



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Date **Friday 22 January 2021**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Remote Meeting - This meeting is being held remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Business

Part A

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement.**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 (Pages 3 - 14)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Workplace Transformation: Enabling Smarter Working - Report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 15 - 44)
6. Poverty Issues - Report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 45 - 84)
7. County Durham Partnership update - Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 85 - 114)
8. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 115 - 124)
9. 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
14 January 2021

To: **The Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

Councillor R Crute (Chair)
Councillor A Batey (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, R Bell, D Boyes, J Chaplow, M Clarke, A Hopgood,
P Jopling, B Kellett, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Makepeace, R Manchester,
C Martin, O Milburn, C Potts, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory,
A Shield, H Smith, F Tinsley, J Turnbull, M Wilkes and A Willis

Contact: Lucy Gladders

Tel: 03000 269 712

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday 17 December 2020 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor R Crute (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Batey (Vice-Chair), E Adam, R Bell, D Boyes, J Chaplow, M Clarke, A Hopgood, B Kellett, H Liddle, R Manchester, O Milburn, R Ormerod, C Potts, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, A Shield, H Smith, J Turnbull, M Wilkes and A Willis

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Jopling, C Martin and F Tinsley.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor R Ormerod substituted for Councillor C Martin.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

The Head of Strategy referred to page 8, paragraph 6 of the minutes and confirmed that an e-mail response was provided to all members of the board on the frequency of staff appraisal and welfare checks and there was an opportunity for any follow up at agenda item 7.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual review of the Council's use of Powers 2019/2020

The Management Board considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed members about the use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and the outcome of the operations. The Board were also provided with details of the updates to the Council's Corporate Guidance on RIPA as part of the annual review as well as details of the training that had been delivered (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

Councillor Wilkes was concerned at the number of licensed premises that had failed test purchases for the underage sales of alcohol and sought clarification if any premises licenses had been withdrawn. He was concerned that 70% of the licensed premises failed the test purchase then 50% failed the second test. He suggested that the powers were not strong enough and asked how many premises had had their alcohol licence revoked after repeated offences.

The Governance Solicitor responded that she would provide details of the outcome of the licence review hearings in future reports and was happy to share with members outside of the meeting details of variations to licencing conditions which had been agreed.

In response to a further question, the Governance Solicitor confirmed that they had withdrawn premises licences in the last two years.

The Chair confirmed that the outcomes of review hearings would be included in future reports.

Resolved: (i) That the annual report on the Council's use of powers under RIPA for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, be noted.

(ii) That the update of the RIPA Corporate Guidance to reflect any changes to current legislation and best practice be noted.

6 Integrated Customer Services Programme Update

The Management Board considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources that presented an overview and update of the integrated customer services programme (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Digital and Customer Services was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that provided an update on the improvements delivered by the Integrated Customer Service programme and

the future plans to enhance the contract offer and customer experience (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

Councillor Boyes commented that the report contained some good news and the technology advances were long overdue. He added it was good that customers could contact the council using technology other than the telephone however, a lot of older residents still relied on the telephone. He asked if there was a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the time a call should be answered and if so, were we meeting this target. He referred to his own personal experience on a call to the council that gave the wrong estimate of time to wait and asked if the technology for call waiting was up to date.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services responded that they did have a corporate KPI for call answering times, the aim was to answer more than 80% of calls within three minutes and they were currently answering more than 98% of calls within three minutes, so they were exceeding the corporate KPI target. They regularly monitored this and reported back to the board as part of the Customer Feedback report. Some additional KPIs wrapped around this including the total percentage of calls that were answered and were available to view. Their aim was always to offer a channel of choice as they would always have residents who wanted to contact them in different ways. It was about meeting the needs of those people who did want to interact differently. The technology allowed them extra capacity so they could offer additional support to customers, in particular some elderly residents who were missing the face to face offer that had not been available recently. In terms of new technology, they were continually testing but there would always be a few glitches. They did carry out rigorous tests and reviewed feedback from customers on how they were finding information. The Head of Digital and Customer Services added she would take the particular point away in terms how often the system updated timings for the queuing system.

Councillor R Bell referred to the Customer Relations Management system (CRM) and the frustration in only receiving an acknowledgment with a CRM number when raising a case, then no update to say that the issue had been resolved. He regularly received requests from parish councils and residents asking on progress that members had to follow up and asked if there were any planned improvements to the CRM system.

The Chair indicated that when you get a response from the CRM system it only provided the CRM number and not the details of the case. It was a better system to what they had previously, but the system could be improved.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services responded that the report did not cover the CRM system, but she was aware from feedback from members about some of the challenges they had been facing. Following an earlier

review of the CRM, a number of improvements had been made to the system. Some of those improvements were due to move forward but had been delayed as a result of additional development work, new web forms and additional web content that had to be produced in response to COVID-19. Work had not stopped, and they had continued to work on improvements and were planning to update the Board on what had delivered, what work was outstanding and any future changes. A lot of development work had been carried out around workflow particularly on communications and messaging. Extra commentary would be included in the next Customer Feedback Report to reflect some of the comments and the additional work that had taken place.

Councillor Adam indicated that a tremendous amount of work had been done within a short period of time that had enhanced the customers experience of contacting the council. He asked if there was real customer involvement in testing the system. He added that some of the language used in the text and links were not understood by members of the public and wondered how much testing had been done and if direct feedback had been received from a wide range of customers.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services agreed they were valid points and indicated they had a programme of work which would enhance customer experience and satisfaction in the new year. They did capture significant customer satisfaction data that primarily came from individuals who engaged through the CRM system. This could cause challenges as it was often emotive subjects that people gave feedback for and not the everyday experience or where they had been happy with the service delivered. They did have a customer focus group for CRM and had used feedback to develop some of the new technologies in particular voice recognition. She also confirmed they did wider stake holder meetings with disability groups. She would ensure that any of the language used on the system was easy to understand and would look at the demographic of that group and see if they could involve anyone else as they moved forward with the wider customer engagement and insight programme.

Councillor Wilkes referred to the CRM system and that he had previously raised some issues which still had not been resolved and was not convinced another year's time would see all these issues ironed out. One particular issue was that the online portal was slow and for many residents in the county who didn't have great reception on their phones whilst they are out and about it was difficult to log in. He added if you send an e-mail instead with a photo of the problem, unless you copied in the relevant officer it never gets to them and is not dealt with. He stated he first raised this issue eight years ago. He indicated that it must be simple when someone sends in a photo to add it onto the system so those on the front line could see the issue

instead of going backwards and forwards or it dropped off the system completely.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services responded that she would take back Councillor Wilkes feedback. They had worked with Councillor Wilkes separately on some issues, some of which had been resolved but some required improvement. It was important that they build in this feedback to see how they could resolve some of these issues especially as more people wanting to contact the council digitally and they needed to ensure the platform meets their needs. They were also working around connectivity and understanding where some of the issues sit in terms of mobile connectivity and broadband connectivity so that they could ensure they had the right levels of connectivity. She then referred to the mapping system and if that was the best solution if other systems could support more ease of access.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised Members that Councillor Milburn at the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked the Council to look at the 'what3words' app to pinpoint the location of fly tipping incidents. The Neighbourhood and Protection Manager who was in attendance had agreed to look at the app as a further development to the system.

The Chair indicated that it was difficult to pinpoint the location of incidents on the system and the 'what3words' app appeared to be a good solution.

Resolved: That the report and presentation be noted.

7 Quarter 2, 2020/21 Performance Management Report

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

The Head of Strategy explained that the report was structured around the three externally focused results-based ambitions of the County Durham Vision 2035, More and Better Jobs, Long and Independent Lives, Connected Communities and a fourth 'Excellent Council' theme. The report further detailed the impact of COVID-19 on council services, staff and residents.

The Chair commented that there was some excellent work going on at the moment against the backdrop of the pandemic and ongoing austerity that was testament to the hard work of officers at the council, members and other workers across the public and private sectors in the county. However, we were all still living with the pandemic and the uncertainty and this was a particular problem facing the authority and communities. He advised

Members that the data sets would be reported back to each of the thematic committees.

The Head of People and Talent Management was in attendance to respond to Members questions on the 'Excellent Council' theme and commented that the workforce had been phenomenal during the ongoing pandemic and they had not seen a peak in absence among staff with COVID related absences being small for the size of the authority. They still had a higher number of long-term absence but around 95% of those absences were individuals who returned to work within six months or leave the authority. The number of employees with no absence was 63% overall.

Members were advised that they had managed to redeploy over 500 staff voluntarily into areas of high priority. Managers had also been positive in terms of support to staff throughout this period with the huge number of staff working from home who had never worked in that environment before which had worked incredibly well.

She then referred to the apprenticeship programme. The authority had been awarded a place in the government's top 100 employers for apprenticeships. The authority had an 80% retention rate of apprentices continuing with posts within the authority and in the last couple of weeks an apprentice who had only been with the authority for ten weeks, had secured a permanent post within the authority.

Councillor R Bell welcomed the large number of staff recording no sickness and asked if this was due to people working from home. He also asked if staff who had not taken any time off sick were recognised by the authority.

The Head of People and Talent Management responded commenting that the number of staff working from home had impacted on sickness levels. The authority had a flexible approach and supported staff if they felt well enough to continue to work. In terms of recognition for those staff with no sickness absence the position that trade unions had taken was that sometimes staff had no choice but to be off. There were also issues around disability and for those reasons the authority had taken the stance not to recognise full attendance, however they did encourage managers to have complimentary discussions with individuals.

Councillor Wilkes referred to paragraph 83 of the Performance Management report in relation to care homes and at page 10 of the agenda, reference to COVID related issues in care homes. At the time there were 60 deaths per 1000 people in care homes and the current rate was showing as 90 deaths and that did not include 42 people who had passed away in hospital but had gone there from a care home so they were at a point where potentially one in ten of people living in care homes in County Durham died of COVID. He

stated these figures were based on the number of beds in the county not the occupancy, so the actual rate was potentially even higher. The issue was raised at full Council yesterday, but we are still seeing people dying in our care homes. He felt that this was something that needed looking at in detail to see what was going on.

The Chair responded that full Council discussed the issue yesterday and he advised Councillor Wilkes that his comments would be noted.

Councillor Boyes indicated that 39% of violence against persons had been linked to domestic violence as well as a 26.7% increase in alcohol related incidents in the same period last year. These were issues that the council needed to worry about as they were going to have a generation of people growing up thinking that violence was normal which was generally men hitting women and children having to witness this. At his local primary school, the headteacher was looking for signs of children coming to school with bruises, this issue was beyond Management Board. He also wanted to focus on a 93% increase in environmental anti-social behaviour compared to the same period last year. A lot of this would come within the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee but also came under Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He then referred to Neighbourhood Wardens and he appreciated the safety of staff was paramount but queried whether they were not going out to deal with members of the public for the fear of catching COVID or if this was council policy, but the council still needed to deal with members of the public.

The Chair asked Councillor Boyes if he was happy to raise these issues through Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which Councillor Boyes agreed to and would report back to Management Board.

Councillor Hopgood referred to safety and school crossing patrols and that residents had raised issues with speeding around schools and that there had been some near misses with crossing patrols. She commented that neighbourhood wardens had cameras and asked if this was something that could be extended to crossing patrols. She asked the Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee if this was something his scrutiny committee could look at.

Councillor Boyes responded that this was something his committee could look at, they already had a packed programme leading up to the elections, but this was something they could explore.

Councillor Hopgood then referred to apprenticeships and asked how many apprentices stayed with the Council at the end of their apprenticeship. She referred to the practice of some companies using apprentices then laying

them off. She hoped the council trained apprentices for the future workforce. She also referred to carbon neutral and planning and referred to paragraph 25 of the report and that the first building the council had approved planning permission for at Aykley Heads does not meet the councils own carbon standards. To make sure we were carbon neutral by 2050 the council needed to lead by example. She also expressed concern about data relating to empty retail units and a further approval of out of town shopping within walking distance of the Arnison Centre. She asked that the strategy be reviewed.

The Chair responded that scrutiny had looked at issues around the retail offer of the county in the past. The issue was beyond the remit of scrutiny and was a planning process, but this could maybe be picked up in Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of People and Talent Management responded that the council had approximately 85% retention rate for apprenticeships. Those apprentices who don't remain with the council either leave because they had secured employment elsewhere or chosen to take a different career route. During the course of the year they worked on a quarterly basis with managers to anticipate when an apprenticeship may end so they did a lot of work in advance to make sure that they give the apprentice the best opportunity of being able to secure a job within the council. They saw a lot of individuals move on before they had completed their apprenticeship. She would ensure that these figures would be included in the next report to the board.

Councillor Hopgood indicated that this was brilliant news that the council should be proud of and was a good news story.

Councillor Turnbull asked officers if Members could be informed when members of staff had left the authority due to ill health or had passed away.

The Head of People and Talent Management responded that she would investigate this and it maybe more appropriate where officers were dealing with members on a regular basis and would come back with a response.

Councillor Robinson indicated that he fully agreed with Councillor Hopgood and referred to the Combined Fire Authority who had just won the national Employer of the Year award for apprenticeships. He then thanked officers for the work they were doing but he had great concerns regarding the impacts of the matters referred to in paragraphs 12, 15 and 17 of the report around 16 to 24-year olds who were the future of County Durham. There was a 62% increase of young people claiming universal credit and 6% of children not claiming free school meals. One in four children in the county were in poverty and 4,000 people were not applying for free school meals that would suggest that some of this was due to pride. He then referred to the mental health of

young people and concerns about the future of our young people post COVID.

The Head of People and Talent Management indicated that the authority had signed up to the government's future job initiative that included the kickstart scheme and had been able to identify 91 job placements for young individuals on universal credit between the ages of 16 and 24 and had submitted their proposal to government for funding and were awaiting the outcome.

Councillor Shield echoed the sentiments of Councillor Boyes and he had had several incidents where the neighbourhood wardens had refused to attend incidents of anti-social behaviour. He then referred to the report in relation to suicide rates within County Durham. He was concerned as the closure of Derwentside Mind had recently been announced. The suicide rates were between 2017 and 2019 and these figures would likely increase with mental health issues due to social isolation since the pandemic. He would like to see a formal strategy to address this in the North West Durham and Consett areas where it had previously been acknowledged that these areas were hot spots. He asked officers to acknowledge the concerns and how they intended to address this.

The Chair indicated that he had raised a valid point, and this had been raised at the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Strategy highlighted the information on suicide surveillance and response at paragraphs 71 to 73 in the detailed report and that she appreciated the concerns in the current climate. At this stage the analysis from the public health intelligence team who monitored suicide for the county was that suicide rates had not escalated overall in the pandemic to date, although close monitoring was ongoing. The Chair indicated that they would keep an eye on this as there had been concerns over the time lag of data.

Councillor Adam referred to the neighbourhood wardens and advised members that the neighbourhood wardens were on lockdown and working from home for a period of time and had been advised if they were going to make contact with any residents only to do this if safe to do so and had to make that judgement as individuals. He then referred to the carbon neutral strategy and that the council also had the carbon management plan and the climate emergency response plan that was due to go to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 19 March 2021, so Councillor Hopgood's question could be explored in more detail.

Councillor H Smith referred to the mental health of young people and the increase in child poverty which were two of the huge issues that the Children

and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been looking at. At the last meeting almost, the entire agenda was about these two issues. An active child poverty working group is looking at alleviating some of these problems.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

8 Quarter 2 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020/21

The Management Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of September 2020 (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

Councillor Hopgood referred to the significant differences in the figures either under or overachieved and asked if there was anything that they needed to be aware of that was not COVID related.

The Officer responded that they did meet regularly to review budgets with managers, and they were looked at in their entirety. If there was an underspend in an area, then managers would be allowed to overspend in other areas as this would be offset by the underspend. He was not aware of anything significant over and above COVID related expenditure.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the increase in expenditure for revenue and benefits that you would not expect this year and expected this to be down.

The Officer responded that payroll had been successful this year in securing some funding through Service Level Agreements that they generated.

Resolved: That the forecast of outturn position be noted.

9 Notice of Key Decisions

The Management Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a list of key decisions that were scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Head of Strategy was in attendance to present the report and advised Members that the MTFP (11) Financial Settlement that was on the schedule to be considered at Cabinet on the 13 January 2021 had now dropped off due to the lateness of the settlement figure from government.

Councillor Adam referred to the County Durham Plan: Minerals Waste Development Plan indicating Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee involvement and asked if this should also go to Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Head of Strategy responded that this was linked to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they had done the overall scrutiny work on the County Durham Plan but suggested that members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to join that discussion.

Councillor R Bell referred to the provisional financial settlement and asked what date the MTFP would be considered by scrutiny.

The Head of Strategy confirmed that the MTFP would now be considered at the February meeting of scrutiny.

Councillor Hopgood referred to items disappearing from the schedule that didn't come back, in particular the consultation on leisure services which was no longer shown. She indicated this still should be shown on the schedule so that members knew what was on the work programme as they cannot ask questions on something if they were not aware of it. The schedule gave the impression that some areas had no major projects which she did not think was the case.

The Head of Strategy confirmed that the report was the statutory publication of the notice of key decisions. She would take Councillor Hopgood's comments back in relation to leisure services.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

22 January 2021



**Workplace Transformation: Enabling
Smarter Working**

Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Members an overview and update on workplace transformation and the enablement of smarter worker approaches.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report and supporting presentation provides Members with an overview of workplace transformation and smarter working activity, the impact, response and learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and future plans to develop our workplace model.

