



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Date **Friday 21 January 2022**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

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 3 December 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. MTFP (12) Update on the development of MTFP (12) including analysis of CSR and MTFP (12) Details of Provisional Settlement - Reports of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 11 - 58)
6. Quarter Two, 2021/22 Performance Management - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 59 - 134)
7. Poverty Issues - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 135 - 160)
8. County Durham Partnership Update - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 161 - 188)
9. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 189 - 198)

10. Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Report of Director of Transformation and Partnerships (Pages 199 - 204)
11. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
13 January 2022

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

Councillor C Martin (Chair)
Councillor C Lines (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, J Elmer, D Freeman, O Gunn, P Heaviside, C Hood, L Hovvells, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, R Manchester, C Marshall, B Moist, K Shaw, M Stead, A Surtees and M Wilson

Contact: Jackie Graham

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 3 December 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Martin (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, J Charlton, B Coult, J Elmer, D Freeman, C Hood, L Hovvels, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, C Lines (Vice-Chair), R Manchester, B Moist, K Shaw, M Stead and A Surtees

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Charlton-Laine, J Cosslett, R Crute, O Gunn, C Marshall and M Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Medium Term Financial Plan – Universal Credit

Councillor Crute had requested a report on the removal of the £20 uplift from Universal Credit. Members were informed that a report on poverty issues would be presented to the Board at its meeting in January 2022.

Quarter One Customer Feedback - Warm Homes

The response to the query from Councillor Hood regarding Warm Homes was circulated to Members by e-mail on 11 November 2021.

Quarter One, 2021/2 Performance Management

A composite response to the queries raised on the report had been provided to Members on 1 December 2021.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 RIPA Annual Review of the Council's use of powers - Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Members of the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The report also informed of the changes to legislation, and policy and developments in respect of the Council's use of its powers under RIPA.

The Governance Solicitor informed Members of the outcome of an inspection conducted on behalf of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner which had taken place remotely in December 2020. The Inspector had concluded that the Senior Responsible Officer was instrumental in developing a strong ethos of compliance within the Council. The Board commended the Team for their achievements in this regard.

Resolved:

That the annual report on the Council's use of powers under RIPA be received.

6 Resources - Q2 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

The 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 2021 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Lines noted that £11.98m was remaining in the Resources Capital Programme 2021/2022 and that in the first five months to August 2021 the actual spend was £1.8m. The Councillor queried whether the remaining budget would be spent by the year-end, noting in particular the underspend in the Digital Durham programme. The Board was informed that COVID-19

had impacted upon the roll-out of the Digital Durham broadband programme but the Finance Manager expected that spend would increase before the end of the financial year, and ICT had been asked for a year end profile. The Finance Manager assured the Member that any remaining budgets in the Capital Programme would be rolled forward to the 2022/2023 financial year.

Resolved:

That the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position be noted.

7 Q2 2021/22 Customer Feedback - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of information collected from the Council's customers which described their experiences of using our services in the 12 months to 30 September 2021, compared to the same period in the previous year (for copy see file of Minutes).

In the absence of the Head of Digital and Customer Services, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager provided a summary of the range of feedback received, noting that throughout the 12 months, almost 1.7 million contacts were made through the customer services team. Telephone contact remained the most frequently used channel for contacting the Council, however, the Council continued to see an increase in the number of customers choosing to interact via the digital channels.

It was explained that since the start of the pandemic, there had been a steady increase in the number of service requests received.

A detailed review of all service requests within the CRM system that were not currently assessed against a performance standard was currently underway. The initial phase of this activity had been completed and had identified a range of service improvements linked to systems, data and reporting, training, and member experience. An update of these improvements would be provided within the quarter three report.

There had been a 13% increase in the number of corporate complaints compared to the same period last year. Of those investigated, 49% were upheld. During the period the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 74 complaints, of which 19 were upheld. Of the 14 decisions delivered during quarter two, two were upheld (14%).

Councillor Elmer noted the increase in service requests received in the 12 month period regarding litter. The Councillor agreed that litter bins should be emptied more frequently but also was of the view that the Council should

take a proactive approach to address the problem, such as increasing investment in the Civic Pride Team. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that this issue was included in the work programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, who had looked at the work of the Civic Pride Team. He would feedback the Member's comments.

Councillor Manchester had recently encountered difficulties reporting a service request on the website and was aware that other customers had experienced the same problem. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that he would refer this to ICT and enquire with the Head of Digital and Customer Services as to whether this issue had been reported by a number of customers.

Members discussed the recent storm, Storm Arwen, and the clear up work required as a result of fallen trees and branches. Councillor Batey had received a query from a customer regarding the crowning of trees, and asked for data on the time spent by the Clean and Green Teams on clearing fallen branches in the aftermath of the storm. Members were informed that routine crowning was not included in the Council's Tree Policy. The Board appreciated the environmental benefits of trees but also felt that a programme of routine crowning, where appropriate, should be explored. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager suggested that this could be included in the work programme of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Coult asked if the number of complainants who were dissatisfied with the response to their complaints had increased or decreased in the 12 month period. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that he would seek the information requested and provide a response to the Member direct.

Councillor Stead noted the increase in customer interaction via the Council's digital channels and welcomed the introduction of WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The Councillor emphasised the importance of communicating the advantages of using digital options available in addition to the telephone. Councillor Lines also welcomed the addition of functions such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp for customer contact with the Council but highlighted that customers may have a different perception of how quickly they would receive a response compared to other ways of reporting requests. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that he would refer the Councillors' comments to the Head of Digital and Customer Services to address through Communications and Marketing. A copy of the Communications Plan could be provided to Members when available.

Following a comment from Councillor Howey regarding the importance of retaining the telephone as a means of contact, which had been essential in the aftermath of the recent Storm Arwen, the Member was assured that the telephone would remain an option for interaction with the Council.

Following a question from Councillor Surtees, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that repeat complaints were included in the overall complaint figures. The Council had a policy for dealing with repeat or vexatious complaints, and where a customer lodged a single complaint through more than one avenue, such as to the service directly and a Councillor for example, this was picked up by the Complaints Team.

Members made a number of comments and suggestions regarding the review of the CRM system, including how photographs were used within the system. Councillor Batey noted that some of the observations made by the Board had been discussed by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee review group previously and asked about the current position. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that he would follow this up and advise Board members accordingly.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

8 Overview and Scrutiny Six Monthly report - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided Members with the six monthly update report which was to be submitted to Council on 26 January 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Strategy and Transformation presented the report and paid tribute to Councillor Brian Avery who had sadly died at the end of October. The Councillor had held the position of Vice-Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved:

That the content of the report to be submitted to Council on 26 January 2022, be noted.

9 Refresh of non-statutory, non-voting Overview and Scrutiny Co-optees - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which informed Members of the arrangements for the refresh of the non-statutory,

non-voting co-optees who were appointed to serve on the thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chair emphasised the importance of promoting the vacancies to attract a good range of interested candidates.

Resolved:

That the arrangements for the promotion of the non-statutory, non-voting co-optee vacancies and the appointment process in accordance with the relevant appointment protocol attached at Appendix 2 of the report, be noted.

10 Update in relation to Petitions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided for information the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Strategy and Transformation advised that the schedule provided a list of those petitions that were active, and those that were to be closed and which would be removed from the list prior to the next update.

Since the last update two new e-petitions had been submitted, one of which had been completed and a response was awaited on the second. One new paper petition had been received and a response was awaited. A list giving details and the current status of all active petitions was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

11 Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

12 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented for information an update of overview and scrutiny activity from October to December 2021 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Charlton informed the Board that Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were planning to look at the Council's emergency planning arrangements in the next few months.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

21 January 2022



**Medium Term Financial Plan (12)
2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue Budget
2022/23**

Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with two reports on the development of the MTFP (12). Firstly, a report (Appendix 2) which provides an overview of the Comprehensive Spending Review announcements on 27 October 2021 and the impact on the development of the 2022/23 budget and the MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26. The second report (Appendix 3) provides an update on the MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 and on the development of the 2022/23 revenue budget in the light of the provisional local government settlement published on 16 December 2021.
- 2 COSMB have prioritised scrutiny of the MTFP and budget as part of their work programme.

Executive summary

- 3 The reports to Cabinet sets out the plan for the MTFP (12) covering the four year period from 2022/23 to 2025/26. The reports detail the MTFP financial forecasts which have been reviewed in the light of recent government announcements.
- 4 The reports highlight the period of significant financial uncertainty that local government is operating in brought about by a series of one year financial settlements, significant budget pressures in social care, special educational needs, disability services and other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and pay and price inflation. Forecasting the

continuing impact of COVID-19 on the council's expenditure, income and government funding adds further uncertainty and complexity.

- 5 The report to Cabinet on 19 January sets out that local government has received a provisional one year settlement. It updates financial forecasts including a range of new investments and additional budget pressures.

Recommendation(s)

- 6 Members are asked to:
 - (a) Consider and comment upon the December 2021 and January 2022 Cabinet reports on the MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26.

Background

- 7 The reports provide an overview on the Comprehensive Spending Review outcome and upon the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The reports detail the impact of these announcements upon the councils 2022/23 budget and MTFP(12) forecasts.
- 8 The Cabinet reports includes information on
 - (a) 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review
 - (b) Base Budget Pressures
 - (c) Council Tax increases 2022/23 to 2025/26
 - (d) Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
 - (e) Core Spending Power
 - (f) Review of MTFP Model
 - (g) Council Tax Strategy and MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 update
 - (h) MTFP (12) – 2022/23 to 2025/26 update
- 9 COSMB has prioritised scrutiny of the MTFP and budget as part of the committee's work programme.

Background papers

- None

Contact: Andy Palmer

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None specific with the report.

Finance

Financial implications are identified within the Cabinet reports of 15 December 2021 and 19 January 2022.

Consultation

The report includes information on the consultation process.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality considerations are built into the approach to developing MTFP (12) as a key element of the process.

Climate Change

The impact of final budget decisions will take into account climate change impacts

Human Rights

Any Human Rights issues will be considered for any detailed MTFP (12) proposals as they are developed and decisions made to take these forward.

Crime and Disorder

None specific with the report.

Staffing

The savings proposals in MTFP (12) will impact upon employees.

Accommodation

None specific within this report.

Risk

None specific within this report.

Procurement

None specific within this report.

Appendices 2 and 3:

Report to Cabinet 15 December- 2021 Medium Term Financial Plan (12), 2022/23 - 2025/26 and

Report to Cabinet 19 January 2022 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue Budget 2022/23

Attached as separate documents.

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Cabinet

15 December 2021

**Medium Term Financial Plan(12),
2022/23 – 2025/26**



Key Decision No. CORP/R/21/02

Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for
Finance**

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an overview of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Comprehensive Spending Review announcements on 27 October 2021 and consider the impact upon the development of the 2022/23 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(12), 2022/23 to 2025/26.
- 2 The report also provides an update on a range of budget pressures that will need to be accommodated next year, including the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on waste budgets.

Executive Summary

- 3 Local government has been operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty, brought about by a series of one-year financial settlements, significant budget pressures in social care, special educational needs, disability services and other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and pay and price inflation. Forecasting the likely ongoing impact of COVID-19 upon the council's expenditure, income and government funding levels adds a further layer of complexity and uncertainty.
- 4 On 27 October 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer published the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). This is the first step in providing local government with a longer term three-year financial settlement.

- 5 The Chancellor of the Exchequer has chosen to increase expenditure on public services, with previously 'unprotected' government departments receiving modest uplifts in government funding at a time when reductions were anticipated.
- 6 The CSR included a £4.8 billion base grant uplift for local government over the three-year CSR period (2022/23 to 2024/25). This funding is expected to be £1.6 billion a year, although circa £100 million per annum is expected to be allocated for specific activities within local government, leaving £1.5 billion per annum expected to be allocated to core local government funding from 2022/23 onwards.
- 7 This additional funding is viewed as recognition that as well as funding from council tax rises, local government also requires additional core funding to address the significant budget pressures across the sector.
- 8 Government have advised that the additional £1.5 billion is to be utilised to cover the 1.25% increase in employer's national insurance rates in 2022/23 as part of the health and social care levy, which is forecast to cost the council £2 million per annum from next year.
- 9 No indication has been given at this stage on how the £1.5 billion will be distributed. The allocation formula used will have a major impact on how much of this funding is forthcoming for the council.
- 10 Over recent years the government have retained a 2% council tax referendum level for council tax. In recent years however additional flexibility has been provided to increase council tax beyond the referendum limit by providing the ability for an adult social care precept.
- 11 Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 upper tier authorities could increase council tax by a total of 6% for the adult social care precept, with the government factoring this into its Core Spending Power calculations and expecting councils to apply these increases. Durham County Council increased its council tax by an additional 2% in each year in line with the government's expectations.
- 12 In 2021/22 the council was able to increase council tax for the adult social care precept by a further 3%, although the government allowed for this to be phased in over two years. The council, along with 53 other local authorities, chose to phase this increase in over two years, with 1% applied in 2021/22 and an indicative 2% built into MTFP(11) and MTFP(12) forecasts for 2022/23.
- 13 The CSR announced an additional adult social care precept of 1% would be available for 2022/23 and that an indicative 1% adult social care precept could be utilised for planning purposes for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This additional council raising capacity is in addition to the residual balance of the 3% not taken in 2021/22.

