered, and there was provision for further feasibility, and a range of detailed assessments. Whilst site contamination, including mine shafts and conserving habitats had been considered to the appropriate level at this stage, it is accepted these are extremely important matters that are subject to further detailed work. In addressing the issue of accessibility, Councillor Marshall highlighted that the public consultation exercise identified that only 4% of customers use public transport and the majority arrive by car. In recommending the site, an equality impact assessment had been completed and further work was undertaken to explore public transport provision. This established that the site was served by an hourly direct bus service, and, by a number of indirect bus services. Further work will be explored to improve the pedestrian and public transport infrastructure and Stronger Towns funding and other initiatives will help to address this. The programme will work closely with other schemes towards the best joint outcomes for the new leisure site and the wider town as a whole.

Councillor Marshall explained that no services such as gas, electricity or sewers run through the site, however, there are services running close to the perimeter and the site design will consider this in more detail. During the site appraisal stage, it is standard practice to include risk items within the cost plan for the project. These risks will be addressed as the project develops and the cost plan will be amended as with any large construction project. Early site investigations have provided sufficient assurances that the risks that have been identified can be mitigated. It is unlikely that benefit will arise from co-locating a library at Tindale Crescent. The planned leisure facility, operating alongside the retail provision within the Tindale area makes for the best mix of services. A library will often lend itself more naturally to a community-focussed co-location and more naturally lends itself to a community hub type facility in Woodhouse Close. Councillor Marshall concluded his response by saying that taking this approach, the Council is able to generate a better overall mix of service provision for the town and surrounding areas, whilst at the same time maximising regeneration opportunities.

Councillor Wilkes, local member for Framwellgate and Newton Hall division thanked Cabinet for improving the environmental sustainability of the leisure proposals and requested that Cabinet advise on the £14 million increase in the original budget from January, as there appeared to be no breakdown as to where this additional funding will be spent, and, on what. Given the lack of detail and the concerns raised by himself and residents, Councillor Wilkes asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration to confirm whether Abbey Leisure Centre will retain a steam/sauna provision, whether the increase in refurbishment costs includes the renewal of the changing room areas and showers, and, whether the increase in refurbishment costs includes any additional works which were unfunded in the original report of over two years ago. Councillor Wilkes also asked if the Portfolio Holder could confirm whether the intention remains for Abbey Leisure Centre to open on a full-time basis, and, that the extended opening hours will continue. He pointed out that residents had waited over two years for the start of works and requested assurance that work will begin at Abbey Leisure Centre in this calendar year.

Thanking Councillor Wilkes for the question, Councillor Marshall replied that the focus on this phase of work had been on site selection for new build leisure centres. The facility mix for each venue is still to be finalised and will involve the careful balancing of wellbeing, sustainability and accessibility. He added the Council will work through the details over next round of engagement in the summer, including working with young people, disabled people and other groups in the community. He confirmed the showers and changing facilities had been included as part of the proposals at this stage and their inclusion will be subject to the final refinement of the project scope. The costs presented in the report include a broader range of considerations which reflect further refinement of the planning for the new leisure centres which takes account of more detailed on-site surveys and investigations. With regard to opening times, this level of detail will be developed with the business plan and facility mix and operating proposals will need to take account of changes resulting from the global pandemic, and it will not be possible to confirm final dates until the facility mix is finalised and the further stage of engagement is complete. Councillor Marshall assured Councillor Wilkes that a final report, providing full details of the finalised proposals including costs, benefits and the delivery timeline, will be brought to Cabinet in the autumn.

The Chair then invited Councillor Wilkes to ask a question on behalf of Councillor Huntington, local member for Shildon and Dene Valley division. In his question Councillor Huntington expressed concern that Shildon and Dean Valley division has some of the lowest health outcomes in the county and he commented that the report did not provide clarity on the future for Shildon. He asked Cabinet to guarantee that Shildon will either be provided with a new leisure centre, or, that the existing centre will be fully refurbished.

Councillor Marshall confirmed the clear commitment to the continued provision of leisure facilities in Shildon, pointing out that recently £264,000 had been spent on refurbishing the athletics track, athletics equipment and associated changing facilities and grandstand. This element of work had been taken forward first, to take advantage of £100,000 of external funding provided by Sport England. Now that this work had been completed to a very high standard, the project team are turning their attention to plans for the leisure centre and wider site, and local members will be kept informed as discussions progress.

Moving the report, Councillor Marshall emphasised the importance of supporting health and wellbeing as the county emerges from the pandemic. He commented that the report presents innovative plans which will see all the existing sites remain open during the build period and this will ensure the Council continues to support the community to access health and wellbeing activities. Seconding the report, Councillor Shaw, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Assets said the plans contribute to the commitment to develop an overarching health strategy and this aligns with the key strategic priorities for the Council.

Councillor Allen, Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Culture and Tourism welcomed the new centres for Seaham, Chester le Street and Bishop Auckland, pointing out they will also benefit the surrounding towns and villages. She added the community hub development at Woodhouse Close which will be co-designed with local people and organisations, will incorporate library provision, which is particularly important as the library at Woodhouse Close is one of the most used libraries in the county. The new proposal will do more to meet the needs of the local community and Councillor Allen said she is looking forward to meeting residents to discuss their ideas as to what they would like to see in the community hub.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Rural Issues, Councillor Patterson, said the report presents one component of a broad network of facilities adding that she was pleased to see it includes the important contribution of community leisure organisations. She thanked all residents who had participated and welcomed further public engagement in the summer with updates on the Council's Leisure Strategy to follow later in the year.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

5 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020/21 - Period to 31 December 2020 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(10) savings

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the:

- (a) updated forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2020/21, based on the position to 31 December 2020;
- (b) updated forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund position at 31 March 2021, based on the position to 31 December 2020;
- (c) updated forecast use of and contributions to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in 2020/21 and the estimated balances to be held at 31 March 2021.

The report also sought approval of the revised capital programme, other budget adjustments, proposed sums treated as outside of the cash limit in year, and, write off deficit schools balances as a result of academy conversions. Cabinet was also provided with an update on progress towards achieving MTFP(10) savings in 2020/21 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Shuttleworth referred to the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances and asked what amount of government grant is expected to cover the additional cost impact of £3.771 million, and if this is not fully funded, from which reserve/service area will the monies be found?

Councillor Napier, Portfolio Holder for Finance, thanked Councillor Shuttleworth for his question and clarified the £3.771 million figure referred to was the Resources Service Grouping net COVID-19 related costs incurred, not the overall Council position, which was outlined in sections 54 to 59 of the report. The latest forecasts are that the Council will incur COVID-19 costs and loss of income of around £65 million this year, offset by COVID-19 underspending of around £16 million. The net position is broadly in line with the grant funding received but factoring in the Council Tax losses, falls short of the funding needed to offset the impacts of COVID-19 on the Council. If funding is insufficient to meet these net costs and loss of income either this year or next, this would be a call on the general reserve.

Moving the report, Councillor Napier commended Finance Officers for their comprehensive report. He commented on the constantly changing landscape which had made financial forecasting particularly challenging over the past year. He highlighted that the Council had kept within budget, whilst investing huge sums of money to support communities and businesses and the prudent financial management will continue to be tested in the future due to the uncertainty regarding the comprehensive spending review.

In this, his final budget report to Cabinet, Councillor Napier spoke of how proud he had been to work with such a strong financial team and he expressed his gratitude to officers and members for their support throughout the years. The Chair, seconding the recommendations, echoed Councillor Napier's thanks to officers for their efforts during this unprecedented time. The Chair extended his personal thanks to Councillor Napier for his work as finance Portfolio Holder.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

6 Quarter Three, 2020/21 Performance Management Report

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Annual Review of the Constitution

The Cabinet considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer which presented proposals for the revision of the Council's Constitution (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 County Durham Health and Social Care Integration update

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided an update on the integration of health and social care in County Durham and sought support for the proposed next steps to further embed integrated arrangements within the County (for copy see file of minutes).

Speaking in support of the proposal, Councillor Hovvels, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services commented on the benefits of the County Durham Care Partnership which had proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the strong partnership working will stand the Council in good stead ahead of the long-awaited government reforms.

Endorsing these comments, Councillor Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services agreed that partnership working will be even more important in the future in order to deal with high levels of demand and to make the best use of the resources available.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 Climate Change Emergency Response Plan - Year 1 Update

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an annual update on progress of the Climate Emergency Response Plan, including an assessment of the impact COVID-19 has had on Council and countywide carbon emissions (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Marshall placed on record Cabinet's thanks to staff for the work done to progress the climate emergency plan, he also thanked Councillor Clare, the Council's Climate Change Champion, for the enormous amount of work he had personally undertaken, and he also thanked those partners, residents, schools and businesses who had contributed to the delivery of the plan. He highlighted that the Council had been named as having the best climate action initiative in the country by the Association of Public Sector Excellence and he said the accolade was testament to all those involved.

Durham County Council's Climate Change Champion, Councillor Clare expressed his gratitude to Councillor Stuart Dunn for bringing about the original climate change emergency motion. He also thanked Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Oliver Sherratt, Head of Environment, and Cabinet for their commitment to the cause.

He spoke with great respect for the Council's Low Carbon Team who had made it their mission not only to maintain, but expand the momentum of the programme during the pandemic. He added that work will continue to embed climate action into the everyday working of Durham County Council.

Councillor Marshall complimented the work which shows the Council's commitment to tackling climate change, and which had gained both national and international recognition. Councillor Patterson as Rural Champion expressed her pleasure at the progress, particularly in light of the challenge of the pandemic and thanked Councillor Clare for his work, adding that she is looking forward to further updates in the future.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

10 Woodland Management Overview and Tree Planting Opportunities with Young People

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which outlined the range of measures underway in managing the County Council's woodlands and expanding tree cover across the county. The report also sought approval of a scheme designed to maximise young people's involvement with tree planting activities (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Gunn paid tribute to the good work of the Durham Youth Council which had encouraged schools to include environmental issues as part of everyday school life by asking schools to consider how green they are, and she welcomed this opportunity for further environmental engagement with young people. Seconding the report, Councillor Hovvels highlighted that the county's woodland is a unique asset, the benefits of which had become increasingly important to the community during the pandemic, to improve health and wellbeing.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

11 Durham County Council Chargepoint Delivery Plan

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which sought agreement to adopt the Durham County Council Chargepoint Delivery Plan. The report set out five key actions which will facilitate the uptake of electric vehicles across County Durham for residents, business and the Council's own fleet and complement the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Shaw said the plan will promote equal opportunities to access charging infrastructure in safe and convenient locations, increasing public confidence in switching to electric vehicles. Adding her support, Councillor Patterson commented that one of the important aspects of the plan is that it recognises rural communities through providing new charging points in rural areas which will encourage take up and help to address the challenges of rural isolation.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

12 County Durham Housing Strategy Targeted Delivery Plans

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought Cabinet approval for the first phase of the Housing Strategy Targeted Delivery Plans including the programme to deliver future phases (for copy see file of minutes).

Moving the report, Councillor Shaw highlighted the benefits of Targeted Delivery Plans including addressing the issue of long-term empty homes, identifying opportunities for the future provision of older persons housing, and complementing the selective licensing proposals.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

13 Agnes Street, Stanley - Proposed Compulsory Purchase Order

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought authority from Cabinet to make a compulsory purchase order pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to a site known as Agnes Street in Stanley (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted the development of Agnes Street, Stanley as a site requiring improvement is consistent with the Towns and Villages Strategy and that the report outlined evidence of demand for the completed units. Councillor Marshall thanked the Corporate Land and Property team for their hard work.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

14 Towns and Villages Place Shaping - Approach to Regeneration of Buildings and Land

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided details of the integrated approach to place-based regeneration (for copy see file of minutes).

Members welcomed the proactive approach, working with the community and key partners to ensure improvements in locations where land and buildings have a detrimental impact, with the report outlining that compulsory purchase order powers should be used only where there is a clear justification to do so.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

15 Council Homes Delivery - Purchase of Affordable Housing units at Gilesgate

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought authorisation from Cabinet for the purchase of six bungalows for rent at Gilesgate, Durham from Chapter Homes for the purpose of providing council homes. This purchase will complement the construction of new council housing as previously agreed by Cabinet (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Shaw spoke of his support for the Council to work with Chapter Homes on this provision of high-quality council homes, and, seconding the report, Councillor Marshall commented that this is an important step in addressing unmet housing demand and he added he was looking forward to similar proposals in the future.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

16 Covid Recovery and Town Centre Parking Charges

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought to review the provision of subsidised or free parking for centres across County Durham for both on-street and off-street parking as a stimulus to support the economic recovery from the global pandemic (for copy see file of minutes).

Moving the report, Councillor Marshall referred to the many measures which will be required to support the response to the pandemic to ensure town centres are sustainable and accessible, and said the approach to free town centre parking to all town centre car parks after 2.00 pm will support access.

Seconding the report, Councillor Patterson referred to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review into town centre retail which identified town centre parking as one of a wide range of issues impacting on the success of town centres, and, she added she was pleased to see that the report recognises the challenges of town centre parking and proposes a sensible approach.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

17 Economic Recovery and Prosperity: Levelling up and Investment for County Durham

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an overview of the County Durham economy, considering the baseline conditions prior to March 2020, and the additional challenges faced by the Covid pandemic and Brexit (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Marshall commented that the report proposed a long term, evidence-based, economic strategy and identified a number of national funding streams which the Council will pursue, as it is clear that the impact of the pandemic will take years to realise. He highlighted key priority areas including the growth of the rural economy and the importance of education, training and skills, and spoke of his hope that the government will work with the Council to deliver the programme.

Councillor Shaw pointed out that Durham has much to offer new businesses and he provided assurance that the Council will continue to ensure the right infrastructure is in place to support new jobs, including the availability of housing. He raised concerns that the government's new methodology in respect of the levelling-up fund will not target areas of deprivation. Cabinet members provided views that the government funding requested is fair, in order to attract more jobs and improve aspirations, and, called upon the government to provide the necessary investment required to level-up the county.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

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Cabinet

21 April 2021



Proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024

Key Decision No. CYPS/03/2021

Report of Corporate Management Team

John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Spennymoor and Tudhoe

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To seek Cabinet approval to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024, taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient places and to ensure good outcomes for all children and young people in the local area.

Executive summary

- 2 Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools formed the Ox Close Federation in November 2018 and this arrangement is working well. Amalgamating the two schools into a single primary school is a logical progression from the federation arrangement.
- 3 Funding for a new build primary school to replace the current schools was agreed by Council in the Medium Term Financial Plan at its

meeting on 26 February 2021. As well as amalgamating the schools on a single site, the proposal also gives the opportunity to expand the number of places to meet the growth in demand for primary places in the Spennymoor area.

- 4 Following an options appraisal into a number of potential sites for the new build, the site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School on Durham Road, Spennymoor, was identified as the proposed option.
- 5 An initial consultation was carried out on the proposals between 2 November and 13 December 2020 with Governors, staff, parents, and the wider community. 118 responses were received to that consultation, 49 in support of the proposal and 69 not in support of it. Further information on the consultation is included in paragraphs 15-19 of this report.
- 6 Following completion of the initial consultation process, the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services approved the issuing of a statutory notice proposing to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024.
- 7 During the 4 week statutory representation period, 32 responses were received, 21 in support of the proposal, 10 not in support of the proposal, and 1 who supports the amalgamation but not the proposed location and size of the new build if the amalgamation is agreed. Information on the responses received during the statutory representation period are set out in paragraphs 23 to 30 of this report.
- 8 As part of the statutory process there are a range of factors that must be considered by Cabinet as the decision maker. These are covered in paragraphs 34 to 45 of this report.

Recommendation

- 9 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) agree to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024.

Background

- 10 On 26 February 2020, Council approved the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 and capital budget 2020/21 previously proposed by Cabinet on 12 February 2020. One element of the plan was funding for a new build primary school to replace the current Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools and to provide additional school places to meet the future demand in Spennymoor.
- 11 Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools formed the Ox Close Federation in November 2018 and this arrangement is working well. Amalgamating the two schools into a single primary school is a logical progression from the federation arrangement. The Department for Education (DfE) official school number for Ox Close Primary School would be the school number for the proposed single primary school. Oxclose Nursery School would close as a registered school.
- 12 Spennymoor is an area of County Durham that has experienced and continues to experience significant growth via housing developments. This is putting pressure on school places across the town. To respond to this, some of the schools in the area have been expanded in recent years. Ox Close Primary School was one of those schools, but despite this, without further expansion, it cannot meet the demand for places moving forward.
- 13 The most effective solution for Spennymoor to address the pressure on places at Ox Close and across Spennymoor generally is a new build replacement school with an increased capacity. It is intended therefore that the proposed new build primary school will replace the current Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools with additional capacity to meet the pressure on school places in the area.
- 14 In a delegated decision report dated 2 October 2020, the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services approved the start of a statutory consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 8 April 2024. As a result of information collected during the consultation, it is now proposed that the target date for the amalgamation is 1 September 2024.

Consultation

- 15 In undertaking this process, the Council has referred to the Department for Education (DFE) guidance – “Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers”. This guidance states that the decision-maker (in this case the Cabinet) needs to be satisfied that the

appropriate fair and open local consultation has been carried out and that the proposer (in this case the Council's Education Service) has given full consideration to all the responses received. The decision-maker should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by a proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school(s).