Recommendation

- 3 Members are recommended to note the information in the report and supporting presentation.

Background

- 4 There has never been a more important time to meet changing expectations through the enhancement and expansion of our workplace transformation and smarter working approach.
- 5 Against the backdrop of COVID-19, workforce and digital readiness is crisis readiness. The core themes and principles of our workplace and digital strategies, in addition to a strong technological infrastructure and broadband offer has enabled us to connect people with services, support our customers, our communities and our organisation to deliver better outcomes for the people of County Durham.
- 6 COVID-19 created an unprecedented situation in which we were forced to rapidly develop emergency working practices to maintain service delivery. This has brought much change and many opportunities and together we have proven beyond reasonable doubt that for many of us, work is very much an activity and not a location.
- 7 Technology, workforce development and HR policies are just some of the elements that have enabled us all to continue to work. Without the resilience, resourcefulness and passion of staff, services would have struggled to deliver what our residents need.
- 8 The last nine months has provided a wealth of experience to guide future work design, with thousands of workers adapting to new technologies and developing new working practices.
- 9 Careful consideration of the benefits and challenges experienced will support evidence-based decision making and underpin new working practices which mitigate and control risks to work and wellbeing, as well as capitalising on the benefits.
- 10 This report and supporting presentation provides Members with an overview of workplace transformation and smarter working activity, the impact, response and learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and future plans to develop our workplace model.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- HR policies and guidance
- Digital strategy
- Transformation strategy plan

Author

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None



Corporate Overview Scrutiny Management Board

Workplace Transformation: Enabling Smarter Working

22 January 2021

Alison Lazazzera
Head of People and Talent Management

Victoria Murray
Interim Head of Digital and Customer Services

Introduction

There has never been a more important time to meet changing expectations through the enhancement and expansion of our workplace transformation and smarter working approach.

Against the backdrop of covid-19, workforce and digital readiness is crisis readiness. The core themes and principles of our workplace and digital strategies, in addition to a strong technological infrastructure and broadband offer has enabled us connect people with services, support our customers, our communities and our organisation to deliver better outcomes for the people of County Durham.

Where we started...

Old Culture

Upper Management
Long-term goals, products, markets, business organization
roles like CEO, CFO, COO, CTO, VP - marketing

Middle Management
Interprets plans & sets sub-goals (for regional offices)

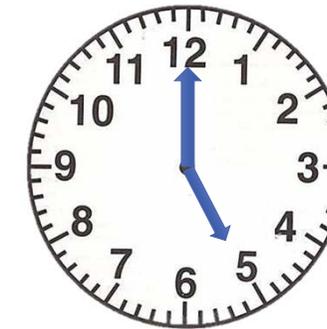
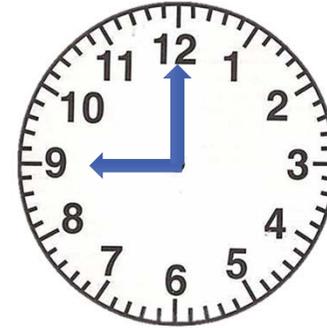
Lower-Level
Implementation of tasks, leader, supervisor

Handwriting	Typing
Post-It	Spiral Notebooks
Highlighting	Filing

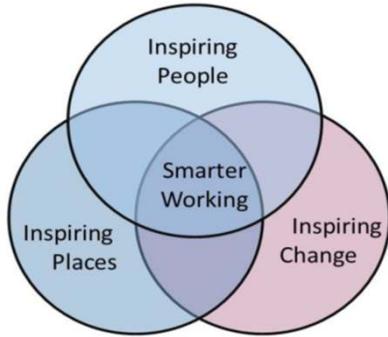
Paper-based culture

POLICY

- Learn
- Understand
- Comply



The journey so far – Foundations for success



Transformation Outcomes



To redesign our services from the outside in, meeting customer needs at a reduced cost to the Council



To help our communities to be resilient and self-reliant



To move our partnerships from good to great



To become renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and our employee engagement.



O
Outcome Focused

P
People Focused

E
Empowering

N
iNnovative



We work together to achieve the best for people

We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees

We value, trust and support each other

We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Digital Organisation

Use digital technologies to improve our services and operate more efficiently.

Digital Customer

Improve access to our services and information through technology and be responsive to customer's needs.

Digital Communities

Help the people of County Durham to get the most out of digital technologies in their homes and communities.

Digital Principles

1. Be digital by design
2. Be driven by data
3. Design services that are people and outcome focused
4. Understand our customer, market and audience
5. Design for scale
6. Build for sustainability
7. Be Innovative, agile and able to adapt to change
8. Use automation
9. Deliver value for money
10. Support collaborative working
11. Ensure foundations work
12. Ensure processes are fast, integrated and light
13. Use Open Standard, Open Data, Open Source and Open Innovation
14. Apply GDPR principles when processing personal data



Modernising our workforce



Strategic workforce priorities & initiatives underway



Modernising HR policies and procedures



More generic roles council wide



Redesigning services and roles and processes.



Leadership which enabled empowerment & new ways of working



Better use of technology in all job roles to work smarter



Strong Digital strategy and connectivity programme



Workforce development and planning programmes on future skills of the workforce



Using our data to make decisions

Covid-19 – Catalyst for change

COVID-19 created an unprecedented situation in which we were forced to rapidly develop emergency working practices to maintain service delivery.

DCC enabled over 8,000 staff to work remotely almost overnight, by making new IT solutions and physical resources easily accessible to support staff to work effectively, reassessing HR and smarter working policies to respond and react to changes in working practices and redefining the use of our buildings and assets to ensure continued service delivery in a safe environment.

COVID-19 has brought much change and many opportunities and together we have proven beyond reasonable doubt that for many of us, work is very much an activity and not a location.

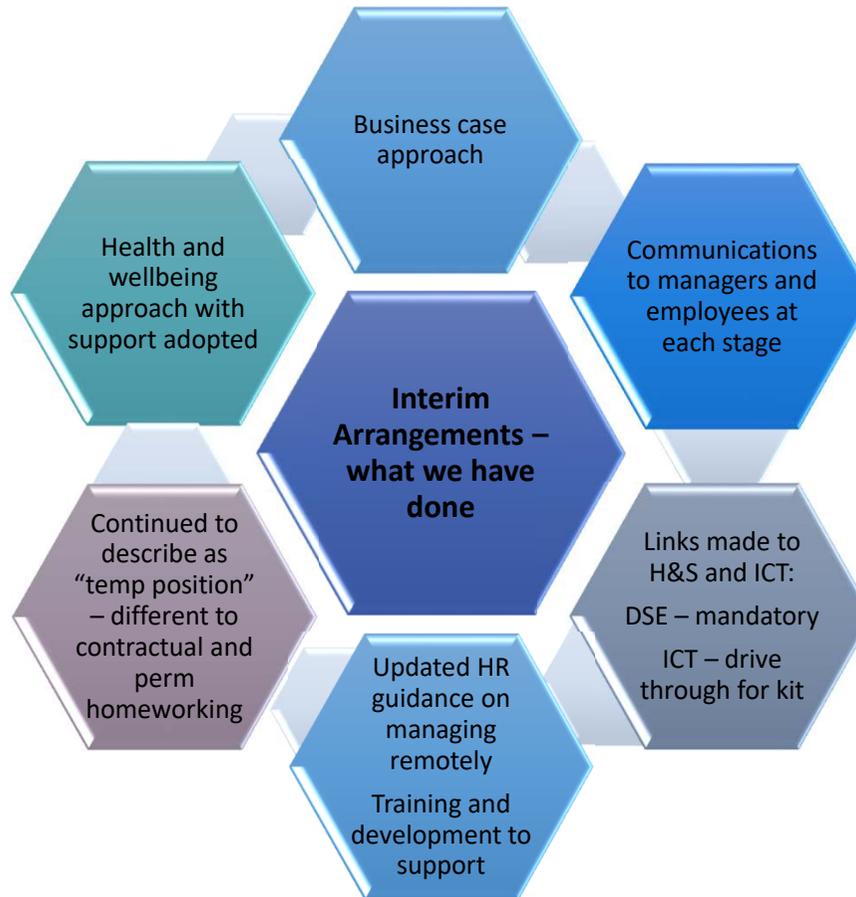
These are challenging times, and technology, workforce development and HR policies are just some of the elements that have enabled us all to continue to work. Without the resilience, resourcefulness and passion of staff, services would have struggled to deliver what our residents need.

Covid-19 – workforce response:



- Supporting all services/schools with recovery/restoration/disruption and contingency planning
- Overcome school closures & challenges
- Blended approach to training
- Emergency Mobilisation Process – 500 redeployed employees during the peak
- Supporting all services/schools with recovery/restoration/disruption and contingency planning
- Navigated through a vast range of complex workforce related issues across services and schools
- DLDs development – DSE RA / Care Academy / redeployment questionnaire
- MH & Wellbeing initiatives
- Virtual Apprenticeship Induction – 47 apprentices recruited
- Kickstart Scheme – 91 job placements

Interim HR arrangements we put in place for home working

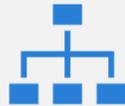


Digital response



Digital customer

- Changing customer behaviours
- Responding to changing customer needs and enhancing customer experiences
- Developing our service offer



Digital organisation

- Reframing the employee experience - Supporting the shift to digital and remote
- Supporting the response through data led decision making
- Integrating our customer service offer
- Digitising processes



Digital communities

- Community Hub
- Supporting digital adoption and inclusion
- Remote teaching and learning in schools
- Digital democracy
- Digital Durham

Digital Customer



New online form development and existing form enhancement



SMS functionality supporting proactive contact



Development of customer feedback approach



Integrated Customer Service



Changes to service opening hours



Enhanced social media and website and web chat offer



Digital skills and adoption



Supported and enhanced multi channel communication



Shaping online content and proactive comms

Digital Organisation

 Remote access

 M365

 ICT policy review

 Unified communications

 Remote, self serve support and drive thru collection point

 FPOC support offered to meet increased FPOC demand.

 Cyber security focus

 Data warehousing and dashboard delivery

 Digital democracy

 Developing our customer feedback approach

Digital Communities



Community hub



Supporting partners - NHS Connectivity upgrades to use spare network capacity to support hospitals in Durham during the crisis.



Supporting digital adoption – First point of contact support and guidance to access services digitally, online shopping etc



Supporting schools



DfE rollout of over 1,000 laptops to disadvantaged children



Digital Durham – Connectivity, devices, digital inclusion

Data and Insight



Explore the data we hold to identify opportunities to track and highlight how effectively we have navigated the shift to virtual working



Analyse data to identify where disruptions to ways of working are having the greatest impact and provide insight to direct tools and processes to support new ways of working and health and wellbeing



Support employees to explore their own working patterns with Microsoft MyAnalytics enabling them to learn new ways to improve focus, wellbeing and collaboration.

The data we are working to unlock includes:

How is employee collaboration changing?

Is the wellbeing of employees being protected?

Effectiveness of remote meetings?

Are employees able to create and share effectively while working remotely?

Impact on Leadership, Management and the Workforce



A shift towards a more flexible culture – roles, skills



Agile and remote working
Managing remotely



How work is designed
Systems thinking



Flexible redeployment of staff through skills matching



Rapid adoption of technology



Pivoting to a digital future/delivering accessible on-line services - digital skills and tools will be crucial



Shared issues and values across the public sector workforce



Reconfiguring working environments



Empowerment – distribution of power to deliver on a shared purpose



Innovation and creativity



Working in collaboration and partnership



Caring for one another, being cognisant of health, wellbeing and resilience



Talent Management



Trust, engagement and recognition



Strong and supportive leadership and management



Aligning workforce planning with business strategy/recovery

Impact on residents, partners and communities



Changing customer requirements- New ways required to interact with the council



Increase in satisfaction



Increased connectivity requirements



Data led decision making and service re-design



Changing behaviours – Increased use of digital channels



Changing service offer



Community led approach

What's next – future plans

The last nine months has provided a wealth of experience to guide future work design, with thousands of workers adapting to new technologies and developing new working practices.

Careful consideration of the benefits and challenges experienced will support evidence-based decision making and underpin new working practices which mitigate and control risks to work and wellbeing, as well as capitalising on the benefits.

However, an important part of shaping future work design is incorporating a positive vision of what the best future might look like.



COVID-19 Employee Feedback

What is working well?



Supporting the response



Maintaining critical services



IT and digital capability



Staff wellbeing/resilience



Business continuity

What learning can we take forward?



"It can be more productive to work at home on certain projects than going into the office."



"We are adaptable to any situation and together as a council we are very strong. being able to think of different ways of doing things is so important.."



"The Council has provided us with the tools to be able to work from home efficiently. Teams is a great resource and has really helped provide the same service at home as you would have in the office. It shows that you do not have to be in the office to carry out your everyday routines"

Key Themes



Demonstrating our Values

- 21% of participants identified their ability to be outcome focused better (Managers- 28.7%)
- 31% identified their ability to be people focused better. (Managers - 42%)
- 25% identified their ability to be empowered better. (Managers- 40.4%)
- 39% identified their ability to be innovative better.
- (Managers – 59.95)



Mental health and wellbeing

- 65% rated this as being the same or better (Managers 67.9%)
- 35% of participants rated their own mental health and wellbeing as being worse or much worse than usual (managers 32.1%)
- 52.9% of Managers rated the mental health of their staff as being the same, better or much better
- 41.8% of Managers rated the mental health and wellbeing of their staff as worse or much worse than usual



Communication

- 90% of respondents agree they feel well informed by the council's management arrangements. (Managers 86%)
- 84.6% agree they receive information in good time (Managers 83.9%)
- 86.9% agree the information they receive contains enough information to act upon. (Managers 86.6%)
- 72% agree they feel well informed by central government (Managers 50.9%)



Collaboration

- 33% of respondents feel collaboration within the workplace is better than usual
- (Managers – 53.5%)

Lessons we need to embed through culture change

The shared sense of purpose that emerged

Maintaining flexibility around individual and team roles

The importance of strong policy and procedural foundations

The adoption of place-based models and for systems leadership

We lived our values: outcome focused, people focused, empowering, innovative

Improved collaboration between local authorities, other public sector bodies

Frontline staff were given the space to do what they judged to be best for those individuals

The desire to work in new ways has a strong moral

Work is an activity not a place

The Future of Local Government



Remote working will be retained by a large proportion of staff



Digital tools will enable a large proportion of **council-run services to be delivered remotely**



Increased and enhanced public participation and engagement will lead to improved decision-making and better outcomes for communities.



Sharing power with local communities embedding a community asset/strengths based approach.

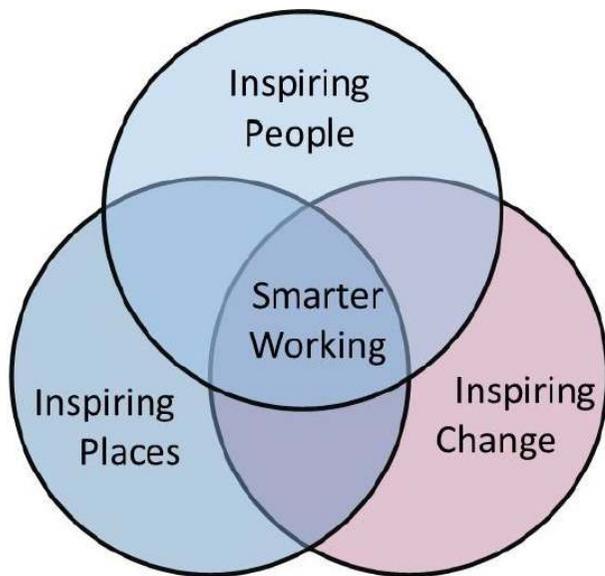


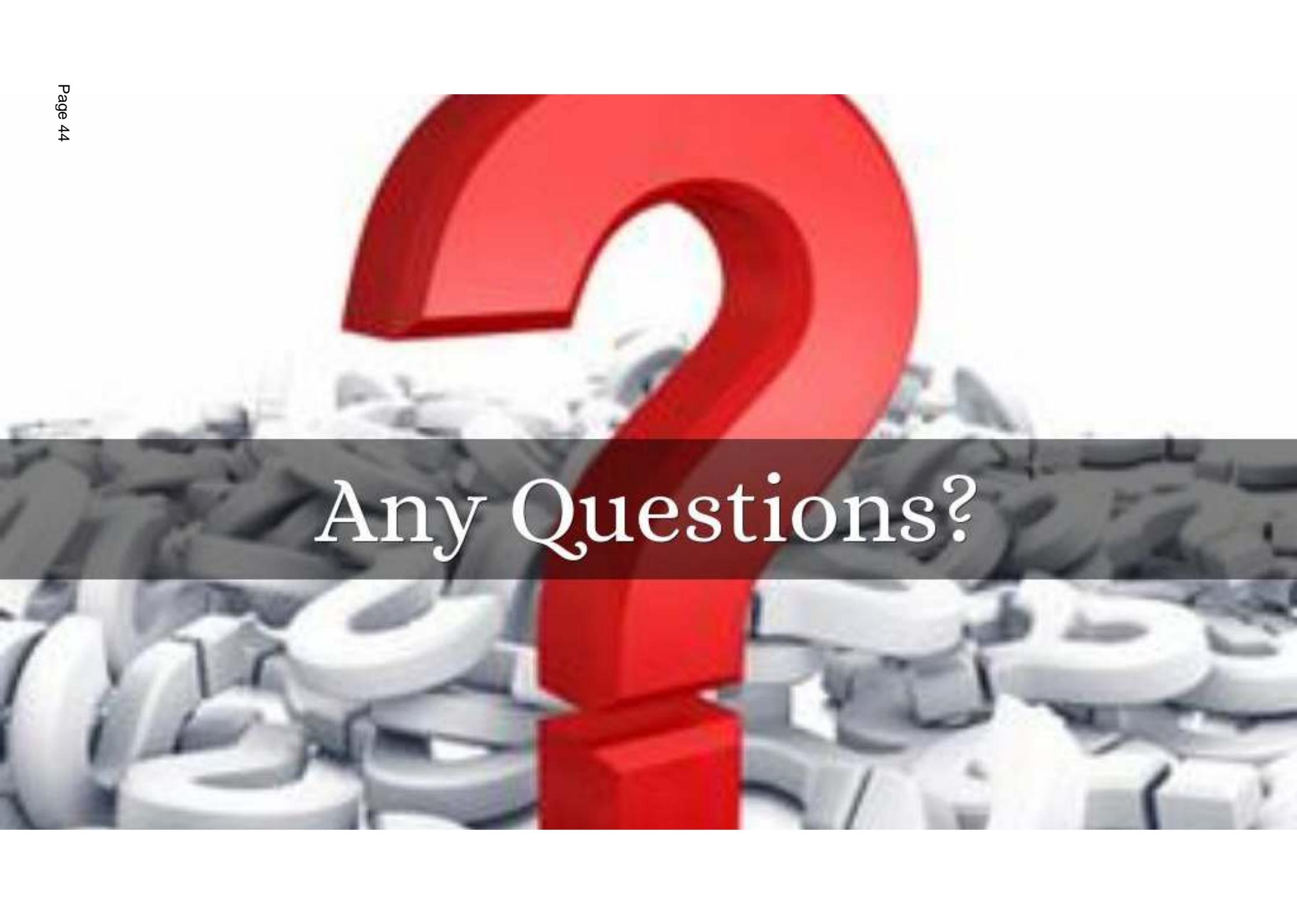
Greater and new types of collaboration between councils, statutory partners, the third and private sectors and communities will achieve better outcomes for their people and places.