- 14 It is not expected that the new adult social care precept can be deferred into future years i.e., if the increase is not utilised in year, it will be lost. The full flexibility available to the council in 2022/23 therefore would be a circa 5% council tax increase, consisting of the 2% referendum limit, the 2% deferred adult social care precept increase from 2021/22 and the new 1% adult social care precept allowed for 2022/23.
- 15 The CSR announced a wide range of discounts on business rates in 2022/23, focussing on retail and leisure sectors. Significantly, the business rate multiplier will be frozen in 2022/23. This will result in no inflationary uplift in business rates for 2022/23, when a 3.1% increase was anticipated based on prevailing CPI interest rates. All local authorities will be fully reimbursed for this loss of income via an increase in Section 31 grants.
- 16 There were limited details on the broader elements of local authority core funding in the CSR. There is no certainty in relation to the Revenue Support Grant, New Homes Bonus (NHB), Better Care Fund and the Improved Better Care Fund or equalisation in relation to the flexibility to increase council tax for the adult social care precept. In addition, there was no announcements in terms of the Fair Funding Review (FFR), or the reset in business rates.
- 17 It is concerning that the additional growth in business rates over baseline levels since 2013/14 is £1.5 billion, which is the same sum being made available to local government over the CSR period.
- 18 It is not possible to accurately forecast what the financial settlement will be for local authorities and the council. It is hoped that the settlement will be more favourable than initially forecast but full detail is expected in December 2021 when the draft local government finance settlement is published.
- 19 There has been an expectation that local government would receive a three-year finance settlement to provide much needed certainty. It is not clear if this will be forthcoming and there is a risk that government will only provide an indicative settlement in years two and three, to provide flexibility to amend funding allocation methodologies in 2023/24 if the FFR is implemented at that time.
- 20 Although it is hoped that the local government finance settlement will provide a better than forecast grant settlement for the council consideration must also be given to the ever-increasing budget pressures the council is facing.
- 21 The CSR has forecast that inflation will average 4% across 2022, peaking at over 5%. In addition, the CSR announced a 6.6% increase in the National Living Wage, which will have a significant impact upon adult social care fees in 2022/23. The CSR also announced the lifting of the public sector pay pause, which is likely to lead to at least inflation

level pay requests from public sector trade unions for the 2022/23 pay round.

- 22 Over recent months work has been undertaken with budget managers to understand the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic into 2022/23. It is apparent that increased tonnages of household waste being collected, which are placing pressure on waste disposal budgets, are not reducing to pre pandemic levels, whilst significant pressures on energy and diesel prices continue to be of concern.
- 23 The CSR also announced the initial allocations of funding to local government from the health and social care levy. The allocation rises nationally from £200 million in 2022/23 to £2 billion in 2024/25. No detail has been provided on how this sum will be allocated to local authorities, but more detail is being provided on the new liabilities local authorities will face. The funding provided will need to cover losses of income from the introduction of a charging cap per person of £86,000 and the increase in the means test asset limit from £23,500 to £100,000.
- 24 Of more concern however is that government is indicating that self-funders who presently pay an estimated £175 per week more in adults residential care than council fee rates, may be able to access council contract rates. In addition, the government have indicated that councils will be required to pay providers a 'fair cost of care'. Both of these national policies are likely to result in care providers expecting a significant increase in fees payable. At this stage therefore the council has no indication of how much funding will be provided and as importantly no indication of the income loss and cost increase any sum received will need to cover.
- 25 At the time of preparing this report the council awaits the publication of the local government finance settlement in December. Once received and assessed an updated MTFP(12) forecast will be presented to Cabinet on 19 January 2022. That report will assess any additional funding forthcoming to the council whilst also building in the new and growing budget pressures the council faces.
- 26 Whilst the CSR announcements on 27 October 2021 are to be welcomed, the uncertainty over the way in which the new funding announced will be distributed, allied with inflationary and other additional budget pressures that need to be addressed, is making financial planning extremely difficult. This requires the council to be flexible and adaptable as it considers setting the 2022/23 budget and the medium-term financial plan 2022/23 to 2025/26.
- 27 Financial planning within the council will ensure that the council is well placed to react effectively to any outcome, however planning with this level of uncertainty is not conducive to effective long-term decision making.

Recommendation(s)

28 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) note the update on the 27 October 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review; and
- (b) note that an updated MTFP(12) position is expected to be reported to Cabinet on 19 January 2022, after analysis of the draft local government finance settlement in December.

Background

29 The MTFP(12) report presented to Cabinet on 13 October 2021 built on the initial forecasts considered by Cabinet in July and provided an update on the development of the 2022/23 revenue budget and the forecast medium term position for the council over the period 2022/23 to 2025/26, which factored in working assumptions in terms of Council Tax increases. This report provides a further update, focussing on the CSR announcements on 27 October 2021, whilst also providing a high-level update upon emerging base budget pressures.

2021 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

30 The Chancellor of the Exchequer published the CSR on 27 October 2021. The document is far reaching and moves the country away from a sustained period of austerity, with the majority of areas of the public sector forecast to receive increases in funding over the three years of the CSR period 2022/23 to 2024/25, including unprotected government departments such as local government.

31 The government are implementing a strategy of increased public spending alongside increases in national and local taxation. The major beneficiary of this approach is the NHS, where additional investment over the next three years, in addition to previously announced increases of £25 billion, will be funded from the 1.25% increase in national insurance (employees and employers' national insurance) via the health and social care levy. It is forecast that the NHS share of public expenditure will increase from 27% in 1999/2000 to an estimated 44% in 2024/25. Increases of this magnitude may not be sustainable into the future and the country will face difficult choices going forward.

32 The CSR reported that the national deficit is forecast to reduce over the coming three years, reaching £50 billion in 2025/26. Against this background however the Chancellor of the Exchequer reported that he was hopeful of being able to implement tax cuts before the next general election.

33 The position for local government is more encouraging than was expected by the sector, although the full extent of the position will not become clear until the draft local government finance settlement is received, which is expected between 7 and 14 December 2021.

34 The main announcements in the CSR which are forecast to have an impact upon local government are as follows;

- (a) **Additional Core funding of a forecast £1.5 billion per annum**
The government announced £4.8 billion of additional core funding for local government over the CSR period (2022/23 to 2024/25). It is forecast that elements of this funding will be utilised for the Supporting People programme, for cyber security as detailed below:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Core Funding	1,500	1,500	1,500	4,500
Supp. Families	40	70	90	200
Cyber Security	12	13	13	38
TOTAL	1,552	1,583	1,603	4,738

No indication has been given at this point as to how the funding will be apportioned between local authorities. This will have a major bearing on how much funding will be received by the council. Government have advised that the additional core funding provided will be expected to cover the increased employer's insurance 1.25% increase from April 2022 which is forecast to cost the council £2 million per annum

(b) **Health and Social Care levy**

The government had already announced a 1.25% increase in employers' national insurance from 1 April 2022. The government have advised that it is forecast that circa £12 billion will be raised from this sum per annum, with 85% going to the NHS to access the increase minimum waiting list times that have manifest due to the impact of the pandemic.

A remaining sum of £5.4 billion was to be made available to social care over the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. The CSR has announced that £1.8 billion of this funding is to be retained centrally by the NHS to invest in care sector training improvements and to improve the wider social care system, including the quality of integration and care. It is not clear at this stage how these sums will be invested locally.

The remaining £3.6 billion is to be apportioned to local government over the next three years as follows:

Year	Amount
	£m
2022/23	200
2023/24	1,400
2024/25	2,000

At this stage full detail is awaited of what additional costs and loss of income local authorities will face but they are expected to be significant.

The MTFP(12) report to Cabinet on 19 October 2021 provided detail on the new care charging lifetime cap of £86,000 and the increase in the personal savings and asset values that is taken into account when determining whether a person can afford to pay for their care charges is to increase from £23,500 to £100,000. Anyone with assets between £20,000 and £100,000 will be eligible for some means-tested support. Once implemented these changes will significantly reduce the income which can be raised by local authorities, with a particular impact upon more affluent areas where people have more personal wealth and currently have to contribute more towards their social care needs.

In addition, government have indicated that self-funders at a point to be specified in the future will be able to access council contract rates. In the county the estimated average sum paid in addition to council contract rates is circa £175 per week in adult residential care. If self-funders were able to access council contract rates care providers would expect an increase in care fees from the council i.e., a saving for a self-funder but a cost to the council.

Government have also indicated that new £2 billion provided to local government by 2024/25 is expected to be invested in ensuring care providers are paid a fair cost of care. At this point no additional information has been forthcoming on how an assessment of fair cost of care will be calculated locally, regionally, or nationally.

It is apparent therefore that the financial position for the council and local government will be significantly impacted by how much of the £3.6 billion is apportioned to each council but more importantly what the loss of income and increased cost amounts to. There could be significant winners and losers in this regard across the sector.

(c) **Council Tax**

Over recent years the government have retained a 2% council tax referendum level for council tax. In recent years however additional flexibility has been provided to increase council tax beyond the referendum limit by providing the ability for an adult social care precept.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 upper tier authorities could increase council tax by a total of 6% for the adult social care precept, with the government factoring this into its Spending Power calculations and expecting councils to apply these increases. Durham County Council increased its council tax by an additional 2% in each year in line with the government's expectations.

In 2021/22 the council was able to increase council tax for the adult social care precept by a further 3%, although the government allowed for this to be phased in over two years. The council, along with 53 other local authorities, chose to phase this increase in over two years, with 1% applied in 2021/22 and an indicative 2% built into MTFP(11) and MTFP(12) forecasts for 2022/23.

The CSR announced an additional adult social care precept of 1% would be available for 2022/23 and that an indicative 1% adult social care precept could be utilised for planning purposes for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This additional council raising capacity is in addition to the residual balance of the 3% not taken in 2021/22.

It is not expected that the new adult social care precept can be deferred into future years i.e., if the increase is not utilised in year, it will be lost. The full flexibility available to the council in 2022/23 therefore would be a circa 5% council tax increase, consisting of the 2% referendum limit, the 2% deferred adult social care precept increase from 2021/22 and the new 1% adult social care precept allowed for 2022/23.

(d) National Living Wage (NLW)

The CSR confirmed that the NLW will increase in 2022/23 by 6.6% to £9.50. The council was previously forecasting a circa 5.3% increase in 2022/23. The increase will need to be reflected in the revised based budget forecast for the 2022/23 budget and increases cost pressures by circa £1.6 million. The NLW is expected to increase to £10.03 in 2023/24 (a 5.6% increase year on year) and to £10.50 in 2024/25 (a 4.7% increase year on year).

(e) Business Rates

The CSR announced a wide range of discounts on business rates in 2022/23, focussing on retail and leisure sectors. Significantly, the business rate multiplier will be frozen in 2022/23. This will result in no inflationary uplift in business rates for 2022/23, when a 3.1% increase was anticipated based on prevailing CPI interest rates. All local authorities will be fully reimbursed for this loss of income via an increase in Section 31 grants. The changes that were announced are summarised below:

- (i) The revaluation of business rates will be every three years from 2023/24;
- (ii) There will be a one-year extension to transitional relief and supporting small business rates relief for 2022/23;

- (iii) There will be a 50% discount for 2022/23 for retail and hospitality of up to £110,000;
- (iv) An exemption for eligible plant and machinery used in onsite renewable energy generation and storage, such as rooftop solar panels and battery storage used with renewables and electric vehicle charging points, from 2023 until 2035. A 100% relief will also be provided for eligible low-carbon heat networks that have their own rates bill. The government will set out more detail on both changes in a technical consultation later this year, with changes to take effect in 2023; and
- (v) There will be a new business rate relief whereby no payment will need to be paid in any year where a business is investing in eligible improvements to an existing property to increase the rateable value. This will support businesses to make improvements to their property such as adding more rooms to a hotel, expanding a factory, or installing CCTV or bike sheds. The government will consult on how to implement this relief, which will take effect in 2023 and be reviewed in 2028.

(f) **Shared Prosperity Fund/ Community Renewal Fund/ Levelling Up**

The CSR confirmed the following allocations to the Shared Prosperity Fund:

	£m
2022/23	400
2023/24	700
2024/25	1,500

At this stage there is no confirmation on how this funding will be allocated to individual authorities.

Government have announced the initial allocations from the forerunner to the Shared Prosperity Fund - the Community Renewal Fund. In total the government announced £127 million of grant awards under this scheme, with the council being successful with one of its bids, with £0.836 million awarded to the Emerging Markets Innovation Accelerator project.

The council also received confirmation that the initial bid to the Levelling Up fund for Bishop Auckland of £20 million had been approved and in addition £50,000 will be forthcoming to carry out further feasibility into the review of the rail network between

Darlington and Weardale. No funding was allocated to the Leamside Line reopening scheme.

- 35 It was hoped that the government would confirm that it will provide local government with a three-year settlement. Indications are however that the settlement may only provide an indicative year two and three year settlement, thus leaving options open for government to amend funding allocations in 2023/24 possibly as part of the full or part introduction on the findings from the Fair Funding Review.
- 36 In addition, and disappointingly, the government have not announced any timing for the business rate reset. To date local authorities are receiving a forecast £1.5 billion more business rates than were included in the 2013/14 business rate retention baseline. The council expects to be a beneficiary from any such reset, although it is concerning that the additional funding being provided to local government of £1.5 billion matches the sum available from additional business rates being generated.

Core Spending Power

- 37 The CSR headlines an average real terms increase (after forecast inflation) for local government of 3.4% over the next three years. This would appear to be a reasonable uplift. However this sum includes the addition funding being provided by the health and social care levy which comes with significant new liabilities and loss of income. Government have also assumed in the CSR calculation that all local authorities will increase council tax by the maximum sum possible in each of the next three years. This represents the majority of the remaining real terms increase in core spending power. The additional £1.5 billion core funding represents a forecast 0.6% real terms increase in funding.
- 38 It is expected that full detail on individual local authority finance settlements and the impact upon core spending power figure will be published as part of the local government finance settlement.

Base Budget Pressures

- 39 The MTFP (12) report to Cabinet on 19 October 2021 provided an update on additional base budget pressures being experienced by the council, building on the initial report considered by Cabinet in July 2021.
- 40 It is becoming apparent that the council is likely to face additional base budget pressures in addition to those reported to Cabinet on 19 October. It is apparent that increased tonnages of household waste being collected, which are placing pressure on waste disposal budgets, are not reducing to pre pandemic levels, whilst substantial inflationary pressures on energy and diesel prices continue to be of concern. Any change in this regard will be reported to Cabinet in January 2022 as part of the local government finance settlement.

- 41 The announcement of a 6.6% increase in the NLW will have a major impact upon the 2022/23 budget as will the forecast 4% average inflation rate over the 2022 period. The government have announced an ending to the public sector pay pause. The current budget forecasts provide for only a 2% pay uplift and 1.5% price inflation provision.
- 42 The council will also need to be cognisant of emerging recruitment issues being faced across the council. A number of teams are beginning to struggle to recruit staff to vacant posts which is a similar challenge being faced across the national and local economy.