- 16 An initial consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools was held between 2 November and 13 December 2020. A virtual meeting on Microsoft Teams was held on 4 November 2020 with Governors and one with staff on 9 November 2020. Parents and other stakeholders were encouraged to submit questions and comments regarding the proposal as well as by emailing relevant Council officers.
- 17 The responses to the consultation were received and considered by officers in the Council. Of the 118 responses received, 49 were in support of the proposal and 69 were not in support of the proposal.
- 18 In summary, the main concerns expressed by those not in support of the proposal were: the proposed new build replacement school was too large and in the wrong place thus making it more difficult for them to get a place; the proposal will lead to increased traffic congestion at Durham Road as the proposed location is too far for some pupils to walk; the proposed school is too large and a better solution would be either an additional new build for the size required to address the shortfall in primary school places in Spennymoor, or expansions to existing schools.
- 19 Those in support of the proposal in the main felt that the amalgamation of the two schools will lead to more effective teaching and learning to benefit both pupils and staff and will lead to a more seamless transition from nursery to primary education for the children; the proposed location for the school will ease the traffic congestion at Ox Close Crescent that currently exists and that the proposed amalgamation in a larger school will make it easier for children to get a place at the school.

Decision to Issue a Statutory Notice

- 20 After considering all of the consultation responses received, the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services agreed to publish proposals to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024. A statutory notice was therefore published on 28 January 2021.

- 21 Although there were more responses opposing the proposal than supporting it, the decision to proceed to statutory representation period was made as no responses challenged the educational grounds for amalgamating Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery School. Responses received that were not in support of the proposal focussed on the proposed location and site for the replacement new build rather than the educational benefits of bringing together Oxclose Nursery and Ox Close Primary Schools into a single primary school. There are other routes for issues about the proposed site to be addressed such as the planning process.
- 22 Once a proposal is published there follows a statutory 4-week representation period during which comments can be made. These must be sent to the Local Authority. Any person can submit representations, which can be objections as well as expressions of support. The representation period is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposal. Once the representation period has closed, a decision on the proposal must be made by the decision-maker (in this case the Cabinet) within 2 months, i.e. by 21 April 2021.

Responses to the Proposal Published on 28 January 2021 (The Statutory Notice Period)

- 23 32 responses were received by the end of the 4-week statutory notice period, 21 in support of the proposal, 10 not in support of the proposal, and 1 who supports the amalgamation but not the proposed location for and size of the new build if the amalgamation is agreed.
- 24 Those respondents who supported the proposal felt that it would address the shortfall in pupil places across Spennymoor as well as ensuring the delivery of a high quality education and enable more effective transition from nursery to primary education in a building that would be more accessible and not locked in by housing.
- 25 The current site at Ox Close is not able to support any further expansion as it is on a narrow and often congested road so any further expansion would be potentially very dangerous for children, parents, staff, and residents. Views were expressed that an expanded school would provide an opportunity for a unique learning environment to be created as well as enabling a wider range of facilities for the community.
- 26 The amalgamation will also enable staff to work more closely with each other in ensuring continuity of learning styles across all phases and avoid duplication of work. Staff will benefit from working as part of a larger team in order to maximise learning opportunities that will benefit both themselves and their pupils. It is respondents' view that Ox Close

is an excellent place to attend and learn and there is a need to expand this culture for more children in the town by adding more places.

- 27 Local Elected Member feedback highlighted that due to the high volume of house builds and planned development, the existing Primary Schools within these Divisions will not be able to meet the projected increase in primary age children needing a school placement by 2023/24. The existing site of Ox Close Primary and Nursery Schools does not lend itself to further expansion due to its current layout existing traffic congestion.
- 28 It was also stated that the proposed site is in close proximity and walking distance to the existing “catchment area” of the current Infant and Primary schools. There is opportunity to increase the catchment area from Durham Gate, Merrington Lane, Low Spennymoor, Mount Pleasant and Tudhoe areas of the Town where there is extensive new development and further projected builds.
- 29 Those respondents not in support of the proposal were of the view that it would increase travelling distances and consequently increase the volume of traffic on Durham Road causing significant traffic congestion. They felt that it would be preferable to either expand existing primary schools in Spennymoor, or to build a smaller additional primary school elsewhere in Spennymoor as a school of the size proposed will lose the personal/family touch and cause children not to perform academically as well as they would in a smaller environment. Some were of the view that as Ox Close Primary School had been expanded a few years ago closing the school would be a waste of resources.
- 30 One respondent supported the amalgamation but not the proposed location and size of the new build replacement school. They highlighted concern that the proposed site would take them further away from their natural catchment area impacting on parents. They also raised concerns about size of the proposed new school and traffic and congestion risks with the proposed site.
- 31 When considering the responses to the statutory notice, Cabinet should be aware that the option of expanding the existing primary schools in Spennymoor that has been suggested by some respondents was considered by officers. However, this option was not progressed as the limitation of space on the sites meant they were not suitable for expansion to the size required.
- 32 It is also evident from admissions data that Ox Close Primary School is the most popular school in Spennymoor and is significantly oversubscribed. For both September 2020 and September 2021, more than 60 first preferences were expressed for a place at Ox Close

Primary School against a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 45. Consequently, there is strong evidence it is the correct school to expand to meet demand.

- 33 The concerns regarding traffic congestion at the Durham Road site will be considered as part of the design process if the proposal is agreed.

Decision-Making Process - Factors to be considered by Cabinet

(a) Consideration of Consultation and Representation Period

- 34 Cabinet needs to be satisfied that the appropriate fair and open local consultation and representation period have been carried out and that the proposer (in this case the Local Authority) has given full consideration to all the responses received. If the proposer has failed to meet the statutory requirements, this proposal may be deemed invalid and therefore should be rejected. Consultation was carried out in accordance with Department for Education (DFE guidance) 'Opening and closing maintained schools, November 2019.

- 35 Cabinet must consider all the views submitted, including all support for, and objections to and comments on the proposal. Details of responses received during the statutory representation period, including the response of officers to the concerns raised by those respondents not in support of the proposal are included in paragraphs 22-29 of this report. The statutory notice published on 28 January 2021 and which expired on 25 February 2021 (the representation period) was prepared in accordance with the regulations and complied with statutory requirements.

(b) Related Proposals

- 36 Where proposals appear to be related to other proposals, the decision-maker must consider the related proposals together. A proposal should be regarded as related if its implementation (or non-implementation) would prevent or undermine the effective implementation of another proposal.
- 37 The proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School by changing the age range of Ox Close Primary School from 4-11 to 3-11 from 1 September 2024, and to close Oxclose Nursery School as a registered school on 31 August 2024 are 'related' therefore they must be considered together.

(c) *Education Standards and Diversity Issues*

38 Ox Close Primary School is judged as 'Good' by Ofsted and it was highlighted that teachers and teaching assistants have ensured that children in the early years thrive both academically and socially. Oxclose Nursery School is judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The two schools therefore start from a strong position and officers in the Education Service in addition to the Senior Leadership Team of the two schools believe that learning and progress can be improved further if the two schools are amalgamated in one building.

(d) *Proposed Admission Arrangements*

39 When deciding the proposal, Cabinet should confirm that the admission arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code. The admission arrangements will remain unchanged and be the same as those for all community and voluntary controlled schools in County Durham and these are compliant with the DFE's School Admission Code. The proposed number of pupils to be admitted to Reception in the school in September 2024 will be 90.

(e) *National Curriculum*

40 All maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum unless they have secured an exemption for groups of pupils or the school community. The proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school has no impact on the school's ability to follow the National Curriculum.

(f) *Equal Opportunity Issues*

41 Cabinet must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires them to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- advance quality of opportunity;
- foster good relations.

42 An equality impact assessment (Appendix 2) has been carried out on this proposal. There are no potential impacts in relation to age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity for pupils and parents/carers. The current schools provide education for boys and girls aged between 3-11 years and the proposed amalgamated single primary school will continue to provide education for boys and girls across the same age range.

(g) Travel and Accessibility

- 43 The single primary school will operate on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School. This site is approximately half a mile from the site of the current schools therefore it should not lead to significantly increased travel time though for some children the walk to and from school will be slightly longer. The site better lends itself to traffic management than the current site.

(h) Funding

- 44 Cabinet must be satisfied that the necessary funding required to implement the proposal will be available. If the proposal is agreed, the Council has allocated the necessary funding of £13.1 million to construct the larger new build replacement school.

(i) School Premises and Playing Fields

- 45 Under the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 all maintained schools are required to provide suitable outdoor space to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and for pupils to play outside safely. The Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School has suitable outdoor spaces for all pupils.

Conclusion

- 46 It is believed that the best way of further improving education outcomes and easing the pressure on primary school places across Spennymoor is to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in an expanded new build replacement school.
- 47 Primary Schools have more opportunity through daily contact, for those working within the school to work together in the best interests of pupils. They benefit from the consistency that working under the leadership of one Head Teacher and one Governing Body brings. A single primary school can reduce the potential for disruption, which some children experience, when they transfer from a separate nursery school to infant or primary school.
- 48 There was a good response to the initial consultation and a reasonable response to the statutory notice. Although the majority of responses to the initial consultation did not support the proposal, those responses received that were not in support of the proposal have not provided educational reasons and so the proposals are recommended notwithstanding the objections.

- 49 The majority of responses to the statutory notice support the proposal and the 10 responses that do not support the proposal have not provided viable alternatives routes to meet the educational needs of children in the area.
- 50 Amalgamating Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools in a larger new build replacement school will ensure there are sufficient school places to meet future demand across Spennymoor and will enhance education provision in the area and will lead to a more sustainable establishment for the long term that will bring about educational improvement and will continue to provide equal access for all.

Background Papers

- Consultation document: 'Proposal to Amalgamate Ox Close Primary School and Oxclose Nursery School into one Primary School on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 8 April 2024.

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The procedure followed and considerations set out in this report comply with the Council's duty to exercise its functions with a view to promoting high standards and the fulfilment of each pupil's learning potential in accordance with S13A of the Education Act 1996.

Finance

The cost of building the new school will be in the region of £13.1 million. There will be a capital receipt from the existing site of approximately £700,000. This funding has already been approved through the Council's Capital Programme.

Ox Close Nursery has an estimated retained surplus balance of £25,000 at 31 March 2021, whereas Ox Close Primary will have an estimated retained deficit balance of £10,000. Both schools are currently able to set a balanced budget next year as stand-alone schools.

As a dedicated Maintained Nursery School, Oxclose Nursery currently receives enhanced funding compared to a nursery unit attached to a primary school. This enhanced funding takes the form of a lump sum and an enhanced hourly rate.

For the 2020-21 financial year, these enhancements are estimated to be £127,000 for Oxclose Nursery.

The schools are aware that the enhanced funding will end after amalgamation and are planning accordingly, utilising opportunities to achieve efficiencies from the combining of the schools to offset this loss of funding.

To assist the transition after amalgamation, the school will retain the full 2024-25 lump sum, (£90,000 in 2020-21) for the remainder of that financial year. Any future changes to the arrangements for enhanced funding for Maintained Nursery Schools, including changes in statutory regulation, would affect these financial implications.

Consultation

Consultation has been carried out in accordance with DfE statutory guidance. The approach to consultation is described in paragraphs 10-26 of the report. The table below sets out the timescales for the consultation which was conducted in accordance with the Department for Education guidance:

Date	Stage
2 November 2020 - 13 December 2020 (6 weeks)	Consultation All responses received by the closing date were considered and included in a delegated decision report to decide whether to take the proposal forward.
January/February 2021 (4 weeks)	Statutory Public Notice Statutory notices were published on 28 January 2021 in the local newspaper, posted on school gates and on the DCC website. These notices provided an opportunity for comments or objections to be made.
April 2021	Decision Making Durham County Council's Cabinet would consider responses to the statutory notice and make the final decision whether to agree the proposal or not.
April 2021 - September 2024	Preparation for the primary school opening if the proposal is approved. This includes designing and building the larger new build replacement school, consulting on a proposed staffing structure, deciding on opening and closing times, deciding on any changes to school uniform.
September 2024	Single primary school opens.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Any review or change to educational provision in an area has the potential to have an adverse effect on protected characteristics, both in terms of pupils, their families, local communities, and employees working in the schools. However, the proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school will benefit pupils, staff, and parents. As well as providing sufficient school places to meet future demand in Spennymoor, education will be provided in one location with a single leadership team to facilitate a positive learning experience for children and provide equal access to all.

The focus on improved educational outcomes is seen as a positive experience in a child's education and ensures that children who are protected under the Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty can maximise their potential. The main groups affected are children currently accessing education at Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools, their families, and staff.

Although doing nothing and leaving the schools as they are may initially be favoured by parents, who tend to view the closure or reorganisation of any school in a negative manner, the fact is that action is required to address the shortfall in pupil places across Spennymoor. This proposal addresses that and provides an opportunity for teaching and learning to be delivered from an enhanced facility.

An Equality Impact Assessment is included as Appendix 2 to this report.

Climate Change

The proposed new build will have a positive impact on climate change as the building will be more energy efficient and contribute to reducing the carbon footprint.

Human Rights

Human rights are not affected by the recommendation in this report.

Crime and Disorder

No impact.

Staffing

Any changes to staffing as a result of the amalgamation will be determined by the Governing Body with assistance from the Council.

Accommodation

Accommodation will be much improved in a new building that will be fully accessible and capable of delivering a first class 21st century curriculum. The current buildings require significant maintenance to address electrical and heating issues.

Risk

If the proposal is not implemented there is a risk that the opportunity for a new build school to respond to growth in the area and to eliminate the expenditure on remedial work to the existing buildings is lost. There will also be reputational damage as the Council would be failing to spend previously agreed financial resources for the new build.

Procurement

The new build school will be procured in accordance with the County Council's procurement arrangements.

Appendix 2: Impact Assessment

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Education, School Places and Admissions
Lead Officer	Graeme Plews
Title	School Places and Admissions Manager
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	N/A
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	April 2021
Start Date	November 2020
Review Date	April 2021

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

Proposal to amalgamate Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools into one primary school in a replacement new build on the Durham Road site of the former Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School from 1 September 2024. The objective of the proposal is to address the pressure on school places in Spennymoor, and to amalgamate a separate Nursery and Primary School into one primary school.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff members, specific clients/service users):

General Public, Governors, Staff, pupils of Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools, providers of Early Years Education, Elected Members, MPs, Neighbouring Schools, Trade Unions, Diocese, Department for Education, Community Groups, Parish Councils, Residents' Associations, AAP Board, CYPS/DCC Staff, Parents/Carers.

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics.		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = Unsure
Age	N	N
Disability	N	N
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	N
Race (ethnicity)	N	N
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	N	N
Sexual Orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide brief details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The main groups affected by this proposal are pupils attending Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools, their families and staff. It is not expected that pupils and their families will be adversely affected.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**
- **advance equality of opportunity, and**
- **foster good relations between people from different groups?**

Amalgamating Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools in a larger new build replacement school will ensure there are sufficient school places to meet future demand across Spennymoor and will enhance education provision in the area and will lead to a more sustainable establishment for the long term that will bring about educational improvement and will continue to provide equal access for all.

A 6 week consultation was held during November and December 2020. Consultation documents were distributed widely, and meetings were held with Governors and staff of Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools. Due to the situation with coronavirus and Government guidance on social distancing it was not possible to have meetings with parents or members of

the local community. Stakeholders were invited to respond in a variety of ways written responses using the response form attached to the consultation document, letter, email or completing the response form online via the County Council's website. Alternative formats were available on request. 118 responses were received to the consultation, 49 in support of the proposal and 69 not in support of the proposal.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery Schools formed the Ox Close Federation in November 2018 and this arrangement is working well. Amalgamating the two schools into a single primary school is a logical progression from the federation arrangement. The Department for Education (DfE) official school number for Ox Close Primary School would be the school number for the proposed single primary school. Oxclose Nursery School would close as a registered school.

Spennymoor is an area of County Durham that has experienced and continues to experience significant growth via housing developments. This is putting pressure on school places across the town. To respond to this, some of the schools in the area have been expanded in recent years. Ox Close Primary School was one of those schools, but despite this, without further expansion, it cannot meet the demand for places moving forward. The most effective solution for Spennymoor to address the pressure on places at Ox Close and across Spennymoor generally is a new build replacement school with an increased capacity.

Ox Close Primary School is judged as 'Good' by Ofsted and it was highlighted that teachers and teaching assistants have ensured that children in the early years thrive both academically and socially. Oxclose Nursery School is judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The two schools therefore start from a strong position and officers in the Education Service in addition to the Senior Leadership Team of the two schools believe that learning and progress can be improved further if the two schools are amalgamated in one building

Screening Summary

On the basis of the screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	No
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	No

Sign Off

Lead Officer sign off: 	Date: 7 April 2021
Service equality representative sign off:	Date:

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk

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Cabinet

21 April 2021

**High Needs Block Funding for
SEND and Inclusion Support**

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

**John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's
Services**

Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and
Young People's Services**

Councillor Alan Napier, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update on spend and pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which supports Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and inclusion support services for children and young people.
- 2 The 2020/21 forecast financial outturn position is outlined, along with the latest five-year financial plan and project updates, which collectively aim to ensure HNB spending is maintained within budget and the accumulated deficit in the HNB is recovered between 2020/21-2024/25.