Future Workplace Model

Future Direction & Plan Building on:

- **Work (the what)**
 - Opportunity of technology and how we interact with our customers/our processes
- **Workforce (the who)**
 - Workforce planning focusing on capacity and capability
- **Workplace (the where)** – ‘work is an activity not a place’
 - HQ and other strategic sites
 - Principle of a hybrid model





Any Questions?

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

22 January 2021

Poverty Issues

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Director of Resources

Councillor Angela Surtees, Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with an update on:
 - (a) the most recent welfare, economic and poverty indicators for the county; and
 - (b) the progress of the council and partners' efforts to address and alleviate poverty including a summary of the actions to respond to the negative financial impacts experienced by residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the poverty action strategy and plan.
- 2 While the report is correct at the time of writing (9 November 2020), the situation with COVID-19 is changing rapidly and government announcements, policy and guidance change daily meaning some of the information in the report may have been superseded.

Executive summary

- 3 The County Council has a longstanding record in supporting social, economic and financial inclusion through the work of the Council's Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG).
- 4 Over recent years the PASG has focussed its efforts on mitigating the impacts, wherever possible, of the Government's austerity and welfare reform programmes.
- 5 The Council has developed a Poverty Action Plan (PAP) which was approved by Cabinet in September 2019, documenting efforts to support people in need.
- 6 Measures in the PAP include support for those on low incomes with access to holistic advice and guidance, access to the Council's Welfare Assistance Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, welfare rights and employment teams etc.
- 7 Children and families are supported through initiatives such as holiday activities with food, initiatives to make the school day more affordable in addition to universal benefits in paragraph 6. This support was further enhanced in the October half term holiday with the Council offering a voucher of £15 per child for parents whose children are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSMs).
- 8 Those seeking employment have been supported through the Durhamworks programme and the Council's employability team, primarily through programmes supported by the European Social Fund and match funded by the Council.
- 9 Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, measures to shield clinically vulnerable residents combined with the national lockdown necessitated a re-emphasis of certain elements of the PAP with a new "plan on a page" introduced through the PASG in May 2020 to refocus efforts during the pandemic.
- 10 The Government introduced a number of temporary measures to support people and businesses through the lockdown and subsequent restrictions. Government measures included food boxes for the clinically shielding, wage subsidies (furlough) for employees whose place of work was shut down and subsequently restricted, support for self-employed people, temporary cessation of benefit conditionality, suspension of evictions for tenants, mortgage holidays and partial reversal of cuts in Universal Credit. More latterly the Government have announced national schemes to support employment such as the Kickstart and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) schemes.
- 11 The Council has introduced a number of initiatives and programmes through the PASG over the last six months to "wrap around"

government schemes and provide a more comprehensive package of support for residents of County Durham, with a “no one left behind” ethos running through the programme of activities.

- 12 The Council provided direct support to vulnerable people through the County Durham Together Community Hub with a strong focus on intelligence led welfare and community-based provision. Measures included additional resources and fast-tracked applications through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) to support food and essential supplies, direct emergency food provision, support to foodbanks, welfare and daily living expenses payments, council tax reduction and council tax hardship, a grant for return to school costs, online employability programmes and online advice and guidance.
- 13 The Council’s PASG acted as the Council’s input into the welfare and community aspect of the Local Resilience Forum to join up welfare with other recovery initiatives in the Council and to link with partner organisations.
- 14 The Council is developing a number of programmes to further progress the work of the PASG through the County Durham Together approach, including a programme of sustainable low-cost food in disadvantaged areas, flexible employment support, improvements in advice and guidance on money matters, further support for parents during the holidays and greater community resilience.

Recommendation(s)

- 15 COSMB is recommended to note and comment on the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county including the recent and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

- 16 On 11 September 2019, Cabinet considered the most recent report on the implications of the Government's welfare reform programme and the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county. Cabinet agreed the Poverty Action Plan (PAP) in response to these issues.
- 17 The financial pressures on lower-income households have increased considerably in recent years. A combination of depressed real wage growth, the Government's programme of welfare reforms, and longer-term challenges in the labour market are creating serious financial problems.
- 18 The Council co-ordinates its efforts to tackle poverty across council services through the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG). This is a senior officer group, chaired by the Corporate Director of Resources and attended by the portfolio holder for social inclusion. We also work closely with our key partners to ensure that we share intelligence on emerging issues.
- 19 The Council has allocated significant resources to supporting welfare assistance for our residents along with a range of community projects in previous years. At its meeting on 12 February 2020, Cabinet agreed a further £1.5m to support the poverty agenda and social inclusion in County Durham. Further resource was allocated to Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to support communities and in July 2020 £693,391 was allocated to the Council from DEFRA to support essential food and supplies.
- 20 Cabinet were provided with a summary on 5 June 2020 of the actions the Council has taken working with partners to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and our framework for recovery planning. This also included details on funding increases for relevant council budgets and initial financial support the council has made available for schemes and initiatives to help alleviate the negative economic impacts across the county.
- 21 The COVID-19 pandemic has had huge impacts on the UK labour market, and despite temporary changes to the existing welfare benefits and implementation of large new schemes, households face great uncertainty over the future, including in terms of the financial support available.
- 22 The UK is currently negotiating a trade deal with the EU. Depending on the outcome of the trade deal, it is possible that the county will experience wider detrimental impacts as manufacturing businesses

adjust whilst the economy is already experiencing a significant downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 23 In response to the pandemic, there have been several government schemes and initiatives announced in relation to welfare, finance and economic support which the Council has had a role in direct implementation, supportive local action or advice and guidance. The PASG has acted as the Welfare and Community Cell of the Local Resilience Forum.
- 24 The resources available to councils to help address the financial problems of low-income residents are severely constrained. The Government has made several announcements in relation to supporting local government financially, either by making available additional funding or by bringing forward previously announced funding programmes.
- 25 Despite the funding constraints that we face, we remain committed to providing help and support for residents in financial difficulty as part of our vision for County Durham. It is important that the Council and its partners continue to respond through the comprehensive approach we now have to welfare reform and poverty issues, overseen by the council's PASG.

Impacts of Welfare Reform and COVID-19 on the County

- 26 The Council has monitored the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which has been documented in previous reports and this monitoring continues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst it is not yet possible to accurately assess the immediate and ongoing impact of the pandemic; national research is starting to emerge.
- 27 A survey of more than 7,000 people, conducted by the Financial Conduct Authority¹ and published on 22 October 2020, found 12 million people in the UK had low financial resilience, meaning they may struggle with bills or loan repayments. The data shows 2 million of those who are not financially resilient have become so since February 2020. Due to the impact of the pandemic, many of those who have experienced changes in employment and increased stress are now likely to have low financial resilience. These consumers are more likely to fall behind on payments. 36% of respondents who already had low financial resilience, and had a mortgage, said they are likely to fall behind on mortgage payments; 36% of those with loans or credit cards

¹ <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/fca-highlights-continued-support-consumers-struggling-payments>

are worried about repayments on these; and 42% of renters are worried about falling behind on rent payments.

- 28 This research has further identified that almost a third of adults (31%) have seen a decrease in income, with households seeing income fall by a quarter, on average. Those from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background were more likely to be affected, with 37% of BAME adults taking an income hit. Whilst survey results show that BAME adults are more likely to have reduced working hours, those aged between 25-34 are the most likely, by far, to have had a change in employment due to the pandemic. This will affect the take up of debt advice, with 19% of those aged 25-34 saying that they were more likely to seek debt advice in the next 6 months compared to 2% of those aged 55-64.
- 29 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation² has examined options for the Government to support low income families and stimulate the economy during the pandemic, and has recently made the case for increases to social security payments. It notes that “social security is a ‘vital lifeline that keeps us afloat’ when support is needed as well as boosting consumer spending in targeted ways”. The report highlights that ending the temporary uplift of £20 per week to Universal Credit (UC) and Working Tax Credit will cause an ‘immediate and devastating loss of income for millions of families’ and outlines the need for the uplift to become permanent.
- 30 This is given weight by a publication from the Institute for Fiscal Studies³ that states ‘even with the temporary increases to UC, the UK has one of the least generous out-of-work benefits systems for workers on average earnings in the OECD’ (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). It provides an example of ‘a single childless worker on average earnings who lost her job would now receive 17% of her usual income in benefits, compared with an average of 20% in the rest of the OECD. The difference is much larger (17% versus 55%) if contributory benefits (where the generosity of benefits is linked to work history) are included, since these are a much bigger feature of most other countries’ welfare systems’.
- 31 A report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission⁴ notes that equality and human rights are at risk of going backwards with clear and long-lasting damage to society and the economy as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The report outlines the impact of coronavirus across key areas of life and the hardship faced by people

² <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/keeping-20-lifeline-right-our-families-and-economy>

³ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15067>

⁴

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equality_and_human_rights_commission_how_coronavirus_has_affected_equality_and_human_rights_2020.pdf

who already face disadvantage. In particular, it has identified concerning backwards trends both for young people and the care system. It has highlighted just how entrenched racial inequality is in society.

- 32 A report from the Child Poverty Action Group⁵ in August 2020 has noted that the pandemic has left low-income families struggling with a significant deterioration in living standards and high stress levels. The report, based on a survey of families with children who are eligible for free school meals, found around eight in 10 respondents reported being in a worse financial position than before the pandemic, and half were much worse off as their income had fallen and costs increased. Nearly nine in 10 respondents reported spending substantially more than before on food, electricity, and other essentials – usually because they have been at home much more. Many families also said that the cost of food had gone up significantly during the early part of lockdown.
- 33 Published on 10 September, the Local Government Association report, ‘A child-centred recovery’⁶, highlights that councils are preparing for a surge in demand for support for children and young people who have “disappeared” from view as a result of the pandemic. The LGA stated that councils are also bracing themselves for a rise in referrals for support that would have normally been made when children were being seen regularly by social workers and health workers. The LGA says the number of children in care has been rising each year and could increase further as a result of COVID-19. It is also warning that the impact of the virus may fall harder on disadvantaged children, who are likely to need even more support. Concerns are also raised over analysis indicating that young people may be worst affected by pandemic-related job losses, and about young people becoming more vulnerable and being drawn into youth violence and county lines drug activities, or being criminally exploited
- 34 The Children's Commissioner for England⁷ published a report in September 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 on children. The report highlights that that the impact has been widespread, profound and ongoing. The report states that children have faced a cocktail of secondary risks which means that many have suffered disproportionately as a result of the crisis. It is reported that children's needs have been frequently side-lined and ignored, most notably by the decision to open restaurants, non-essential shops and pubs before schools were fully re-opened. Vulnerable children (including children in care), children in custody and children with Special Educational Needs

⁵ <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Poverty-in-the-pandemic.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.local.gov.uk/child-centred-recovery>

⁷ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cco-childhood-in-the-time-of-covid.pdf>

and Disabilities have also seen their rights actively downgraded resulting in 'a rising tide of childhood vulnerability'.

- 35 Due to data lags, it is not possible to accurately assess the immediate and ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through the full range of statistics available nationally and on Durham Insights. However, the Council is monitoring the situation through its own data sources as well as ongoing community feedback to mobilise services and respond to need.
- 36 At the beginning of the pandemic there was a significant impact on the number of people claiming employment benefits; with currently nearly 10,000 more claimants age 16 to 64, compared to September 2019. Since this initial increase between March and May, the claimant count has remained relatively static and currently stands at 6.6%. This trend is reflected both nationally and regionally, with County Durham currently having the third lowest rate in the region. In September, there were 130 more claimants compared to August, of which 120 were young claimants (aged 16-24 years). Across the county, since March 2020, North Durham experienced the largest increase in claimants aged 16 to 64, and Sedgefield within the 18 to 24 population.
- 37 Youth unemployment has risen to almost 10% in County Durham in September and 11% in the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area. Nationally the rate was 9.5% in September 2020.
- 38 In terms of the Welfare Assistance Scheme, the daily living expenses element saw its greatest increase in relation to awards, at the start of the pandemic with weekly awards trebling in March 2020. Awards moved back to more "normal" levels of around 50 per week in subsequent months. The latest data in October has shown figures starting to rise again. As expected, claims for settlement grants have reduced over the last 6 months compared to the same period last year.
- 39 The number of Council Tax Reduction claims showed a similar pattern to Daily Living Expenses claims having peaked significantly at the end of March 2020 with four times the normal levels. This number reduced over subsequent months with a subsequent rise seen more recently.

National Policy update – Welfare and COVID-19

Increase to Universal Credit standard allowance

- 40 In March 2020, the Government increased the standard allowance of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by £20 a week. This is a temporary increase and is due to end in April 2021 unless the Government commits to making it a permanent feature. Currently, the additional £20 per week does not go to people claiming legacy benefits

such as Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support.

Job Retention Scheme ('Furlough scheme')

- 41 On 20 March 2020 the introduction of a Job Retention Scheme (JRS) was announced, whereby the Government would pay the equivalent of 80% of the wages of staff put on 'furlough' (a period of temporary leave of absence on reduced pay) during the lock-down.
- 42 On 12 May 2020, the Chancellor made a further announcement that the furlough scheme would be extended by a further four months with workers continuing to receive 80% of their current salary through to the end of July. In addition, from the start of August, furloughed workers were able to return to work part-time with employers being asked to pay a percentage towards the salaries of their furloughed staff. The employer payments were expected to substitute the contribution the Government made, ensuring that staff continue to receive 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a month. This scheme was to be withdrawn fully on 31 October 2020.
- 43 On 8 July 2020, The Chancellor announced the introduction of a new Job Retention Bonus (JRB) to provide additional support to employers who keep on their furloughed employees in meaningful employment, after the JRS ends on 31 October 2020.
- 44 On 31 October 2020, following the Government's announcement to introduce new lockdown measures in England starting on 5 November, the JRS has been extended for a month with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. Under the extended scheme, the cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ended on 31 October. Businesses will have flexibility to bring furloughed employees back to work on a part time basis or furlough them full-time, and will only be asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions which, for the average claim, accounts for just 5% of total employment costs.
- 45 The Chancellor subsequently announced on 5 November the 'furlough' scheme will be extended until the end of March 2021. The policy will be reviewed in January regarding employer contributions and the JRB will be paused.

Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)

- 46 On 26 March 2020, the Chancellor announced the introduction of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme. This scheme allowed self employed people to claim a taxable grant (up to 80% of their average

monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month) if their business had been adversely affected on or before 13 July 2020.

- 47 This scheme was subsequently extended on 29 May and a second taxable grant worth 70% of average monthly trading profits, was introduced (paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits, and capped at £6,570 in total).
- 48 On 24 September this scheme was again extended for those who are currently eligible for SEISS and are continuing to actively trade but face reduced demand due to coronavirus. The initial lump sum will cover three months' worth of profits for the period from November to the end of January 2021. This is worth 20% of average monthly profits, up to a total of £1,875.
- 49 The Government announced on 22 October, that contributions to incomes for the self-employed have also been increased. The Government announcement increases the amount of profits covered by the two forthcoming self-employed grants from 20% to 40% of people's incomes meaning that the maximum grant increases to £3,750.
- 50 To reflect the recent changes to the 'furlough' scheme, the Government announced on 2 November 2020 the SEISS would support self-employed individuals with 80% of their average trading profits for November, and to ensure those who need support get it as soon as possible, payments will also be made more quickly with the claims window being brought forward from 14 December to 30 November.