Council Tax increases 2022/23 to 2025/26

- 43 In line with the planning assumptions built into the previous report, there is an expectation that the council will increase its council tax in each of the next four years. This is a planning assumption at this stage as final decisions on council tax levels for 2022/23 will need to be considered and agreed by Full Council on 23 February 2022.
- 44 The MTFP(12) forecasts currently assume a 3.99% council tax increase in council tax in 2022/23, and 1.99% increases across the remainder of the MTFP(12) period.
- 45 The 3.99% increase in 2022/23 utilises the 2% adult social care precept flexibility deferred from 2021/22 and is in line with government recommendations as maximum increases in line with the referendum limits are factored into the Spending Power calculations and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Red Book forecasts.
- 46 In making the announcements on NHS and social care funding on 7 September 2021, the government stated that they expect demographic and unit cost pressures to be met through Council Tax, social care precept, and long-term efficiencies with the overall level of Local Government funding, including Council Tax and social care precept, to be determined in the round at the Spending Review.
- 47 This is particularly challenging for Durham given our low tax base and low tax raising capacity, where the additional revenue generated from council tax increases is insufficient alone to cover basic inflationary pressures, let alone any demographic and other unfunded and unavoidable cost pressures the council faces.
- 48 The increased Council Tax raising powers from the 1% additional Adult Social Care precepts in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 provide some increased flexibility in terms of the Councils Medium Term Financial Planning.

Conclusion

- 49 At this point the CSR announcements would appear to be better news than the council was previously forecasting.
- 50 The local government finance settlement is awaited however in order to provide the full detail and in addition clarity is required on what costs and loss of income local authorities will face in relation to lifetime care charge capping, self funder arrangements and fair cost of care proposals in adult care.
- 51 Alongside the ongoing assessment of base budget pressure, it is only when all information is available to the council that the budget proposals can be finalised for 2022/23.

Background papers

- Medium Term Financial Plan(12), 2022/23 - 2025/26 and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – Report to Cabinet 7 July 2021
- Medium Term Financial Plan(12), 2022/23 - 2025/26 – Report to Cabinet 19 October 2021
- Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 – Period to 30 September and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings – Report to Cabinet 17 November 2021

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget. It also has a fiduciary duty not to waste public resources.

Finance

The report provides a review of the content of the CSR and the likely high-level impact upon the council and local government, though confirmation of a number of matters is required as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement that will be published in December. The report also highlights a range of emerging base budget pressures that will need to be factored into the 2022/23 budget and across the MTFP(12) planning period.

Consultation

The approach to consultation on the 2022/23 budget was set out in the October Cabinet report, and the approach will utilise our existing County Durham Partnership networks and our AAPs. The feedback from the consultation will be factored into the planned MTFP(12) update report to Cabinet in January 2022.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality considerations are built into the budget planning process and underpins the approach to developing any MTFP(12) savings requirements. No new additional savings are included in this report.

Climate Change

The impact of final budget decisions will take into account climate change impacts. The updated MTFP forecasts reported to Cabinet in October included provision to mainstream the Low Carbon Team and made provision for the first phases of the electrification of the vehicle fleet, which will make a positive contribution to the council's carbon reduction targets.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues will be considered for any detailed MTFP(12) and Council Plan proposals as they are developed, and decisions made to take this forward.

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

Where any savings proposals in MTFP(12) impact upon employees, HR processes will be always followed. The report includes proposed investments in a number of teams to address corporate priorities and capacity issues.

Accommodation

None specific within this report.

Risk

Local government has been operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty, brought about by a series of one-year financial settlements, significant budget pressures in social care, special educational needs, disability services and other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and pay and price inflation.

Forecasting the likely ongoing impact of COVID-19 upon the council's expenditure, income and government funding levels adds a further layer of complexity and uncertainty.

At this point the CSR announcements would appear to be better news than the council was previously forecasting.

The local government finance settlement is awaited however in order to provide the full detail and in addition clarity is required on what costs and loss of income local authorities will face in relation to lifetime care charge capping, self-funder arrangements and fair cost of care proposals in adult care.

Alongside the ongoing assessment of base budget pressure, it is only when all information is available to the council that the budget proposals can be finalised for 2022/23.

Procurement

None specific within this report

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Cabinet

19 January 2022

**Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26
and Revenue Budget 2022/23**



Key Decision: CORP/R/21/02

Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for
Finance**

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on the development of MTFP(12), covering the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 and on the development of the 2022/23 revenue budget in the light of the provisional local government finance settlement published on 16 December 2021. The report includes updated financial forecasts and provisional council tax strategy, subject to the outcome of further consultation, that will be presented to Cabinet and County Council in February as part of the budget setting reports.

Executive Summary

- 2 On 15 December 2021 Cabinet considered an update on the 27 October 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcements. At that point the CSR was viewed as the first step towards a three year settlement for local government. It was noted however that although there had been an expectation that local government would receive a three-year finance settlement to provide much needed certainty, it was not clear that this would be forthcoming. It was also noted that there was a risk that government would only provide an indicative settlement in years two and

three, to provide flexibility to amend funding allocation methodologies in 2023/24 if the Fair Funding Review (FFR) was implemented at that time.

- 3 The CSR did announce additional core funding for local government, with a £4.8 billion base grant uplift for local government over the three-year CSR period (2022/23 to 2024/25). This funding was expected to be £1.6 billion a year, although circa £100 million per annum was expected to be allocated for specific activities within local government, leaving £1.5 billion per annum expected to be allocated to core local government funding from 2022/23 onwards.
- 4 The additional funding was viewed as recognition that as well as increased funding from council tax rises, local government also required additional core grant funding to address the significant budget pressures across the sector. This funding would need to cover the cost of the 1.25% increase in employer's national insurance costs from 2022/23.
- 5 The provisional local government settlement was published on 16 December and confirmed the additional £1.5 billion funding forthcoming to local government and the allocation methodologies. Disappointingly in line with expectations, the financial settlement was again only for one year, with confirmation that consultation on the FFR will begin in the spring of 2022 with the expected aim of implementing changes to funding allocations for the whole of local government in 2023/24. No detail on what the FFR formula would be or whether this would be linked to a Business Rate Reset, further Business Rate Retention or include consideration of the Public Health Grant was published with the draft settlement, so there remains significant uncertainty beyond 2022/23.
- 6 A proportion of the new core funding has been provided via an increase in the Social Care grant – equating to 42.4% of the additional funding made available. The council will receive £8.1 million of the £636 million provided nationally, increasing the Social Care Grant we will receive to £31 million in 2022/23.
- 7 The majority of the remaining £1.5 billion of funding is to be provided as a new 'Services Grant'. The national sum is £822 million of which the council will receive £8.8 million. It is concerning however that the Services Grant will be a one off grant i.e. there is no guarantee of this sum being received in 2023/24 or beyond. Government is expected to confirm however that this new funding stream is being provided to cover the ongoing costs of the 1.25% employer's national insurance increase which is forecast to cost the council £1.5 million per annum from 2022/23 onwards.
- 8 It is understood that this significant new grant has been notified as 'one off' to provide the government with funding flexibility to implement the FFR in 2023/24. The FFR is forecast to result in significant reallocation of funding between local authorities leading to winners and losers across the sector. Having as much as £822 million available to redistribute in 2023/24 will

enable the government to smooth in any changes either by providing transition funding to any authority who loses funding or possibly to limit losses on an ongoing basis.

- 9 In total, the council will receive additional core funding in 2022/23 of £16.9 million from these two allocations, which will be vital in ensuring significant ongoing budget pressures can be financed such as the National Living Wage 6.6% uplift, the impact of inflation upon costs, especially energy costs which are forecast to increase in 2022 by over 40% and from the continuing pressures in Children and Young Peoples Services.
- 10 The provisional settlement also included inflationary uplifts to both the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF), which will result in additional funding to the council of £1.8 million next year. In addition, it was announced that there would be a continuation of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) for one further year with the council receiving £4.1 million. It is expected that the future of the NHB beyond 2022/23 will be decided as part of the FFR.
- 11 Finally, although announcements on several specific grant allocations are still awaited, along with details of all capital grant allocations, the provisional settlement did include the initial allocations to local authorities from the Health and Social Care levy. The CSR announced a sum of £3.6 billion would be payable over the next three years rising from £200 million in 2022/23 to £2 billion in 2024/25.
- 12 In the provisional settlement it was announced that £1.4 billion of the £3.6 billion available would be allocated as a grant for Market Sustainability and for Fair Cost of Care for adult social care. Funding of £162 million is to be provided in 2022/23 followed by £600 million in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. The allocation for the council in 2022/23 is £1.9 million with this sum expected to be utilised to support the adult social care markets and prepare for the future work to secure market sustainability and the planning to move to a fair cost of care for adult services in 2023/24 and beyond.
- 13 Overall, the provisional settlement is to be welcomed with additional funding being provided to the council next year, although circa 55% of the additional funding is one off and not certain for 2023/24 and beyond and there is no clarity on the future of the NHB.
- 14 The additional funding provided in the settlement for 2022/23 will enable the council to make decisions regarding the requirement for savings in 2022/23, whether sums could be made available for additional investment and what level of council tax increase to consider next year.
- 15 To protect front line service provision no additional savings are recommended in these areas for 2022/23. Additional corporate savings of £1.2 million to supplement the already agreed 2022/23 savings of £1.227 million are included in the 2022/23 budget.

- 16 The additional government funding provided alongside MTFP(12) savings have allowed investments to be recommended in priority front line service provision. In this regard £2.6 million of additional investments are recommended in Neighbourhood and Climate Change (NCC) and Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG).
- 17 In NCC additional investment is recommended in relation to bin replacement, street scene, community protection, neighbourhood wardens, pest control, public rights of way, nature reserves, woodland protection, allotments and on our climate change objectives
- 18 In REG funding is provided to continue with the car parking free after two policy, pending a review of car parking delivery during 2022 to inform policy beyond next year.
- 19 Additional base budget pressures of in relation Looked After Childrens costs (c£3.4 million) and additional inflation for pay and price increases and for waste disposal contracts (c£2 million) have been factored into the updated 2022/23 budget forecasts, augmenting the sums previously reported in terms of Adult Social Care fee pressures (c£12 million); Energy Cost increases (c£3.1 million) and Home to School Transport cost pressures (£2.6 million).
- 20 Taking on board the available government funding, taxbase growth, base budget pressures, investments and MTFP(12) savings it is recommended that a 3% council tax increase be considered for 2022/23. The council is able to increase council tax by a maximum of 4.99% in 2022/23 being 1.99% for the referendum level, a 2% adult social care precept deferred from 2021/22 and a 1% adult social care precept uplift for 2022/23. Against the background of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis however the recommendation is that a lower council tax increase of 3% is considered for 2022/23. At this point it is forecast that a 3% council tax increase will result in a balanced budget position for 2022/23, with no requirement to use reserves to balance the budget. A 3% increase in council tax could be comprised of a 0 to 1.99% increase in the standard council tax precept, coupled with a 3% to 1.01% increase in the Adult Social Care precept.
- 21 In terms of later years of MTFP(12) it is expected that further savings will be required to balance the budget. The greatest risk and uncertainty faced at this point being for 2023/24 due to the expected implementation of the FFR and the short term nature of the £8.776 million Services grant receivable in 2022/23. The forecast savings shortfall for 2023/24 at this point is £16.607 million with a £29.987 million shortfall over the four year MTFP(12) period, assuming council tax increases of 2.99% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and a 1.99% increase in 2025/26.
- 22 Planning for the council 2022/23 budget will continue over the coming weeks with the budget report to be presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022 before being presented to Full Council on 23 February 2022.

Recommendations

23 It is recommended that Cabinet

- (a) note the content of the report detailing the provisional local government finance settlement; and
- (b) note the recommended investments within NCC and REG;
- (c) note the proposed council tax increase for 2022/23 of 3%. This position will be considered at full council on 23 February 2022;
- (d) note the forecast balanced budget position for 2022/23 and the forecast £29.987 million savings shortfall over the four year MTFP(12) period; and
- (e) note that the 2022/23 revenue and capital budget and MTFP(12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 budget report will be presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022 and to Full Council on 23 February 2022.

Background

- 24 Previous reports have been presented to Cabinet on MTFP(12) – in July, October and December, to ensure updates are provided upon forecast budget pressures and the need to achieve savings to balance the councils budget.
- 25 This report provides an update on the provisional local government finance settlement published on 16 December 2021. It includes updated financial forecasts including a range of new investments and additional budget pressures that have been factored into the financial forecasts and provisional council tax strategy, subject to the outcome of further consultation, that will be presented to Cabinet and County Council in February as part of the budget setting reports

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

- 26 The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 16 December 2021 and confirmed increases in funding for local government mainly as a result of the £1.5 billion of additional core funding for local authorities announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 27 October 2021. The additional funding provided nationally to local authorities is as detailed below:
- (a) **Services Grant £822 million** – a new one off grant apportioned based upon the 2013/14 local authority Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). Utilising this methodology ensures all local authorities including district councils receive additional funding. The council will receive £8.776 million of this sum, equating to 1.07% of the national allocation;
 - (b) **Social Care Grant additional £636 million**– an increase in this funding stream from £1.1 billion to £1.7 billion. This sum is apportioned to local authorities based upon the Adults Relative Needs Formula (RNF) alongside an element of equalisation to consider that local authorities can raise differing amounts from council tax increases due to varying size of council taxbases. This funding is only payable to upper tier authorities who provide social care services. The council will receive £8.076 million of this sum, equating to 1.27% of the national allocation, increasing our social care grant to £30.955 million in 2022/23;
 - (c) **Revenue Support Grant (RSG) £72 million** – local authorities will receive an inflation uplift of 3.1% in line with the September 2021 Consumer Price Index (CPI) on their 2021/22 RSG allocations. The council will receive an additional £0.873 million of RSG funding next year, increasing RSG received to £29.1 million;