Executive Summary

- 3 There are enduring pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which provides funding for SEND and inclusion support services for children and young people in County Durham.
- 4 There have been insufficient resources to support children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs in recent years. This position is continuing and is replicated in other local authorities. It is linked to a

combination of factors to include rising demand for service provision that meets the increasingly complex needs of children and young people, and the SEND Reforms (2014) that increased support to include individuals from birth up to 25 years of age.

- 5 Despite some previous support from the Council's own resources, spending pressures have resulted in a growing deficit in County Durham's DSG account and the cumulative deficit for Durham's HNB stood at £5.7 million at the end of 2019/20. Whilst there was an increase in the HNB allocation in 2019/20 and continued work on the HNB sustainability programme, the latest forecast indicates that expenditure will exceed HNB grant by £1.8 million in 2020-21. This is a slight reduction on the previous forecast and will increase the cumulative deficit position on the HNB reserve from £5.7 million to £7.5 million at the end of 2020/21.
- 6 Through successful delivery of the HNB Sustainability Plan we aim to ensure that services are delivered within budget in accordance with the HNB five-year financial plan, and this is supported through the SEND transformation work that is either planned or underway. Key elements of this work relate to the following areas which were subject to consultation and reported previously to Cabinet:
 - Centrally Managed Services;
 - Special Schools;
 - Top-up Funding (TuF);
 - Targeted Support Funding (TSF);
 - Post 16 Funding;
 - Funding support to Partnerships of Schools;
 - Joint commissioning of therapies;
 - Joint commissioning of equipment, aids and adaptations;
 - Alternative Provision (AP) and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- 7 The report provides an update on each of these areas of work highlighting where progress has been made, planned next steps and identifying where some areas of work continue to be disrupted as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.
- 8 It is proposed that the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board continues to oversee the implementation of the work programme to deliver the

proposed changes, the five-year plan and any impact from the coronavirus outbreak.

Recommendations

- 9 Cabinet is requested to:
 - a) note the updated assumptions and forecast position for HNB spend in 2020/21;
 - b) agree to the updated five-year financial plan for 2020/21- 2024/25 which includes a deficit recovery plan for previous HNB overspend;
 - c) agree to the five-year plan being regularly reviewed and updated, including allowing for any impacts from the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent recovery period which may be protracted in relation to SEND support needs; and
 - d) note the update on the Investment Support Fund and progress on the transformation projects outlined in the report and proposed next steps.

Background

- 10 Cabinet received a detailed report in January 2020 outlining the spending and pressures on the HNB of the DSG, the findings of a three-month public consultation which took place in 2019, and recommendations to implement key areas of work that seek to make the HNB more sustainable. This included the development of a five-year financial strategy for 2020/21 – 2024/25 for the HNB and a financial recovery plan to bring the account back into balance by 2024/25.
- 11 The SEND and Inclusion Resources Board (SIRB) oversees this programme of work. In July 2020, Cabinet received a progress report and agreed to receive a further update.
- 12 The SIRB has continued to meet on a monthly basis through virtual meetings to oversee HNB spend and the HNB Sustainability Plan.
- 13 Updates on progress against the HNB Sustainability Plan have also continued to be presented to Schools Forum meetings, which have been hosted virtually.
- 14 The work of the SIRB includes considering any impacts from the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent recovery period which may be protracted in relation to SEND support needs.
- 15 The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in some of the work on HNB sustainability and more broad SEND transformation work being disrupted and delayed. The highest priority continues to be given to supporting vulnerable children, their families and learning providers at this time.

HNB Forecast 2020/21

- 16 The report presented to Cabinet in July 2020 showed a slightly improved final outturn position compared to that reported in January 2020, for the HNB in 2019/20, identifying an overspend of £8.6 million against the HNB DSG grant allocation. The Council funded £5.6 million of the overspend from its reserves, and the last report to Cabinet reported that the balance of £3.0 million increased the cumulative deficit position on the HNB reserve to £5.7 million as at 31 March 2020.
- 17 The table at Appendix 2 details the updated forecast outturn position for each budget line of the HNB for 2020/21. The forecast now indicates that expenditure will exceed HNB grant by £1.8 million in 2020/21. This will increase the cumulative deficit position on the HNB reserve from £5.7 million to £7.5 million at the end of 2020/21. Whilst this still represents an overspend position, it is important to note that this is a greatly improved position compared to recent years where overspends were much higher and is a slight reduction on the previous forecast.

- 18 The overspend position forecast within the 2020/21 financial year is largely due to a significant increase in demand for Top-up Funding (TuF) in mainstream primary and secondary schools and special schools. In total, costs are forecast to exceed the original budget by £2 million in these areas to meet additional SEND support needs for more young people.
- 19 During 2020/21 there was an increase in the number of young people attending county special schools resulting in the need to fund an additional 33 places at an average cost of £19,000 per place. TuF has been used to fund places for each of these students and in some instances some additional resource to facilitate supervision ratios in school. TuF has also been used to fund additional creative packages of supervision and children needing additional help in their current provision, therefore preventing placement breakdown and the use of more expensive private independent placement.
- 20 In addition, allocation of TuF to mainstream schools has increased for the following reasons:
- More schools are coming forward to request TuF awards in support of provision that is additional to, and different from, the typical offer of provision in a school. In providing this TuF, we are ensuring young people can access their local mainstream school in line with our commitments to young people with SEND. The value of the packages awarded is lowering, demonstrating a higher level of efficiency.
 - Early identification of SEND in pre-school provision is increasing. Good transition planning between early years settings and primary schools means that schools are able to request funding from the point a reception child starts school. Previously, the needs of children were generally not identified so early on, resulting in support being delayed for the child and eroding parental confidence in the mainstream offer, encouraging them to look for a special school placement.
- 21 It is difficult to project the future pattern of expenditure for TuF following the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, but there is potential for a further spike in demand for additional packages of support. This could increase costs further in the next year. In light of the significant increases in demand in this area and anticipated increases in future expenditure, adjustments have been made to the five-year HNB financial plan which is covered further below.
- 22 The HNB overspend position has also been impacted by increasing expenditure for young people who are excluded or are at risk of

exclusion from mainstream school and are accessing support through The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

- 23 On-site capacity for permanently excluded pupils at the PRU is much lower than the demand for places. Approximately 100 young people are attending off-site provision because there is insufficient on-site capacity at the PRU, and this increasing expenditure is contributing to the overspend on the HNB.
- 24 PRU expenditure is forecast to exceed budget by £0.374 million in 2020/21. The number of permanent exclusions has decreased since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic in March 2020, and the final outturn may be less if permanent exclusions continue to be reduced. Work to reduce the level of permanent exclusions further and in turn reduce expenditure from the HNB is underway in relation to the Behaviour and Inclusion Partnerships, Alternative Provision and the PRU, and is outlined later in this report.
- 25 There is a forecast underspend for placements for post-16 students across the Further Education and Independent sector. Expenditure in this area has increased at a lower rate than anticipated in the budget planning and this is being kept under review.
- 26 All areas of HNB expenditure will be kept under close review with regard to coronavirus pandemic related issues and monthly monitoring continues to take place.
- 27 Updated government guidance requires local authorities that have a deficit on their DSG account at the end of the 2019/20 financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, to co-operate with the DfE in handling that situation. Local authorities must:
 - Provide information as and when requested by the Department about its plans for managing its DSG account in the 2020 to 2021 financial year and subsequently.
 - Provide information as and when requested by the Department about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
 - Meet with officials of the Department as and when they request to discuss the local authority's plans and financial situation.
 - Keep the Schools Forum regularly updated about the local authority's DSG account and plans for handling it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.
 - The Secretary of State reserves the right to impose more specific conditions of grant on individual local authorities that have an

overall deficit on their DSG account, where he believes that they are not taking sufficient action to address the situation.

- 28 The Council is following the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) guidance for local authorities in managing the DSG HNB deficit and an update report is presented at each Schools Forum meeting.

HNB Five-Year Financial Plan

- 29 The latest updated five-year financial plan is presented at Appendix 3.

- 30 The current forecast deficit on the HNB of £7.5 million is due to be recovered during 2023/24 under current planning assumptions.

- 31 The plan has been updated to reflect the latest forecast position for 2020/21 as well as the following changes to previous assumptions:

- Grant funding – for 2021/22, the HNB funding formula used a floor of 8% and a gains limit of 12%, so that all councils received an increase in that range. The financial plan now assumes an increase of 8% in 2022/23 (increased from previous assumption of 4%). Assumptions for 2023/24 and 2024/25 remain at 0% increase. In line with this, for current planning purposes and until further Government guidance is received, most areas of spend do not currently include an increase for 2023/24 and 2024/25 in the latest plan.
- Mainstream Top-up Funding – as outlined above, this year has seen significant increases in demand and the anticipated expenditure for the following years of the plan has been adjusted.
- Special school funding – it has been agreed to increase special school banding rates by 3% in 2021/22 and the plan has been updated to reflect this. This was subject to consultation and discussed at Schools Forum further details of which are outlined later in this report.
- Behaviour Panels / Alternative Provision - funding allocated through Behaviour and Inclusion Partnerships will increase in 2021/22 financial year in order to help reduce permanent exclusions and pressures on the PRU and HNB budget through their work. The Council is continuing discussions with the Behaviour and Inclusion Partnerships about this with a view to a different system of support being developed over the longer term and this is covered later in the report.

- 32 As part of our work on the HNB, an Investment Support Fund has been established for future years, which identifies 2.5% of the overall HNB

grant allocation for use on specific projects over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25, as well as supporting any additional pressures which emerge.

Investment Support Fund

- 33 A sum of £6.9 million has been identified from the HNB across a four-year period in order to support specific initiatives that improve value for money and efficiency of HNB activity and link to HNB Sustainability Plan work. The list below gives some examples of how this may be used:

Inclusion and Alternative Provision

To realise a future state where significant funding is devolved to Behaviour and Inclusion Panels based on their submission of clear business cases, with the aim of reducing permanent exclusions of pupils from mainstream schools, and subsequently reducing the demand on the PRU (and hence pressures on the HNB budget), allowing this service to be redesigned.

Top-up Funding Banding Review (mainstream)

A 'banded system' for TuF is being developed to support schools in ensuring pupils' SEND needs are consistently and more appropriately met, within the agreed budget allocated within the five-year financial plan.

- 34 There is potential that demand in certain budget areas may exceed current forecast expenditure included in the plan. Work is ongoing to further develop the forecasting model over a five-year timeframe. Whilst this work continues, it is possible that some funding from the Investment Support Fund may be required to supplement existing budgets without adding to the deficit position and recovery plans.

Key Risks

- 35 The following main risks have been identified to the successful achievement of the five-year funding and deficit recovery plan:
- Assumptions about higher HNB grant levels in 22/23 may not materialise;
 - Planned cost reductions may not be achieved;
 - Increases in demand may be higher than anticipated;
 - Increases in costs may be higher than anticipated;
 - The ongoing coronavirus pandemic may bring additional cost pressures and require extra support for children and young people in their learning environments over a longer period;

- The financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the national economy may lead to further pressures in school and HNB funding in future years.

36 Transformational work is underway as part of the HNB Sustainability Plan to ensure that costs are reduced, improved value for money is achieved and spending is maintained within budget. This work (outlined below), also aims to ensure that HNB funding is spent on the right support, at the right time and in the right place for children and young people with additional needs and that this support is aligned closely to their needs.

Progress on Key Areas of HNB Sustainability Work

37 Between July and October 2019, the Council publicly consulted on proposals relating to the following areas identified for review, chosen due to their impact on HNB spending:

- Centrally Managed Services;
- Special Schools;
- Top up Funding;
- Targeted Support Funding;
- Post 16 Funding;
- Funding support to Partnerships of Schools;
- Joint commissioning of therapies;
- Joint commissioning of equipment, aids and adaptations;
- Alternative Provision (AP) and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

38 Most respondents to the consultation were in favour of the Council adopting all but one of the proposals (relating to a 3-day week post-16 provision), associated with the above nine areas of review.

39 Cabinet approved the proposals and recommendations within the report on 15 January 2020. Since then work has been conducted on the priority areas of key focus which is summarised as follows.

Centrally Managed Services

40 As reported to Cabinet in July 2020, three reviews were completed in 2019 to realise significant reductions to HNB expenditure as follows:

- (i) Review of home to school transport to the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU): £0.600 million – transferred from HNB requirement to DCC home to school budget pressure.
- (ii) Review of frontline services re-charges: £0.711 million reduced to £0.150 million (part year charge) in 20/21 and £0.300 million in 21/22 onwards.
- (iii) Review of management and support re-charges: £0.104 million reduction in HNB funding.

41 Early Years SEND Funding was also identified as an area for review. This funding is used to provide additional support and/or equipment for children with significant SEND and/or complex medical needs who are accessing their nursery education entitlement. A review of Early Years funding is being conducted as part of a wider review of TuF. A banded system is being developed that will help to reduce the variability in applications for funding, ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of funds from within the available budget, and ensure children's SEND needs are consistently and more appropriately met. Once the Early Years funding arrangements are confirmed, further consideration may be given in future to reviewing the Early Years offer and support model again to ensure we continue to maintain spending within budget, while ensuring provision is closely aligned to need.

Special Schools

- 42 Work continues to engage with special schools to review funding and ensure provision meets all types of demand. During autumn 2020, a consultation took place with special schools to obtain feedback on the financial pressures they are experiencing. This consultation signalled funding pressures related to increasing staff costs, costs associated with COVID 19, and increased costs of specialist equipment and support.
- 43 Following this feedback, a further consultation was undertaken with all schools in November 2020 on a proposal to increase special school band rates by 3% in 2021/22. At it's meeting in November 2020, Schools Forum considered this proposal and a further proposal to modify the process for paying additional TuF to special schools where there are unfilled places.
- 44 As at 31 October 2020, figures indicated that there were 50 unfilled spaces in Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) special schools out of a total of 336 places commissioned. This is an issue as the sums provided to special schools are not recovered if places are not filled.

This applies to the element of TuF included in the banded rate as well as the base place funding of £10,000.

- 45 In addition, those schools that have unfilled places may also separately receive additional TuF for specific pupils over and above the budget share allocation. The latest figures indicate TuF to the value of £0.147 million is due to be paid in 2020/21 to special schools where there are unfilled places.
- 46 Without changes to the system, there is a likelihood the HNB funds unfilled places in SEMH schools and does so at a higher rate in 2021/22, whilst at the same time TuF continues to be paid to the same schools for pupils with additional needs beyond the current band allocation.
- 47 Guaranteed Minimum Budget Statements issued to special schools in November 2020 proposed reductions to commissioned places in SEMH schools when compared to the 2020/21 position. This should go some way to addressing the issue of unfilled places in a managed way.
- 48 The cost to the HNB of the recommended increase of 3% to Special School banding rates is around £0.75 million per annum. This equates to almost £3 million across the remaining four years of the five-year plan.
- 49 It is proposed to address concerns over unfilled places in SEMH schools by changing funding arrangements in 2021/22. The changes mean that prior to the release of any additional TuF to special schools, consideration will be given to the number of unfilled places.
- 50 A full review of special school banding is planned over the next year, aligned to the review of TuF for mainstream schools, with a view to introducing a revised banding system for the start of the 2022/23 financial year if feasible.
- 51 The Conditions of Grant for the Dedicated Schools Grant require that local authorities pass onto special schools the increase in High Needs formula funding for special schools in respect of the Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pensions Employer Contribution Grant so this is also included in the updated five year plan.
- 52 Developments to increase capacity in special schools are also continuing. Plans for implementation of six modular classrooms at The Oaks Special School to realise up to 40 places for young people with discrete autism needs are still underway. It was agreed with the school that to achieve the best value from the investment, a permanent brick build in keeping with the rest of the school site was the best option. The new build is currently progressing through the planning system and is

scheduled for completion in September 2021. The existing group of young people are being accommodated across both The Oaks and Evergreen School sites.

Top up Funding (TuF)

- 53 TuF is the granting of HNB funding to schools when provision to meet an individual child or young person's SEND needs would cost more than the school's core funding budget including the notional SEND budget.
- 54 At present every school determines the amount of extra funding they need for each child. This has resulted in differences in the amount of support a young person receives depending on the school's considerations and how the school completes an application and calculates the funding. Some schools make a number of TuF requests, while others submit very few. Some schools access a significant resource for provision that other schools consider as core to their offer. Overall, TuF is unsustainable in the long term within the HNB funding available and this is an area of increasing demand, as outlined earlier in this report.
- 55 Whilst some work has already taken place to improve quality assurance and value for money, further improvements are required to ensure a robust process is in place that is visible and understood by all schools as well as parents and carers. This would help to reduce the variability in applications for TuF and ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of funds.
- 56 The majority of respondents to the public consultation held last year agreed with the proposal for a 'banding system' to be developed and applied to TuF to support schools, thereby helping to ensure SEND needs are consistently and more appropriately met.
- 57 This project aims to help ensure that: more children and young people with SEND needs are retained within mainstream education; parents have confidence in the support provided to children which will be timely, aligned to needs, and provided in the right place; and set outcomes for children and young people are met.
- 58 The new funding process will ensure that funding is only approved once all other appropriate support for pupils has been identified and put in place, aligned to their additional needs, and supported by the school's notional budget, in the first instance. Implementation of the new banded system aims to provide a more robust application process, that results in the most appropriate support being in place, while ensuring spending is kept within the allocated budget for TuF.