Job Support Scheme

- 51 On 24 September under the Government's 'Winter Economy Plan' the Chancellor announced a new Job Support Scheme (JSS) to be introduced from 1 November which will run for six months to help keep employees attached to the workforce.
- 52 The Government will contribute towards the wages of employees who are working fewer than normal hours due to decreased demand. Employers will continue to pay the wages of staff for the hours they work - but for the hours not worked, the Government and the employer will each pay one third of their equivalent salary. The level of grant will be calculated based on the employee's usual salary, capped at £697.92 per month.
- 53 On 9 October, the Chancellor, announced an expansion of the JSS. Firms whose premises are legally required to shut for some period over winter as part of local or national restrictions will receive grants to pay the wages of staff who cannot work. The Government will support eligible businesses by paying two thirds of each employees' salary (or

67%), up to a maximum of £2,100 a month. The scheme will begin on 1 November and will be available for six months, with a review point in January. Only those forced to shut rather than suffering significantly reduced demand for their service due to the pandemic or government measures qualify.

- 54 The Government announced a further expansion to the JSS on 22 October. Previously, for businesses which can open, employees had to work 33% of normal hours. This minimum hour requirement has now reduced to 20% (i.e. those working one day a week will be eligible). Employer contributions for the hours not worked have reduced from 33% to 5%. The scheme shall apply to all eligible businesses in all alert levels. Employers will continue to receive the £1,000 Job Retention Bonus. The JSS for businesses legally required to close remains unchanged.
- 55 The Government announced on 31 October that the Job Support Scheme, which was scheduled to come in on Sunday 1 November, has been postponed until the 'furlough' scheme ends.

Test and Trace Support Payments

- 56 The Government announced on 20 September, the introduction of a one off £500 payment for those people on lower incomes, on qualifying benefits, who cannot work from home due to the nature of their work and have lost income as a result of being instructed through Test and Trace to self-isolate from 28 September, to be administered by local authorities. Those who must self-isolate for reasons other than an instruction from test and trace do not qualify.

Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB)

- 57 Finally, the Chancellor also announced on 22 October, a new grant scheme which will provide additional funding to allow local authorities to support businesses in high-alert level areas which are not legally closed but which are severely impacted by the restrictions on socialising. The funding local authorities will receive will be based on the number of hospitality, hotel, B&B, and leisure businesses in their area. Grants will be provided up to £2,100 depending on the rateable value for every month that Alert Level Tier 2 restrictions apply. This is equivalent to 70% of the grants received by closed businesses in Alert Level Tier 3. It will be up to local authorities to determine which businesses are eligible for grant funding in their local areas, and what precise funding to allocate to each business. These grants shall be retrospective, any area that has been under these restrictions, can claim backdated payments up to August.

- 58 This was superseded on 31 October with the announcement of new lockdown measures in England, where business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month under the LRSG. Also, £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

Kickstart Scheme

- 59 On 2 September the Government announced the launch of the kickstart scheme which will provide funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24-year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers: 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months; associated; and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS)

- 60 On 5 October 2020 the Government launched the Job Entry Targeted Support Scheme. This scheme will help those out of work for three months via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) access to tailored, flexible support to quickly get back into employment. The new programme will see several providers offer a range of help, including specialist advice on how people can move into growing sectors, as well as CV and interview coaching. The scheme is likely to be contracted to private employment agencies, mostly out of County.

Free School Meal Vouchers

- 61 During the announcement by the Prime Minister on 18 March that all schools would close on Friday 20 March, it was announced that meals and vouchers would be offered to children on Free School Meals (FSM) and later announced on 6 April that this would include the two week period for the Easter holidays. The vouchers were worth £15 a week for each eligible child however not all localities had participating supermarkets.
- 62 On 16 June, the Government announced the scheme was due to end at the end of the summer term in July but following a high profile campaign by a national figure they announced the scheme would be extended to cover the six weeks holiday period.
- 63 On 8 November, the Government released a press release from the Department of Work and Pensions stating the Government will spend £400m to support children with free meals over the holidays, amongst other packages of support. This includes: £170m COVID-19 Winter

Grant Scheme to support children families and the most vulnerable over winter – the funding will be ring-fenced with at least 80% earmarked to support food and bills; Holiday Activities and Food programme will be expanded across England, covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 202; Payments from the Healthy Start scheme are set to rise from £3.10 to £4.25 per week from April 202; and Government has also pledged additional funding of £16m for food distribution charities such as FareShare.

Free food parcels for clinically shielding residents

- 64 For those residents in England that have been advised by the NHS to shield, the Government provided free weekly food parcel delivered to residents' doorsteps. This was offered from 7 April to 26 June 2020.
- 65 The Government food parcel was a free weekly box of basic food and essential supplies. The boxes contained items that the Government considered to be a week's worth of food that an individual or family needed to live on for one week.

Council Tax Hardship Fund

- 66 The Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary confirmed on 24 March the Government's £500 million Hardship Fund to provide council tax relief to vulnerable people and households to help those affected most by coronavirus.
- 67 Councils were also able to use the funding to provide further discretionary support to vulnerable people through other support arrangements such as local welfare schemes.

Rent eviction ban

- 68 On 23 March the Coronavirus Bill passed through the Commons and Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary made an announcement any emergency legislation would suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation while this national emergency is taking place and no new possession proceedings through applications to the court would be able to start during the crisis.
- 69 This was subsequently extended in June up until 23 August, but was extended by a further four weeks until 20 September and also requiring landlords to give tenants a six-month notice period, meaning that no tenant would find themselves evicted before March next year.

Mortgage payment holiday

- 70 On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor announced that homeowners would be able to claim a three month break from their mortgage repayments if unable to repay because of COVID-19.
- 71 On 22 May the Treasury announced that homeowners struggling to pay their mortgage due to Coronavirus would be able to extend their mortgage payment holiday for a further three months or start making reduced payments.
- 72 The Government announced on 31 October that mortgage payment holidays would not end on 31 October. Borrowers who have been impacted by coronavirus and have not yet had a mortgage payment holiday will be entitled to a six month holiday, and those that have already started a mortgage payment holiday will be able to top up to six months without this being recorded on their credit file.

Homelessness

- 73 On 17 March, the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced that councils would be given £3.2m from the Government as part of an emergency scheme called "Everyone In", which was aimed at stopping the spread of the virus. On 26 March, the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness wrote to local authorities asking them to urgently accommodate all rough sleepers and focus on the provision of adequate facilities to enable people to adhere to the guidance on hygiene or isolation, including for those who are at risk of sleeping rough. Local authorities may use third party accommodation providers to comply with this request.
- 74 On 14 May the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has announced £6million of emergency funding to provide relief for frontline homelessness charitable organisations who are directly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 75 The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing wrote to local authorities on 28 May requesting that when arranging move-on accommodation for people sleeping rough, local authorities: explore sustainable options, including through partnerships with housing associations and in the private rented sector; encourage people sleeping rough to stay with friends or family, 'where appropriate and possible'; and where no move-on possibilities exist, provide short-term accommodation while looking into long-term options.

Freeze on benefit conditionality and sanctions

- 76 On 20 March the Chancellor announced that people on benefits and Universal Credit would not be penalised from 30 March to 1 July 2020 if

they failed to look for work or make themselves available for work due to coronavirus.

- 77 The Government also confirmed that the DWP would be automatically extending all awards and reassessments for health and disability benefits during this period.

Ban on bailiff visits

- 78 The Taking Control of Goods and Certification of Enforcement Agents (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020, laid in Parliament on 25 April and came into effect immediately, preventing bailiff visits during the period in which Coronavirus restrictions are in place. Bailiffs resumed operations in England and Wales on 24 August.

The council's response

- 79 The Council has taken a lead through a strategic and co-ordinated approach to the changes made to the welfare system and the impacts of poverty to date, including how the funding available from government has been used to support people affected by the changes. This has identified the benefit of joining services across service groupings. In doing so, it has become apparent that alongside the welfare reform changes there are areas of work already being delivered which are complementary and collectively address the underlying issues around the county.
- 80 The Council's PASG co-ordinates the delivery of a range of new and existing policy work which seeks to achieve a much broader understanding of the issues affecting residents, resulting from continuing changes to welfare and other issues which mean that residents can experience poverty. Building on this understanding, the group seek to identify actions to support residents and help address identified inequalities.
- 81 There is a comprehensive network of statutory, voluntary and community organisations who work together to provide advice services across the county through the Advice in County Durham Partnership (AiCDP). This is underpinned by comprehensive communications programme to ensure that claimants understand changes and are signposted to the most appropriate sources of advice, help and support, and council employees, particularly those in customer-facing roles, receive regular information and training to help them understand the changes to welfare and poverty issues and how the council and partners can help.
- 82 The Council has recently supported the AiCDP to procure a new referral portal and website, which will improve the referral process for advice

and embed the “no wrong door” principle for residents, ensuring that any individual needing advice and support will be signposted to the most appropriate organisation. The portal is expected to launch in the new year.

Poverty Action Strategy and Plan

- 83 The Council’s poverty action plan was reviewed in 2019 and a new Poverty Action Strategy and Plan was approved by Cabinet in September 2019.
- 84 Clearly, many of the drivers of poverty - such as the strength of the economy, employment, wage rates, national welfare provision and inflation - are beyond the council’s control. We have developed a poverty action strategy to help us mitigate the effects and make some of the impacts less severe, where possible. The strategy aims to provide focus and direction on the priorities for improving services and opportunities for residents in County Durham who are experiencing poverty and will cover a two-year period up to 2021.
- 85 Our ambition is to do more than passively support residents to claim benefits and pay their rent. We want to improve our evidence and analysis to create a one Council approach to support residents and mitigate the impacts of welfare reforms and poverty. We aspire to develop a compassionate coherent culture that seeks to maximise the value of our collective resources and appreciates the obstacles that internal and external silos create to supporting vulnerable residents.
- 86 Our vision is to *“improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in County Durham who are currently experiencing poverty; and to help alleviate issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience poverty”*. To achieve the best possible outcomes for residents experiencing poverty, our strategic aims are:
- (a) to improve our understanding of the types of poverty and its impacts on County Durham residents;
 - (b) to increase employability, personal wellbeing and sense of worth for residents;
 - (c) that residents receive the best support and advice available concerning their financial situation; and
 - (d) that children, young people and families have the resources to their basic needs including accessing opportunities to take part in society.

- 87 The strategy is underpinned by a revised Poverty Action Plan which focuses on new actions and commitments which will enable us to deliver the key priorities we have identified as being most important for reducing poverty levels in County Durham and achieving our vision.

Poverty Action Strategy and Plan – COVID-19

- 88 As the COVID-19 pandemic evolved, and residents and communities were ‘locked down’ we started to see an inevitable shift in the issues reported to the Council and partner agencies, particularly around family finance. This, no doubt, is set to accelerate as the economy contracts and people find themselves, without an income, many for the first time.
- 89 Our vision changed to *“to improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in County Durham who are currently experiencing immediate financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associate economic shocks; and to help alleviate long term issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures and poverty”* and the Poverty Action Strategy and plan was therefore reformulated to reflect this and to formulate new initiatives to help tackle the crisis. This involved a rapid refresh of the action plan to include some new short-to-medium term initiatives and investments and also identify where we could bring forward/replace existing actions, with those needed to address the impacts of the pandemic.
- 90 A plan on page has been developed to capture the emerging actions required to help our resident's financial circumstances during the pandemic and these are themed under four new workstreams which are working with key partners and stakeholders to take this work forward:
- (a) Community resilience;
 - (b) Employment and personal sense of worth;
 - (c) Welfare and money matters; and
 - (d) Children and families.
- 91 The revised strategy, plan on a page, and action plan is attached at Appendix 2.

Key Actions - Poverty Action Strategy and Plan

- 92 Relevant services, projects and initiatives from the action plan continue to be monitored and reported via the appropriate service reporting channels and also regular updates are presented to the PASG. Recent achievements include:
- (a) Community resilience

- (i) AAP welfare/poverty funded projects – 12 projects were delivered during 2019/20 reflecting the diverse needs of the county’s residents with £120,000 funding allocated and £3,2919 match funding.
 - (ii) AAP funded COVID-19 support projects - over 150 projects and community organisations were funded to support vulnerable people access food and essential supplies as well as to help addressing loneliness; financial support and ongoing running costs to maintain community based services.
 - (iii) Foodbanks - £50,000 annual grant to the Durham Foodbank to fund core county wide infrastructure and £5,400 to East Durham Trust Foodbank.
 - (iv) The Council established the County Durham Together Community Hub at the start of the pandemic to respond proactively and offer additional support to the Shielded Population and to those 70,000 people who the Council identified as potentially vulnerable through previous service requests and data from other agencies. The Community Hub also provided a 7 day a week helpline to provide holistic person-centred support those in need. The Hub assessed individual need, promoted information of local community-based provision, direct support through a network of redeployed staff and links into Welfare Assistance, Emergency Food Provision, Welfare for Life, Check and Chat services and developed a data base of volunteers. County Durham Together is providing a COVID information line as well as providing welfare and advice services.
- (b) Employment and personal sense of worth
- (i) Employability Durham – 2,518 referrals since July 2018, to help residents accessing support to help them overcome barriers and move back into employment, education or training. During the pandemic, services have gone online or via telephone contact.
 - (ii) Durham Advance - since September 2018 over 820 participants have engaged/still engaging with the scheme and over 240 participants have moved into employment.
 - (iii) LINKCD - since July 2019 over 174 participants have engaged/still engaging with the scheme and over 115 participants have moved into employment.

- (iv) North Durham Assist – between October 2018 and July 2020, over 170 residents have been referred onto this scheme and over 95 moved into employment.
 - (v) Employability Mentoring - between October 2018 and July 2020, 210 residents have been referred onto this scheme and 88 moved into employment.
 - (vi) The Council has supported youth employment through the Durham Works programme which has been operating since 2015 and has helped over 3800 young people into work or training.
- (c) Welfare and money matters
- (i) Emergency food – in addition to the extra £1.4m the Council made available to community organisations to provide essential food and supplies, as at 4 October we have also provided 2,607 emergency food parcels to residents experiencing financial hardship whilst accessing food and emergency supplies.
 - (ii) Discretionary Housing Payments – for the year 2020/21 we have so far made over 2,200 DHP awards totalling £840k to help residents with rental costs.
 - (iii) Daily Living Expenses – for the year 2020/21 we have so far paid out £96k in DLE awards and £238k in Welfare Assistance payments to help residents with living expenses.
 - (iv) The Council has paid over £3.3m in Council Tax Relief to residents facing financial hardship.
 - (v) Durham Savers - 60 salary savings schemes for local residents working in local business have been set up with the credit unions and the scheme has delivered virtually in businesses and the community with 110 residents engaging in September-October 2020.
- (d) Children and families
- (i) Cutting the Cost of the School Day - 106 schools/nurseries have undertaken the training programme.
 - (ii) Supporting families to access financial support - Universal Credit and smarter budgeting training delivered for CYPS social workers and One Point service practitioners. All One Point service practitioners have been trained and registered

to use the Advice in County Durham Partnership Portal which has resulted in 131 referrals via the portal to date.

- (iii) Back to School Support Fund – as at 9 October, 25 applications have been made with approximately £18,100.50 funding allocated directly to schools. These include 18 primary, 6 secondary and 1 special school.
- (iv) Holiday Activities with Food - 30 projects delivered during the Easter holidays; 22 projects during May half term; and 85 projects during the six week summer holiday. This provision was extended to the October half term holiday period to ensure that children in County Durham have access to stimulating activities and food during school holidays when FSM are not available.
- (v) One Point/Family Centre Family Activities - 1,148 distributed to children and families over the six week summer holiday period.

93 The Council allocated additional resources to offer a £15 voucher, per child, to all parents of children in receipt of FSM over the October half term holiday. The voucher worked through a QR code system and an online application process. This initiative was in addition to the money allocated to schools and community groups through AAPs to support holiday activities with food provision. Businesses and community groups responded with great generosity of spirit to the plight of children in receipt of FSM over the holiday period and so the Council publicised as much information as possible to advise parents of all local food provision in their locality.

94 The Council has a longstanding record of providing assistance to families during the school holidays and will continue to do so whilst families and children remain in need.

MTFP Growth and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs funding

95 As previously reported to Cabinet, the Council has already allocated significant funds to support the Poverty Action Plan since 2013. This has included, but is not exclusive to: over £900,000 additional funding to top up the council's Discretionary Housing Payments policy; £6,405,546 funding for benefits take up and advice initiatives; £840,000 funding to AAPs for welfare/poverty projects initiatives to help mitigate welfare/poverty type issues in communities; £2,519,930 for employability and housing initiatives; and £313,777 funding for food initiatives including holiday activities with food etc.