- (d) **Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) £63 million** - local authorities will receive an inflation uplift of 3.1% in line with the September 2021 Consumer Price Index (CPI) on their 2021/22 IBCF allocations. The council will receive an additional £0.906 million of funding next year, increasing the IBCF received to £30.865 million;
 - (e) **Reduction in New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding of £68 million** – it was previously forecast that the NHB may be abolished or substantially reduced from 2022/23. The government have however agreed to continue the NHB funding for one more year. The sum to be paid out in 2022/23 nationally is £68 million lower than in 2021/22 due to two years payments falling out (2018/19 and 2021/22) and only being replaced by the 2022/23 allocation. Under normal circumstances this would be paid back to local authorities as ‘Returned NHB’. This is not the case on this occasion with the NHB instead being utilised to finance inflationary uplifts in the RSG and IBCF allocations. The council is forecasting it will receive £4.082 million in NHB funding in 2022/23, a £0.394 million reduction from the current year.
- 27 Within the provisional local government finance settlement, the government have confirmed that there would be consultation with the local government sector on the implementation of the Fair Funding Review (FFR). The FFR has been delayed for a number of years and it was thought the government may postpone the implementation until 2025/26. It is apparent however that the intention is to consult on the FFR in the Spring of 2022 with an expectation that this could lead to implementation in 2023/24.
- 28 No detail on what the FFR formula would be or whether this would be linked to a Business Rate Reset, further Business Rate Retention or still include consideration of the Public Health Grant allocations was published with the provisional settlement, so there remains significant uncertainty beyond 2022/23.
- 29 The implementation of the FFR was originally expected to be introduced at the same time as the move to 75% Business Rate Retention (BRR). It is expected however that the move to 75% BRR will not occur in the current parliament. One significant element of the move to 75% was to be the integration of the Public Health grant into BRR and the implementation of the ACRA formula for the redistribution of this grant leading to a forecast £18 million reduction in the grant allocation for the council. Although the cancellation of the move does not indicate that the ACRA formula will not be introduced for a standalone Public Health grant it would certainly improve the council’s lobbying position as it would be totally transparent that this funding stream was being significantly reduced for the county.
- 30 Although the additional funding announced in the provisional local government finance settlement is welcome there are concerns for the council in the following areas:

- (a) **Services Grant** - £822 million (55%) of the additional £1.5 billion of new funding for local government announced in the CSR should be considered as one off funding. Government have stated that the 1.25% increase in employer's national insurance is to be financed from this funding stream, indicating some of the funding should be forthcoming to the council in 2023/24 though there can be no guarantee for the remainder of the funding. It is believed that the government are treating this funding as one off to provide flexibility to implement the findings of the FFR where there is expected to be significant winners and losers across the sector. The funding available could be utilised to provide transition funding for losing authorities over a number of years or to provide recurrent funding to ensure no authority loses funding. Under either of these scenarios the council could not guarantee receiving the funding it will receive through new Service Grant next year into 2023/24;
- (b) **Social Care Grant** – although the additional funding is welcome it is disappointing that only 42% of the additional £1.5 billion has been allocated via this area when it is children's and adult social care where the major recurrent budget pressures are being felt by upper tier Councils like ourselves;
- (c) **New Homes Bonus** – the council is receiving the final year of four years of recurrent funding from the 2019/20 NHB allocation in addition to a one off 2022/23 sum. In total the council will receive £4.082 million in 2022/23. This sum will not be payable however in 2023/24 and the unused £68 million of NHB nationally was used to finance inflation uplifts in RSG and IBCF in 2022/23. It is of concern that this method of utilisation could be considered in future years including being used to supplement transition funding for the FFR i.e. the council again would have no guarantee of receiving any of the NHB funds in 2023/24.

31 In addition to the funding streams detailed above the council will receive an additional £0.039 million from an uplift in the Lower Services Tier grant due to a small change in data driving the apportionment of the grant. The Lower Services Tier Grant will increase to £0.786 million in 2022/23.

32 The provisional settlement also announced the first tranche of funding from the health and social care levy. The £12 billion available nationally will be financed by the 1.25% in employers and employee's national insurance increase in April 2022 and of this sum, £3.6 billion is to be paid to local government over the 2022/23 to 2024/25 period. It is expected that this sum will be required for local authorities to cover costs and lost income associated with the following

- (a) **Adult care cost cap of £86,000** – this being expected over time to result in a loss of income to local government;

- (b) **Increase in means test asset threshold from £23,000 to £100,000** – again leading to an increase in costs to local authorities as a result of loss of income; and
- (c) **Self Funders** – government had indicated that from October 2023 self funders could ask to be accepted on council care contracts thus securing lower care costs. It was expected this would lead to increased costs to local authorities as care providers would seek increases in fees from the council to recover lost income from self funders.
- 33 The provisional settlement provided further detail in relation to the funding available to local government, with an initial allocation of £192 million being paid to local authorities in 2022/23 from a ‘Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care’ grant financed from the health and social care levy. The government guidance in this regard being that:
- (a) local authorities will be required to carry out a Fair Cost of Care exercise for both adult residential and domiciliary care in 2022 to seek to then implement from 2023/24 onwards to ensure care providers are paid a fair cost for provision; and
- (b) the funding would be £162 million in 2022/23 rising to £600 million in both 2023/24 and 204/25 to meet the outcome of that exercise.
- 34 The provisional settlement set out that the council will receive £1.905 million in 2022/23, representing 1.18% of the £162 million being invested nationally. Although no allocation has been advised for 2023/24 and 2024/25 it is forecast that the sums payable will increase by £5.151 million to £7.056 million in 2023/24 with this sum also payable in 2024/25 In terms of what the £3.6 billion payable to local government will be allocated, for the governments expectations are detailed below:

	Fair Cost	Cost Cap/Means Test	TOTAL
	£m	£m	£m
2022/23	162	0	162
2023/24	600	800	1,400
2024/25	600	1,400	2,000
TOTAL	1,362	2,200	3,562

- 35 The major concern for the council will be whether the sums allocated to it will be sufficient to cover the additional costs and loss of income experienced from implementing the recommended changes. The council is forecast to spend circa £180 million on purchasing adult social care in

2022/23 and as such the sums being made available for a fair cost of care exercise may not be sufficient to meet market expectations.

- 36 At this stage there are no announcements of any additional COVID support funding for local government. This position will continue to be monitored closely in the coming months. Council income in areas such as leisure, theatres, and car parking are very much linked to the outcome of the pandemic and impacts upon the budget will need to be carefully considered.

Core Spending Power (CSP)

- 37 The provisional CSP figures for the council would indicate a positive position compared to previous years. The England average is a 6.9% increase next year, whilst Durham's position is forecast to be 8.4%. A number of issues need to be considered in this regard however:
- (a) the CSP calculation forecasts that the council will increase council tax by the full 4.99% available i.e. the 1.99% referendum level plus the 2% adult social care precept deferred from 2021/22 and the new 1% adult social precept. Any 1% below the 4.99% assumed would reduce the CSP by 0.5%;
 - (b) the CSP includes the new Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care grant of £1.9 million which comes associated with a new burden and as such is not available to support core council service provision.
- 38 In terms of comparative CSP per dwelling positions the table below compares the council with a number of authorities and the England average. If Durham received CSP to the national average CSP of £2,155 per dwelling the council would receive an additional £39 million of funding.

Area	Core Spending Power Per Dwelling
	£
England	2,155
Durham	1,999
Middlesbrough	2,297
Newcastle	2,153
Northumberland	2,096
Richmond upon Thames	2,095
Wokingham	2,079

Review of MTFP Model

39 The MTFP(12) update report to Cabinet in October provided an update on the forecast revenue budget position for 2022/23 as well as an update for the MTFP(12) period 2022/23 to 2025/26. An ongoing review of base budget pressures and savings options has been carried out resulting in a number of amendments to the base budget pressures forecast for the MTFP(12) period. The major amendments included in the updated MTFP(12) model attached at Appendix 2 are detailed below:

(a) **Government Funding**

The model includes the government funding published in the provisional settlement on 16 December 2021. In addition, the government have announced that the School Improvement Grant will be phased out over the next two years. This £0.8 million grant provides funding to finance the School Improvement team in Children and Young People's Services (CYPS). This service is vital in supporting school improvement in the counties schools.

CYPS have advised that there will be a significant impact upon the authority's ability to support school improvement if the full £0.8 million budget was withdrawn. Government have advised that £0.4 million will be withdrawn in 2022/23 with the final £0.4 million in 2023/24. To ensure support can still be provided to schools the £0.4 million loss of income will be funded corporately via the MTFP in 2022/23 with CYPS expected to reduce costs in the service by £0.4 million in 2023/24.

(b) **Council Tax Base**

The 17 October 2021 MTFP(12) update report forecast a £2 million increase in the taxbase for 2022/23. The council tax taxbase setting report to Cabinet on 17 November 2021 however, identified a 2072.6 (1.46%) Band D equivalent increase in the taxbase for 2022/23 equating to a £3.5 million increase.

(c) **Pay Inflation**

Pay inflation was previously forecast to be 2% across the MTFP(12) period. In the light of rising inflation this has been reassessed with the forecast increased to 3% in 2022/23 and 2.5% in 2023/24 with 2% per annum provided thereafter.

(d) **Price Inflation**

Price Inflation was previously forecast to be 1.5% across the MTFP(12) period. In the light of rising inflation this has been

reassessed with the forecast increased to 3% in 2022/23 and 2% in 2023/24 with 1.5% per annum thereafter.

(e) **Adult Social Care Fees**

All costs associated with social care fee uplifts has been consolidated in the MTFP(12) model. The consolidated sum represents the forecast cost to uplift home care fees by 10% in 2022/23 and to uplift other adult social care fees in 2022/23 to cover the impact of the 6.6% increase in the national living wage, the cost of the 1.25% increase in employer's national insurance and the impact of general inflation costs.

(f) **Employers National Insurance**

The forecast impact of the 1.25% increase has been recalculated to exclude all grant funded schemes and trading areas of activity reducing the forecast cost to the General Fund to £1.5 million.

(g) **Energy Price Increase**

In October 2022 the MTFP(12) update report to Cabinet highlighted that energy prices were increasing substantially, impacting upon both 2021/22 and the base budget in 2022/23. It is now forecast that the increased costs in 2022/23 will be £3.1 million more than the 2021/22 base budget, as compared with the previous £2.2 million forecast increase.

(h) **Childrens Demographics**

The looked after children budget continues to face significant pressure mainly as a result of the complex nature of children requiring care but also due to the lack of supply of care placements which is resulting in increased costs. The budget forecast has increased from £1 million to £4.4 million to ensure a sustainable budget is in place for 2022/23.

(i) **Home To School Transport**

Growth required in this budget was previously forecast to be £3 million. Updated forecasts considering the impact of service volumes at cost from the beginning of the school year in September has enabled this sum to be reduced to £2.6 million.

(j) **Waste Haulage contract**

Significant pressure continues to be faced in waste disposal. The increase in the 2022/23 cost of the waste haulage contract is now

forecast to be £0.375 million, £0.175 million higher than the previous forecast.

(k) **Household Waste Recycling Contract**

It was previously forecast that the cost of this contract would increase by £1 million in 2023/24 when the contract was reprocured. It is apparent however that to maintain the current service against the background of the pandemic and in light of benchmarking of costs of contracts elsewhere, then a £1.8 million contract uplift will be required as we prepare to reprocure the service in 2023/24.

(l) **Waste Tonnages**

During the pandemic waste tonnages collected increased. It was previously forecast that this increase would reduce as lockdown periods were eased. This has not been the case however and tonnages at this stage require a £1 million increase in the 2022/23 base budget to ensure a balanced budget is in place next year.

40 In addition to the amended base budget pressures detailed above consideration has also be given to a range of priorities for further investment. The following investments, which build on the sums included in the October report, are recommended for inclusion in the 2022/23 budget:

(a) **Low Carbon Development and Partnership Officer - £0.1 million**

This investment will supplement the £0.297 million already included in MTFP(12) plans across 2022/23 and 2023/24. The additional £0.1 million will fund a post to take forward the climate change commitments and manage a cross-sector working arrangement to promote and deliver climate change interventions through new joint funding/commissioning initiatives. This will facilitate educational awareness, social media promotion etc.

(b) **Bin Replacement - £0.1 million**

The base budget for bin replacement and repairs is not adequate and needs to be increased to sustain service provision. This is an essential service and failure to increase the budget will either mean budgetary overspend or lack of bins next year

(c) **Street Scene Efficiency - £0.130 million**

Improvements to monitoring and intelligence gathering across all Street Scene services. Investment will include vehicle tracking on street sweepers to target limited resources where most needed. The

investment also includes two new sweepers (one for footpaths and one for roads) plus two operatives.

(d) Car Parking - £0.6 million

The "Free After 2" parking initiative was adopted in the 2021/22 after the base budget was agreed and resulted in a reduction of £600,000 in car parking income. The costs in 2021/22 are being met corporately and it is proposed that the initiative is extended into 2022/23 pending the outcome of the countywide Parking Strategy review to inform policy for 2023/24 and beyond.

(e) Community Protection Workforce Development – 2022/23 - £0.890 million, 2023/24 - £0.218 million, 2024/24 - £0.196 million and 2025/26 recovery of £0.2 million

Provision has been made for the implementation of the Community Protection Workforce Development Plan to address the current skills and expertise gap within the Community Protection service and meet the future workforce requirements of the service to ensure business continuity and the Council's statutory obligations are met. The additional investment will enable the service to recruit over the current staffing establishment. This revised establishment will then be reduced in future years as more experienced colleagues retire and posts at that time are not filled hence the recovery of budget growth from 2025/26 onwards. MTFP(13) and beyond will factor in further recovery of the time limited investment in this area as part of this plan.

(f) Neighbourhood Wardens- £0.120 million

Two new posts (Warden Manager and Warden Co-ordinator) are required to help ensure that the service is operating efficiently, improving outcomes for communities and providing management information for the service.

(g) Pest Control - £0.141 million

An increase of one investigations officer and two pest control officers plus 0.5 fte support staff has been factored into the budgets from 2022/23 onwards. This will ensure the current backlog of investigations is addressed and will return wait times to reasonable levels and will include the introduction of welfare assistance scheme for public health pests. The proposal includes an additional £10,000 income through domestic pest treatments from next year.

(h) **Woodland Protection Officer - £0.045 million**

A new post to take forward and deliver new and ongoing externally funded tree and woodland initiatives.

(i) **Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officer - £0.100 million**

A new post to produce and co-ordinate the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A vital component in responding to the potential ecological emergency declaration. This proposal also includes an implementation budget matched with planning gain and other funds to promote delivery.