- 59 In light of delays caused by the COVID 19 emergency response in 2020, the project was re-scheduled. Work on this project re-commenced in September 2020, with a multidisciplinary project team established, a governance model and a number of key deliverables being identified, as well plans devised to engage with stakeholders to develop the new system. Best practice research and financial benchmarking has been completed to inform the development of proposed banded model options. Engagement took place with SENDCO networks during October - November 2020 to identify their requirements and stakeholder engagement is continuing into 2021 to develop the core offer and model options.
- 60 It is planned that the new funding process will be designed by May 2021, with initial piloting and then wider implementation from September 2021 and will subsequently be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Targeted Support Funding (TSF)

- 61 Prior to 2020/21, funding was distributed to schools using a formula-based approach (costing £784k in 2019/20). The previous process for allocating TSF to schools was acknowledged as being complex and not widely nor well understood.
- 62 Following the consultation in 2019, the process for allocating TSF was amended with effect from April 2020 to one where schools were required to apply for funding. Conversations have been held with some schools about this, since this change, especially where the school budget had a high reliance on this funding. Schools no longer receive an automatic payment of TSF. TSF is instead provided when a school applies for help. Schools now contact the SEND team to discuss their case and receive support through the new application process which was initially piloted with a few schools prior to being rolled out in April 2020.
- 63 This approach was a transitional arrangement for one year only and the budget was set at £430k based on an allocation of 0.75% of the HNB grant allocation.
- 64 For 2021/22, we have reviewed the criteria for assessment of applications, to ensure TSF is used where a school has a significant funding gap for their cohort of young people with SEND, which is not supported sufficiently from the core budget and TuF applications.
- 65 Stakeholder consultation on the proposed criteria has taken place and the new process was successfully implemented in April 2021.

Post 16 Funding

- 66 The fair pricing framework has been established across the Post 16 sector. This has helped providers plan accordingly and provided the necessary controls to HNB expenditure.
- 67 All providers have submitted individually costed plans for each of their learners. Each submission has been quality and value assured from the SEND Casework team providing appropriate challenge to ineligible spend and support where needs could be met more efficiently.
- 68 Provider applications for additional high needs funding have begun to improve in both timeliness and quality of applications. This has reduced the need for interim payments and has improved the financial forecasting for both providers and the Local Authority.

Funding Support to Partnerships of Schools

- 69 Funding from the HNB is allocated to each Community of Learning (CoL) and Behaviour and Inclusion Partnerships (BIP) to meet identified local needs.
- 70 A review of the process for allocating funding to these partnerships of schools was conducted early in 2019 resulting in a pilot being implemented between June and July 2019. This required partnerships to submit an application for funding based on a clear business case and this generated a saving of circa £280k to the HNB for 2019/2020.
- 71 At its January 2020 meeting, the Council's Cabinet agreed for a new process based on this successful pilot to be rolled out from March 2020. The business case template and guidance were reviewed and updated in accordance with the latest financial information and partnership chairs submitted their business cases by April 2020. As a result of rolling out this initiative, a total of £321k of funding was saved to the HNB in 2020/21.
- 72 Following the successful implementation of this new process for administering funding, the approach is continuing as part of normal business in 2021/22.

Communities of Learning Funding Support Arrangements 2021-22

- 73 Funding for CoLs will continue to be capped at 1% of the HNB Budget in line with previous feedback from schools and the Schools Forum about areas to make savings from, whilst still supporting important work. Due to the increase in Government HNB funding allocation, CoLs will receive £654k for 2021/22 which is £81k more than the previous year's allocation of £573k.

Behaviour and Inclusion Partnerships (BIPs) Funding Support Arrangements 2021-22

- 74 Four Secondary Behaviour and Inclusion Partnership Panels (North, Central, East and South West) and one Primary Behaviour and Inclusion Partnership Panel work to provide funding and support to schools, working together with alternative education providers and services, to offer appropriate pathways for young people disengaged from education. The Panels allocate funding in several ways to support young people.
- 75 The Behaviour and Inclusion Panels (BIPs) have supported 899 pupils since 2016 with 288 pupils going on to be permanently excluded. This means 611 (nearly 70%) of the pupils referred to the panels did not receive a permanent exclusion as a result of the support they received. This will have significantly reduced pressures on the PRU and HNB. A placement at the PRU (on-site) costs around £20,000 per pupil, per annum (excluding transport costs) and this is funded by the HNB budget. Off-site and specialist placements costs can be significantly higher.
- 76 Further funding is being allocated to the panels through the Investment Support Fund in 2021/22 to reduce pressures on the PRU and HNB budget. The increase in resource is designed to support the panels to promote positive inclusion, reduce permanent exclusion and improve reintegration rates for those who have been excluded.
- 77 Behaviour and Inclusion Partnership Panels submitted business plans outlining future spending needs for 2021/22 and their commitment to reducing permanent exclusions.
- 78 Additional funding for 2021-22 was granted to the BIPs in March 2021, based on clear business cases with criteria including the need to demonstrate how a reduced number of pupils being admitted into the PRU following permanent exclusion will be realised.
- 79 It is proposed that any future funding will be determined by the submission of business plans in the autumn term each year to reflect needs within the area and to demonstrate the impact on reducing the number of pupils requiring placements at the PRU within each panel area.

Joint Commissioning of Auxiliary Aids, Adaptations and Equipment

- 80 Schools and local authorities have a duty, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014, to provide equipment, auxiliary aids and adaptations for pupils with SEND to support education outcomes.

- 81 A review of the local arrangements has identified that the current system is complex with limited local guidance for families or professionals and does not always take account of the holistic needs of the child or young person. In addition, the review identified that there is a lack of clarity and consistency relating to how equipment, aids and adaptations should be funded which has the potential to continue to impact upon school TuF and the HNB budget.
- 82 A project plan to address the findings and recommendations of the review was developed with clear actions and timelines to secure improvements. However, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the majority of the activities identified have stalled due to a need to focus and respond to the immediate pressures experienced by families who have children with SEND during this period.
- 83 Following the integration of local health and care commissioning arrangements, additional capacity has been identified to drive the identified improvement activities forward and a revised project plan is being developed to enable progress in 2021.

Joint Commissioning of Integrated Paediatric Therapies

- 84 Following a review of paediatric therapies (Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy), there is broad agreement across the local authority, education settings, the respective NHS provider trusts and the Durham Clinical Commissioning Group to support the transformation of the local therapy services to secure improved education, health and care outcomes for local children. A key aspect of this is to ensure that local families can access the support they need, locally and in the most appropriate environment for the child.
- 85 Work is primarily focused upon the following three projects:
- a 0-5 years integrated pathway with single point of access for children born with severe neuro disability;
 - an integrated special school pilot;
 - an in-reach offer for local children with SEND admitted to paediatric hospital settings.
- 86 Progress on the projects was paused as therapists and their managers were redeployed to enable the local NHS provider trusts to manage the winter pressures and the roll out of the COVID 19 Vaccination Programme. It is anticipated that the projects will gain momentum again in 2021 as services recover from the need to respond to the immediate pressures linked to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Alternative Provision (AP) and The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

- 87 The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), is the Durham County Council provision for both permanently excluded pupils and those identified as close to permanent exclusion, delivering a personalised academic, social and therapeutic programme. There is continued pressure on the PRU as on-site capacity for permanently excluded pupils is much lower than the current demand for places.
- 88 Increasing expenditure for young people who are accessing alternative provision and support through the PRU is contributing to the overspend on the HNB. Alternative provision refers to any education not in mainstream, special school or academy and this provision supports over 500 young people across the county. Approximately 100 young people are attending off-site provision because there is not sufficient on-site capacity at the PRU. This figure was significantly higher prior to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 89 Following an external review of provision in July 2019, an Education Inclusion Operational Plan was developed, led by the Head of Education and Skills, between February and June 2020 in partnership with colleagues from EHVC, schools and other settings. It aims to support greater inclusion, with more children remaining in their first-choice schools; reduce exclusions (both fixed term and permanent); facilitate the effective and equitable use of quality alternative provision and improve the rate of reintegration to mainstream schools or specialist provision according to need. Successful delivery of the plan will therefore reduce pressures on the PRU and subsequently the HNB budget.
- 90 Four task and finish groups comprising representatives of schools, settings and other services, are established to deliver the operational plan and the following remits:

Headteacher/ Support Services Working Group Remit

- to agree expectations / thresholds of support that should be offered by any school before a decision is made on a permanent exclusion;
- to agree the expectations for a multi-agency, offer of support to work in partnership with schools, young people and their families.

Panel Chairs Working Group Remit

- to revisit the role, remit and expectations of the panels;

- to develop a wider role to take collective responsibility for every child and young person;
- to oversee the school offer, outreach support, localised solutions, strategic decision on alternative provision placements;
- to agree a fair and transparent allocation of the resources through robust terms of reference and protocols.

Reintegration Working Group Remit

- to develop a reintegration protocol to support pupils who have been permanently excluded.

Transition Planning Working Group with a remit to

- to enhance transition across all key stages;
- to develop better understanding of the extent and impact of pupil mobility;
- to agree a countywide transition protocol.

- 91 An Inclusion Steering Group is in place to oversee the work of the task and finish groups and delivery of the Education Inclusion Operational Plan. While some work was paused as resources were diverted to the COVID 19 emergency response, progress has been made against the key deliverables summarised below.
- 92 A Draft Reintegration Protocol has been developed based on feedback obtained through a survey held with headteachers and senior leaders. It aims to support the sustained return of pupils to mainstream education following a permanent exclusion by providing schools with confidence that a decision to reintegrate a young person has been based on a clear and balanced assessment. The protocol provides a clear reintegration pathway to assist realistic planning with receiving schools.
- 93 To support the protocol, assessment tools have been produced by the PRU in collaboration with SEND and Inclusion and Early Help teams. A joint TuF process has also been agreed for pupils with SEN to support their re-integration back to mainstream education.
- 94 Consultation is taking place on this protocol with Durham Association of Primary Headteachers (DAPH) and Durham Association of Secondary Headteachers (DASH) during the spring term to seek agreement for implementation across all schools countywide, from September 2021. This will provide a stronger platform for successfully returning pupils to

mainstream education from the PRU, and therefore reducing pressures on the HNB budget. The Panel Roles and Remit Task and Finish Group are currently exploring how a greater devolved funding model could include financial incentives within funding agreements to incentivise take up of the reintegration process.

- 95 The School and Support Task and Finish Group have developed a Durham Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) that will support pupils showing signs of disengagement from education. The PSP will support discussions both internally, with parents and students and other professionals / services to support the young person. North Durham Academy and Moorside Primary have agreed to pilot the PSP during the spring term 2021 and provide feedback to the group.
- 96 The Pupil Inclusion Pathway flowchart has been updated to include information from wider services as part of their graduated response offer. A report will be considered by the Inclusion Steering group at the end of the spring term, prior to consultation with Durham Association of Secondary Headteachers (DASH) and Durham Association of Primary Headteachers (DAPH) during the summer term and proposed implementation by September 2021.
- 97 A draft Transition Protocol has also been developed to support the transition of pupils across each key stage from early years settings through to Post 16. It outlines the underlying principles for high quality transition, provides suggestions for good practice, and sets out standards and tools that can be adopted by schools / education settings. It includes enhanced transition arrangements at Key Stage 2 to ensure those students at risk of permanent exclusion are provided with appropriate support to integrate them into Key Stage 3. A Data Sharing Agreement to support the transfer of information, plus a Transition Risk Indicator return and electronic pupil passport has been developed and is being used to support pupils with additional vulnerabilities and to facilitate successful planning for children based on their needs, by receiving schools. Work is ongoing to establish a data sharing agreement and ensure GDPR requirements are met and it is planned that this protocol will be consulted on during the summer 2021, prior to refinement and implementation by September 2021.
- 98 The Panel Roles and Responsibilities Task and Finish Group has agreed a funding formula and draft financial agreement that would support a devolved funding model, this includes a full cost recovery plan for any pupil permanently excluded and a contingency plan for any school not buying into the agreement. The group has also developed a quality assurance protocol for alternative education. This ensures robust systems are in place to provide placements that meet students' educational needs, clear review criteria and quality assurance

inspection visits. The group are currently exploring how alternative provision destination data can be used to support progression into post-16 education and adulthood.

- 99 The Fair Access Protocol has also been reviewed to reflect possible changes from the DfE consultation on the school admission code. The changes would require the BIPs to consider a Fair Access Case for hard to place pupils and will be subject to consultation with DASH and DAPH.
- 100 Work is also continuing to review provision at the PRU to ensure it meets need and prepares young people for their next steps in life. The PRU received a very positive, “good” Ofsted report following inspection in February 2020. A SEND classroom was developed despite the challenges faced during the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, outreach work is currently being developed alongside the work of the SEND interventions team to help prevent exclusions, with adjusted provision scheduled to be ready for implementation later in the spring 2021. The pilot has been very well-received by schools. An agreement is in place with Education Plus to commission some Key Stage 3 places with strong therapeutic support to promote reintegration or appropriate placement.
- 101 The successful delivery of the above work underway to promote inclusion, prevent exclusion, support transition and improve the rate of reintegration of pupils into mainstream schools will reduce the pressures on the HNB budget by reducing demand for places at the PRU.
- 102 Further work is now underway to develop and align the tracking of BIP activity with PRU budget and related activity. This also includes work to review the PRU budget expected to be required in future years as we expect demand to reduce as more young people stay in or are re-integrated more quickly back into mainstream settings.

Related SEND and Inclusion Work

- 103 Alongside the increased demands on the HNB, the Council has continued to see a significant increase in services provided by the SEND Casework team relating to new assessments for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), TuF packages, Annual Reviews of EHCPs and Post-16 work. This increase in customer demand is recognised as enduring demand and a proposal to significantly grow the resource in this service area, as part of the MTFP 2021/22, was included as part of the Cabinet’s budget papers in February 2021. This will support growth in the SEND casework team and interdependent services in business support and Education Psychology.

- 104 In addition, work is underway to review, improve and streamline the business processes co-ordinated by the SEND Casework Team and business support staff. The aim is to identify where efficiencies can be made in the processes, to include the use of smarter ways of working and new technology to help meet increasing demands, make better use of staff resources and realise other benefits. A business process review of new requests for Education Health and Care Plans has been completed and an implementation plan is now in place. Work is also taking place on the annual review business process.

Conclusion

- 105 The report sets out the current financial position of the HNB budget of the DSG, the latest five-year financial plan and the progress being made on key areas of transformation work to help improve efficiency and value for money, ensure spending is kept within available resources and that children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.
- 106 While spending is predicted to exceed grant by £1.8m by the end of 2020/21 financial year, this is a significantly improved position compared to recent years when overspends were substantially higher. The total current forecast deficit of £7.5m in the HNB is due to be recovered during 2023/24 under current planning assumptions and every effort will be made to achieve this.
- 107 Despite some delays and disruption due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic emergency, work is continuing in key areas to make spending more sustainable in line with the five year financial plan, develop services in accordance with the latest good practice guidance and legislation, and reflect feedback from our service users in order to better meet their needs.
- 108 It is acknowledged that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic situation is causing uncertainties and makes budgeting more difficult for all our services, learning providers and other partners. We will continue to regularly monitor spend and forecasting of resources in coming months and work closely with partners across education, health and care as we seek to support young people with SEND and those who need inclusion support services.

Background papers

None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Sections 45-53 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 sets out the funding framework governing schools' finance.

The Children and Families Act 2014 covers the SEND reforms and is accompanied by statutory guidance for organisations to follow through the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015).

The overarching legal implication within the report is the Equality Act 2010 with respect to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Section 149 of the Act details the requirement when taking decisions to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups and eliminate unlawful discrimination. It is necessary the impact on those groups is analysed as part of each area of work linked to HNB sustainability.

Finance

The report highlights the overspend and deficit position in the HNB. The outturn position for 2019/20 was an overspend of £8.6 million, with £5.6 million of this being supported by the Council's general fund (Budget Support Reserve). The cumulative deficit on the HNB reserve as at 31 March 2020 was £5.7 million.

The forecast position for 2020/21 indicates that expenditure will exceed HNB grant by £1.8 million. This will increase the cumulative deficit position on the HNB reserve from £5.7 million to £7.5 million at the end of 2020/21.

Based upon assumptions of HNB DSG allocations for the following four years, it is forecast that the cumulative deficit on the HNB reserve will be recovered by the end of 2023/24.

The report sets out several actions as part of an HNB sustainability plan which seeks to support children and young people with SEND within the resources available. Alongside this, the Council and other local authorities are continuing to lobby the Government for additional resources.

Consultation

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes clear that local authorities must ensure that children, young people, parents and carers are involved in decisions about local provision.

A previous report to Cabinet (January 2020) outlined the approach to and findings of a public consultation, aimed mainly at early years settings, schools,

special schools and colleges along with other stakeholders including children and families. Further consultation and stakeholder engagement is taking place regarding individual pieces of work identified in this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

As the nine priority areas of the HNB sustainability programme affect 0-25 years old with SEND and their families, parents and carers there is potential impact for the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex and ethnicity. There is disproportionate impact in relation to sex (both male and female) and ethnicity. Significantly more males have an ECHP (74%). In terms of impact on women, evidence suggests they are more likely to have caring responsibilities for children and young people. Ethnicity data shows there is potential disproportionately in terms of ethnic minorities with special education needs (SEN).