- 96 In February 2020 the Council approved a series of one-off investments for the financial year 2020/21. Within this was an additional £1.5m for anti-poverty initiatives to boost welfare assistance, employability and accessible food programmes.
- 97 At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the council allocated funds from existing Poverty Action Steering Group budgets to support short-to-medium term actions to help our residents experiencing financial hardship, or to prevent residents from being negatively impacted by the pandemic. In addition the Council allocated £1.4m to community groups through the AAPs in order to provide food and essential welfare support to people through the pandemic.
- 98 The Government allocated a small grant of £693k, also for food and essential supplies over the summer period with guidance as to how the money can be spent. This gives some flexibility in how this grant could augment the existing PASG funds and provide additional activity across the Poverty Action Plan. A table detailing high level expenditure and the relevant areas of activity is detailed below:

Budget	£	Main / Potential Activities
Welfare Assistance Scheme Daily Living Expenses/Settlement Grant	500,000	Increased Demand Broaden Criteria Target additional groups
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	500,000	Increased Demand
Advice in County Durham Co-Ordination	220,000	Extend existing provision Increased demand for existing services Debt / Money Advice
Targeted employment support	500,000	Tailored employment advice and guidance. Flexible funds Youth employment support
Food and essential welfare support	£1,400,000	Food deliveries to vulnerable residents Support to VCS with essential running costs
Activities with Food	125,000	Holiday Activities with Food through AAPs
Foodbank Investment	35,000	Debt Money Advice Additional Storage
Subsidised Meal Provision	200,000	The Bread and Butter Thing Fairshare Licences
Local Lockdown Emergency Food Fund	55,000	COVID-19 response and Contingency plus second wave boxes

Future Direction

- 99 Whilst the Council has supported its most vulnerable residents over recent years and has intensified support during the COVID-19 pandemic there is much still to do to promote social inclusion and support people and their families over the coming months and years, particularly given the difficult economic situation.
- 100 The Council is undertaking a review of advice and guidance in the County to ensure consistency of the availability of advice services. Coupled with this are improvements to the Advice in County Durham

Portal to ensure that the “no wrong door” approach whereby agencies can cross refer clients to a full range of advice services is enhanced with a case management approach and improvements in data management to target services. The Council is also looking to increase advice on money management, debt advice services and access to cheap credit through the Council’s housing solutions team and partner agencies. The Council is also in the process of reviewing its service level agreement with Citizens Advice County Durham to ensure that it delivers the outcomes expected and sets a framework for future collaboration.

- 101 The Council is actively supporting The Bread and Butter Thing, a charity operating from Manchester who work with national food distribution agencies to redistribute surplus food in an accessible way, through community organisations, to local residents in areas of disadvantage. The programme was is due to be launched in County Durham in Eden Hill by the end of November to benefit families and individuals in the locality. Development work is ongoing with further community groups and schools in the County in Crook, Bishop Auckland and Cockfield and Evenwood, with the expectation of greater roll out over the next 12 months. The Council is working with the charity to help them establish a North East base in Chilton County Durham, further extending the reach into the County.
- 102 The Council is investing in a range of employability measures in response to the increase in unemployment and the cessation of the furlough scheme. Through the PASG the Council is supporting Youth Employment Hubs to help young people find employment as well as the Kickstart scheme both as an employer and local co-ordinator. The Council is supplementing European Social Fund (ESF) funded employability programmes, which provide support for unemployed people, with Council funded staff and flexible funds to provide help and support for those recently or facing redundancy.
- 103 The Council has boosted contingencies to provide food and other essential supplies to vulnerable residents should further COVID-19 related restrictions come into place. This will be integral to the further development of the County Durham Together approach to empower communities, promote self-help and holistic person-centred services across council services and a range of statutory partners.

Conclusion

- 104 The Council is in the front-line of responding to these challenges through the services we provide and our network of Area Actions Partnerships supporting local action. Working with our partners, we are at the heart of our local areas and interact with residents lives on a daily

basis and are committed to achieving greater social mobility, fairness and community cohesion.

- 105 We have a direct financial relationship with our residents: collecting council tax payments, administering benefits and other discretionary payments. This provides us with an opportunity to identify households in financial difficulty and provide them with support and to manage the nature of that relationship in a way that supports financial inclusion.
- 106 In such circumstances, it is vital that the council maintains its partnership-based approach in delivering its' Poverty Action Strategy and Action Plan to ensure we make it everyone's business to respond to poverty and the risk to financial exclusion and homelessness.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- [Cabinet report, COVID-19 planning and response, 5 June 2020](#)
- [Cabinet report, Welfare reform and poverty issues, 11 September 2019](#)
- [Cabinet report, Welfare reform and poverty issues, 13 September 2017](#)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report, which is provided by way of update to Members. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union may have significant legal implications. The nature and extent of these implications are unknown and Officers continue to monitor changes in primary legislation for the pandemic and Brexit proposals to assess the likely future impacts on the council and residents of the county.

Finance

The council supports welfare provision and poverty alleviation through a number of service budgets across the council, such as the Welfare Assistance Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) policy which are administered by the council's Revenues and Benefits Service. The council also offers discretionary County Tax relief to individuals and households in financial hardship and has protected residents from government reductions in Council Tax Benefit through the approach it has taken to local Council Tax Support.

The council has been allocated government grant of £693,361 to help cover the costs for emergency provision for residents. The longer term financial implications for the council are at this stage difficult to quantify, and are dependent on the duration of local restrictions, future 'lockdowns' and the speed of economic recovery. Future MTFP reports to Cabinet will need to consider the financial risks relating to the longer term impact of COVID-19.

Consultation

The review of the Poverty Action Plan was informed by feedback following informal consultation with council services and partners during the first quarter of 2020/21.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The council's Welfare Assistance Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments policy and Local Council Tax Support Scheme have been subject to equality impact assessments where appropriate.

Climate Change

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Note applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.

Appendix 2: Poverty Action Strategy & Plan

Durham County Council – Poverty Action Steering Group

Revised Poverty Action Strategy September 2019- September 2021

June 2020 COVID-19 revision

Purpose

Our Poverty Action Strategy (PAS) has been revised earlier than originally planned in response to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

This revised strategy aims to provide focus and direction on priorities for improving services and opportunities for residents in County Durham who are experiencing: immediate financial hardship due to the economic shocks of the coronavirus pandemic; and, impacts of longer-term poverty. This strategy will be reviewed in September 2021.

For those responsible for delivering services, any future work programmes should contribute to achieving the aims set out in this strategy.

Introduction

The council's Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) co-ordinates the delivery of a range of new and existing policy work which seeks to achieve a much broader understanding of the issues affecting residents, resulting from continuing changes to welfare and other issues which mean that residents can experience poverty. Building on this understanding, and underpinned by data and intelligence from Durham Insights, the group seeks to identify actions to support residents and help address identified inequalities through our Poverty Action Plan (PAP). The PAP was approved by Cabinet in September 2019.

However, more recently, we have had to respond dynamically and innovatively revising our approach as the national coronavirus action plan and recovery strategy evolves. The council has worked nationally, regionally and locally to protect our communities and to support those affected by the pandemic, economically, socially and in relation to their own physical and mental health, and the outcomes from the council's Inequality Impact Assessment will further inform this evolving action plan to seek to reduce the widening gap for some of our residents.

We know there are considerable challenges ahead if we are to deliver on our vision. In order to overcome these challenges, we have revised our Poverty Action Strategy which includes the revised Poverty Action Plan and sets out what needs to be achieved in the next 12-18 months in relation to each of our key priorities.

The action plan includes a renewed focus on ensuring our strategies, policies, plans and programmes all link together to ensure an intelligence led and evidence informed, consistent and ongoing focus on our residents who experiencing financial hardship for the first time or hardship and/or poverty which has been compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. It includes new and revised actions and

Poverty Action Strategy 2020-2021 COVID-19 revision V4.0

commitments which will enable us to deliver the key priorities we have identified as being most important to help our residents whose finances have been negatively impacted by the associated economic shocks of the coronavirus pandemic and for reducing overall poverty levels in County Durham.

Vision

Our vision is: to improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in County Durham who are currently experiencing immediate financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic shocks; and to help alleviate long term issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures and poverty.

Strategic Aims

We have to anticipate that society will be affected by COVID-19 for some time to come. We therefore need to continue to increase our understanding of the local impacts of change, so we can best use and direct resources to help continue to mitigate the impacts where we can, through well thought-out and targeted approaches. To achieve the best possible outcomes of our vision for residents experiencing immediate financial hardship and/or poverty, our strategic aims are:

- *To improve our understanding of immediate financial hardship and both short and long term poverty, and the impacts on County Durham's residents;*
 - *Short term – restarting/resetting society – June to December 2020*
 - *Medium term – living with COVID-19 – 2021*
 - *Longer term – recovering – 2022;*
- *To foster employability, personal wellbeing and sense of worth for residents experiencing immediate hardship and/or poverty;*
- *Residents receive the best support and advice available concerning their financial situation;*
and
- *Children and families have access to specific resources in response to the measures in place to combat COVID-19.*

Key Priorities

Underpinning our strategic aims are the key priorities and detailed actions in our revised Poverty Action Plan 2020-2021. This plan ensures we build on improvements already made and deliver new/improved initiatives required to support our residents experiencing the various types of financial hardship and varying levels of poverty.

Resources

New workstreams will be established to deliver some of the immediate actions where necessary, although it is expected a lot of the activity can be delivered through existing resources and organisations. Working with partners from across the public, private and third sector will continue to

underpin our approach. The council has consistently recognised we cannot reduce poverty on our own: collaboration and a focus on delivering common outcomes remains a top priority.

Governance

The council's Poverty Action Steering Group will continue to provide leadership and direction in delivering against the action plan.

The PASG will:

- Monitor the situation across the county;
- Make practical recommendations for policy and action to address the issues identified and focus on equity of support and target to those who need it the most
- Improve co-ordination and co-operation between service groupings and organisations, and establish new interfaces with existing sector led workstreams working to address the immediate financial impacts associated with the coronavirus pandemic and poverty at a local level;
- Monitor the delivery of the action plan established to respond to the issues identified.

Monitoring and Review

Progress will be reported to the council's Cabinet, the County Durham Partnership, The COVID-19 Health, Welfare and Community Recovery Group as well as updates to partners and other organisations etc.

The original strategy and action plan were originally subject to review every two years, due September 2021. This date will remain, for this revised strategy and action plan, unless circumstances dictate that a review is required sooner. The strategy and action plan will be revised to ensure that it is current and reflects the communities in County Durham and what our residents are telling us, in or around September 2021.



Poverty Action Strategy – COVID-19 Plan on a Page 2020-2021

Workstreams & Immediate Actions

Vision: to improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in County Durham who are currently experiencing immediate financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associate economic shocks; and to help alleviate long term issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures and poverty.

Workstreams	Community Resilience	Employment & Personal Sense of Worth	Welfare & Money Matters	Children & Families
Immediate actions to look at	<p>Enhance the 'holistic care/person centred management' – no wrong door approach.</p> <p>Enhance Advice in County Durham Partnership Support to help partners cope with increased demand.</p> <p>Share intelligence on emerging impacts between services key partners and new smaller groups to inform service delivery and projects/initiatives etc. both short term and long term</p> <p>Enhance the 'Volunteer' programme offer to fill new and emerging gaps in provision and to provide additional support to immediate actions.</p> <p>Digital skills team (volunteers) set up to work with residents to help/support them confidently conduct more online activities including: employment activities, housekeeping, accessing services and social/companionship type activities etc.</p>	<p>Enhance the 'holistic care/person centred management' – no wrong door approach.</p> <p>New/amended provision required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet the needs of new claimants groups who have never been in this situation. Advice and support re employment contract disputes as a result of COVID-19 activities. Link with 'Volunteers' programme Job match programme (careers service) Utilise social value contracts for DCC and Business Durham Tailored support for residents new out of education (i.e. 18 yr age group) and new into the job market during COVID-19 climate. <p>Includes PH initiatives re mental/physical health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Enhance the 'holistic care/person centred management' – no wrong door approach.</p> <p>Map support re food and basic provisions and target funding/projects to plug any gaps.</p> <p>Revise Welfare Assistance Scheme with additional flexibility and discretion for COVID-19 climate.</p> <p>Revise Welfare Rights Service offer to provide wider advice and support relating to COVID-19 including: debt advice, personal finance and budgeting support etc.</p> <p>Enhance support to Credit Union to provide residents with low/no interest loans; personal finance and budgeting support etc.</p> <p>Enhance DCC Managing Money Better Service offer to provide residents with debt advice, personal finance and budgeting support etc.</p> <p>Produce baseline of financial support available from social and private landlords for tenants impacted by COVID-19 and identify gaps.</p> <p>Enhance Housing Solutions service offer to include tailored advice and support for residents with mortgages.</p>	<p>Enhance the 'holistic care/person centred management' – no wrong door approach.</p> <p>Work with schools to increase FSM voucher/meal take up during school closure period.</p> <p>Holiday activities with food programme revised to accommodate lock down/social distancing.</p> <p>Link with schools to support those children and families experiencing mental/physical health issues as a result of the COVID-19 climate.</p> <p>Link with schools to support those children and families experiencing difficulties with the transition back to school.</p> <p>Enhance support for children and families experiencing domestic abuse and violence as a result of the COVID-19 climate.</p> <p>Culture and sport to provide additional alternative activities for families with children out of school.</p>

The actions of the workstream will be unpinned by effective data and intelligence regularly updated on [Durham Insight](#).

Durham County Council – Poverty Action Steering Group

2019-2021 Poverty Plan v4.0

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
<p>1. To improve our understanding of the types of poverty and its impact on County Durham residents</p>	<p>1.1. Have a greater understanding of new and emerging population needs, pooling all data/intelligence across a broad range of services/partners and analysing data to inform existing/new service provision and use of resources.</p>	<p>1.1.a. Produce Joint Service Needs Assessment (JSNA) factsheets on poverty and share via Durham Insights to help inform practice/service development/partnership working etc.</p>	<p>APS will be updated quarterly in light of the current climate</p>
		<p>1.1.b. Use internal and where available external data to develop insight and profiles of groups (including housing data), likely to be impacted by poverty in order to improve communications and engagement with target groups.</p>	<p>Full programme completed by March 2021</p>
		<p>1.1.c. Share intelligence on emerging impacts of COVID-19 between services key partners and new smaller groups to inform service delivery and projects/initiatives etc. both short term and long term.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>1.2. Staff providing frontline services (and Members) understand the new and emerging needs relating to hardship caused by the COVID-19 economic climate and the longer term impacts of poverty and how these affect communities and families within County Durham and are equipped with the relevant level of information to quickly help residents.</p>	<p>1.2.a. Develop content for induction programme for existing employees, elected members and Member communications covering poverty in the county, impacts on residents, alleviation measures and signposting to advice and support, so that staff are able to spot poverty and know what to do to help.</p>	<p>May 2021</p>
		<p>1.2.b. Include financial wellbeing in the council’s Better Health at Work Award programme.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
		<p>1.2.c. Review and revise information, correspondence and website on council tax, benefits and concessionary support to reduce jargon, simplify and make more customer friendly (in line with the council’s ‘outside-in’ principle).</p>	<p>December 2020</p>
	<p>1.2.d Review and revise customer service procedures and processes in order to join-up welfare advice and support at the first point of contact with a resident. To provide a holistic support offer for residents</p>	<p>March 2021</p>	

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
	1.3. Partners work collectively to identify and deliver new and/or amended advice/guidance/support to help address the immediate issues associated with the COVID-19 economic climate and the longer term impacts of poverty.	<p>1.3.a. Research and develop poverty alleviation measures including the Durham Living Wage through social value provisions in procurement contracts. Promote through procurement processes and Business Durham business liaison.</p> <p>1.3.b. Develop toolkit for local organisations to help their employees, for example signposting information, promotion of salary savings schemes with local credit unions, access to ICT to make online claims.</p> <p>1.3.c. Promote and increase Durham Living Wage accreditation among employers in County Durham.</p> <p>1.3.d. Coordinate a partnership with landlords to share best practice and understand the impacts of COVID-19 and long term poverty.</p> <p>1.3.e. Enhance Advice in County Durham Partnership support to help partners cope with increased demand.</p> <p>1.3.f. Enhance the 'Volunteer' programme offer to fill new and emerging gaps in provision and to provide additional support to immediate actions.</p> <p>1.3.g. Facilitate and fund the set up of 'The Bread and Butter Thing' in County Durham.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>December 2020</p> <p>Complete</p>
	1.4. Residents have access to digital help/support to enable them to confidently conduct more online activities including housekeeping, accessing services and social/companionship type activities etc.	<p>1.4.a. Digital skills team (volunteers) set up to work with residents to help/support them confidently conduct more online activities including: employment activities, housekeeping, accessing services and social/companionship type activities etc.</p> <p>See also: 1.3.e. 1.3.f.</p>	January 2021