(j) **Countryside Estates Management - £0.105 million**

Key to the implementation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be the ninety two countryside sites that the Council is responsible for. Investment will enable two Nature Reserve Officers to target Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites, engaging stakeholders and volunteers to help manage and maintain these facilities.

(k) **Allotments - £0.360 million**

An additional three engagement staff to work with the fifty associations that run sites across the county and three enforcement staff to deliver the new policy agreed by Cabinet. A maintenance and initiative budget will also be created to incentivise associations and individual sites to make improvements.

Council Tax Strategy and MTFP(12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 Update

41 The adjustments to MTFP(12) planning detailed in this report have impacted upon the forecast savings requirements for the 2022/23 to 2025/26 period.

42 The current forecast of savings required for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 before any increase in 2022/23 council tax or any new MTFP12 savings are factored in is detailed overleaf:

	Savings Requirement	Less Savings Already Approved	Savings Shortfall
	£m	£m	£m
2022/23	9.484	(1.227)	8.257
2023/24	16.882	(0.275)	16.607
2024/25	6.017	0	6.017
2025/26	7.708	0	7.708
TOTAL	40.091	(1.502)	38.589

43 The above table shows a forecasts £8.257 million savings shortfall in 2022/23 and a £38.589 million shortfall across the MTFP(12) period. This position is after assumed council tax increases in 2023/24 and 2024/25 of 2.99% in each year and 1.99% in 2025/26, however it does not take into account any additional MTFP(12) savings available to supplement the £1.227 million of savings previously agreed by Council or any council tax increases next year. At this stage the following three corporate savings can be considered for inclusion in the 2022/23 budget.

- (a) **Staff Turnover £1 million** – the current staff turnover percentage included in base budget setting is 3%. This assumes that as staff leave council employment it will take a period to fill posts thus generating a saving. In recent years the 3% figure has been exceeded and it is felt prudent to increase this figure to 3.5%, thus generating a £1 million saving;
- (b) **Insurance Costs £0.1 million** – the recent procurement of insurance policies has resulted in a £0.1 million reduction in cost;
- (c) **Jade Industrial Development £0.1 million** – the major capital development at Jade was forecast to be self financing with borrowing costs to be covered via rentals generated from tenancies. The development has been enormously successful and it is forecast that annual rental income will exceed the annual borrowing costs enabling a contribution of £0.1 million to MTFP(12) savings.

44 The £1.2 million MTFP(12) saving detailed above will complement the £1.227 million of MTFP(10 and 11) savings already approved for 2022/23, bringing total savings next year to £2.427 million.

45 Factoring these savings into the 2022/23 forecast reduces the savings shortfall to £7.057 million. This shortfall enables consideration to be given to reducing the council tax increase for 2022/23 from the previously modelled 3.99% to 3%. It is important to note that the council is able to increase council tax in 2022/23 by a maximum of 4.99%. The 4.99% increase comprising of the following;

- (a) a 1.99% referendum limit increase;
- (b) a 2% adult social care precept deferred from 2021/22;
- (c) a 1% 2022/23 adult social care precept utilising additional powers provided in the CSR.

46 A 3% increase would support our communities as they face other household budget pressures. A 3% increase in council tax could be comprised of a 0 to 1.99% increase in the standard council tax precept, coupled with a 3% to 1.01% increase in the Adult Social Care precept.

47 In addition to funding available from the adult social care precept the government have also provided additional funding through the Social Care Grant to invest in both adults and childrens social care. On the basis of a 3% adult social care precept increase, the funding available to support the 2022/23 budget would be as follows:

	£m
Adult Social Care Precept	7.050
Social Care Grant Increase	8.067
Market Sustainability Grant	<u>1.900</u>
TOTAL	<u>17.017</u>

48 Significant sums are identified in the attached MTFP(12) model attached at Appendix 2 for investment in both adult and children’s social care in 2022/23. The table below identifies the budget growth proposed for adult and children’s social care:

	Adults £m	Childrens £m	TOTAL £m
Pay Inflation	0.9	0.9	1.8
Price Inflation	(0.7)	0.9	0.2
National Insurance	0.2	0.2	0.4
Adult Social Care Fees	12.0	0.0	12.0
Energy	0.0	0.1	0.1
Adult Social Care Levy	0.5	0.0	0.5
Childrens Demographic	0.0	4.4	4.4
Children’s Safeguarding	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.1</u>	<u>0.1</u>
TOTAL	<u>12.9</u>	<u>6.6</u>	<u>19.5</u>

- 49 The council is forecast to expend an additional £19.5 million in 2022/23 on adult and children’s social care, which is higher than the £17.017 million of funding and council tax that would be raised to support social care statutory social functions.
- 50 In terms of council tax increases included in later years of MTFP(12) the council will be able to increase council tax by a maximum of 2.99% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 consisting of a 1.99% referendum limit and a 1% adult social care precept. On that basis a 2.99% council tax increase is assumed for planning purposes for 2023/24 and 204/25 with a 1.99% increase assumed for 2025/26.
- 51 The inclusion of £1.2 million of MTFP(12) savings and a 3% increase in council tax has the following impact upon the MTFP(12) model which is detailed at Appendix 2:

	Savings Requirement	Less Savings Already Approved	Savings Shortfall
	£m	£m	£m
2022/23	2.427	(2.427)	0
2023/24	16.882	(0.275)	16.607
2024/25	6.017	0	6.017
2025/26	7.363	0	7.363
TOTAL	32.689	(2.702)	29.987

Conclusion

- 47 The provisional settlement is in the main positive for the council in supporting the balancing of the 2022/23 budget. The provisional settlement however does not provide long term certainty for local government with many uncertainties still in place in relation to settlements beyond 2022/23.

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget for 2022/23. It also has a fiduciary duty not to waste public resources.

Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent amending legislation provides the provisions and criteria for awarding discretionary rate relief. The Localism Act 2011 amended Section 47 Clause 69, of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to allow local authorities to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer (not just those who can currently be granted discretionary relief), via a local discount scheme.

Finance

The report details the impact of the provisional local government finance settlement upon the council. In total, the council will receive additional core funding in 2022/23 of £16.9 million from these two allocations, which will be vital in ensuring significant ongoing budget pressures can be financed such as the National Living Wage 6.6% uplift, the impact of inflation upon costs, especially energy costs which are forecast to increase in 2022 by over 40% and from the continuing pressures in Children and Young Peoples Services.

The provisional settlement also included inflationary uplifts to both the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF), which will result in additional funding to the council of £1.8 million next year. In addition, it was announced that there would be a continuation of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) for one further year with the council receiving £4.1 million. It is expected that the future of the NHB beyond 2022/23 will be decided as part of the FFR.

Finally, although announcements on several specific grant allocations are still awaited, along with details of all capital grant allocations, the provisional settlement did include the initial allocations to local authorities from the Health and Social Care levy. The CSR announced a sum of £3.6 billion would be payable over the next three years rising from £200 million in 2022/23 to £2 billion in 2024/25.

The additional government funding provided alongside MTFP(12) savings outlined in the report have allowed investments to be included in priority front line service provision. In this regard £2.6 million of additional investments are recommended in Neighbourhood and Climate Change (NCC) and Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG).

Taking on board the available government funding, taxbase growth, base budget pressures, investments and MTFP(12) savings the updated financial forecasts include a 3% council tax increase for 2022/23.

The council is able to increase council tax by a maximum of 4.99% in 2022/23 being 1.99% for the referendum level, a 2% adult social care precept deferred from 2021/22 and a 1% adult social care precept uplift for 2022/23. At this point it is forecast that a 3% council tax increase will result in a balanced budget position for 2022/23, with no requirement to use reserves to balance the budget.

In terms of later years of MTFP(12) it is expected that further savings will be required to balance the budget.

Consultation

The approach to consultation on the 2022/23 budget was set out in the October Cabinet report, and the approach will utilise our existing County Durham Partnership networks and our AAPs. The consultation process for MTFP(12) is ongoing and will influence the final budget report in February 2022.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 all public authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, “have due regard to the need to” eliminate conduct that is prohibited by the Act. Such conduct includes discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to protected characteristics but also requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a “relevant protected characteristic” and persons who do not. This means consideration of equality analysis and impacts is an essential element that Members must take into account when considering these savings proposals

Climate Change

The budget will provide funding to reflect this priority.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues will be considered for each of the proposals as they are developed and decisions made to take these forward. There are no human right implications from the information within the report.

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

A robust approach to Risk Assessment across the MTFP process will continue to be followed.

Local government has been operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty, brought about by a series of one-year financial settlements, significant budget pressures in social care, special educational needs, disability services and other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and pay and price inflation. These pressures are expected to continue and potentially escalate across the MTFP(12) planning period.

The provisional local government finance settlement published on 16 December 2021 provided more funding than what the council was previously forecasting. However, a significant proportion of this additional grant is one off funding pending the outcome of consultation on the implementation of the Fair Funding Review (FFR), which has been delayed for a number of years.

It was initially thought the government may postpone the implementation until 2025/26. It is apparent however that the intention is to consult on the FFR in the Spring of 2022 with an expectation that this could lead to implementation in 2023/24.

No detail on what the FFR formula will be or whether this would be linked to a Business Rate Reset, further Business Rate Retention or still include consideration of the Public Health Grant allocations was published with the provisional settlement, so there remains significant uncertainty beyond 2022/23.

The implementation of the FFR was originally expected to be introduced at the same time as the move to 75% Business Rate Retention (BRR). It is expected however that the move to 75% BRR will not occur in the current parliament. One significant element of the move to 75% was to be the integration of the Public Health grant into BRR and the implementation of the ACRA formula for the redistribution of this grant leading to a forecast £18 million reduction in the grant allocation for the council. Although the cancellation of the move does not indicate that the ACRA formula will not be introduced for a standalone Public Health grant it would certainly improve the council's lobbying position as it would be totally transparent that this funding stream was being significantly reduced for the county.

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Medium Term Financial Plan - MTFP(12) 2022/23 - 2025/26 Model

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Government Funding				
Revenue Support Grant	-873	-580	-445	-450
Services Grant	-8,776	8,776	0	0
Social Care Grant	-8,067	0	0	0
Social Care Levy Funding	-1,900	-9,500	-3,300	0
IBCF Inflation	-906	0	0	0
Lower Tier Services Grant Inflation	-39	0	0	0
B Rates/S31 - S31 Adj & RPI increase (4.9%/2%/1.5%/1.5%)	-4,985	-1,500	-1,100	-1,100
Top Up - RPI increase (4.9%/2%/1.5%/1.5%)	-3,349	-1,400	-1,050	-1,050
New Homes Bonus	394	0	0	0
Loss of School Improvement Grant	400	0	0	0
Other Funding Sources				
Council Tax Increase (3%/3%/3%/2%)	-7,050	-7,200	-7,300	-5,000
Council Tax Base increase	-3,500	-2,000	-2,000	-1,500
Business Rate Tax Base increase	-500	-500	-500	-500
Estimated Variance in Resource Base	-39,151	-13,904	-15,695	-9,600
Pay inflation (3%/2.5%/2%/2%)	7,100	6,100	5,100	5,300
Price Inflation (3%/2%/1.5%/1.5%) - excludes social care fees	2,923	1,800	1,300	1,400
Base Budget Pressures				
Social Care Fee Inflation Uplift - includes NLW, NIC and CPI	12,000	7,900	6,800	3,300

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
National Living Wage Other Service Areas	300	350	400	50
National Insurance Increase	1,500	0	0	0
Pension Fund Auto Enrolment costs	500	0	0	0
Pension Fund Revaluation	0	-2,000	0	0
Energy Price Increases	3,100	0	0	0
Social Care System Licenses	0	100	0	0
Adults Demographic Pressures	0	1,000	1,000	1,000
Adults - costs associated with Social Care reform (£1.9m - £1.4m)	500	9,500	3,300	0
Children's Demographic Pressures	4,400	2,000	2,000	2,000
Children's Safeguarding Staffing	110	0	0	0
Home to School Transport	2,600	0	0	0
Loss of School SLA Income and Sales support	100	0	0	0
Materials Recycling Facilities Contract	1,000	0	0	0
Waste Haulage Contract	375	0	0	0
Household Waste Recycling Contract	1,800	0	0	0
Residual Waste Tonnages	1,000	0	0	0
Tees Valley SPV Set Up Costs	200	0	0	30
Low Carbon Team - staffing & partnership development	313	84	0	0
Vehicle Fleet - Transfer to electric vehicles	0	0	0	1,328
Drainage Inspections - mainstream investment	250	0	0	0
Bin Replacement Uplift	100	0	0	0
Street Scene Efficiency, I.T. Improvements and Innovations	130	0	0	0
Free after 2 Parking Initiative	600	0	0	0
Community Protection Workforce Development	890	218	196	-200
Neighbourhood Wardens	120	0	0	0
Pest Control	141	0	0	0
Woodland Protection / Nature Reserves / Public Rights of Way	250	0	0	-145

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Allotments - Engagement Officers & Maintenance	360	0	0	0
Multi Storey Car Parks - 24/7 management	200	0	0	0
Corporate Property and Land - additional staffing	600	0	0	0
REG Senior Restructure	250	0	0	0
Legal Services - Staffing and Barristers costs	310	0	0	0
Coroners Service - Pathology Services and staffing	198	0	0	0
HR/OD Development	185	0	0	0
Veterans Leisure Discounts	45	0	0	0
Unfunded Superannuation	-100	-100	-100	-100
Prudential Borrowing	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Net Collection Fund Position after 75% Grant applied	450	834	-1,284	0
Cessation 2021/22 Short Term Investments	-10,000	0	0	0
TOTAL PRESSURES	37,800	30,786	21,712	16,963
Use of One Off funds				
Adjustment for use of BSR in previous year	3,778	0	0	0
Use of Budget Support Reserve	0	0	0	0
Savings				
Savings Agreed in MTFP(10)	-977	-275	0	0
Savings Agreed in MTFP(11)	-250	0	0	0
MTFP(12) Savings	-1,200	0	0	0
SAVINGS SHORTFALL	0	16,607	6,017	7,363
	TOTAL SHORTFALL			29,987

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

21 January 2022

**Quarter Two, 2021/22
Performance Management Report**

Ordinary Decision



Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter two, July to September 2021.