Proposals to address priorities are designed to ease funding pressures and contribute towards longer term sustainability for SEND education. Negative impact is therefore not anticipated, as proposals aim to create a more inclusive and targeted SEND education offer by addressing need yet ensuring value for money through ensuring consistency and quality of centrally managed services, linking funding to evidence of impact, extending the range of specialist places, improving staff training, joint commissioning to ensure consistency and value for money and reducing pupil exclusions. This should impact positively in terms of disability, age (children, young people with SEND and their parents or carers), sex and ethnicity.

Climate Change

An intended outcome of this programme of work, is to increase support for young people to attend local schools, rather than travel to schools that are further away, both within and outside of the county. The successful delivery of the programme will result in reduced miles travelled by pupils, thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions and potentially a reduced contribution to local traffic congestion.

The joint commissioning of equipment and auxiliary aids will help to reduce waste and consumption of resources, through the improved oversight, management and reuse and maintenance of equipment.

It is intended that the reviews of our business processes within the SEND Casework team will result in reduced printing and paper consumption, through the increased use of digital systems and the implementation of modern ways of working. The potential for developing a customer portal within the Synergy data management system is also being explored. Implementation of a customer portal, use of video conferencing for meetings and exchanging information, should help to reduce the need for staff and customer travel to some meetings. The digital mail system “Flite” is already being used by the

team, and the use of this system will be promoted to other areas of the service, as necessary and appropriate.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

There may be changes required in staffing based on the proposals outlined in the report.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

The programme of work being overseen by the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board is being progressed as part of a programme management approach and includes developing, and continuously reviewing, a risk register. Key risks are summarised in the main body of this report. Careful consideration of risks and possible unintended consequences is taking place regarding each of the areas of work.

Procurement

Commissioning and procurement implications are being considered for each of the proposals in the HNB sustainability plan.

Appendix 2: HNB Forecast Outturn v Budget 2020/21

DSG High Needs Block	2020-21 Original Budget £ million	2020-21 Forecast Outturn £ million	2020-21 Over / (Under) Spend £ million
Special Schools (maintained and academy)	23.893	23.893	0
Top-up-Special (individual pupils)	1.092	1.391	0.299
Top-up-Special (changes in mix)	0.478	0.600	0.122
Sub-total Special School Provision	25.463	25.884	0.421
INMSS – pre-16	3.569	3.569	0
INMSS – post-16	3.463	3.213	(0.250)
FE provision – post-16	4.024	3.800	(0.224)
Exports to other LA areas	0.970	0.970	0
Imports from other LA areas	(0.656)	(0.656)	0
Sub-total External provision	11.370	10.896	(0.474)
EMP place funding	0.608	0.608	0
Top-up funding-Nursery	0.500	0.500	0
Nursery Outreach Team	0.800	0.800	0
Top-up funding-Primary	5.865	7.361	1.496
Top-up funding-Secondary	1.139	1.394	0.255
Targeted Support Fund	0.430	0.329	(0.101)
Communities of Learning	0.572	0.572	0
Sub-total Mainstream Provision	9.914	11.564	1.650
Equalities and Intervention Team	1.802	1.802	0
SEND Sensory Team	1.314	1.314	0
Specialist Inclusion Support	0.567	0.567	0
Management and support recharge	0.827	0.827	0
Equipment	0.075	0.075	0
LA recharges to DSG	0.150	0.150	0
Contingencies	0.159	0	(0.159)
Sub-total Central provision	4.894	4.735	(0.159)
Behaviour Panels	0.600	0.600	0
Local Authority PRU (The Woodlands)	5.776	6.150	0.374
Income from schools (Permanent)	(0.341)	(0.341)	0
Income from schools (Turnaround)	(0.567)	(0.567)	0
Other AP provision	0.125	0.125	0
Sub-total Alternative Provision	5.593	5.967	0.374
Total	57.234	59.046	1.812

Appendix 3: HNB Five-Year Financial Plan

DSG High Needs Block	2020/21 Forecast Outturn £ million	2021/22 Estimate £ million	2022/23 Estimate £ million	2023/24 Estimate £ million	2024/25 Estimate £ million
Special Schools	23.893	26.034	26.555	28.493	28.493
Special School TPEG / TPECG	-	-	-	-	-
Top-up-Special (pupils)	1.391	1.419	1.447	1.447	1.447
Top-up-Special (banding)	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600
Sub-total Special School Provision	25.884	28.053	28.602	30.540	30.540
INMSS – pre-16	3.569	3.640	3.713	3.713	3.713
INMSS – post-16	3.213	3.277	3.343	3.343	3.343
FE provision – post-16	3.800	3.876	3.954	3.954	3.954
Exports to other LA areas	0.970	0.989	1.009	1.009	1.009
Imports from other LA areas	(0.656)	(0.669)	(0.682)	(0.682)	(0.682)
Sub-total External provision	10.896	11.113	11.337	11.337	11.337
EMP place funding	0.608	0.620	0.633	0.633	0.633
Top-up funding-Nursery	0.500	0.510	0.520	0.520	0.520
Nursery Outreach Team	0.800	0.816	0.832	0.832	0.832
Top-up funding-Primary	7.361	8.097	8.907	9.797	10.777
Top-up funding-Secondary	1.394	1.533	1.687	1.855	2.041
Targeted Support Fund	0.329	0.491	0.529	0.529	0.529
Communities of Learning	0.572	0.654	0.706	0.706	0.706
Sub-total Mainstream Provision	11.564	12.721	13.814	14.872	16.038
Equalities and Intervention Team	1.802	1.838	1.875	1.875	1.875
SEND Sensory Team	1.314	1.340	1.367	1.367	1.367
Specialist Inclusion Support	0.567	0.578	0.590	0.590	0.590
Management and supp recharge	0.827	0.889	0.907	0.907	0.907
Equipment	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075
Investment support fund	-	0.822	1.765	1.765	1.765
LA recharges to DSG	0.150	0.300	0.306	0.306	0.306
Sub-total Central provision	4.735	5.842	6.885	6.885	6.885
Behaviour Panels	0.600	1.468	0.706	0.706	0.706
Local Authority PRU	6.150	5.700	5.700	5.700	5.700
Income from schools (Permanent)	(0.341)	(0.341)	(0.341)	(0.341)	(0.341)
Income from schools (Turnaround)	(0.567)	(0.567)	(0.567)	(0.567)	(0.567)
Other AP provision	0.125	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128
Sub-total Alternative Provision	5.967	6.388	5.626	5.626	5.626
Total	59.046	64.117	66.263	69.259	70.425
Grant available	57.234	65.690	70.858	70.858	70.858
Budget surplus (+) / shortfall (-)	(1.812)	1.573	4.595	1.599	0.433
Shortfall met by council reserves	-	-	-	-	-
In-year impact on HNB DSG	(1.812)	1.573	4.595	1.599	0.433
Forecast HNB DSG reserve	(7.538)	(5.965)	(1.370)	0.228	0.661

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Cabinet

21 April 2021

**Health Protection Assurance
Annual Report**



Report of Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

All.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of Cabinet with an update on health protection assurance arrangements in County Durham.
- 2 Updates come from the implementation of the health protection action plan, which is overseen by the Health Protection Assurance and Development Group (HPADG).
- 3 The direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic is covered in reports from the Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB). This report will pick up on the indirect effects of COVID-19 as to the impact on relevant work programmes.

Executive summary

- 4 HPADG meets quarterly and seeks assurance on five main strands of health protection activity, in addition to data and communications which are threaded throughout:
 - (a) Screening programmes
 - (b) Immunisation programmes
 - (c) Outbreaks and communicable diseases
 - (d) Strategic regulation interventions
 - (e) Preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies
- 5 Key achievements overseen by HPADG to date include:
 - (a) Improvement in flu vaccination uptake amongst eligible groups
 - (b) Extension of Durham County Council flu vaccination to all staff, with much improved uptake on the previous year
 - (c) Sustained delivery of national immunisations programmes
 - (d) Sustained delivery of the Antenatal and Newborn Screening programme.

- 6 Areas impacted by COVID-19 and requiring further development.
- (a) All but the Antenatal and Newborn screening programmes have been impacted by the pandemic. The restoration of affected screening programmes was started prior to the second wave and will have been affected by successive waves.
 - (b) Development areas include:
 - Improving uptake of certain vaccinations including shingles and pneumococcal
 - Ensuring equitable coverage and uptake of screening and immunisations programmes
 - Taking account of forthcoming changes to the NHS England and Public Health as they affect health protection functions
 - Development of a sexual health strategy for County Durham
 - Ensuring health protection and public health related emergency preparedness is assured during organisational change.

Recommendation(s)

- 7 Members of Cabinet are requested to:
- (a) Note the content of the report.
 - (b) Note that performance in County Durham for all childhood immunisation programmes exceeds both standards and national averages
 - (c) Note that the report provides broad assurance that effective processes are in place for each of the key strands of health protection activity
 - (d) Support the need for further assurance in relation to flu and COVID-19 vaccination
 - (e) Support the need for assurance on the transfer of Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health England (PHE) functions including health protection and screening and immunisation programmes and emergency response
 - (f) Support further identification and response to emerging health protection priorities and be updated accordingly.

Background

- 8 The protection of the health of the population is one of the five mandated responsibilities given to local authorities as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Director of Public Health (DPH) for County Durham is responsible under legislation for the discharge of the local authority's public health functions.
- 9 The health protection element of these statutory responsibilities and the mandatory responsibilities of the DPH are as outlined below:
 - (a) The Secretary of State's public health protection functions
 - (b) Exercising the local authority's functions in planning for, and responding to, emergencies that present a risk to public health
 - (c) Such other public health functions as the Secretary of State specifies in regulations
 - (d) Responsibility for the local authority's public health response as a responsible authority under the Licensing Act 2003, such as making representations about licensing applications
 - (e) A duty to ensure plans are in place to protect their population including through screening and immunisation.
- 10 Within Durham County Council, the remit for health protection is delivered by Public Health in conjunction with the Community Protection Service (CPS) and the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU). The local CCG employs an Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) through an agreement with Public Health.
- 11 PHE's core functions include protecting the public from infectious diseases, chemicals, radiation and environmental hazards and supporting emergency preparedness, resilience and response. Teams responsible for delivering these functions in the North East sit within the PHE Centre based in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- 12 NHS England (NHSE), working jointly with PHE, is responsible for commissioning and quality assuring population screening and immunisation programmes. This includes a team covering the Cumbria and the North East, also based in Newcastle.
- 13 Regular liaison between Directors of Public Health (DsPH), the Centre Director of PHE in the North East, and the Head of Public Health for NHSE in Cumbria and the North East occurs via monthly North East DsPH meeting and monthly telephone catch ups as well as via the Public Health Oversight Group.

- 14 In August 2020 the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the abolition of Public Health England, with a new National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP) to take over its health protection functions.
- 15 On 24th March 2021, it was declared that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) would replace the concept of the NIHP and be established from April 2021. The transfer of responsibilities is expected to take place by September 2021.
- 16 The UKHSA includes the NHS Test and Trace Programme and the Joint Biosecurity Centre, which were stepped up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 17 The White Paper 'Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' was published on 11th February 2021. This announced that the government had concluded that that the allocative functions of CCGs should be held by an ICS NHS Body. Amongst other things, this will have implications for the current arrangements for the commissioning and delivery of the local Infection Prevention and Control Team.
- 18 The White Paper included a proposal to create a power for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to require NHS England to discharge public health functions delegated by the Secretary of State alongside the existing section 7A provisions (rather than by agreement with NHS England, as is currently the case). This would include scope to direct as to how those delegated functions are to be exercised.
- 19 By these means, the government foresaw 'a greater range of delegation options for section 7A public health services, including the ability for onward delegation of the function into collaborative arrangements, such as a section 75 partnership arrangement'.

Health protection assurance arrangements in County Durham

- 20 The previous annual report laid out in full the local assurance arrangements for health protection.
- 21 There have been significant changes in governance and assurance for the COVID-19 pandemic and local response, which is covered separately in updates to the local Outbreak Control Plan and HWB via the HPAB.
- 22 The HPADG, chaired by the DPH, was established in 2018, and aims to enable the Director of Public Health to fulfil the statutory role in assuring

the Council and HWB that satisfactory arrangements are in place to protect the health of the local population.

- 23 The HPADG has developed a detailed action plan built on five pillars of health protection, in addition to data and communications, which are threaded throughout:
- (a) Screening programmes
 - (b) Immunisation programmes
 - (c) Outbreaks and communicable diseases
 - (d) Strategic regulation interventions
 - (e) Preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies
- 24 The action plan is supported by a scorecard that includes a range of appropriate health protection indicators and outcomes (see Appendix 2).
- 25 The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Safety Strategic Group (HSWSG) is in place in DCC to ensure that suitable priority is given to the management of Health, Safety and Wellbeing across the Council. This includes representation from Public Health.
- 26 NHSE established a County Durham and Darlington Screening and Immunisations Oversight Group which provides assurance to the DPH in relation to screening and immunisation programmes. In addition, the management of incidents and the quality assurance for screening programmes are reported separately to the DPH. Programme boards have been established for each of the screening and immunisation programmes.
- 27 PHE established the County Durham and Darlington Area Health Protection Group and this brings together organisations involved in protecting the health of the population. Prior to the pandemic, the group met quarterly, attended by a Consultant in Public Health. The purpose of the group is to provide a forum to discuss strategic and operational health protection issues; review outbreaks and incidents (local, regional and national) and learn from lessons identified; provide a forum where cross-boundary and cross-organisational issues can be discussed and solutions identified; identify local priorities alongside implementing national policy and guidance, and identify any joint training and development needs. The group does not have a formal accountability or governance structure.
- 28 PHE NE has a bespoke surveillance system in place for communicable diseases with daily and weekly alerts for exceedances and identification of linked cases. The DPH is informed of outbreaks, incidents and

exceedances via email alerts. The DPH is represented at all local outbreak control meetings and outbreak reports are also shared.

- 29 In addition, the DPH has direct access to national surveillance systems set up for the collection and analysis of COVID-19 related data including vaccinations.
- 30 The DsPH for County Durham and Darlington established the County Durham and Darlington Healthcare Acquired Infections (HCAI) Assurance Group in 2004. This group is chaired by a DPH and has wide membership from all provider organisations, enabling the DsPH to have a clear line of sight to all providers in County Durham and Darlington. HCAI information is also reported directly to CCGs where action plans are put in place to address identified issues. These are reported to the CCGs' Governing Bodies as part of the regular quality reports.
- 31 County Durham has retained an in-house team of Infection Prevention and Control nurses. The Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) provide a service to both County Durham and Darlington to support both Primary Care and Social Care within residential settings, and, since September 2020, the service has been extended to schools providing for children with Special Educational Needs to bolster their Infection Prevention and Control Support in County Durham.
- 32 The IPCT continue to undertake Root Cause Analysis of Community Onset Clostridium difficile Infection cases and Community Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus (MRSA) blood stream Infections. Lessons learned are highlighted to the appropriate clinicians in primary care.
- 33 The team is notified of all alert organisms for residents in care homes and offers the appropriate advice to the staff to help manage the resident safely.
- 34 The IPCT support and work with colleagues in the local authorities' adult social care commissioning team.
- 35 All work undertaken by the IPCT is reported back through the County Durham and Darlington Health Care Associated Infections Assurance group chaired by the DsPH.
- 36 NHS England established the County Durham and Darlington and Tees Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP) in 2013. This has now merged with the LHRP in the north of the patch to form a North East group. One of the responsibilities of the LHRP is to provide the DPH with assurance that the health sector has well tested plans to respond to major incidents that contribute to multi-agency emergency planning.

The LHRP is co-chaired by NHSE and a DPH and attended by a County Durham Consultant in Public Health.

- 37 NHSE and CCGs have a duty to cooperate with local authorities on health and well-being under the NHS Act 2006. This includes cooperating on health protection, including the sharing of plans. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act makes clear that both NHE England and the CCGs are under a duty to obtain appropriate advice in the protection of the public health. CCGs are also Category 2 responders under the Act giving them a duty to provide information and cooperate with civil contingency planning as needed.
- 38 The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) is essentially the local authority's point of contact for business continuity and emergency planning both internally and externally in response to incidents and emergencies. The CCU are also a conduit for information for multiple agencies through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and have a duty officer on call at all times.
- 39 CCU holds a community risk register which provides assurance to the DPH about key risks to the community including: pandemic influenza; flooding; adverse weather; emerging infectious disease; fuel shortage; widespread long duration electricity network failure; animal disease and building collapse.
- 40 The CCU produce extensive emergency preparedness plans on 'Resilience Direct' and work with the LRF to co-ordinate the training exercise calendar. This also includes running exercises for the local university.
- 41 All internal plans are reviewed on a regular basis. The DPH is involved in the initial development of relevant plans and is sent updates once plans are reviewed. Access to LRF plans is through 'Resilience Direct' from the LRF or the CCU. The DPH is a member of the LRF.
- 42 Durham County Council leads the recovery co-ordination group, responsible for community engagement and recovery assurance in the event of an incident (for example an extensive fire that may have led to land contamination).
- 43 Under normal circumstances, PHE's Health Protection, NHSE's Screening and Immunisation and the local IPCT produce annual reports.
- 44 PHE's annual report covers the NE geography and includes details of the prevention and surveillance of communicable diseases, their response to communicable disease outbreaks and incidents; emergency preparedness, resilience and response, environmental

issues and quality and health inequality issues in health protection. The annual report is supplemented by quarterly reports to the DPH that detail outbreaks and issues in County Durham.