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
2. To foster employability, personal wellbeing and sense of worth for residents experiencing immediate hardship and/or poverty	2.1. Have an in-depth understanding of immediate impacts the current economic climate has on different employment type groups to inform existing/new service provision.	2.1.a. Review baseline mapping exercise to identify holistic support available for basic skills and employability. Refresh programme of support, in the light of findings of the mapping exercise.	January 2021
	2.2. Residents who experience mental/physical health issues as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic or are affected by poverty/changes to welfare receive the most appropriate advice and support from DCC.	2.2.a. Include specific objectives and actions on poverty alleviation in the reviewed Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	September 2021
		2.2.b. Scope which appropriate front line health and social care staff, housing staff could provide welfare advice and signposting as part of their core remit e.g. primary care, health visitors etc. Develop workforce training sessions to increase skills and competence to do the brief intervention.	January 2021
	2.2.c. Develop joint working practices between housing and health team to assist homeless people and those threatened with homelessness where people experience physical/mental health issues.	Complete	
2.3. Residents have access to suite of programmes, schemes, services etc. for all aspects of their employment journey which provide the appropriate employment guidance and/or support needed at any point of time in their working life.	2.3.a. Develop new and/or amended existing provision required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale up Durham Advance employment advice, mentoring and individual support • Scale up Youth employment support through Durham Works programme • Work with Job Centre plus to promote access flexible funds • Work with regional and local partners to develop online job match programmes • Work with national, regional and local partners to enhance the digital skills offer, access to wifi, and develop Link with Durham Volunteers programme 	January 2021	

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise social value contracts for DCC and Business Durham in respect of inward investment opportunities and link to local labour • Work up additional wage subsidy scheme and prepare to bid for funds • Develop a communication plan with a menu of services and contacts for unemployed people • Co-ordinate with the FE sector to enhance skills training and apprentice programmes through ESF and other funding sources • Explore the option to increase temporary, part time, public sector employment and apprenticeships 	
	2.4. Have a greater understanding of long term inequalities in employment and analyse data to identify increased opportunities to support residents into training and/or work.	See also: 2.1.	Ongoing
		2.3.b. Enhance joint working practices between employment/training and health team to assist clients where they experience physical/mental health issues.	Complete

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
<p>3. Residents receive the best support and advice available concerning their financial situation.</p>	<p>3.1. Have a comprehensive understanding of the different types and levels of support available to help residents experiencing any aspect of financial hardship including access to food and basic provisions.</p>	<p>3.1.a. Map support re money matters (including food and basic provisions) to target funding/projects to plug any gaps.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
	<p>3.2. Staff providing frontline services (and Members) are equipped with the relevant level of information to efficiently help and/or refer residents to the most appropriate support.</p>	<p>3.2.a. Develop an early identification and support programme for frontline staff and partners to guide and support families with children most at risk of, or currently experiencing financial hardship and ensure support available is correctly targeted.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
		<p>3.2.b. Deliver up to date briefing sessions to elected members on child poverty and the work being delivered to mitigate the impacts.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
		<p>3.2.c. Develop an early identification and support programme for frontline staff and partners to guide and support adult households most at risk of, or currently experiencing financial hardship and ensure support available is correctly targeted.</p>	<p>March 2021</p>
		<p>3.2.d. Continue to train frontline staff across DCC and partners to use AiCD portal.</p>	<p>December 2020</p>
<p>3.2.e. Undertake feasibility study of using AiCD portal for all poverty-related referrals</p>	<p>Complete</p>		

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
		3.2.f. Enhance the ‘holistic care/person centred management’ – no wrong door approach. See also: 1.1.b. 1.2.a. 1.2.c. 1.2.d.	December 2020
		3.2.g. Baseline mapping exercise to identify support available for legal support identifying any gaps and potential schemes/projects to fill gaps.	March 2021
	3.3. DCC continues to provide financial support (or equivalent) for residents affected by the COVID-19 economic climate, poverty and/or changes to welfare where it is appropriate.	3.3.a. Revise Welfare Assistance Scheme with additional flexibility and discretion for COVID-19 climate. 3.3.b. Revise Welfare Rights Service offer to provide wider advice and support relating to COVID-19 including: debt advise, personal finance and budgeting support etc. See also: 1.1.b. 1.2.c. 1.2.d. 3.1.a.	Complete Complete
	3.4. Residents receive the financial support which they are entitled to (i.e. non DCC financial support).	3.4.a. Enhance support to Credit Union to provide residents with low/no interest loans; personal finance and budgeting support etc. 3.4.b. Enhance DCC Managing Money Better Service offer to provide residents with debt advice, personal finance and budgeting support etc. 3.4.c. Enhance Housing Solutions service offer to include tailored advice and support for residents with mortgages. 3.4.d. Produce baseline of financial support available from social and private landlords for tenants impacted by COVID-19 and identify gaps.	January 2021 January 2021 January 2021 January 2021

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
		See also: 3.1. 3.2. 3.3.b.	
	3.5. Residents in County Durham have a high level of knowledge for basic personal finance.	3.5.a. Produce a baseline of financial literacy training available to primary and secondary schools and the FE sector. 3.5.b. Develop a coordinated programme of financial literacy and personal finance training to the above. 3.5.c. Develop learning materials for primary and secondary schools to improve financial literacy and personal finance. 3.5.d. Develop a financial literacy and personal finance module for inclusion in the DCC apprenticeship programme, with a view to rolling out to other employers. 3.5.e. Explore feasibility of DCC providing Looked After Children with a credit union account and a nominal annual payment. 3.5.f. Working with training providers to build personal resilience amongst trainees.	January 2021 January 2021 January 2021 March 2021 March 2021 March 2021
	3.6. Residents are aware of the dangers of using pay day and doorstep lenders and have access to alternative means of support.	3.6.a. To work with partner agencies to deliver a programme of multi-agency community roadshows across the county (six per year) e.g. loan sharks, scams etc. 3.6.b. Explore feasibility of restricting access to payday lender webpages from DCC public access computers, linking instead to credit union lenders.	June 2021 Complete

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
4. Children and families have access to specific resources in response to the measures in place to combat COVID-19	4.1. Families with children eligible for FSM continue to access FSM food/vouchers during the temporary school closures.	4.1.a. Work with schools to increase FSM voucher/meal take up during school closure period including school holidays.	Complete
	4.2. Children and families have access to stimulating and enriching activities during the temporary school closures.	4.2.a. Holiday activities with food programme revised to accommodate lock down/social distancing.	July 2021
	4.3. Children and families who experience mental/physical health issues as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic or are affected by poverty/changes to welfare receive the most appropriate advice and support from DCC.	4.3.a. Work with schools to support those children and families experiencing mental/physical health issues as a result of the COVID-19 climate.	Complete
		4.3.b. Work with schools to support those children and families experiencing difficulties with the transition back to school.	Complete
		4.3.c. Enhance support for children and families experiencing domestic abuse and violence as a result of the COVID-19 climate.	Complete
	4.4. Narrow the gap in access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing for children and young people.	4.4.a. Undertake a health equity audit of who is currently accessing council leisure facilities to understand how we target our offer better to reduce inequality of access and opportunity.	March 2021
		4.4.b. Undertake a feasibility study of establishing a budget to support improving access to leisure facilities (e.g. discounts, promotion and transport) for children and families referred by social care and health agencies	March 2021
		4.4.c. Explore the funding options for the provision of personal male and female hygiene products to young people through secondary schools, One Point centres and family centres etc.	Complete
		4.4.d. Review and evaluate pilot of family centres providing food, clothing, personal hygiene products etc.	Complete

Aim	Key priorities	Actions	Due date
		<p>4.4.e. Review and evaluate pilot of free activities with food provision during 2019/2020 school holidays and undertake a feasibility study of establishing a budget for future provision.</p> <p>4.4.f. Develop and roll out 'child poverty pledge' for teams and partners to sign up to set of standards/promises to help alleviate child poverty.</p> <p>4.4.g. Review and enhance the 'Cutting the cost of the school day' project.</p> <p>See also: 1.1.a. 1.1.b. 1.1.c.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>February 2021</p> <p>December 2020</p>
	<p>4.5. Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people in County Durham making the move into work easier so they reach their full potential.</p>	<p>4.5.a. Develop 'My Future is Durham' initiative into a wider programme for schools and colleges.</p> <p>4.5.b. Explore the development of specialist careers advice and pathways for Looked after Children, Care Leavers and SEND to enable young people to realise their aspirations.</p> <p>4.5.c. Explore future funding options to further develop DurhamWorks programme.</p> <p>4.5.d. Review options to encourage career development and aspirations through DCC's apprenticeship programme for 2020/21.</p>	<p>June 2021</p> <p>September 2020</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>September 2021</p>

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

22 January 2021

County Durham Partnership Update

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

**Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and
Climate Change**

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

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

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Executive summary

- 2 The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound effect on individuals, families and communities in County Durham and around the world and the wider County Durham Partnership have worked together to ensure we provide a response across all agencies that will support people through this. The mature partnerships and enhanced relationships have been a key strength throughout the pandemic, both with statutory and non-statutory agencies, which has ensured that our support offer has been co-ordinated at both the local (including through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), the voluntary and community sector and mutual aid groups) and strategic levels.
- 3 The County Durham Vision 2035 was written together with partner organisations and the public and sets out what we would want to county

to look like in 15 years' time. This vision is structured around three ambitions which are:

- (a) More and better jobs
- (b) People live long and independent lives
- (c) Connected communities

- 4 The vision ambitions and objectives which support these ambitions, have supported how partners are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and how partners deliver services.
- 5 The **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)** has been critical to the success of the County's response in supporting individuals and local communities and will continue to do so during the recovery and restoration phases. The VCS played a significant part in mobilising community networks and assets to provide an immediate response supporting the vulnerable in need during the lockdown. This has also highlighted the need to ensure that sustainable funding is provided to the sector so that our communities continue to be well connected and supportive of each other.
- 6 Durham County Council had a dedicated £1.4 million coronavirus support fund, which was shared amongst **Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)** across the county, to ensure local projects were able to help those in need during the coronavirus pandemic.
- 7 The funding has been allocated to 291 projects and these projects have also attracted £1,461,959 in match funding from other sources, meaning projects supported by us across our county have seen over £2.7 million invested in projects to combat the effects of Covid-19.
- 8 These 291 projects will see the full £1.4 million coronavirus support fund utilised.
- 9 As part of the Outbreak Control Plans for Covid-19 each local authority area needs to have in place a Local Outbreak Engagement Board, which is a public-facing Board led by council Members to communicate openly with the public. In County Durham this is the **Health and Wellbeing Board**. The Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan was endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 14 July 2020 and it receives an update at each meeting where questions submitted by residents are also answered by members of the Board.
- 10 A new partnership structure was agreed by the **County Durham Partnership** in September 2020. The new partnership structure underneath the County Durham Partnership is:

- (a) Health and Wellbeing Board (and Outbreak Engagement Board) – **Statutory**
 - (b) Safe Durham Partnership – **Statutory**
 - (c) Economic Partnership
 - (d) Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- 11 In addition, the Prevention Steering Group, which was established in 2017, to identify areas of work where the Partnership needed to concentrate its efforts with early interventions to reduce demand on services and impacts on people’s lives, communities, business and organisations that support them has been expanded to become the **County Durham Together Partnership** which will be responsible for countywide approaches.
- 12 The **County Durham Together Community Hub** has been established in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 13 The hub was developed to coordinate food provision, social contact, welfare support, volunteering and be the central coordination function for the voluntary and community sector.
- 14 A **Covid-19 Community Champions programme** has been developed to ensure that as the pandemic continues, key messages are shared within communities, and that these messages are trusted, concise and clear.
- 15 The Child Poverty Working Group was awarded £150,000 from the Poverty Action Group and £100,000 from Public Health to develop and deliver holiday activities with healthy food across County Durham. The funding has supported work with partners across the county to add value to a co-ordinated, sustainable, countywide holiday food and activity offer that supports children, young people and families to help reduce the ‘holiday experience gap’ and has impact in our communities longer term.
- 16 Officers from across multiple DCC services came together to deliver the October half-term school meals support scheme, providing invaluable support to children and families across the county. A total of 8,632 applications for support were received and DCC paid out 6,670 claims. This amounted to the equivalent of £156,270, which was used to provide meals for 10,418 of our county’s children.
- 17 The three-year European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Durham Sparks/Community Enterprise Durham project has come to an end with

the final claim submitted in October 2020. The project was established to support community social enterprises and local potential entrepreneurs across the county and achieved positive successful outputs and broader outcomes. It attracted £525,000 of ERDF funding, matched with £350,000 funding from Durham County Council.

- 18 The Office of Police Crime and Victim's Commissioner, together with Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council as part of the **Safe Durham Partnership**, has been successful in obtaining £485,360 as part of the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. This funding will be used to support situational crime prevention (i.e. target hardening security equipment to addresses which have been a victim of burglary, repeat burglary and properties in close proximity to the burgled property) in the Horden area with the aim of preventing residential burglaries.
- 19 Partners supported World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2020. This is important given the impacts Covid-19 and subsequent restrictions have had on the health and wellbeing of people across the County, and access to people's support networks.
- 20 In October 2020, the Council agreed to adopt the County Durham Plan. The Plan seeks to ensure the county is a successful place to live, work, invest and visit by focussing on supporting and creating vibrant communities.
- 21 Our **14 Area Action Partnerships** (AAPs) held autumn events where they met virtually to gather the views of residents and businesses on a wide range of issues. This was an opportunity for residents to find out what was happening in their area and how people have been supported throughout the coronavirus pandemic and to hear about the priorities and goals for the next 15 years, which have been set as part of the Vision for the county. In addition, AAP Board meetings and task and finish groups have also moved to virtual meeting to enable them to continue.

Recommendation

- 22 COSMB is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the contents of this update.

Background

- 23 The **County Durham Partnership** including the board and forum (which bring together the board and local communities), five partnerships (**Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe Durham Partnership, Economic Partnership, Environment and Climate Change Partnership** and **County Durham Together Partnership, Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership** and the **Local Safeguarding Adults Board, Better Together VCS Forum** and all **Area Action Partnerships** lead on key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

County Durham Partnership Board

- 24 The County Durham Partnership Board met in July to give partners an opportunity to discuss their collective local response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The role of the Local Resilience Forum as a collaborative mechanism for delivery of partner organisations mutual aims and outcomes in the event of an emergency or major incident and the use of an intelligence-based approach to working with communities was acknowledged. In addition, measures to move the county forwards in terms of recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 through a Business, Economy, Regeneration and Strategy (BERS) Recovery Group, a subgroup of the **County Durham Economic Partnership** were discussed.
- 25 In September, partners agreed a new partnership structure for the County Durham Partnership which ensures the partnership structure aids delivery of the County Durham Vision 2035, which was ratified at the County Durham Partnership meeting in September 2019, with ambitions for:
- (a) More and better jobs
 - (b) People live long and independent lives
 - (c) Connected Communities
- 26 The County Durham Partnership also agreed new branding to reflect the new partnership structure.
- 27 At the November meeting, an overview of the VCS in County Durham and the effects Covid-19 has had on the resilience of the VCS was discussed.



28 The VCS are a key partner within the County Durham Partnership and are recognised for their unique capabilities to energise and support local communities and make a distinct and sustained contribution to the economic and social development of County Durham. The new County Durham Vision, the Wellbeing approach and the developing work of County Durham Together provides an appropriate time to review how we work with the VCS. Sustainable longer-term funding for VCS infrastructure, a greater coordination of VCS commissioning by partners and developing a 'connector model' to identify and respond to gaps in provision were discussed. The development of a VCS Framework to provide a consistent and strategic approach to how the public sector works with the VCS was also discussed.

Covid-19

29 The Covid-19 pandemic and response has seen a reprioritisation of partners' efforts to manage their response to Covid-19 and the cancellation of a number of partnership meetings. However, all meetings have now been resumed and are taking place via Microsoft Teams.

30 The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have a further negative impact on adults, children and young people already living in poverty in County Durham. Our response to this ongoing public health crisis has been to develop alternative service delivery models, adapt and do differently and use technology for workforce training, drop ins and interventions.

31 **County Durham Together (CDT)** was developed based on the Wellbeing principles and worked to ensure the community was empowered to self-help as much as possible and reach those most in need through an intelligence led approach from the outset. At the point of need the hub was there to consider the whole person and embed back into community networks as much as possible thus fully utilising the VCS to the maximum.

32 Wellbeing for Life was a central part of the proactive work with the most clinically vulnerable. Pathways were developed to triage and escalate more vulnerable residents and a first check was always undertaken to establish if people were already known to services to avoid duplication in effort and confusion in the system. County Durham Together had strong connections and pathways with TEWV mental health trust and the community team of CDDFT. The AAPs and VCS were critical in the deployment of essential supplies such as food and understood the local community



networks and how to reach the most vulnerable. Funding grants were swiftly dispersed into communities through the work of the AAPs.

33 There are ten components to working with our communities using the new delivery model:

- (a) Culture and leadership change programme to develop shared values, beliefs, language and behaviours of our workforce no matter who your employing organisation;
- (b) Understanding our people using our data to develop our knowledge of people and families who have multiple clinical and / or social vulnerabilities and may require earlier support;
- (c) Co-production **WITH** our people: building on the work of AAPs to hear the thoughts and ideas from our elected members and communities to co-produce the delivery model as a collective;
- (d) To continue with the digital offer with a feedback loop
- (e) Transforming LOCATE into a community book, enabling self-help to be as easy and equitably accessible as possible enabling people to find out what is available to them for health, social and welfare purposes;
- (f) VCS alliance contracting, sustainability and coordination
- (g) Working with the voluntary and community sector to continue with the growth and development of the mutual aid infrastructure;
- (h) Develop a clear and credible Coordinated Navigators / Community Connectors to interface with the voluntary and community sector as well as core public sector such as the lead for this in primary care and then mental health and local government.
- (i) Workforce to have generalist skills and competence up to threshold of specialism
- (j) Buildings to have multi-functional access and service delivery at the level of place. Considering where our teams are based in communities and how our physical presence embeds within that community whether that be part of a library, customer access point, a family centre or a GP surgery.