Performance Reporting

- 3 The performance report is structured around the three components.
 - (a) High level state of the County indicators to highlight areas of strategic significance. These are structured around the [County Durham Vision 2035](#).
 - (b) Council initiatives of note against the ambitions contained within the vision alongside a fourth 'excellent council' theme contained within our [Council Plan](#)¹.
 - (c) A long list of key performance indicators against the themes of the Council Plan.
- 4 The Council Plan sets out how the Council will use the resources at its disposal to achieve the ambitions set out in the County Durham Partnership's vision for the County. It sets out the Council's ambitions and key work areas to achieve these with high level performance indicators

¹ approved by full council October 2020

to measure progress. Appendix two of this report reflects this in the way it is set out.

- 5 It also includes an overview of the continuing impact of COVID-19 on council services, our staff, and residents.

More and Better Jobs

- 6 Across County Durham, we estimate the employment rate has remained static at 71.3%, which is below target of 73%, however is in line with both regional and national trends. We are expecting it to deteriorate once the government removes its financial support packages. Young people remain disproportionately affected.
- 7 The 1.9% increase in gross household disposable income is less than the averages for England (+2.5%) and the region (+2.2%), meaning the gap in earnings continues to grow and is adding to the financial pressures experienced by our residents.
- 8 Our tourism and cultural sector was particularly hard hit by the pandemic. In 2020, there were nine million fewer visitors to the area, a reduction in the visitor economy of £474 million and 5,000 fewer jobs across the sector.
- 9 However, despite the pandemic, an additional 460 businesses have been created since 2020 taking the total number to 14,565. This equates to 273 per 10,000 population. This is still significantly lower than the national average (412) but on par with the regional average (271).
- 10 Latest data (2019) shows that although our GVA per person increased by 6.6% to £16,925, it is the second lowest in the region which has an average of £20,727 and is considerably lower than the England average of £30,239.
- 11 To mitigate against these economic challenges, we are continuing to move forward with significant investment and regeneration projects which will create new infrastructure, transform our towns and villages, and boost the visitor economy. We are also continuing to provide financial assistance to businesses to help them survive the impact of the pandemic and protect their long-term future, and help people into employment.
- 12 However, over the last 12 months, the council led strategic employment sites such as NETPark are 95% occupied, and the county has also seen eight inward investments secured and more than £59 million of GVA growth created. The number of businesses engaged has increased by 27% compared to the same period last year.

Long and Independent Lives

- 13 Although the pandemic has caused a fall in life expectancy, [recent research](#) suggests it was already in decline in many areas in the North of England. Across County Durham, male life expectancy has fallen by seven months and female life expectancy by six months. Both remain lower than the national average.
- 14 The pandemic has also made it more difficult for people to participate in sport and activity. Over the last 12 months, 31% of adults across the authority area participated in less than 30 minutes exercise each week and are therefore classed as inactive. This compares to a national average of 27%.
- 15 Latest data (2019/20) shows slight increases in excess weight. 64.8% of adults (up from 63.3%) and 24.9% of children aged 4 to 5 (up from 24%) were classed as overweight or obese.
- 16 Across the county, smoking prevalence increased from 15% to 17%, 15% of mothers smoked at the time of delivery (8.9% nationally) and 29.1% were breastfeeding their babies at 6-8 weeks (48% nationally). There was also an increase in the suicide rate which remains higher than the national figure.
- 17 Poverty pressures continue to be a major issue and we expect the situation to deteriorate as basic living costs continue to rise, hitting those with little disposable income hard. We are aware 24% of children eligible for free school meals are not claiming them.
- 18 10.9% of people across the county reported a low happiness score (self-reported well-being), which is higher than last year (9.5%) and above the national figure of 8.7%.
- 19 We are continuing invest in walking and cycling infrastructure, work to tackle food poverty, provide focused activity across mental and physical well-being, and support smoking quitters.
- 20 Work to reduce carbon emissions is also underway. Agreed projects will increase electric vehicle charging points, retrofit houses, explore mine water heat (at Seaham Garden Village), introduce more bike loan schemes, and restore peatlands in the North Pennines.
- 21 Carbon emissions across the county have reduced by 54% from the 1990 baseline.
- 22 During quarter two, we helped to support 180 households with food, and over the summer holidays, we delivered more than 100 projects as part of our Holiday Activity with Food programme.

- 23 70% of respondents reported they were satisfied with services for care and support, an increase on last year (68%) and higher than nationally (64%). In addition, 78% of adult social care users report they have enough choice over the care and support services they receive, higher than last year (75%) and the national average (67%).
- 24 We are continuing to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families and remain on track to achieve 'significant and sustained outcomes' for around 6,000 families as part of our stronger families programme.

Connected Communities

- 25 During the 12 months ending 30 September, there was a 7% reduction in recorded crime, a 5% reduction in recorded anti-social behaviour and a 6% reduction in recorded domestic abuse incidents (although the proportion of domestic related violence against the person offences involving alcohol has increased).
- 26 The reduction in crime is mainly driven by a 30% reduction in theft-related offences, which most likely reflects people spending more time at home, fewer opportunities to commit crime in public spaces and the closure of non-essential retail and the night-time economy.
- 27 Another consequence of people spending more time at home is the generation of more household waste. This, combined with planned maintenance at the energy from waste plant, has resulted in a smaller proportion of waste being diverted from landfill – 90.1% compared to the 97.8% for the same period last year. In addition, contamination of kerbside recycling bins continues to increase and is currently 35%.
- 28 We are investing heavily in our town centres. New masterplans are being developed, free public wi-fi is being rolled out and new leisure facilities are to be built. We are also undertaking actions and campaigns which focus on environmental improvements, better quality housing, road safety and water safety.
- 29 We are continuing with our programme of transforming residential care and fostering by recruiting and retaining more foster carers and developing new council children's residential homes. This remains a challenging issue.
- 30 Town centre occupancy rates are now considerably lower than the national average of 86%. Outside of the town centres, the Arnison Centre has seen the largest drop in occupancy with seven vacant units.
- 31 At the start of the pandemic, we saw all patronage on local bus services drop significantly to around 20-30% of normal. While we've seen an increase in patronage as the lockdowns and restrictions have been

eased, this hasn't been as great as we would have hoped. Added to this, concessionary patronage has lagged significantly behind the "non-concessionary" patronage. This probably indicates a reluctance by that group to return to public transport.

- 32 Demand for the services of our specialist domestic abuse provider is 30% higher than the same period last year, and continues to increase quarter on quarter. In addition, clients are presenting with more complex issues (especially mental health), so cases are taking longer to resolve.
- 33 A greater proportion of people successfully completed treatment programmes compared to the previous year: for alcohol - 35% compared to 31%, and non-opiates - 38% compared to 31%. The success rate for opiate treatment remained the same (5.5% compared to 5.6%)
- 34 The pandemic and the complexity of referrals to children's social care continues to impact on the number of children and young people who are open to statutory social care teams, currently 3,818, and has increased the caseloads of our social worker teams.
- 35 56% of local people surveyed were satisfied with the way the council and police were dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues in their area, up from 50% the year before.
- 36 Care Connect, our emergency contact service that supports people to remain living independently in their own home continues to see the number of customers and connections on the service decline over the longer term trend. There has been a 10% loss in connections in the last five years, with a typical year on year decrease of between 4-5%; and a 23% reduction in the number of clients. Over the last year, connections decreased by more than 3% and clients by almost 4%, mainly due to death of the client.

An Excellent Council

- 37 The council continues to face significant financial pressure resulting from the pandemic. The additional costs incurred and loss of income are presently forecast to be around £24 million this year, offset by COVID-19 related underspends (relating to closure of facilities and disruption to normal service activity as a result of the pandemic) of £7.5 million – a net overspend of £16.7 million, which is presently within the forecast circa £17.2 million the council expects to receive from the government to cover the financial impact of the pandemic.
- 38 However, the vast majority of services have now reopened and during quarter two, our teams started a phased return to offices on a hybrid basis. Work-related control measures (hands, face, space, fresh air, vaccination) remain in place, and alternative provision is being made for

those classified a Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or for whom there are mental health concerns.

- 39 Although demand for services remains relatively high (an additional 95,000 service requests were received in the last 12 months – 26% more than the previous year), the rate of increase is slowing. This demand is driving both a corresponding increase in complaints (although complaints as a proportion of service requests remains constant at around 0.6%) and a decrease in satisfaction with service delivery timescales.
- 40 During quarter two, we started reinstating our Performance Development Review (PDR) process (enhancing our overall approach to ongoing individual performance management), developing a new approach for the induction and ongoing support of new managers, and encouraging more customers to liaise with us digitally by expanding our online contact channels.
- 41 We continued to invest in our workforce: £7.6 million, via our apprenticeship programme, has allowed more than 1,100 employees to develop new skills. We are undertaking a new consultation programme to understand the level of digital skills currently in place across our workforce, and inform our new digital skills programme going forward.
- 42 We are working to further reduce our carbon emissions by installing solar panels and LED lighting; developing a solar farm, battery storage and charging posts at Annfield Plain (Zero Carbon Depot Project), developing a new building energy management system to improve the control of energy, only using electric vehicles as pool cars, and purchasing an electric refuse vehicle.
- 43 Decarbonisation of the electricity grid has helped reduce our carbon emissions by 58% (from the 2008/09 baseline).
- 44 Our lowest sickness rate for the last 12 months is the third lowest since 2010/11, at 10.06 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE), with circa 82% of employees recording less than five days sickness and almost 66% recording no sickness. Although our sickness rate has marginally increased over the last six months, most of the increase is due to the prevalence of COVID-19 across our workforce. If we adjust for COVID-related sickness, our rate remains comparatively low at 9.09 days per FTE.
- 45 The council has also gained recognition for its services and staff in the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards and the Municipal Journal (MJ) Local Government Achievement Awards which took place this year.

- 46 We won a national award for our Children's Services in the LCG Awards, which celebrate excellence in local government. We were recognised for our Supporting Solution Service, which provides a phased approach to young people on the edge of care, with the aim of enabling them to stay with their families and avoid entering the care system.
- 47 We were highly commended in two categories in the MJ Awards; one for Digital Transformation for Digital Durham, with the judges being impressed by how we accelerated the delivery of our digital strategy at an unprecedented pace, ranging from adapting to how we communicate with our customers to supporting our staff to work remotely. It also recognised the introduction of the award-winning Health Call Digital Care Home system, which allows care workers to digitally share the results of their resident observations, such as blood pressure and heart rates, with health professionals.
- 48 The second category we were highly commended was the Senior Leadership Team for our Corporate Management Team (CMT); The judges recognised the team's expertise and dedication in leading the authority through the pandemic, as well as its approach to empowering staff and implementing a major investment programme. CMT commitment to community focused ways of working, along with a nationally recognised approach to social value and partnership work was also praised.
- 49 76% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 September 2021 were assessed against a performance standard. The performance standard was met in 74% of cases. This is an increase of 15 pp on the previous quarter and just slightly lower than the 77% recorded for the same period last year. However, it should be noted that over the same period, service requests increased by 26%.
- 50 We are undertaking a detailed review of all service requests within our CRM system that are not currently assessed against a performance standard. We have completed the initial phase of this activity and have identified a range of service improvements linked to systems, data and reporting, training, and member experience.

The impact of COVID-19

- 51 The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented health emergency across the globe. [Restrictions](#) to contain the virus, minimise deaths and prevent health and social care systems being overwhelmed remain in place, and are continuing to impact our everyday lives, our health, and the economy.

- 52 However, roll-out of the UK's vaccination programme, which has reduced both hospital admissions and deaths, allowed the government to implement plans for a [gradual and phased route out of lockdown](#).
- 53 Working with government organisations and within the context of national developments, we continue to protect our communities, support those affected by the pandemic, and develop plans for future recovery.
- 54 The COVID-19 surveillance dashboard can be accessed [here](#).

Risk Management

- 55 Effective risk management is a vital component of the council's agenda. The council's risk management process sits alongside our change programme and is incorporated into all significant change and improvement projects. The latest report can be found [here](#).

Recommendation

- 56 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance, the impact of COVID-19 on performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

Climate Change

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

Staffing

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

Procurement

Not applicable.