- 45 NHSE's annual flu programme report describes uptake amongst eligible groups and highlights areas for improvement. This is preceded by a local evaluation of the flu programme delivered locally.
- 46 The IPCT annual report details the range of support and interventions initiated to reduce HCAI and reports in year activity details. This report also includes the work plan for the IPCT for the upcoming year.
- 47 The DCC Community Protection Service (CPS) provides assurance to national regulators including Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) through the implementation and regular reporting on their air quality strategy; contaminated land strategy; food safety plan; food hygiene plan; annual enforcement programme; various licensing and enforcement policies and disease contingency plans. Services provided by CPS are regulated nationally by the FSA, HSE and DEFRA to provide further assurance on the quality of service provision.
- 48 A Local Air Quality Management Area currently exists within Durham City. Action and implementation plans are in place to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide emissions and improve air quality standards within that area.

Updates on key areas

- 49 Data provided below are collated from numerous sources and compiled in the scorecard attached at Appendix 2.

Screening and immunisations

Screening

- 50 Up to and including 2019, cancer screening coverage rates in County Durham have consistently exceeded national averages and minimum standards. In 2019:
 - (a) Breast screening coverage in County Durham was 78.4% compared to a national average of 74.5%.
 - (b) Cervical screening coverage in County Durham was 76.9% compared to a national average of 71.9%.
 - (c) Bowel cancer coverage in County Durham was 62.3% compared to a national average of 60.1%.

- 51 Performance against key indicators for non-cancer screening programmes (including Antenatal and Newborn Screening, Diabetic Eye Retinopathy and Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm) in County Durham shows sustained achievements above national minimum standards up to Quarter 4 2019/20. The only exception was coverage of Newborn Hearing, which at 94.1% fell below the standard of 98%.
- 52 COVID-19 has impacted on delivery of most adult screening programmes, with the following services currently recovering: Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm, Diabetic Eye Retinopathy, Bowel and Breast cancer screening
- 53 Cervical cancer screening services have been restored, and Antenatal and Newborn Screening services have been unaffected by the pandemic.

Immunisations

- 54 Vaccinations delivered through primary care (including the childhood programme) have been unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. School age immunisation services have recovered.
- 55 At the time of writing, the COVID-19 vaccination programme is ongoing, with hospitals mainly responsible for vaccinating health and social care workers, and Primary Care Networks vaccinating eligible patients. Access to appropriate high quality data is currently in development.
- 56 Overall, the universal childhood immunisation programmes demonstrate high uptake rates across County Durham, with rates generally above national targets and averages (see Appendix 2). This includes the following coverage:
- (a) 97.8% of the combined diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Dtap / IPV / Hib) vaccine at 1 year
 - (b) 97.8% of pneumococcal vaccine (PCV) at 1 year
 - (c) 98.0% of the Dtap / IPV / Hib vaccine at 2 years
 - (d) 97.1% of the PCV booster at 2 years
 - (e) 96.8% for one dose of Measles, Mumps and Rubella at 2 years
 - (f) 98.1% for one dose of MMR at 5 years
 - (g) 96.1% for two doses of MMR at 5 years
- 57 At the time of writing, the flu vaccination campaign is ongoing as patients can be inoculated until the end of March 2021. Provisional data show that, despite challenges to delivery in a COVID-19 safe environment, uptake of flu vaccinations has improved across eligible groups since the previous year.

- 58 In 2020/21 the DCC staff vaccination programme was extended to all staff (including schools, but not academies). To date, 3981 staff vaccinations have been given.
- 59 An evaluation of the 2020/21 campaign will be produced by the Board in Spring 2021. This will inform the flu programme for 2021/22.
- 60 Uptake of Shingles vaccine remains stubbornly low. Discussions have been held with NHSE on ways to improve uptake locally.
- 61 There continues to be national shortage of pneumococcal vaccine covering 23 strains of the bacteria that may be impacting on uptake.

Communicable disease control and outbreaks

- 62 In response to the pandemic, DCC has established an Outbreak Control Team and a 7-day week rota for the public health team to monitor and respond to clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19. A wider on-call rota was put in place to manage outbreak responses, with outbreak control teams convened on a number of occasions, pulling together colleagues across the spectrum of public health, community protection, communications, civil contingencies, and community support, to respond to individual outbreaks.
- 63 The presence of several prison establishments in Durham presents challenges in the management of infectious diseases, particularly respiratory viruses (including COVID-19), blood borne viruses and TB.
- 64 At the time of writing, there have been outbreaks of COVID-19 within prison establishments across the North East at different stages of the pandemic.
- 65 The sexual and reproductive health activity dataset (SRHAD) and HARS, together with GUMCADv2 form the basis for a standardised sexual health dataset collected from sexual health clinic settings (plus CTAD from laboratories). The Integrated Sexual Health Service (ISHS) is expected to provide and discuss quarterly GUMCADv2 and SRHAD data analysis from PHE to enable informed commissioning decisions relating to GUM attendances, activity and sexually transmitted infection trends.
- 66 PHE Sexual and Reproductive Health profiles continue to show County Durham as having a lower than average diagnosis rate for STI's.
- 67 Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) continues to be a growing threat to public health. County Durham CCG has seen significant reductions in antibiotic prescribing, reducing the number of prescription items for antibiotics per patient population measure (STAR-PU) by 8% from Nov

19 to Nov 20. This is partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic leading to reduced prescribing for acute coughs as well as telephone triage measures in GP practices leading to more appropriate prescribing. Despite this reduction County Durham CCG remains the 5th highest prescribing CCG out of 137 CCGs in England at 1.053 items per STAR-PU. The CCG employs a Medicines Optimisations (MO) Team who take the lead on encouraging appropriate prescribing practices, however in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures on primary care this work has been mainly supportive over the last year (20-21). This work will continue to be a focus for the MO team in 21-22.

Strategic regulation intervention

- 68 The Community Protection Service (CPS) delivers key frontline services which are mainly regulatory in nature and encompass environmental health, trading standards and licensing functions. The service is adopting a more strategic and risk-based approach to regulation and works closely with a range of key partners to achieve better regulatory outcomes which protect and promote the health and wellbeing of local communities. The Service is now responsible for community safety, including Anti-Social behaviour and the Vulnerability Interventions Pathway Team who signpost into a variety of support services including addictions, mental health, alcohol and drug misuse and crisis services.
- 69 In relation to service priorities, as well as maintaining the Council's statutory functions around food safety and wellbeing, occupational safety and health, pollution control, housing standards and other health protection interventions, the CPS is an integral part of the Council's COVID-19 Pandemic response in relation to outbreak management and regulation of relevant health protection legislation and implementation of local COVID-19 restrictions.
- 70 The CPS team has had long term capacity issues which has been further compounded by the COVID-19 response and Brexit transition. Additional funding has been secured to increase capacity within operational teams, however there are national shortages of suitably qualified Environmental Health and Trading Standards professionals which present difficulties with ongoing recruitment as well as staff retention and succession planning.
- 71 In addition, the CPS has a number of specialist teams which will provide an enhanced COVID-19 response in relation to local COVID-19 outbreaks, workplace health and safety, nuisance and anti-social behaviour. As part of our graduated approach to compliance and enforcement, some enforcement actions will need to be escalated to the specialist CP teams as and when necessary. The Community Protection Service Teams have a range of enforcement powers and

tools to deal with non-compliance issues associated with current restrictions and other matters which may be related to local restrictions including:-

- Fixed Penalty Notices
- Prohibition Notices
- Improvement notices
- Abatement Notices
- Community Protection Notices
- Directions to close premises, events or public places
- Criminal Proceedings

- 72 The CPS continues to provide business support through the Business Regulatory Advice Department (BRAD). The service team will provide advice and guidance to businesses to promote better compliance with current legislation as well as facilitates business diversification.
- 73 Following a successful bid by the Safe Durham Partnership for 'Making Every Adult Matter' (MEAM) support during 2020 work is progressing to develop a place based approach to tackling local community issues and improve the futures of the most disadvantaged individuals.
- 74 The overarching vision of the partnership is to promote new ways of working which could be replicated in other areas where there are significant health, social and economic problems.
- 75 The MEAM approach provides a framework on which to strengthen our existing partnership arrangements as well as facilitate system change and promote the co-production of future services.
- 76 This work supports the principles of the County Durham Together initiative which will provide a new way of working with our communities towards achieving the County Durham Vision 2035.
- 77 Horden has been identified as the Phase 1 pilot area given the levels of multiple deprivation and ongoing community issues in the area. The Horden project team will develop the MEAM initiative and bring together a variety of different partners who will work as one team within a neighbourhood hub. Their work will focus on addressing the needs of individuals as well as local community priorities and build upon best practice and shared learning identified from our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 78 Working collaboratively to restore, redeem and transform local communities and address a variety of community issues and social needs, the Horden project team will focus on the social determinants of health including improvements in the local environment, housing, education, income, crime and social capital.
- 79 Initial investment in the Horden project has been identified for the next 3 years and will enable further opportunities to be explored including match funding. An Expression of Interest (EOI) has been submitted to the Government's 'Changing Futures' programme. If successful, this may attract additional funding of between £1.5-£4.5M to continue the project and potentially increase the establishment of more place based teams in other areas of high multiple deprivation across the County.

Preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies

- 80 Partner organisations involved in public health have played a major role in preparing for and responding to public health incidents this year.
- 81 As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, partners reviewed and re-appraised themselves of the North East Influenza Pandemic Framework which was used as the initial governance and response framework for the pandemic. Outbreak management and business continuity plans were reviewed and developed and exercised on a number of occasions through the year. As part of the development of the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan, scenario planning workshops were used to develop standard operating procedures for each of the outbreak control teams.
- 82 The council's emergency response procedures, and in particular those relating to evacuation and emergency rest centres have been reviewed and revised in response to the evolving COVID-19 guidance and rest centre managers and responders briefed and trained on COVID-19 safe management and practice.
- 83 A first wave de-brief was undertaken in the summer and further exercises developed and undertaken in response to the government's local response strategy and the development of the County Durham Local Health Protection Assurance Board's own case and outbreak exceedance modelling (the spike predictor tool).
- 84 The civil contingencies unit has also worked with the CCG and NHSEI to identify vaccination centre sites across the county.
- 85 The Excess Death Framework for Durham and Darlington was exercised in February 2020 and subsequent COVID-19 specific excess

death plans and protocols have been developed and exercised during the course of 2020/21.

- 86 Public health partners took part in an exercise on wider winter pressures which included other impacts in addition to COVID-19 and EU transition.
- 87 Plans are in place for the two Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites in Durham and a statutory exercise for one of the two sites will be undertaken later this year.
- 88 The Director of Public Health, along with other DsPH across the North East are part of a Scientific and Technical Advice Cell rota in a major incident when a STAC is called by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group the DPH will chair the STAC. The DPH has undergone Major Incident Gold Command Training to ensure the DPH can operate at SCG level and understands the working arrangements of STAC and the SCG.
- 89 The DPH is a member of the County Durham and Darlington LRF SCG established in February 2020 to manage COVID-19. The DPH is also a member of the Regional Officers Group and has advised the LA7 group of local authorities as chair of the North East group of Directors of Public Health.
- 90 Agencies were involved in precautionary planning in relation to fire risk at a commercial waste processing site which subsequently led to a major fire incident in the Old Eldon area. Public health risks were assessed, and appropriate advice given to local residents concerned by smoke.
- 91 Agencies have also monitored the spread of avian flu across the country and provided advice to the farming and poultry industries on human health risks in commercial farming and to the public in relation to coming into contact with dead wildfowl.

Main implications

- 92 It is critical that the DPH receives assurance in relation to the health protection functions of screening; immunisation; outbreaks and communicable disease management; strategic regulation interventions and; preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies.
- 93 Following engagement with representatives from Public Health England, NHS England, DDES CCG and DCC Civil Contingencies Unit, Department for Environment, Health and Consumer Protection and community infection control assurance mechanisms are now in place

through the formulation of a health protection action plan. This action plan has identified priority areas for action, achievement of which will be monitored through the HPADG and health protection scorecard. The HPADG group meets quarterly and reports to the HWB.

Conclusion

- 94 The health protection functions delivered by a range of organisations in County Durham continue to demonstrate good overall performance.
- 95 On the whole, good communication exists between the commissioners of the various programmes and the DPH and remedial and corrective interventions are instigated when necessary. Escalation procedures are in place in the event the DPH needs to raise concerns. Despite challenges with delivery in the context of COVID-19, preliminary data show that uptake of flu vaccination has improved amongst all eligible groups since the previous year.
- 96 There has been significant change to health protection structures and processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. 2020/21 is likely to bring further structural change and may require the continuing need for a heightened response to COVID-19 whilst seeking to manage change and maintain focus on other health protection functions.
- 97 There remain areas for potential improvement across screening and immunisation services, communicable disease control and outbreaks, strategic regulation intervention, and preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies. This includes understanding and addressing variation in access to services by sociodemographic characteristics. Monitoring towards achievement of the identified actions will be undertaken by the HPADG and using the health protection scorecard. The HPADG meets quarterly and reports to the HWB.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Section 2B NHS Act 2006 places a duty on each local authority to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area.

The steps that may be taken include:

providing information and advice; providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living; providing services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness; providing financial incentives to encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles; providing assistance (including financial assistance) to help individuals to minimise any risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment; providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement; making available the services of any person or any facilities; providing grants or loans (on such terms as the local authority considers appropriate).

Finance

Funding for the staff flu vaccination programme comes from the Public Health (health protection) budget.

Consultation

There is no requirement for consultation in relation to this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to this report.

Climate Change

Exposure to potential harms arising from the effects of climate change would fall within the umbrella of health protection, for example severe weather patterns.

Human Rights

This report has no implications for human rights.

Crime and Disorder

This report has no implications for crime and disorder.

Staffing

This report has no implications for staffing.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

No risks are identified for the Council.

Procurement

Not applicable.

Appendix 2: Health protection scorecard

Attached as separate document

Health Protection scorecard - February 2021

	Significantly worse than England
	Not significantly different to England
	Significantly better than England
	Significance not tested
-	No sub-regional data available
	Above national goal
	Close to national goal
	Below national goal

	Data updated since previous scorecard?	Indicator	Measure	Period	County Durham		North East	England	Recent trend
					No.	Measure			
Screening	N	2.19 - Cancer diagnosed at early stage (experimental statistics)	%	2017	1,171	49.3%	52.4%	52.2%	▬
	Y	C24a - Cancer screening coverage - breast cancer	%	2020	50,271	77.9%	76.3%	74.1%	▬
	Y	C24b - Cancer screening coverage - cervical cancer (25 - 49 years)	%	2020	62,719	76.9%	77.2%	70.2%	▬
	Y	C24c - Cancer screening coverage - cervical cancer (50 - 64 years)	%	2020	39,407	77.4%	76.5%	76.1%	▬
	Y	C24d - Cancer screening coverage - bowel cancer	%	2020	58,376	66.0%	65.1%	63.8%	▬
	Y	C24e - Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening - Coverage	%	2019/20	2,616	80.4%	78.3%	76.1%	▬
	N	C25b – Diabetic eye screening - uptake (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	83.2%	82.6%	
	N	C24h - Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy Screening – HIV Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	99.7%	99.7%	
	N	C24i - Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy Screening – Syphilis Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	99.7%	99.7%	
	N	C24j - Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy Screening – Hepatitis B Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	99.7%	99.7%	
	N	C24k - Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening – Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	99.7%	99.7%	
	N	C24l - Newborn Blood Spot Screening – Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	99.0%	97.8%	
	Y	C24m - Newborn Hearing Screening – Coverage (%)	%	2019/20	4,523	98.1%	98.4%	98.2%	▬
	N	C24n - Newborn and Infant Physical Examination Screening – Coverage (%)	%	2018/19	-	-	95.1%	96.4%	