34 The County Durham Together Community Hub supports residents who:

- (a) Are clinically extremely vulnerable

- (b) Have multiple social vulnerabilities and are impacted by COVID-19
 - (c) Are self-isolating
 - (d) Need support to access food, essential supplies and online supermarket shopping slots
 - (e) Have concerns about money, housing, health or employment linked to coronavirus, self-isolation or lockdown
 - (f) Are isolated or lonely and would like someone to listen and chat via our Chat Together programme
 - (g) Have questions or queries about current Guidance and Legislation
- 35 A **Covid-19 Community Champions programme** has been developed to ensure that as the pandemic continues, key messages are shared within communities, and that these messages are trusted, concise and clear.
- 36 Champions will help us to reach all communities across County Durham by:
- (a) Supporting the promotion and dissemination of key messages;
 - (b) Information sharing online and potentially through events;
 - (c) Helping us to better understand the needs of communities;
 - (d) Being part of an interactive County Durham Together webpage;
 - (e) Liaising with AAPs and other local groups.
- 37 By using the latest local public health data together with the knowledge, connections and relationships of local champions we will be able to get the appropriate information to the right people within the community.
- 38 The champions will receive training and ongoing support from the council to empower communities to play their part in preventing the spread of the virus. A total of 59 people have signed up to be individual champions, with a number of organisations signed up as Champions Plus. <http://www.durham.gov.uk/covidcommunitychampion>
- 39 A number of AAP areas had face to face advice suspended due to Covid-19 and alternative arrangements were quickly put in place in the **3 Towns AAP** so residents could access advice from the Advice in County Durham network through telephone calls and email. Self-referral

posters were displayed in local venues and this was publicised on social media.

40 **Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH)**

AAP supported 17 projects through its Covid-19 emergency funding. Projects covered a wide range of issues including crisis and food bank support, debt advice, food, running costs for community groups, activity packs, children's activities and care packages.



BASH residents receiving a food box

41 Durham County Council is recruiting a COVID-19 compliance team who can make a real impact to support local businesses through education, support and proportionate regulation. The principal role of this team is to visit relevant business premises across County Durham to ensure Covid-19 compliance, including the investigation of related complaints.

Accordingly, they will provide advice and support to businesses on how to operate in a Covid-19 secure way in accordance with legislation, Government and sector guidance.

AAP Autumn events

42 Between 20 October and 12 November each of our **14 Area Action Partnerships** (AAPs) met virtually to gather the views of residents and businesses on a wide range of issues. The focus of these events was to:

- (a) Find out more about how groups and individuals in their area have been supporting their community during the pandemic.
- (b) Hear from Cllr Simon Henig, leader of the council, about the priorities and goals for the next 15 years, which have been set as part of the Vision for the county. These aims are based on feedback gathered from the public during a consultation carried out last year.
- (c) Have the opportunity to shape the county's future activities, including £20 million of work to make towns and villages around the county more vibrant - one of the key priorities of the Vision.
- (d) Hear an update from Amanda Healy, County Durham's Director of Public Health, on the coronavirus pandemic and details of how

residents can play their part in reducing the spread of the virus by becoming community champions.

- 43 The ability to write comments and feedback at the events gave attendees a chance to interact with the presenters. The total number of comments received across the 14 events was 1375, with the least number of comments received at an event being 56 and the most being 126, eight events had over 100 comments. These are really good numbers considering this is the first time that we have held virtual events in this way.
- 44 Since the pandemic began, AAPs have provided more than £1.1 million to almost 300 community groups and organisations working to support the county's most vulnerable residents. This is alongside the support given to groups by agencies such as Durham Community Action and the County Durham Community Foundation.

Holiday activities with health food countywide programme

- 45 The Child Poverty Working Group was awarded £150,000 from the Poverty Action Group and £100,000 from Public Health to develop and deliver holiday activities with healthy food across County Durham. The funding has supported work with partners across the county to add value to a co-ordinated, sustainable, countywide holiday food and activity offer that supports children, young people and families to help reduce the 'holiday experience gap' and has impact in our communities longer term.
- 46 The Holiday Activities with Health Food (HAWHF) group have worked together with the AAPs to develop, administer and distribute funding for enriching holiday activities with healthy food over the holiday periods 2020 (Easter, May half term, Summer and October half term).
- 47 Each of the 14 AAPs were given **£15,000** in total to allocate to community organisations to deliver Holiday Activities with Healthy Food across the four school holiday periods in 2020. A total of **£210,000**. In addition, £10,000 was allocated for county wide projects.
- 48 From Easter to October 2020, **184** projects were allocated funding through the 14 AAPs for Holiday Activities with Healthy Food and an additional project was allocated countywide funding to deliver during the summer holidays.
- 49 **Over 14,522** beneficiaries have been reported to date from **115** out of **185** of the projects allocated funding. The total number who have benefited from the 185 projects allocated funding from the Holiday Activities with Health Food funding will be significantly higher when all monitoring returns have been received.

50 Most of the projects delivered, involved the creation of a wide range of activity packs offering a range of activities for children and young people and families to engage in. From arts and crafts, environmental and wildlife activities, science activities and sports and physical activity and activities to enhance wellbeing as well as either healthy food and snacks or ingredients and recipes to make a wide range of meals for themselves and their families.



51 All groups that received funding through the AAPs were provided with a document developed by Public Health 'Recommendations to support Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Groups operate during the Covid-19 pandemic' to support them with face to face delivery during the summer holidays.

52 For each holiday period the VCS Alliance team have collated all HAWHF programmes across the county, the information is made available as a live mobile app and a printer friendly PDF version. The mobile app is updated regularly and to date is shared with all VCS Alliance networks, AAPs, all schools (via the extranet and Headteacher briefing note), Families Information Service and Locate.

53 Officers from across multiple DCC services came together to deliver the October half-term school meals support scheme, providing invaluable support to children and families across the county. A total of 8,632 applications for support were received and DCC paid out 6,670 claims. This amounted to the equivalent of £156,270, which was used to provide meals for 10,418 of our county's children.

Safeguarding

54 The **Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB)** held its development session in September 2020 and adopted the new ways of working within the landscape of COVID-19. The session was an opportunity for

LSAB statutory and relevant partners to consider its new strategic plan, which focusses upon the learning from emerging themes for safeguarding adults during COVID-19. Work strands over 2020/2022 will encompass reflecting upon COVID-19 to inform upon hidden victims and emerging themes, that will inform and support the LSAB assurance activity and identification of key communication messages with cross connectivity to wider partnerships and connected agendas. A strong thread of audit and assurance will ensure the LSAB continues to measure the effectiveness of local multi-agency working and in ensuring adults remain safe.

55 The LSAB have produced their fifth Annual Report. The annual report provides assurance on the measures in place to safeguard adults across County Durham, and outlines progress, achievements and challenges during 2019/20 against the following LSAB strategic priorities. It also includes details of the early LSAB response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- (a) Prevention and Early Implementation
- (b) User/Carer Voice and Awareness Raising
- (c) Performance, Quality and Governance
- (d) Safeguarding Adults Reviews Learning and Training.

56 An easy read version and an 'annual report on a page' have also been produced

57 David Pickard has been appointed as the new Independent Chair and Scrutineer of the **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)**.

58 The DSCP has produced its first annual report since the new DSCP arrangements came into force. The Annual Report demonstrates how the functions of the DSCP have been fulfilled, as set out in the statutory guidance 'Working



Keeping Children Safe



ANNUAL REPORT
2019 - 2020

Safeguarding Children
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Together to Safeguard Children 2018' and an update on work undertaken against the DSCP priorities during 2019/20. It also provides a performance monitoring overview, a summary of the use of restraint in secure centres, serious case reviews and child death reviews and

details on the multi-agency training provision. A children and young people's version of the annual report has also been produced.

- 59 The DSCP has appointed a Young People's Commissioner Apprentice, whose role is to engage with children and young people across the county to ensure their voices are heard, and that this influences the services they receive.
- 60 November 2020 saw the third year of undertaking a wider partnership approach to Safeguarding Week under the umbrella of the **Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB), Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)** and the **Safe Durham Partnership**. Key themes during the week focussed upon safeguarding in the community with a lens on strengths of multi-agency working during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to ensure safeguarding and the safety of residents remained front and centre. Promoting awareness of issues such as radicalisation, modern slavery, domestic abuse and financial abuse as well as the activity under County Durham Together and the Community Hub response to COVID-19. The week also placed a strong focus upon the strength-based model of signs of safety, and mental health. A podcast from the National Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicola Jacobs was also included as part of the week. The session was opened by the LSAB Independent Chair and DSCP Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

Vision 2035: More and Better Jobs

- 61 On 21 October the Council adopted the County Durham Plan. The Plan seeks to ensure the county is a successful place to live, work, invest and visit by focussing on supporting and creating vibrant communities. This is by delivering more and better jobs and sustained economic growth; a wide choice of high quality homes that supports economic growth and meets the needs of all people; a high quality built and enhanced natural environment; and the necessary supporting infrastructure including transport, health and educational needs.
- 62 The County Durham Plan includes provision for over 300 hectares of land to be allocated for business and industry development, with the potential for this to create more than 32,000 jobs. It also envisages almost 25,000 homes being built up to 2035
- 63 The Business, Economy, Regeneration Strategy Recovery Group (a subgroup of the **County Durham Economic Partnership**) has been established to assess and address the economic implications of the pandemic for County Durham to provide the assistance that businesses need to restart and grow the economy of County Durham. It is focusing on six key areas:

- (a) Business support,
- (b) Employability and skills
- (c) Infrastructure,
- (d) Intelligence,
- (e) Strategy and Lobbying
- (f) Communication

64 During the first couple of months following the launch of Government Grant Funding, support was also given to an additional 266 High Street Businesses, both in securing grant funding and signposting to areas of support. In August 2020:

- (a) The Council received European Funding to support the reopening high streets safely.
- (b) Three officers were appointed until March 2021 to visit high street businesses, support businesses with opening and operating safely and identifying further support that is required.
- (c) The Market Project was launched; which allows new and existing businesses access to funding support for purchase of market stalls and relevant legal requirements.

65 All the initiatives in place support the Government's efforts to help business trade in a safer environment.

66 The coronavirus crisis has put thousands of jobs and hundreds of businesses at risk. Durham City has seen a number of businesses close. **Durham AAP** have supported Durham BID with an Area Budget grant of £40,000 which will enable them to utilise new and old technologies to get key messages out to local people to look at new ways to encourage people to come into Durham to shop, eat and drink in a responsible way.

67 One of the first projects to be supported using Covid-19 Recovery monies by **Chester-le-Street AAP** was the CDC Enterprise Agency - PLAN B – Business Action Planning. This is a business support program designed for post COVID recovery. 25 businesses will receive bespoke one to one coaching and practical support to redesign their business models allowing them to thrive in a post Covid-19 economy.

68 Single Homeless Action Initiative in Durham (SHAID) approached the **Stanley AAP** for funding support as they like many others had highlighted and identified a need to keep key workers safe and get them the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they require. SHAID received funding to purchase a 3D printer and materials to produce 700 face visor masks for



Stanley Medical Group staff wearing their SHAID supplied masks

frontline workers of local organisations and single carers across the Stanley area. The KO3D printing for Covid-19 project has enabled the quick delivery and distribution of face visors to frontline staff across the Stanley AAP area including: care homes, pharmacy staff, schools and front-line charity workers and single carers who needed this added safety measure to continue their role as key workers, enabling them to stay safe and to be able to continue to offer the vital services they are delivering in the community during this pandemic.

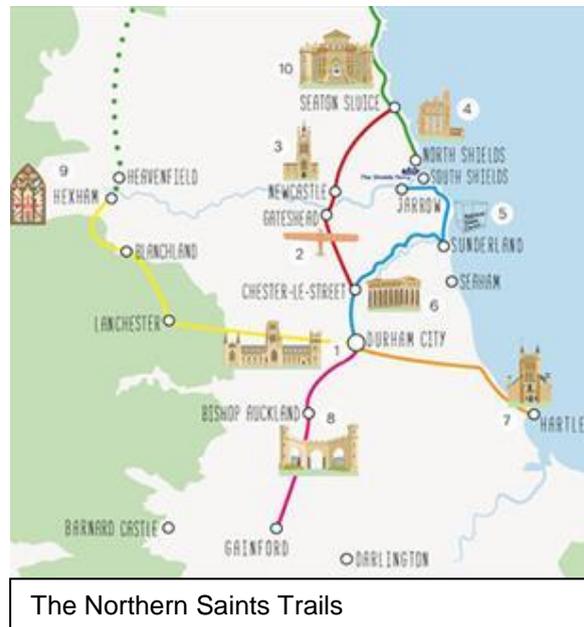
69 The three-year European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Durham Sparks/Community Enterprise Durham project has come to an end with the final claim submitted in October 2020. The project was established to support community social enterprises and local potential entrepreneurs across the county and achieved positive successful outputs and broader outcomes. It attracted £525,000 of ERDF funding, matched with £350,000 funding from Durham County Council.

70 The Durham Sparks Project supported over 100 local community enterprises with over 30 new FTE employment opportunities also created. Nearly 150 individuals were also supported to explore their own business ideas through 12+ hours of support. The Finchale Consortium led by Finchale Group and involving a number of business consultants delivered the project over the last three years across the county. ERS Consulting were also awarded the evaluation element of the project and have produced a comprehensive, positive and complimentary report on the project particularly focussing on the approach and model of delivery.

71 Young people, who disproportionately make up the workforce of key affected sectors such as hospitality and leisure, are likely to be hit hardest by unemployment in the coming months.

72 Work is underway on the establishment of three Youth Hubs in Peterlee, Bishop Auckland and Stanley utilising DurhamWorks and Jobcentre Plus funding.

73 The Northern Saints Trails project is a tourism product development initiative to position and market North East England as The Crossroads of British Christianity through the development of six long distance walking trails based on existing ancient pilgrimage routes.



74 The Trails portray the region's Saints and their stories, set against a backdrop of the very best of the region's attractions, landscapes, places to eat and drink and visitor accommodation. A range of marketing materials are in place and ready to go for the full launch of the Northern Saints project in 2021, once pandemic restrictions are eased. The project website was soft launched over the summer and is aimed at in-region and day visitors. The website contains over 500+ regional products.

Vision 2035: People live long and independent lives

75 The **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)** is refreshing its Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25 to take account of Covid-19 and the Vision following the Strategic Governance Review.

76 The County Durham Placed Based Commissioning and Delivery Plan 2020-25 sets out the commissioning and delivery intentions of all partners represented at the Integrated Care Board and forms the health and care delivery component of the County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

77 A Health Impact Assessment was undertaken in response to Covid-19, with findings and recommendations being endorsed by a range of Partnerships to enhance recovery using a system wide approach. In addition to specific action being undertaken by partners, this will focus on:

- (a) targeted work for vulnerable and marginalised groups as part of COVID-19 recovery to reduce preventable inequalities

- (b) training of the whole-system workforce to raise awareness of welfare support and impact money worries can have on health and wellbeing.
- (c) Using population health management approaches and forecasting across the system, consider how to support prevention and early intervention in mental health can be used to mitigate as far as possible any increased demand to secondary care
- (d) Develop and implement a streamlined information resource to provide access for communities and individuals to support for mental health and emotional wellbeing
- (e) Ensure the community is prepared to respond to a second wave and local outbreaks

78 This year, World Mental Health Day was on 10 October 2020, and a number of activities to raise awareness were introduced. These included the 'Power of 5 challenge', where staff were encouraged to spend 5 minutes across 5 days talking to 5 people they haven't spoken to since lockdown began in March 2020.



79 Staff were also reminded of the five ways to wellbeing:

- (a) Connect
- (b) Be active
- (c) Take notice
- (d) Keep learning
- (e) Give

80 A Healthy Business Strategy has been developed for businesses across County Durham. The framework contains a set of actions which tackle workplace mental health, stigma and discrimination, improve general mental health awareness and promote the importance of good workforce mental health which aims to support small businesses and voluntary organisations.

81 AAPs have supported a range of initiatives relating to people's mental health and physical wellbeing. Keeping connected is especially important for people living with mental health issues.

Mid Durham AAP funded the Welcoming Lanchester: A Guide to Lanchester addressing Issues around Loneliness. This is a document led by members of the Patient Participation

Group at the medical centre including members of Lanchester Partnership. The publication was posted through every door in the parish and is also included on our 'Durham Insight' website

<https://www.durhaminsight.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Welcoming-Lanchester-Guide-for-websites-03122019.pdf>



Mid Durham AAP members promoting 'Welcome to Lanchester'.

82 Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) delivered a number of activity packs to the homes of older residents in the **Great Aycliffe and Middridge (GAMP) AAP** area. The packs were designed to promote resilience and improve mental wellbeing, also helping to alleviate boredom during the older people's isolation due to Covid-19. Packs contained arts/crafts and baking activities suitable for all

abilities. Packs were delivered by PCP key workers/volunteers and the GAMP AAP Coordinator who could also offer help and advice should any queries arise when delivering the packs. The feedback from the older people was very positive and they appreciated the support.