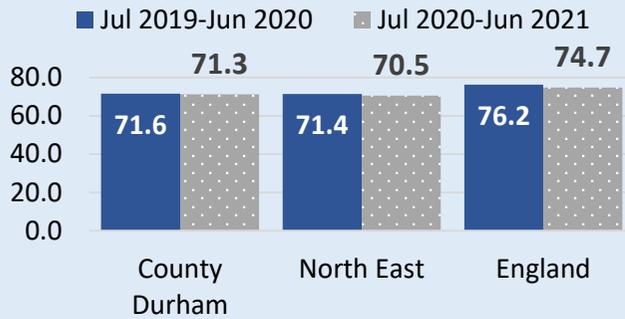
Durham County Council Performance Management Report

Quarter Two, 2021



MORE AND BETTER JOBS

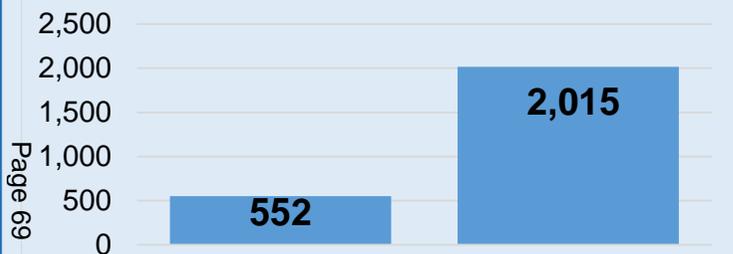
Employment Rate



Unemployment Rate



Jobs created/safeguarded by Business Durham (Jul-Sep 2021)



Support Schemes

Co. Durham

North East

England

Job Retention (furlough)
(as at 31 August)

4%

4%

5%

Self-employed income support
(as at 15 September)

31%

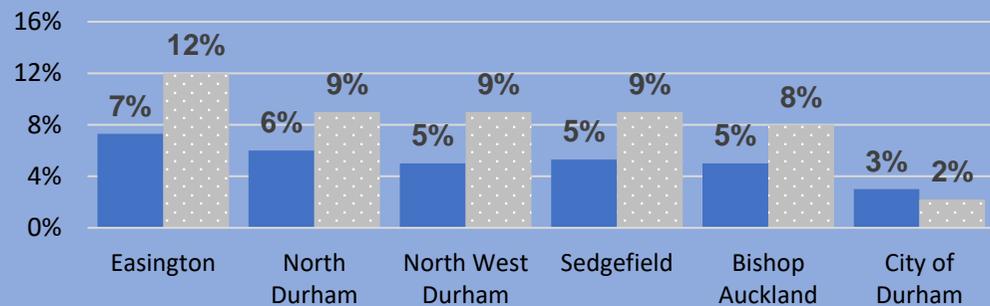
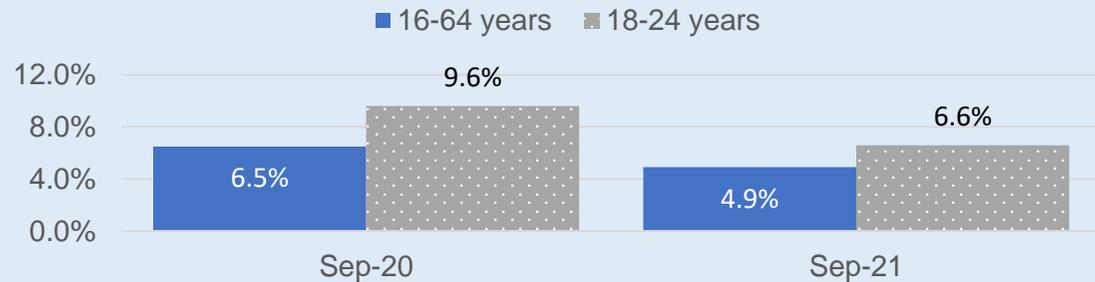
33%

33%

8,500 jobs furloughed

6,100 claims for SEISS

Claimant Count (as at September 2021)



More and Better Jobs

- 1 The ambition of More and Better Jobs is linked to the following objectives:
 - (a) Delivery of a range of employment sites across the county;
 - (b) A strong, competitive economy where County Durham is a premier place in the North East to do business;
 - (c) A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county;
 - (d) Young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment;
 - (e) Helping all people into rewarding work;
 - (f) Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county.

National, Regional and Local Picture

- 2 The County Durham Regeneration Statement sets the direction of regeneration and economic development of the county up to 2022. This document contains a number of long-term measures of success. A key aim within this strategy is the employment rate for the county to converge to and be maintained at pre-2008 recession levels (73% of working age population).
- 3 Latest data (June 2021) shows the employment rate shows a similar picture to the previous reporting period, which is in line with regional trends, and is within the confidence level for this data. We have yet to see any significant impact of the pandemic on the employment rate, following the government's removal of the furlough scheme and self-employment income schemes. We anticipate an increase in unemployment across the county.
- 4 Throughout the lifetime of the furlough scheme, 82,800 unique jobs were furloughed at some stage, representing just over 40% of all employments in the county. Large numbers of employments on furlough at the end of the scheme related to people in the 50-59 age group, those employed in manufacturing and accommodation and food service sectors with a disproportionately larger number of men being placed on furlough.
- 5 The unemployment rate has shown an increasing trend since June 2020 however, the amount of change is still within the confidence level for this data and therefore could be due to variations in sampling within the survey.
- 6 Nationally there are around a million vacancies July to September, a record high and an increase of 318,000 from the pre-pandemic January to March 2020 position. While the rate of vacancy growth has slowed recently, the number of vacancies is still increasing across most sectors with job opportunities bouncing back post COVID much quicker than expected.

- 7 At a local level we do have some hard to fill vacancies in the labour market due to the ongoing effect of post Brexit labour movement as well as wider access to work issues such as transport. We continue to see significant numbers of opportunities in hospitality, health and social care and the HGV / logistics sector where there may be certain entry / qualifications requirements; this is replicated across the North East and nationally. We are continuing to work with learning providers and individual businesses to support their recruitment and ensure residents have the best possible access to these jobs.
- 8 The latest data from the UK Business Count (as at March 2021), shows there were 14,565 enterprises in County Durham. An increase of 460 (3.3%) businesses since 2020, higher than regional (1.5%) and national (0.5%) increases. This is equivalent to 273 businesses per 10,000 population, significantly lower than the national average (412) but similar to the regional average (271).
- 9 The focus of the ambition within the Vision for County Durham 2035 is on more and better jobs. Whether we are creating better jobs is reflected in our regeneration statement through the key measures of gross disposable household income and gross value added (GVA).
- 10 Between 2018 and 2019 gross household disposable income within the county increased by 1.9% to £16,617. This is below the rate of growth seen for the region and England which grew at 2.2% and 2.5% respectively meaning that the gap in earnings continues to grow.
- 11 GVA is a productivity metric. It measures the contribution that the county makes to the overall economy. Latest data in relation to the amount of GVA per person in County Durham for 2019 shows a rise to £16,925, an increase of 6.6%. This is the second lowest in the region and represents 81.7% of the regional average. The County Durham rate is considerably lower than the England figure (£30,239) and lower than the North East (£20,727).
- 12 The eviction ban was completely lifted from 1 October 2021 and all notice periods have returned to the pre-pandemic position. Landlords, as of 20 September, are now able to progress their possession claims through the courts. Courts will carefully prioritise the most serious cases, such as high level anti-social behaviour or other crimes. Court orders can now be enforced by bailiffs unless anyone living in the property has COVID symptoms or is self-isolating. Despite the lifting of eviction restrictions, the Government continues to encourage landlords and tenants to resolve disputes without going to court wherever possible.

Council Services

Delivery of a range of employment sites across the county

- 13 In September, Cabinet agreed to £49.6m being used for the third phase extension of NETPark (The North East Technology Park) Business Park in Sedgefield. The new phase could generate up to 1,250 skilled jobs and be worth up to £625m to the County Durham economy.

A strong competitive economy and premier place to do business

- 14 The UK Community Renewal Fund is a new Government fund set up to support communities to pilot programmes and new approaches ahead of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Announcements on successful bids to this £220 million fund were expected in July but have been delayed. There are concerns nationally about the ability to deliver successful projects by March 2022. The LA7 has called on the Government to extend the proposed delivery timeframe.
- 15 A subgroup of the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) has met to develop and implement a strategy for lobbying for County Durham's ambitions to be recognised and funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund. A paper setting out key messages to be used in strategic liaison was agreed at the last CDEP Board. The group will map where lobbying will add most value. Work was undertaken to identify key stakeholders from a list of 34 parties.
- 16 The £6 million Durham Business Recovery Grant launched in January 2021, to help businesses implement recovery plans to overcome the effects of the pandemic has now closed. We received over 780 applications to the scheme requesting over £12 million in total. Three hundred and eighteen applications were approved, totalling more than £4.54m, with the potential to safeguard up to 3,554 jobs. The majority of grants (95%) have been awarded to micro or smaller businesses employing up to 50 staff. Grants have been awarded to 119 (37%) businesses in retail and personal services, 61 (19%) businesses in manufacturing and engineering, 60 (19%) in the cultural, creative and tourism sectors and 34 (11%) in business services, professional services and distribution, with the remaining 44 (14%) coming from other sectors.
- 17 A further £500,000 has been awarded through the County Durham Growth Fund to support four SMEs, bringing the total awarded to date to £5.8 million out of the £8.9 million fund. 184 jobs have been created so far, with a further 375 jobs projected before the end of the project.
- 18 The current pipeline of potential investments for the Finance Durham Fund is extremely strong, and it is expected that the total invested through Finance Durham will reach £10 million by the end of the calendar year; with potential new

investments in three businesses and one follow-on investment that will complete in quarter three.

- 19 Eight inward investments were secured during the quarter generating 221 jobs. These were Peratech Holdco Ltd, Vaildair Diamond Scientific, EV Smart, Evolution E Types Ltd, Conduit Construction Network Ltd, Project Control Tools Ltd, RG Distributors Ltd and Needlebay Systems.
- 20 During the quarter, 59 businesses were intensively assisted by Business Durham exceeding the target for the year.

Business Durham Activity	Jul-Sep 2021	Compared to last year	
Inward investments secured	8	+8	↑
Businesses engaged	577	+155	↑
floor space occupied	95%	+15pp	
GVA from jobs created or safeguarded (million)	£59.1	+£59.1	↑

- 21 Durham Ambitious Business Start-ups (DABS) now has 161 businesses and individuals registered, 97 of these are pre-start businesses, of which 63 have accessed 12 or more hours of support. There are 64 new businesses within their first year of trading, 37 of which have received 12 hours of support.

Helping all people into rewarding work

- 22 Despite referrals to employability programmes increasing over the last few months due to both Job Centre Plus (JCP) and our delivery partners reintroducing face to face meetings, numbers are still below pre-COVID levels. However, numbers are expected to recover in the coming months as JCP staffing levels has returned to normal and more JCP claimants are encouraged to participate in employment related activity.
- 23 The number of participants progressing into employment has increased compared to the previous reporting period, with more people being supported to set up as self-employed, move into jobs in those sectors that have experienced increased demand or to replace furloughed workers who have moved into other jobs. Clients completing education or training courses has also increased despite a large proportion of our clients having limited digital skills that prevent them from doing online courses. Most courses were delivered through our delivery partners on the L!NKCD programme. This scheme brings together community minded organisations and training providers to support people in the county who need help getting into work and learning new skills. However, delivery of L!NKCD

programme has been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions and we are looking to extend the programme to December 2023.

- 24 Work continues to support adults who are eligible to access employability support through our Refugee Mentoring project; with 164 adults across nine arrival phases (two per year) being supported into employment, training or volunteering opportunities. Support is currently being offered to the new phase nine arrivals who have settled in the Crook area and we have already engaged with 11 individuals.

A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county

- 25 County Durham has been named as one of the eight locations that made the longlist in the UK City of Culture 2025 competition and has until January 2022 to finalise its bid. Securing the title would deliver transformational social and economic benefits to the whole of County Durham and the wider region; allowing us to engage even more people in arts and culture, attract thousands of additional visitors and help us to secure millions of pounds of investment. The Partnership is now focused on taking County Durham to the next stage of the competition and are urging people to continue to support the Durham 2025 campaign. It is anticipated that the overall winner will be declared in May 2022.
- 26 In September, Cabinet approved further feasibility work to be carried out looking at options to bring the former Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum and Art Gallery back into use as a wider culture and visitor destination incorporating a significant dedicated space for items from the DLI collection that will complement the planned exhibitions in the Durham History Centre. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be presented to councillors in early 2022.
- 27 The Kier Group has reported a six week delay on the new History Centre, however they are confident this does not affect overall delivery and completion for October 2022. The delay was caused by the discovery of Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) on the site and the need to acquire planning permission to demolish and rebuild a wall of the listed building. Planning permission has now been granted and all ACM removed from site. Work continues on securing external funding and liaising with the National Lottery Heritage Fund for permission to support delivery of the activity programme, the digital programme and the exhibition programme.
- 28 The Lumiere festival took place between the 18 and 21 November with a programme of 37 international artworks. For the first time, the festival was spread across the county to encourage visitors to explore other parts of the county and extend the economic benefits the event brings. In a change from previous years, the controlled City centre area of Lumiere was ticketed for the entirety of the

festival each night to manage audience numbers as part of measures in place to offer a safe experience.

- 29 Following cancellations due to the pandemic last year, Bishop Auckland Food Festival (7-8 August) and Seaham Food Festival (2-3 October) both returned this year and are just two of a number of events helping to showcase the county's cultural offer as part of the council's bid to become UK City of Culture 2025. Both events were a huge success, attracting thousands of visitors to the area, and more than 100 traders from across the county and beyond. The festivals not only provided a significant boost to businesses trading both at the festival and the towns themselves but provided a much needed boost to the region's economic recovery from the impact of COVID.
- 30 Durham Book Festival took place between 9 and 17 October, returning to live events following a digital-only offer last year due to the pandemic. Writers, performers and thinkers from across the world participated in more than 60 events, either in person at the Gala Theatre or online. The festival aimed to be fully accessible to every audience member by captioning events in the theatre and ensuring all digital content was either captioned (video) or transcribed (audio).
- 31 The 2021 Heritage Open Days took place during September, though much reduced from previous years due to COVID, 37 properties participated in the event attracting over 6,000 visitors. Five new venues took part in this year.
- 32 During quarter two there were nearly 150,000 visitors to Hardwick Park and 40,000 visitors to Wharton Park.
- 33 The new hub, Crimdon Coastal Hub, delayed due to COVID is forecast for to open in November.
- 34 Investment in Bishop Auckland including the delivery of the Eastern Sustainable Access Corridor will provide the infrastructure needed to manage and direct the visitors to the Auckland Project's annual programme of events and also peak season traffic to its year-round visitor attractions. The corridor will provide direct access from the A1(M), avoiding traffic congestion in the town centre. A base transport model for the town is now complete and further work is being undertaken around forecast modelling to determine an options assessment report, economics and preliminary design and planning application.
- 35 The corridor will provide dedicated provision for pedestrians and cyclists; and connect to and promote existing routes such as the Auckland Way railway path. Work on the business case will commence late 2021.

Young people will have access to good education, training and employment

36 There has been one Ofsted inspection during the quarter two period. This school (Framwellgate School Durham) was graded 'requires improvement' prior to the visit and following the publication of the inspection report, is now graded 'good.'

37 The role of local authorities in dealing with safeguarding complaints regarding schools has changed in recent years with complainants being required to use the school's published complaints policy. Once a complainant has exhausted the school's procedure then the matter may be escalated to Ofsted, who request the local authority to investigate. There have been ten qualifying safeguarding complaints made to Ofsted relating to Durham schools during quarter two. This compares to two in the same period last year, but there were ten during quarter two in 2019. The increase from last year is quite significant and could be a result of the impact of the pandemic, given most children and young people were accessing virtual learning rather than attending schools during quarter two 2020 and therefore their social interaction with staff and peers was somewhat limited.