Data updated since previous scorecard?	Indicator	Measure	Period	County Durham		North East	England	Recent trend
				No.	Measure			
12 months								
N	D03b - Population vaccination coverage - Hepatitis B (1 year old)	%	2019/20	-	100%	-	-	
N	D03c - Population vaccination coverage - Dtap / IPV / Hib (1 year old)	%	2019/20	4,922	97.8%	96.0%	92.6%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	3.03iv - Population vaccination coverage - MenC <i>**From 1st July 2016 the dose of MenC offered at 3 months is to be discontinued and so the 1 year evaluation 3.03iv indicator will become obsolete within the next two years (data for 2016/17 will be the last collection) **</i>	%	2015/16	5,399	98.7%	97.8%	*	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	D03f - Population vaccination coverage - PCV (1 year old)	%	2019/20	4,923	97.8%	96.4%	93.2%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
24 months								
N	D03g - Population vaccination coverage - Hepatitis B (2 years old)	%	2019/20	-	100%	-	-	
N	D03h - Population vaccination coverage - Dtap / IPV / Hib (2 years old)	%	2019/20	5,047	98.0%	96.6%	93.8%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	D03m - Population vaccination coverage - Hib / MenC booster (2 years old)	%	2018/19	4,993	96.9%	95.1%	90.5%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	D03k - Population vaccination coverage - PCV booster (2 years old)	%	2019/20	5,001	97.1%	95.2%	90.4%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	D03j - Population vaccination coverage - MMR for one dose (2 years old)	%	2019/20	4,987	96.8%	95.1%	90.6%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
2-3 years								
N	D03l - Population vaccination coverage - Flu (2-3 years old)	%	2019/20	5,250	49.2%	48.4	43.8%	
		<40% 40% to 65% >65%						
5 years								
N	D04b - Population vaccination coverage - MMR for one dose (5 years old)	%	2019/20	5,438	98.1%	96.8%	94.5%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	3.03vi - Population vaccination coverage - Hib / Men C booster (5 years old)	%	2017/18	5,768	97.2%	95.1%	92.4%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
N	D04c - Population vaccination coverage - MMR for two doses (5 years old)	%	2019/20	5,329	96.1%	92.0%	86.8%	
		<90% 90% to 95% ≥95%						
Other Children and young people								
N	D04e - Population vaccination coverage - HPV vaccination coverage for one dose (females 12-13 years old)	%	2018/19	2,368	88.0%	86.3%	88.0%	
		<80% 80% to 90% ≥90%						
N	D04f - Population vaccination coverage - HPV vaccination coverage for two doses (females 13-14 years old)	%	2018/19	2,383	87.8%	84.8%	83.9%	
		<80% 80% to 90% >90%						
Other								
N	Persons entering substance misuse treatment - Percentage of eligible persons completing a course of hepatitis B vacc		2016/17	32	3.6%	6.0%	8.1%	
N	D05 - Population vaccination coverage - Flu (at risk individuals)	%	2019/20	33,673	47.4%	46.9%	44.9%	
		<55% ≥55%						
N	D06a - Population vaccination coverage - Flu (aged 65+)	%	2019/20	79,686	72.1%	83.8%	72.4%	
		<75% ≥75%						
N	D06b - Population vaccination coverage - PPV (aged 65+)	%	2019/20	80,132	71.6%	70.9%	69.0%	
		<65% 65% to 75% ≥75%						
N	D06c - Population vaccination coverage - Shingles vaccination coverage (70 years old)	%	2017/18	3,513	47.6%	45.0%	44.4%	No trend
		<50% 50% to 60% ≥60%						

Imms and Vaccs

	Data updated since previous scorecard?	Indicator	Measure	Period	County Durham		North East	England	Recent trend
					No.	Measure			
Sexual health	N	D02a - Chlamydia detection rate / 100,000 aged 15-24	R/100,000	2019	985	1505	1869	2043	
			<1,900 1,900 to 2,300 ≥2,300						
	N	D02b - All new STI diagnoses (exc Chlamydia aged <25) / 100,000	R/100,000	2019	1915	574	648	900	
	N	Gonorrhoea diagnosis rate per 100,000 population	R/100,000	2019	294	55	73	123	
N	Syphilis diagnoses rate per 100,000 population	R/100,000	2019	36	6.8	10.4	13.8		
N	D07 - HIV late diagnosis (%)	R/100,000	2016-18	20	33.3%	42.9	42.5		
									≥50% 25% to 50% <25%
Infectious diseases	N	Legionnaire's disease confirmed incidence rate / 100,000	R/100,000	2016	3	0.57	0.53	0.61	
	N	Typhoid and paratyphoid confirmed incidence rate / 100,000	R/100,000	2018	2	38.0%	0.15	0.61	
	Y	D08b - TB incidence (three year average)	R/100,000	2017-19	32	2	3.9	8.6	
	N	3.05i - Treatment completion for TB (%)*	%	2017	4	50	74.7	84.7	
	N	Measles (reported cases confirmed, Year to date)	R/100,000	Q2 2019	0	0	0.15	-	
	N	Measles new diagnosis rate	R/100,000	2018	1	0.2	0.5	1.7	
	N	<i>Mumps (confirmed cases, quarterly number and annualised rates)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	14	10.4	1.3	-	
	N	<i>Whooping cough (confirmed cases, quarterly number and annualised rates)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	6	4.55	3.31	-	
	N	<i>Rubella (confirmed cases, year to date)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	0	0	0	-	No trend
	N	<i>Meningococcal Infection (confirmed cases, quarterly number and annualised rates)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	1	0.76	1.2	-	
	N	<i>Scarlet Fever (all notifications)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	20	15.2	27.2	-	
	N	<i>Haemophilus Influenzae Type B (HiB)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	0	0	0	-	
	N	Non-typhoidal Salmonella (incidence)	R/100,000	2017	92	17.6	16.6	15.7	
	N	<i>Quarterly Salmonella Enteritidis (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	5	3.8	3.2	-	
	N	<i>Quarterly Salmonella Typhimurium (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	5	3.8	1.8	-	
	N	<i>Quarterly Salmonella other (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	9	6.8	5.7	-	
	N	Campylobacter (incidence)	R/100,000	2017	689	132	123	97	
	N	<i>Quarterly Campylobacter (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	168	127.5	126.7	-	
	N	Cryptosporidium (incidence)	R/100,000	2017	75	14.4	10.4	7.3	
	N	<i>Quarterly Cryptosporidium (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	11	8.3	4.7	-	
	N	Giardia (incidence)	R/100,000	2017	35	6.7	11.9	8.5	
	N	<i>Quarterly Giardia (incidence)</i>	R/100,000	Q2 2019	10	7.6	8.6	-	
	N	STEC serogroup O157 (incidence)	R/100,000	2018	13	2.5	2	1	

	Data updated since previous scorecard?	Indicator	Measure	Period	North Durham CCG		North Durham recent trend	Durham Dales, Easington And Sedgfield CCG		STP	England	DDES recent trend
					Count	Value		Count	Value			
Health Care Acquired Infection	Y	All C. difficile rates by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2018/19	48	19.3		60	21.9	28.8	22	
	Y	All MRSA bacteraemia rates by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2018/19	3	1.2		2	0.7	1	1.4	
	N	CCG-assigned MRSA rates by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2016/17	1	0.4		3	1.1	0.57	0.4	
	Y	All MSSA bacteraemia rates by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2018/19	50	20.1		59	21.5	27.7	21.8	
	N	Trust-assigned MRSA counts by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2016/17	3	3		4	4	-	315	
	N	Third party-assigned MRSA counts by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2016/17	0	0		0	0	-	276	
	Y	All E. coli bacteraemia rates by CCG and financial year	R/100,000	2018/19	180	72.3		301	109.6	104.7	77.7	
	N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of C. difficile infection, by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	8	20.2		8	22.2	28.7	23.8	
	N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of all MRSA bacteraemia cases, by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	0	2		0	0.7	1.2	1.5	
	N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of MSSA bacteraemia cases, by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	4	17.4		6	20.4	27.9	21.7	
	N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of E. coli bacteraemia by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	17	71.1		22	91	101	76.2	
	N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of hospital-onset E. coli bacteraemia, by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	8	17.1		3	10.1	20.1	13.8	
N	Counts and 12-month rolling rates of community-onset E. coli bacteraemia, by CCG and month	R/100,000	Sep-18	14	61		17	73.9	81	62.4		

Cabinet

21 April 2021

Workforce Strategy - 2021 – 2023

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Andrea Patterson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder
for Corporate Services and Rural Issues**

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To adopt the council's new Workforce Strategy for the period 2021 - 2023.

Executive Summary

- 2 The council is aware that the world is changing, and how public services are delivered will continue to change. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had a major impact, and this will have a major influence on the future operating model as a council, how residents access services and what the council will need from our workforce.
- 3 The council will need to continue to embrace new technology, as well as respond to national shortages in particular professions, whilst planning to address the impact of an ageing workforce.
- 4 With the development of the council's new vision and priorities 2035 and the approach to transformation and improvements, there is a need to have a Workforce Strategy which aligns how we manage and deploy the workforce for the future.

- 5 The development of a Workforce Strategy and associated delivery plan will provide a focus on what the council needs to do to build our workforce for the future, providing a “home” for all strategic workforce initiatives, all of which will enable the council to drive cultural change across our workforce.

Recommendation

- 6 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (i) approve the adoption of the new Workforce Strategy.

Background

- 7 Any successful organisation should aspire to have three key strategies / plans:
- a council or strategic plan setting out its vision, strategic priorities and how to achieve them;
 - a medium-term financial plan to ensure viability of the council and financial achievement;
 - a people strategy to ensure the workforce has the right skills and is fully engaged to successfully deliver the council's priorities.

The Approach

- 8 The workforce will need to develop different skills sets in order to meet future challenges. This will help employees to thrive in a changing culture of collaborative relationships and new ways of working.
- 9 All employees will need to understand and act in accordance with the council's values, demonstrating this through their behaviours. Leaders and Managers are going to be key, demonstrating leadership, driving a different culture and helping to deliver the council's strategic priorities.
- 10 As a large and complex organisation, the council needs to review the people practices and tools with our workforce to make sure they are fit for the future. Workforce planning, talent management and succession planning will be critical to the council. This will include the council's approach to apprenticeships and the delivery of the three-year Apprentice Strategy.
- 11 Leadership of change is critical, and the council's Leaders must be equipped with mental and emotional resilience, a personal preparedness to deal with uncertainty and a readiness to act. As Leaders, they will also need to lead on the embedding of new workforce programmes, initiatives and ways of working. Therefore 'building leadership capacity' is one of the priorities within the Workforce Strategy.
- 12 Attracting and retaining talent will be imperative as the council moves forward. Ensuring our workforce feel valued and supported will be a key theme of the future. The fourth priority "Being a Good Employer" will capture strategic Human Resources and Organisational Development initiatives which will enable the council to be an employer of choice, deliver on our Strategic Equalities priorities, be

inclusive and ensure the health and being of our workforce is of highest priority.

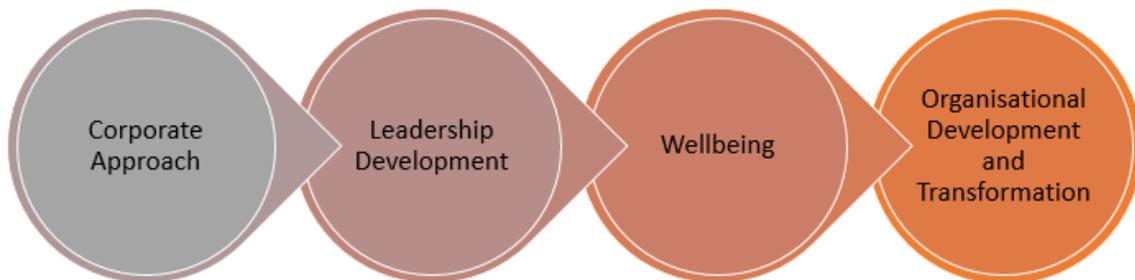
- 13 The initiatives contained within the four priority areas of the strategy will enable the council to transform our workforce.

Our response to COVID-19

- 14 As part of the council's response to COVID-19, an initial evaluation of how the council planned for, responded to and managed planning has been undertaken. This identified a number of common and very positive conclusions and reflections on the council's response in relation to:

- leadership and clear direction;
- council response and measures;
- business continuity;
- employee empowerment and engagement;
- adoption of flexible working through the use of technology;
- employee flexibility;
- cross-council and partnership working.

- 15 A number of key themes and actions were identified as follows that are linked to our Workforce Strategy and initiatives will therefore included in the Strategy to take these elements forward:



The Strategic Workforce Priorities

- 16 The priorities and plans within the Workforce Strategy will act as enablers to transform our people and services by developing and putting the right transformational people practices in place.

17 Four workforce priorities have therefore been identified as follows:

PRIORITY ONE	Planning for the Future & Refocusing our Workforce
All employees going in the same direction to achieve culture change and transformation. Robust workforce planning in order that the workforce development and workforce plans can be built to address priorities and challenges	
PRIORITY TWO	Building Leadership Capacity
Effective leaders get the most from the team they lead, inspiring and empowering others. They also take people on the right journey for the organisation and help us to change culture and transform.	
PRIORITY THREE	Developing our Workforce
Investing in and developing our workforce will be critical. We need to build a Workforce Development Infrastructure & whole Council approach to realise efficiencies of scale and plan appropriately, using the resources we have to maximum effect.	
PRIORITY FOUR	Being a Good Employer
The services we deliver are only as good as the people we employ so we need to focus on being a great employer, one where people want to work for. The health & wellbeing, engagement and support/encouragement and recognition we give to our workforce will lead to a workforce who aspire to do their best at all times.	

18 The proposed Workforce Strategy is attached as Appendix 2.

19 An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3, which shows that the proposed Strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan.

20 The Workforce Strategy will also have a positive impact on the issues and challenges posed by the rurality of County Durham. A rural proofing impact screening assessment (attached at Appendix 4) shows that some of the strategic HR initiatives included such as agile and remote working for the workforce, the new ways of working models proposed and the initiatives linked to the recruitment review and a blended work offer will have a positive impact on employees living in these areas. This is in addition to the ongoing initiatives concerning promoting apprenticeship opportunities and upskilling the workforce as well as work to be a more inclusive employer.

Conclusion

21 The new Workforce Strategy sets out the council's workforce ambitions for the future under four key themes:

- Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce

- Building leadership capacity
- Developing our workforce
- Being a good employer

22 The adoption of the new Workforce Strategy provides a framework within these ambitions which can be delivered and aligned to the interlocking objectives in the 2035 Council Vision, whilst working in partnership with Trade Unions and the workforce to deliver and embed the various initiatives within the Strategy.

Contact: Alison Lazazzera Tel: 03000 264473

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The initiatives set out within this report will ensure the Council are acting in accordance with employment legislation and best practice.

Finance

The Workforce Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the council's workforce ambitions. Delivery within this framework will be managed within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual financing provision, monitoring and control. There are no additional financial implications associated with the strategy.

Staffing

The Workforce Strategy covers council employees (excluding schools) and will be co-ordinated by the OD/WFD Team within People and Talent Management, Resources.

Risk

The proposals set out within the Strategy will enable the Council to proactively manage workforce risks.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3. The Strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan. In addition, a Rural Proofing screening assessment has been completed and attached at Appendix 4.

Climate Change

The Strategy will support climate change by ensuring the approach is filtered through workforce initiatives.

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

The Strategy will support the ongoing work in relation to our responsibilities relating to equality and diversity.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions. Consultation on individual initiatives will take place with employee representatives and staff network groups.

Durham County Council Workforce Strategy

2021-2023



Foreword

by the Chief Executive

County Durham is a great place to live, visit or work in. Durham County Council is a great council and we are ambitious with our plans for the county and are continually reviewing what we do and how we do it to improve the services we provide to our residents and customers.

We have a clear vision and agreed priorities as set out in our Council Plan which outlines how we will transform and modernise the council, our services and our people.

We are aware that the world is changing, and how public services are delivered will continue to change. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had a major impact, and this will have a significant influence on our future operating model as a council, how our residents access services and what we will need from our workforce. The council will also need to continue to respond to other challenges such as health inequalities and wellbeing, rising demand for services, ongoing impacts of austerity, health and social care challenges, climate change and challenges in children's social care. We will need to continue to embrace new technology, as well as respond to national shortages in particular professions and also address the impact of an ageing workforce.

The digital agenda is becoming more important and we will need to invest in our employees to ensure they have the necessary skills required for the future. We will be designing our services from the outside in and using technology as an enabler for how residents can access our services, joining up processes from a customer perspective and focusing on achieving the best outcomes within the resources available to us as a council.

Our work with partners and our communities will steer our delivery model as we move forward, considering how we enable people to help themselves, support each other and join up services from a preventative perspective. Our partnerships with Trade Unions and employees will be key and will help steer and deliver on our Workforce Strategy.

Our workforce and that of our partners, is integral to our success. This Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce over the next three years which will enable us to get to where we want to be as a council. This includes priority areas for organisational development and transformation which will enable us to deliver on our organisational values of "Outcome Focused, People Focused, Empowering and Innovative".

We aim to be renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and for being a fantastic place to work whilst delivering great services for our residents.



John Hewitt
Chief Executive of Durham County Council

Context

The Future Workforce Challenges

As we move into the future, the nature of the challenges affecting our workforce and how we respond will be very different.

- Work-life balance being the norm
- Flexible workspaces
- Moving to more digital and virtual methods of development
- Cultivating an authentic workplace culture
- Developing our future leaders and promoting career progression
- Employer branding to attract and retain/remain competitive
- Upskilling the workforce with future and new skills sets
- Offering a holistic health and wellbeing benefits offer
- Different models of leadership

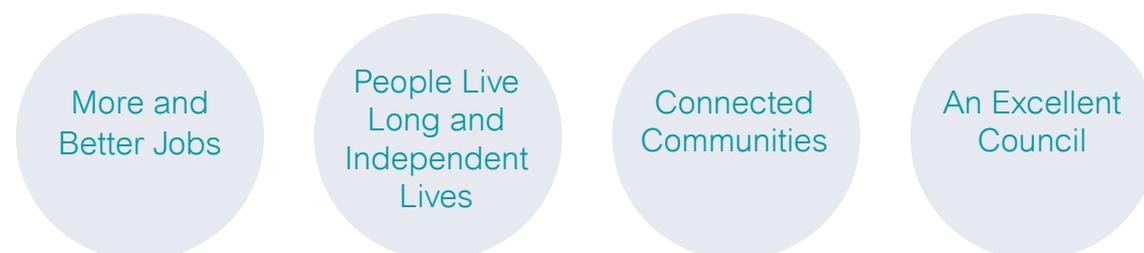
Initiatives to address these challenges will form part of this Workforce Strategy.

Our achievements over the last few years provide a fantastic platform for us to build on. This diagram demonstrates the many achievements during this period.



The Council Plan

Ultimately, the vision for the County, the vision for the council and the vision for the future workforce all need to align to deliver what is set out in our [Council Plan](#), against the following four ambitions:



Whilst the strategy supports delivery of the overall Council Plan, it primarily focuses on the fourth ambition: 'Excellent Council'.