GAMP and PCP volunteers preparing to deliver activity packs to residents

83 The **4 Together Partnership AAP** supported the Solan Connor Fawcett Family Trust with two applications during the first lockdown period. One was support towards the charity's fixed running costs and the other was an application to provide care services and packages to cancer sufferers and their families in the area. Vital care services were able to be continued including transport to hospital and doctors' appointments,

services and equipment to support families, help with funerals and delivery of a care packages with regular telephone phone support.

84 With an extension of our funding this project was able to run right through from April to the end September, offering 24 weeks of vital support to some of our most vulnerable individuals and their families.

85 AAPs, especially in rural areas, can use the natural environment to support the development of leisure related activities. **Weardale AAP** has supported the refurbishment of the Weardale Way. The Weardale Way which is a popular walk for both local residents and it attracts walkers of all levels of fitness, this varied and at times challenging walk offers the opportunity to enjoy the natural environment depending on the experience of the walker. The refurbishment will ensure works are undertaken in keeping with traditional stonemasonry and carpentry skills, employing local contractors and the health benefits of being outdoors are utilised.

86 Elections took place in secondary schools across the county at the beginning of 2020 to elect young people onto the new **County Durham Youth Council (YC)**. The YC currently have 39 registered members, with



Durham Youth Council members self portraits

representation from 19 secondary schools, and they are working with 23 other youth provisions to increase membership and improve representation. Since September 2020, and following schools return to teaching, a Participation and Engagement Officer has been appointed, as the lead support for the Youth Council.

87 The Youth Council ran their British Youth Council elections in the week beginning 19 October and two County Durham Young people are our representatives at the national level.

88 Youth Council members have set up four sub-groups:

- (a) Mental Health and Wellbeing,
- (b) Environment,
- (c) Youth Council Handbook

(d) Durham History Centre Project.

Members have selected which sub-groups they would like to be involved in and will be holding regular meetings to expand the work on their projects.

89 Roles for Care Experienced Young Inspectors are being developed to help us to shape the services we provide in Durham County Council Children's Residential homes. The Young Inspectors will be developing a framework and toolkit, accessing training and support to allow them to carry out the role of a Young Inspector, which will involve them visiting our children's residential homes and sharing their views and observations on the services provided to the young people and their home.

90 The Young Carers Charter supports to make positive change for children, young people and families where there is a caring role. A total of thirteen organisations have achieved Young Carer Charter status within the **Spennymoor AAP** area this has included five Primary Schools, four community organisations along with Spennymoor Town Council, Spennymoor AAP, County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group and Saint Andrews Medical Centre. Spennymoor Youth Council and Spennymoor Stage and Song have also committed to achieve charter status.



Promoting the Young Carers Charter in Spennymoor

91 This Charter work has been extremely successful within the Spennymoor AAP area and has ensured that the needs of young carers have been considered and actioned by a range of local organisations who will ensure that any information regarding the support of young carers is disseminated and shared with respective teams and partnerships.

92 A presentation on the work of the Neighbourhood Charter has also been undertaken at the Spennymoor AAP Board meeting earlier in 2020 and received a very positive response.

93 Since the last update report, the council has confirmed three years funding for our **Armed Forces Outreach workers** who are part of a local authority partnership **Armed Forces Outreach Service**, providing advice and support for members of the armed forces community in

need. Help is available with housing, benefits, employment, health and wellbeing, thus ensuring that the most vulnerable are assisted to live long and independent lives.

- 94 At the first virtual meeting of the **County Durham Armed Forces Forum** on 8th October, our CCG partner reported that 30 GP surgeries in County Durham are now accredited as Veteran Friendly GP Practices and all GP surgeries in the county have links to the Veterans Gateway, an online resource of support available to members of the Armed Forces community. Further work is planned to update Durham Insight with data about Veterans' health so that appropriate interventions can be planned to help veterans have long and independent lives.



Showing support for Durham Armed Forces

Vision 2035: Connected Communities

- 95 The **Safe Durham Partnership** is refreshing its Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2020-25 to take account of Covid-19 and the Vision following the Strategic Governance Review
- 96 As part of the work of the **Safe Durham Partnership**, County Durham has been successful in securing £485,360 from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. The Safer Streets Fund aims to stop offences that blight communities and cause misery for victims from happening in the first place. The scheme has been operational since October 2020 will run to the end of March 2021 and target the Horden area which has been identified as an area where support would benefit the community. The money is being used to provide target hardening measures for both the victims property and those of the tenants in the surrounding area. The funding will also be used to train officers to deliver local crime prevention advice to residents.
- 97 The National Hatecrime Awareness Week campaign ran virtually, from the 10 -17 October 2020. Daily multi-media messages were shared to raise awareness of 'hate crime' and branded under the "Hate Hurts" campaign to shows that partners are united against Hate Crime in Durham and Darlington. Officers within the partnership were also given the opportunity to take part in some free online training to help them identify hate crime, how it impacts on the individual and the community as well as how to report.

- 98 Following on from activity at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to raise awareness of the helplines available for domestic abuse, 16 days of Action ran from 25 November until 10th December which saw partners through the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group, a sub group of the **Safe Durham Partnership**, work together to provide a coordinated response. Key themes included:
- (a) Why Covid-19 has made the issue more important than ever
 - (b) The impact of domestic abuse on children in the home
 - (c) How you can get help
 - (d) How we can all help
- 99 As part of our PREVENT duty under the **Safe Durham Partnership**, a joint collaboration between Durham Constabulary's Prevent Team, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council saw approximately 100 school safeguarding officers' and Head Teachers engage in a training event held over two days in order to provide the latest information on the threat and risks related to extremist and terrorist related activity in the area. This was the first fully online event of its type in the area and received positive praise from the attendees.
- 100 Social Housing providers have received special training to deliver terrorism awareness to their staff in order that front line officers can spot the signs of radicalisation and extremist behaviour and make the necessary referrals for support through the Prevent referral and Channel process.
- 101 Channel is the safeguarding panel, which aims to safeguard those vulnerable to being drawn into extremist and terrorist related acts.
- 102 The new Channel guidance, which has implications for how Channel panels are delivered across England and Wales was published by the Home Office and launched through online events in November 2020.
- 103 Some of the key practical requirements for local authorities include:
- (a) Designating a Channel chair and deputy chair
 - (b) Embedding Channel within local governance arrangements
 - (c) As a statutory function, ensuring Channel is incorporated within local authority constitutions
 - (d) Updating local Data Protection Information Notices (Privacy notices) to reflect Channel panel and the use of personal data

104 Our current Channel guidance will be updated to take account of the new national Channel Guidance.

105 To make sure the right messages were being delivered and people seeking advice were not confused by the amount of websites on offer, work was carried out in September 2020 in order to ensure that the most appropriate advice was being highlighted to children, parents, carers and professionals in relation to online safety.

106 **East Durham Rural Corridor (EDRC) AAP** funded a project which involves working with the Cyber Harm Reduction Officers at Durham Constabulary to divert young people away from cybercrime and prevent cybercrime from happening. Members of the Youth Forum took an interest in the work after the Police attended a Board meeting. The Cyber Officers advise the public on how to stay safe online and work with young people to divert them away from cybercrime. A high number of those who commit cyber offences are teenagers, so they work along the line of PREVENT to ensure that they are aware of cybercrime and are diverted from committing this.



Meeting up to tackle cyber crime

107 The EDRC AAP Youth Forum have developed a Facebook Group 'Live, Listen, Speak Project' to allow relevant information to be circulated quickly and to enable children and young people in the area to have continuous dialogue and have a say. Through working with the Cyber Officers, they will be able to ensure that the online youth forum is safe and secure. The Youth Forum would like to continue working on this project and progress it further to raise awareness of the project the young people will hold two workshops across the area to talk to other young people about engaging. The young people will see what others want to improve about the areas via the online forum and will work to make these changes by involving the local community.

108 Following agreement of the new partnership structure at the County Durham Partnership, a workshop was held on 10 November 2020 to establish a new **County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership (ECCP)**. Experts from partner organisations, businesses and the voluntary sector with an interest in the environment and climate

change met to ensure a strategic, multi-agency approach was established for the new partnership.

109 At the workshop people used their knowledge and expertise to identify the areas which will influence the new ECCP agenda over the next decade, whilst considering cross-partnership linkages to ensure the partnership's agenda is as comprehensive as it can be, including considering environmental links to people's health and the economy. People discussed the issues which would influence the strategic priorities for the ECCP currently and in the future; including those detailed in the Vision 2035, the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan, A Green Future: 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Bill 2020. Following discussions three priority workstreams were agreed for the new ECCP

- (a) Climate Emergency
- (b) Ecological Emergency
- (c) Place, Health and Community

110 **Derwent Valley AAP** have worked with OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) to undertake an energy audit in four primary schools in the area and identify how they could become eco-friendlier. Each school will choose a topic they would like to focus on, for example, energy, biodiversity, waste. An action plan will be created for related activities to be carried out involving the whole school and linking into the wider community as well as linking into national campaigns such as Earth Hour.



111 A budget will be allocated to each school to spend on capital items (for example, items to replace single use plastics, hi-vis clothing for walking buses) to help them in their eco school journey. The schools will also be helped to achieve the ECO Schools Award - Bronze, Silver or Green Flag with all schools aiming to be Green Flag status.

112 To support our vision in helping our communities realise their potential and help build our communities. The approach to wellbeing has been adopted by the Health and Wellbeing Board and builds on the fantastic work undertaken by communities during Covid-19. The approach

means we will work **with our** communities, delivering solutions together, instead of **doing to** communities.

- 113 High streets and town centres retain an important place in our society, but they need to adapt to ensure that they remain vibrant, safe and attractive social hubs that people want to use. **Teesdale AAP (TAP)** has agreed in principle to introduce a free public internet and analytics solution throughout Barnard Castle town centre. TAP and the Council believes this will help make the town centre a more vibrant and attractive place for residents, visitors, businesses and shoppers, and that it will increase footfall and help local businesses thrive and grow.
- 114 There will be 17 Access Points installed across the town centre which will provide free wi-fi to anyone that logs on to the system 'Connected Barnard Castle'. Any person that has a line of sight to one of these Access Points will be able to access the free Wi-Fi. Evidence suggests that a town centre that provides free wi-fi encourages people to dwell longer in town centres, encourages additional footfall, additional spend and in turn helps businesses to thrive and grow.
- 115 The role of County Durham's Local VCS Infrastructure Organisation, Durham Community Action (DCA), has been pivotal in providing information to the council about how local groups have been managing and the support they have been providing in local communities including intelligence about the emerging Mutual-Aid groups. They have also been providing information, advice and guidance to local groups through regular communications with the sector, downloadable guides, online training and telephone support around Covid-19 secure practices, safeguarding volunteers and vulnerable adults and children, information about emergency and recovery funding programmes, and supporting trustees and management committees for Community Buildings. During this time, they also launched the new County Durham Volunteering website which is designed to match organisational requests for volunteers with individuals looking for volunteering opportunities and will be an invaluable resource for promoting and encouraging volunteering within the county.
- 116 The most recent survey carried out by DCA in August 2020 amongst members of the **Better Together Forum** of larger and/or specialist VCS organisations revealed that amongst the organisations who responded:
- (a) 100% have seen consistent changes in the nature of support provided to beneficiaries and everyone is doing things differently.
 - (b) 90% have had Covid-19 related grant funding with the majority funding service adaption and continuing core services to meet increased demand. Just under two thirds of respondents have

also developed specific (fixed term) Covid-19 emergency response project-based activity.

- (c) 80% of those who had emergency funding for project based activity would like to continue with it in the medium to long term and these longer term funding needs centre around resourcing for the 'new normal' with 88% identifying IT equipment, training and support as a priority.

117 **East Durham AAP** has supported local community centres and local organisations by providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enable them to continue to operate and comply with the latest government guidance. By providing this equipment, organisation can continue to support local communities during the coronavirus pandemic.

118 The role **Faith Communities** are playing during the pandemic is crucial to keeping communities connected and supportive of each other. Although places of worship were initially closed during the lockdown, the members of faith communities continued to provide both practical and pastoral support for local communities



Food provided by Sacriston Churches Together

through foodbank provision, meal delivery services and telephone befriending. Several faith-based projects were supported by AAP Covid-19 emergency funding.

119 One faith-based charity, Durham Christian Partnership, who run several projects including the Countywide network of Foodbanks, also run Community Money Advice County Durham which operates as part of Advice in County Durham. This free, impartial and confidential debt and money advice service is now available through video links at 11 foodbank centres across County Durham with further locations coming online soon. Authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority and affiliated to the national charity Community Money Advice, they have been helping people with debt issues for the past 10 years through face to face consultations, telephone, text, email and post. Clients can now speak directly through a video link with one of their debt advisers, or simply collect information at the foodbank centres and ask for a same-

day call back. This service helps individuals and families stay connected by helping them through difficult and life changing circumstances.

Conclusion

- 120 We could not have foreseen the scale of the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact this has had on all services across the County from early 2020.
- 121 Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic has impacted disproportionately on certain people across the County, particularly our older population, people with existing/underlying health conditions such as diabetes and obesity, our black and ethnic minority population as well as those living and working in more disadvantaged circumstances. The pandemic has also impacted on mental wellbeing across the whole life course, widening health, social and economic inequalities.
- 122 The County Durham Partnership, including our Safeguarding Boards, Better Together VCS Forum and our fourteen Area Action Partnerships will continue to work together to prevent health and wellbeing inequalities widening even further and work with our communities as true and equal partners through this difficult time. Our relationships with other agencies and with our communities are built on a robust foundation and will continue to provide a basis for improving outcomes for our local people through to the end of the pandemic and during the recovery and restoration phases to meet the County Durham Vision we set over a year ago.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

Author

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None

Finance

Area and neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

Durham County Council had a dedicated £1.4 million coronavirus support fund, which was shared amongst Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) across the county, to ensure local projects were able to help those in need during the coronavirus pandemic.

Consultation

The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the partnerships and the working practice of AAPs.

Climate Change

This is recognised throughout partnership activities.

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce re-offending. In County Durham, the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

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**Corporate Overview and
Scrutiny Management Board**



22 January 2021

Notice of Key Decisions

Report of Corporate Management Team

Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To consider the list of key decisions that is scheduled to be considered by the Executive.

Recommendation(s)

- 2 You are recommended to give consideration to items listed in the notice.

Background

- 3 New rules in relation to Executive decisions were introduced by The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, which came into force on 10 September 2012.
- 4 The regulations took away the requirement for the Executive to produce a Forward Plan of key decisions, however introduced that the decision maker cannot make a key decision unless a document has been published at least 28 clear days before the decision is taken, unless either a general exception or special urgency requirements have been met. The document which has to be published must state:
 - a) that the key decision is to be made on behalf of the relevant local authority
 - b) the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made

- c) where the decision maker is an individual, that individual's name and title if any and where the decision maker is a decision making body, its name and list of its members
 - d) the date on which or the period within which the decision is to be made
 - e) a list of the document submitted to the decision maker for consideration in relation to the matter of which the key decision is to be made
 - f) the address from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure copies of, or extracts from any document listed as available
 - g) that other documents relevant to those matters may be submitted to the decision maker
 - h) the procedure for requesting details of those documents (if any) as they become available.
- 5 The requirements also apply to an exempt matter as previously it did not strictly have to be included in the Forward Plan. Now a publicity document must contain particulars of the matter, but may not contain any confidential exempt information or particulars of the adviser or political adviser or assistant.
- 6 Notices of key decisions that are being produced meet the legal requirements of publication, as well as continuing to provide information for a four month period. Members will therefore be able to consider key decisions as previously for the four month period.

Current Notice of Key Decisions

- 7 The notice of key decisions that is attached to the report at Appendix 2, is the latest to be published prior to the papers for the Board being dispatched to members. The notice complies with the requirements for Cabinet to be able to take key decisions at the meeting on 10 February 2021. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 31 May 2021.

Contact:	Ros Layfield	Tel: 03000 269708
	Jenny Haworth	Tel: 03000 268071

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet. To publish the notice of key decisions in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Finance

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Consultation

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Climate Change

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Human Rights

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Crime and Disorder

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Staffing

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Accommodation

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Risk

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

Procurement

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

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SECTION ONE - CORPORATE

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement
CORP/R/20/02	10/02/21	Final Budget Report		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance & Commercial Services. Tel 03000 261946	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered a report on the budget 2021/22 and MTFP (11) 2021/22 to 2024/25 at the meeting on 29 October 2020. Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of MTFP 11 through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 11 February 2021.

SECTION TWO - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement
CYPS/09/2020	10 Feb 2021	School Admission Arrangements 2022/23		Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services		Graeme Plews, School Places and Admissions Manager Tel. 03000 265777	
CYPS/1/2021	10 Feb 2021	Proposal to amalgamate Durham Community College and Fyndoune Community College into one secondary school on the DCBC site from 12 April 2021		Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services		Graeme Plews, School Places and Admissions Manager Tel. 03000 265777	
CYPS/2/2021	10 Feb 2021	Proposal to make changes to Elemore Hall and Windlestone Schools with effect from 1 September 2021.		Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services		Graeme Plews, School Places and Admissions Manager Tel. 03000 265777	

SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement
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SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement
REG/01/21	10/02/21	Towns & Villages		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration		Stuart Timmiss, Head of Development and Housing. Tel: 03000 267334	The Economy and Enterprise OSC will receive an update on the progress of the Town and Village Centres Programme at the meeting on the 23 February 2021.

SECTION FIVE - NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement

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