In developing this Workforce Strategy, it is important to recognise where we want to be. The Council Plan provides us with this direction.

As an organisation we aspire to:

- Redesign services with the customer in mind
- Use and embrace technology as an enabler to change
- Achieve the best outcomes within current resources
- Ensure all activities add value to the customer
- Use our data and information to inform our decision making
- Empower and enable our staff and communities
- Be as efficient and effective as possible, removing waste and reducing costs
- Continue with our partnership working from good to great
- Be renowned for our skilled, engaged and flexible workforce
- Help communities become more self-reliant and resilient

Our values describe the type of organisation that we want to be:

Outcome Focused
People Focused
Empowering
Innovative

We continue to embed these in everything we do.

We will create a workforce for the future whilst supporting our people through change. We will have the right people, with the right skill sets, in the right location, at the right time and at the right cost to deliver high quality services and to build a council for the future.

We will also continue to learn from feedback from our employees and the lessons we have learnt through the COVID-19 pandemic to build upon the transformation that has quickly been established.

Our Workforce Profile

To develop a workforce that can meet the current and future needs of residents, we first need to understand our existing employee profile. A snapshot taken at 31 December 2020 highlights key data we know about our workforce. This data excludes school-based employees.

Headcount 7,961

Sex 63% Female 37% Male

Disability 3% of staff have a disability (as a % of post count)

Sickness Absence 9.71 days lost per FTE

Staff Turnover exc Schools 6.97%

Apprenticeship Posts 228 apprenticeship posts

Age Profile 6.95% staff aged under 25 as a (% of post count)

Age Profile 42.53% staff aged over 50 as a (% of post count)

High Risk Recruitment Areas

- Social Workers (particularly Children's Social Care)
- Trading Standards • Community Protection (Environmental Health)

Gender Pay Gap Reporting

Gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. For further information in relation to the council's position, please follow this [Link](#)

Understanding the make-up of the workforce helps us to plan for the future.

We know:

- We have a large diverse workforce with turnover being low in most areas
- We have an ageing workforce; therefore, we need to have succession plans in place
- We are making progress with apprenticeship recruitment and support into employment
- We understand our risk areas in terms of recruitment and retention in key professions and are making plans to address these risks
- We are tackling the main causes of ill-health and have achieved the Better Health at Work 'continuing excellence' standard and are now working towards 'maintaining excellence', whilst continuing to take a holistic approach to health and wellbeing agenda
- We understand the main causes of absence and have targeted interventions to address these areas
- We will build upon the targeted initiatives in order to eliminate our gender pay gap
- We remain compliant with the public sector equality duty; building 'an inclusive and welcoming employee culture' by way of developing employee networks.

The initiatives set out in this Strategy will enable the council to respond to some of the workforce and wider demographic challenges and enable us to put robust workforce plans in place to robustly address those challenges.

Our Workforce Priorities

The right transformational people practices

To achieve the vision set out in the Council Plan, address future skills gaps and tackle the emerging challenges, the Workforce Strategy will concentrate on four key priorities.

When we connect our vision to our values and priorities, the illustration below describes what this Workforce Strategy will deliver over the next three years. The priorities and plans in the Workforce Strategy will act as enablers to transform our people and services by developing and putting the right transformational people practices in place.

PRIORITY 1 Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce

- Evidenced based workforce decision making, planning and delivery supported by accurate workforce data and insight
- Workforce plans for each of our services to address current and future workforce needs
- Strong succession planning and talent management strategies to help us 'grow and develop our own employees'
- Developing modern HR practices and approaches which will enable us to transform what it is like to work for the council and how we manage the organisation

PRIORITY 2 Building leadership capacity and culture change

- Investing in our leaders and managers to be the best and to inspire and empower employees
- To develop a model of leadership which is conducive to leading flexibly in a modern organisation
- Embedding our values in everything we do
- Creating a supportive and inclusive working culture where employees thrive and perform

PRIORITY 3 Developing our workforce

- Giving all employees the opportunity to develop and grow to achieve their full potential
- Ensuring our employees have the right skills to support them in their roles and to deliver high quality services to our communities and build a council for the future
- Building learning and development into everyday work
- Focusing our programmes on critical skills and competencies for the future
- Enabling accessible and easy access to learning and development by a one stop shop/ blended learning offer

PRIORITY 4 Being a good employer

- Attracting and retaining the best talent through a branded employment offer, creating a great place to work and being an employer of choice
- Investing in new and flexible ways of working to develop an agile workforce
- Valuing our employees through effective employee engagement and recognition, a range of employee benefits and encouraging ideas and innovation
- Ensuring employees are supported through a holistic health and wellbeing approach

Delivering the Strategy

A range of strategic HR and OD initiatives under each priority area will help us to deliver our workforce strategy, modernising the organisation. Actions plans are in place to deliver these initiatives.

PRIORITY 1 Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce

All employees heading in the same direction to achieve culture change and transformation. Robust workforce planning in order that the workforce development and workforce plans can be built to address priorities and challenges.

How:

Culture change

- Lead organisational cultural change considering COVID impact and local government landscape changes
 - Develop a plan of initiatives to support cultural change based on our priorities, values and behaviours, and organisational model going forward
-

Organisational Model

- Develop a strategic approach to re-organisation.
 - Develop and lead the workforce elements of health and social care integration
 - Develop protocols for shared posts across organisations/other service arrangements
 - Consider the strategic HR practices and policies required for integrated services.
-

Workplace Model

- Develop an Employee Workplace Strategy and Guidance for leading differently
 - Review HR policies and procedures against the future model
-

Workforce planning

- Implement the council wide approach to workforce planning, using workforce data
 - Develop corporate and service workforce contingency plans
 - Develop key career pathways for key occupational posts across services
 - Map apprenticeship standards across service areas to support development opportunities
 - Digitise and deliver the corporate development offer
 - Develop, digitise and deliver service development plans
 - Review Induction/ onboarding
 - Delivery of the actions within our Apprenticeship Strategy
 - Review role profiles and competencies for the future
-

HR Policy Modernisation Programme

- Modernise the approach to recruitment: develop the employer brand, careers hub, digitise and improve processes, review the overall approach including person specifications.
- Review the approach to restructuring/redeployment linked to efficiencies, flexibility of the workforce and the future organisational model.
- Review role profiles to modernise and increase flexibility across services
- Continue to digitise HR processes
- Continue to review all HR policies and procedures in line with our public sector equality duty and progress inclusion.

PRIORITY 2 Building leadership capacity and culture change

Effective leaders get the most from the team they lead, inspiring and empowering others. They also take people on the right journey for the organisation and help us to change culture and transform.

How:

- Implement standardised management role descriptions to support leadership expectations
- Work with services for service specific management, leadership development initiatives
- Review the leadership and management programme:
 - Senior leadership development
 - Strategic Leadership events and engagement
 - Develop a Talent Programme Approach
 - Develop career path mapping for leadership posts
 - Maximise management qualifications through the apprenticeship route
 - Develop a fit for purpose manager induction
 - Further enhance the Coaching programme/offer
 - Introduce a succession planning approach
 - Focus on leadership and management remotely

PRIORITY 3 Developing our workforce

Investing in and developing our workforce will be critical. We need to build a workforce development infrastructure and whole council approach to realise efficiencies of scale and plan appropriately, using the resources we have to maximum effect.

How:

- We will have an inclusive approach to talent management and have in place a comprehensive Employee Learning and Development programme, access to over 300 digital and E-Learning resources, together with a Leadership and Management Development Programme to support all employees to grow and develop in their roles.
- Develop a Corporate Employee Development Programme 2021/22 and softer skills programmes/ digitise/blend offer
- We will digitise the full Learning and Development infrastructure, systems and processes
- Deliver Service specific workforce development plans
- Maximise the use of Apprenticeship Standards to upskill the workforce
- Implement the full roll-out of digitised Performance and Development Reviews (PDR)
- Review the approach to training budgets and maximise resources available
- Review the approach to qualifications
- Create a fit for purpose evaluation framework
- Transfer/implement processes of service specific data and progress into the Durham Learning and Development System
- Establish organisational reporting requirements for workforce development
- Embed the Coaching and Mentoring framework
- Deliver a Digital training programme and support for the workforce
- Implement the mental health development programme and awareness
- Ensure all frontline training is built into the Durham Learning and Development System

PRIORITY 4 Being a good employer

The services we deliver are only as good as the people we employ so we need to focus on being a great employer, one where people want to work for. The health and wellbeing, engagement and support/encouragement and recognition we give to our workforce will lead to a workforce who aspire to do their best at all times.

How:

- Refocus/ repackage health and wellbeing offer through a more holistic approach
- Set up health and wellbeing focus groups and identify new future actions
- Ensure those who are vulnerable are protected with the right organisational measures in place
- Ensure return to activities are managed in a phased, gradual and safe manner
- Deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Plan
- Deliver the actions associated with the council's Autism Strategy
- Implement the Domestic Abuse Charter and plan
- Focus on improving attendance at work and overall wellbeing
- Deliver the actions and initiatives relating to the Gender Pay Gap
- Inclusive employer – staff networks, focus on make-up of the workforce, delivery of equality objectives to the workforce
- Review, develop and implement the new framework for employee recognition
- Enhance and actively promote the employee benefits offer
- Develop a framework, policies and tools to support smarter working
- Review the approach to enhance communications and engagement
- Progress our organisational commitment to being a Disability Confident Leader and a Stonewall Diversity Champion
- Increase employment opportunities for disabled people and other groups e.g. young people, SEND, Looked After Children

Measuring our success

We need to know this strategy and the initiatives are making a difference.

We need to know that they are delivering against our vision for the workforce, our vision and priorities, values and behaviours. The outcomes will therefore be tested in a number of quantitative and qualitative ways.

Employer of choice

Where our recruitment, career development and reward and recognition structure align with workforce plans and employee satisfaction levels and the number of people wanting to come and work for us increases.

Undertaking regular temperature checks and staff surveys

A full staff survey complimented by regular health checks.

Attraction and retention

Feedback from those joining and leaving the organisation.

Health and Wellbeing

Survey results and measures such as attendance. Measuring overall wellbeing figures and data and analysing trends and changes.

A skilled and flexible workforce

Where we have the right skills and behaviours supported by an induction, PDR and development programme.

Strong and effective leadership

Demonstrated by how our employees feel supported working for the council.

Our values are



For advice regarding the application of this document please contact:

HR Advice and Support
hradviceandsupport@durham.gov.uk



Durham County Council complies with all relevant statutory obligations. Personal information processed by the Council will be handled in accordance with the Council's privacy statement, which can be accessed [here](#). Human Resources privacy notice provides more specific information on the data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#).

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the Data Protection Officer at dpo@durham.gov.uk or the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

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Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	OD/WFD Team
Lead Officer	Claire Maddison, HR Officer
Title	Workforce Strategy 2021 - 2023
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	-
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	21 April 2021
Start Date	February 2021
Review Date	March 2023

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

Our workforce is integral to our success. The Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce over the next 3 years which will enable us to get to where we want to be as a Council. This includes priority areas for workforce development and transformation which will enable us to deliver on our organisational values of "Outcome focused, People Focused, Empowering and Innovative."

We intend to become renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and our employee engagement, whilst delivering great services to our residents and customers.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

All current and prospective employees will be affected by and benefit from this strategy. Other stakeholders that will be indirectly affected are: Councillors, trade unions, partners and contractors, service users and the wider community.

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	Y
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	Y
Religion or Belief	N	Y
Sex (gender)	N	Y
Sexual orientation	N	Y
Transgender	N	Y

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

No potential adverse impacts have been identified.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

We are committed to ensuring that this strategy is embedded throughout the council to create a supportive working culture in which employees thrive and perform, to enable the achievement of our vision, values and behaviours.

Our strategic workforce priorities are supported specific equality objectives which are incorporated into the strategy. This includes a commitment to advance equality of opportunity by taking steps to improve recruitment and retention rates of disabled people.

Actions associated with delivering the councils autism strategy, our mental health development programme, our membership of stonewall diversity champions programme, approach towards eliminating the gender pay gap and being a Disability Confident employer all support us to meet the three arms of the public sector equality duty.

There are equality groups that are more likely to particularly benefit from the new strategy such as: older employees (flexible working, staff retention, support for staff with caring responsibilities), young employees (including apprentices, graduates and care leavers where the council is the corporate parent), employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions and LGBT+ employees. The strategy also considers the needs of part-time workers and employees with childcare or caring responsibilities who are more likely to be women, as well as women returning from maternity.

The strategy acknowledges the importance of inclusive leadership. There is a commitment to lead by example and promote equal pay and the Durham Living Wage among its partners and contractors. The strategy also reaffirms the council's commitment to working in partnership and adopting good practice in the attraction and recruitment of diverse talent, flexible working, promotion and progression, LGBT inclusion, disability confidence and reasonable adjustments, digital inclusion and access, etc.

Individual policy areas under this strategy e.g. the valuing employee framework, will undergo individual equality impact assessment where relevant.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?
Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Demographic mix of the workforce (exc. schools)

- Higher proportion of staff are aged between 41-65 plus (5,897) compared to 3,375 aged between 16-40
- Higher proportion of female workers (63%) than male
- Around 25 % of employees have disclosed their disability status and of those providing this data, around 12 per cent have a disability
- Approx. 27% of staff have provided information on sexual orientation where 3% of those respondents have recorded their sexual orientation as lesbian, gay or bisexual
- We don't have complete data for ethnicity, but of those staff who have provided ethnicity data, just over 2% are minority ethnic.

It is individual choice to provide personal data for protected characteristics (other than sex and age as this is recorded for payroll purposes). We are currently enhancing the way we capture data via MyView, broadening data categories (e.g.

including gender identity) and encouraging staff to self-disclose their personal characteristic information. A full communications plan will accompany this programme when we are at a stage to inform staff of MyView updates. This will include encouraging staff to check their personal data and update where possible, also, the importance of providing this information, privacy and data security and how the data will be used.

The Workforce Strategy is a strategic document that aims to enable the council to achieve its strategic priorities and vision. It also aims to facilitate the required transformation change by effectively supporting, managing and upskilling its current / future workforce to enable them to deliver the best services and outcomes for local communities.

Consultation was carried out with the Strategic Planning Group and will also be carried out with Trade Unions in due course. Staff Network Groups (Disability and LGBT) will be consulted regarding the priorities/initiatives contained in the Workforce Strategy, once formally adopted.

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	The EIA will be updated with consultation feedback. NB: Any significant policy changes that result from the direction of this strategy would be subject to individual equality impact assessment.
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Claire Maddison	Date: 4 March 2021
Service equality representative sign off: Mary Gallagher	Date: 10 March 2021

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk

Durham County Council Rural Proofing Toolkit

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team	People and Talent Management
Lead Officer	Alison Lazazzera
Title	Head of People and Talent Management
Start Date	March 2021
Review Date	March 2022

Subject:

Name of plan or strategy:
Durham County Council Workforce Strategy 2021- 23
Please give a brief description of the plan or strategy:
The Strategy sets out the Council’s corporate and strategic aims and ambitions in relation to human resources/ organisational development and includes priorities and interventions/ initiatives which will be taken forward in terms of future workforce modernisation, enabling the council to deliver the council plan objectives through the people we employ.

Screening:

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following:		
Rural consideration	Negative Impact Indicate: Y/N/Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y/N/Unsure
Services	N	Y
Infrastructure	N	Y

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following:

Rural consideration	Negative Impact Indicate: Y/N/Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y/N/Unsure
Business	N	N
Employment	N	Y
Housing, planning and education	N	N
Environment	N	Y
Equality	N	Y

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of the assessment.

The Workforce Strategy will have a positive impact on the issues and challenges posed by the rurality of County Durham.

This rural proofing impact screening assessment shows that some of the strategic HR initiatives included such as agile and remote working for the workforce, the new ways of working models proposed and the initiatives linked to the recruitment review and a blended work offer will have a positive impact on employees living in these areas. This is in addition to the ongoing initiatives concerning promoting apprenticeship opportunities and upskilling the workforce as well as work to be a more inclusive employer.

Evidence:

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation.

The Workforce Strategy seeks to address planning for the future and refocusing our workforce, to build leadership capability and to develop a workforce with the skills to match future service delivery plans.

Understanding the make-up of the workforce helps us to plan for the future. We know:

- We have a large and diverse workforce
- A large proportion of the workforce live in County Durham
- We understand our risk areas in terms of recruitment and retention in key professions and some of the barriers and are taking actions to address these challenges
- We understand the nature of our roles which can be undertaken through new ways of working, agile/ mobile working and have evidence of this success in the last 12 months
- We understand the make up of the workforce and challenges/ risks and are putting plans in place to address these
- We are tackling the main causes of ill-health and understand the main causes of absence and have targeted interventions to address these areas
- We have plans in relation to our ICT & digital offer in addition to new ways of working and planning which will assist those in the more rural elements of the County
- We work to support individuals into employment and training through apprenticeships, traineeships and other schemes to improve the skills of the workforce and the wider community

Durham is a large and diverse county with a large proportion of the county is rural and has some of the sparsest population densities in the country, therefore workforce capacity, capability and innovation are critical.

Screening Summary:

On the basis of this screening is there evidence of an actual or potential impact on some/all of the rural considerations which will proceed to full assessment?	No
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Sign Off:

Lead officer sign off: A Lazazzera	Date: 24 March 2021
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