38 The Educations and Inspections Act 2006 places a statutory responsibility on all local authorities to make arrangements to identify children missing from education (CME) in their area. The local authority, schools and partner agencies have developed a protocol to enable escalation of any case to establish the whereabouts of a child before the school can delete the child's name from the school register. The protocol includes referral to children's social care, police, NHS and other local authority services to ensure children moving between areas are tracked, in appropriate cases.

39 In quarter two, 81 students were referred to the local authority.

Successfully tracked	60
Moved within county. School transfer discussions ongoing	5
Processing as admissions to schools in Durham	4
Moved out of county. Relevant local authorities informed	3
Referred for school attendance enforcement action	3
Elective home education registrations pending	2
Tracing via information held with partner agencies	2
Awaiting an appeal hearing for a school application	1
Abroad. Due to return	1
Total referrals	81

40 Attendance rates were 90% across all settings on 17 June 2021, however, they declined locally and nationally in the last four weeks of the school year 2020/21 around the same time as there were increases in infection rates associated with emergence of the COVID-19 delta variant and consequently school bubble

closures. These trends were mirrored for vulnerable groups where rates of attendance for those with a social worker and those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were both 85% on 10 June 2021.

- 41 Across the academic year 2020/21, 189 children and young people were supported to return to school and as year 11 pupils became non-compulsory school age as of 25 June these factors resulted in a local overall decrease in local Elective Home Education (EHE) figures. Overall numbers continued to remain low at any point in the quarter at approximately 0.6% of the school age population. Staff continue to support families to return to school where this was the preferred choice of families and a multi-agency EHE panel continues to support EHE children and young people via meetings, safe and well calls and other checks.
- 42 The Early Years panel considered 64 requests for early years SEND Support, an increase of 40 (166%) on the previous year and six requests to initiate statutory assessment with five (84%) agreed in comparison to one request being agreed the previous year. As this quarter includes the end of the academic year it is timely to highlight that 350 children were supported across the academic year, an increase of 35 (11%) on the previous year, with 96 statutory assessments being initiated, three times as many as the previous academic year (32 initiated).
- 43 Support has continued to be provided to young people during the summer period, as they completed academic programmes. The latest data (August 2021) shows that the proportion of young people (aged 16-17) not in employment, education or training (NEET) is 6.6%, which equates to 708 young people from a cohort of 10,677. This compares to an average of 3.1% for England and 5.3% for the North East. It is important to note that DurhamWorks have been identifying young people and moving them to a NEET destination during this period in order to register them on the programme, so that they can receive appropriate support at the earliest opportunity. However, this does result in an increase in the proportion of young people who are NEET compared to other periods during the year. It also results in a lower proportion of young people whose current destination is not known and the rate in County Durham remains low – 2.4%, compared to an average of 5.6% in England and 7.3% in the North East.
- 44 A significant amount of work is currently being undertaken to ensure that young people who completed Years 11 and 12 at the end of June 2021 have a confirmed offer in education or training. This is known as the ‘September Guarantee’. The proportion of young people undertaking an apprenticeship continues to be higher in County Durham – 5.8% compared to an average of 4.2% for England.

Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county.

- 45 More households contacted Housing Solutions this quarter than during quarter one and compared to the previous 12 months. The majority of areas within the service have seen an increase in numbers, with Housing Officers seeing a 20% increase in presentations since quarter one. The overall increase for quarter two represents the largest quarter to quarter increase since 2019.
- 46 Many households are now presenting as homeless or facing homelessness due to the lifting of the eviction ban from 1 October which has reverted the notice period back to two months. The Private Rented Sector Team saw a rise in complaints of disrepair and illegal eviction allegations in September that may be linked to the eviction ban ending. Our Stop Before You Serve Scheme is continuing to assist landlords who are contemplating serving eviction notices.
- 47 We are still seeing high levels of rough sleepers, during the quarter, 160 were reported and 58 were found and assisted. Levels are similar to the same period last year however the needs of rough sleepers have been found to be more complex. Additional staff have been secured to focus on issues around mental health and other substance related problems. We have also supported more rough sleepers into long term accommodation this quarter and it is anticipated this trend will continue as further properties become available through the County Durham Lettings Agency and the ability to house people through the private sector and other supported accommodation providers, such as Changing Lives and Jigsaw.
- 48 Work continues to increase suitable accommodation for rough sleepers and those with complex needs. A bid has been submitted to Homes England and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for £556,262 to convert Shildon People's Centre into four flats and deliver a further ten lease and repair properties in 2022/23. Six properties have also been leased to date via the Local Lettings Agency with 16 waiting to be completed. Negotiations are also ongoing with property owners to purchase a further 18 properties through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) initiative. However, a volatile housing market and lack of supply of the correct type of properties has seen a delay in delivery of our Move on Fund designed to help free up supported accommodation. New procedures to source properties have been established and dedicated staff have been identified to take this forward. To date, four properties have been refurbished with a further one in progress and two in acquisition stage.
- 49 Quarter two has seen a 71% increase in the number of new households placed in temporary accommodation compared to quarter one however, this is 17% less than the same period last year. Increases have been seen in relation to where the applicant has been asked to leave by family or friends (+50%), and domestic

abuse cases (+16%). The position is constantly monitored and reviewed to ensure households are not accommodated for a long period of time. This is reflected in the length of time a household is placed in temporary accommodation decreasing this quarter by seven days compared to quarter one.

- 50 The rise in energy costs has seen an increase in the number of fuel debt cases to our Management Money Better (MMB) Initiative. Such cases are very complex and time consuming which has meant a decrease in the number of households assisted during the quarter. In previous quarters, assistance was predominantly standard fuel switching cases which take less time to assist. The rise in fuel costs and market failure of a number of energy suppliers has resulted in fewer fuel switching opportunities. It is anticipated that requests for assistance to MMB will increase during quarter three and the situation will be monitored to predict spikes in demand. The average saving per household as a result of advice provided by MMB has increased during the quarter and is mainly due to fuel debt write-offs and Warm Home Discount applications.

Long and Independent Lives

- 51 The ambition of Long and Independent Lives is linked to the following key objectives:
- (a) Children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional well-being;
 - (b) Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes;
 - (c) County Durham will have a physical environment that will contribute to good health;
 - (d) We will promote positive behaviours;
 - (e) Health and social care services will be better integrated;
 - (f) People will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more homes to meet the needs of older and disabled people;
 - (g) We will tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities.

National, Regional and Local Picture

- 52 Life expectancy for residents of County Durham has reduced and this reflects figures both for England and the North East region. The release of these data coincides with a report from [Imperial College London](#) which found that, in the five years prior to the pandemic (2014-2019), life expectancy across the country went down in almost one in five communities for women, and one in nine communities for men.
- 53 Recently published data from the Active Lives survey (May 2020 to May 2021) clearly shows the continued impact of the pandemic on people's ability to take part in sport and physical activity. In line with the national trend, reported levels of 'inactive' participation (<30 minutes a week) increased from the previous 12 months and is above national average (27.5%). With regard to 'active' participation levels (150+ minutes per week), we remain relatively static (at 58.7%) compared to the previous 12 months but below national average (60.9%).
- 54 The latest CO₂ emission results released for 2019 show a reduction across the county of 54% on 1990 levels. The CO₂ tonnage on a per person basis shows that County Durham equates to 4.11 tonnes per person; lower than the North East at 4.49 tonnes and England at 4.24 tonnes.

LONG AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

age 82

Think Family

5,661 families turned around

(2015 - Sep 21)

following intervention...

2,242 workless families progressed to work

2,730 families reported reduced mental health issues

1,025 families reported reduced substance misuse

4,937 families achieved significant & sustained outcomes (2015 -Sep 21)

% EHCP completed within 20 week time period



Adult Social Care

175.0

per 100,000 adults aged 65+ admitted to residential or nursing care (Apr-Jun 2021)

88.3%

of patients discharged into reablement/ rehabilitation services still at home after 91 days (Jan-Jun 2021)

77.1%

of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months (Apr-Sep 2021)

94%

of individuals achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process (Apr-Sep 2021)

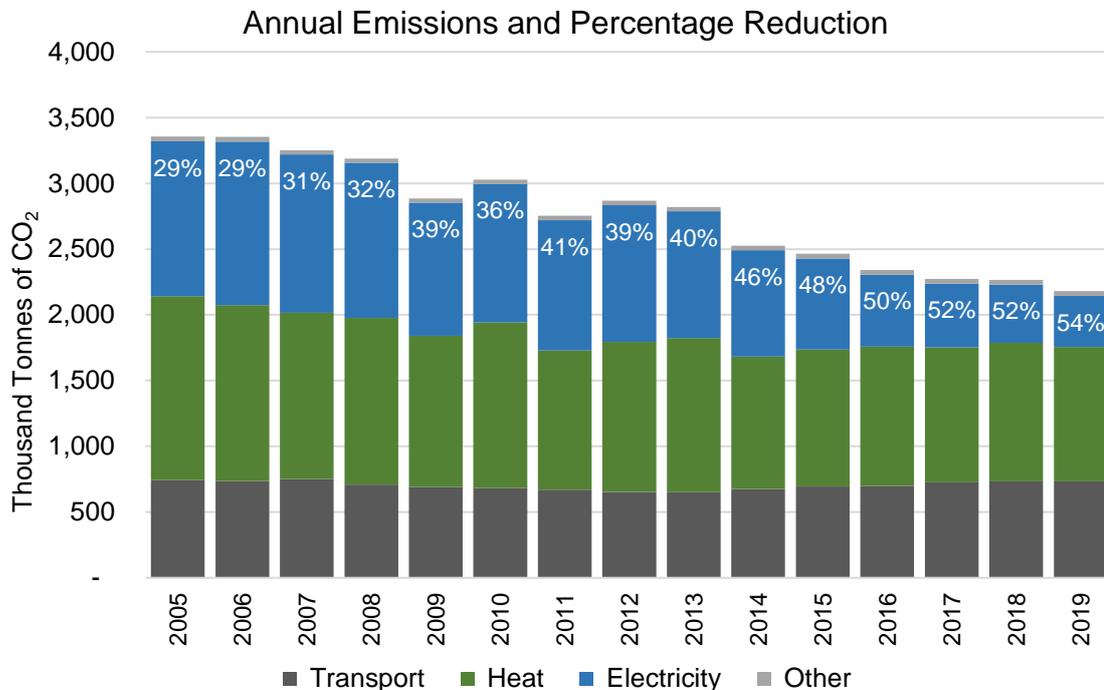
worse than last year

better than last year

similar to last year

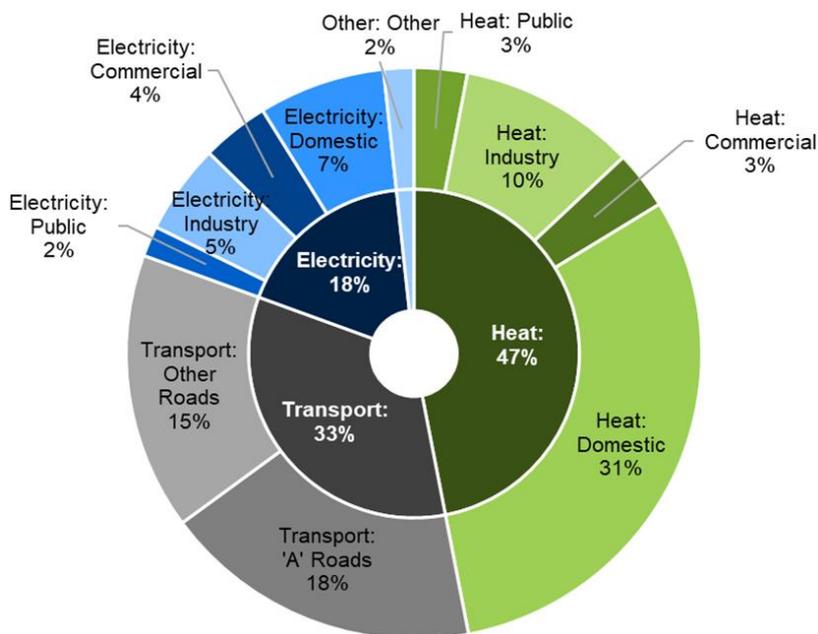
Not comparable

55 The greatest source of emissions is heat at 47%; with domestic heating being the highest sub-category at 31%. To contribute to achieving our carbon emissions targets, households across the county must reduce their gas use, this could be achieved by the equivalent of around 20,000 households fully decarbonising, or everyone using about 8% less coal, gas or oil; this is achievable in part through improved home insulation.



56 Emissions from transport has reduced slightly since 2005. Transport emissions make up 33% of the county’s total carbon emissions. Replacing around 24,000 vehicles with ULEV or reducing fossil fuel vehicle mileage by 8% over two years would keep us on track to achieve our carbon neutral county target. This could be achieved if everyone reduced their personal vehicle use, walked, cycled or used public transport more and avoided unnecessary travel through use of remote working and video conferencing.

57 Emissions from electricity have reduced from 35% in 2005 to 18% in 2019. In the main this is due to the decarbonisation of the grid moving from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.



Council Services

Children and young people enjoying the best start in life, good health and emotional well-being

- 58 The Join In programme, a locality-based physical activity programme, supports children, young people and their families in communities. It focuses on the following three key age groups: early years; primary; and secondary school age and beyond (10-18 years).
- 59 COVID-19 has had an impact on the delivery of the service, which is delivered through face to face group sessions. Whilst limited provision of the programme has taken place during the pandemic, the early years element of the service (Ready Sett Go) has recommenced in 20 early years settings and each runs for 10 weeks.
- 60 As part of the Active 30 programme two projects have commenced, funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. A targeted approach for primary schools in the top 20% most deprived areas of the county has been developed, to engage young people in deprived communities in physical activity. This aims to engage children and families through their schools and to embed these healthy behaviours at home.
- 61 The second project aims to promote physical activity opportunities to young people and families through a daily TV broadcast. Active North East works with Active 30 partners to film tailored and targeted, age-specific content with local young people, schools and clubs. These sessions are broadcast twice per day to

encourage young people and families to take part in 10-minute active blasts, either at school or at home.

- 62 The national 'Supporting Families' programme (formerly 'Troubled Families') and known in County Durham as 'Stronger Families' is on the first year of a possible three year extension and this will be confirmed in the Government's 2021 Spending Review.
- 63 Across County Durham, since the programme commenced in April 2015 we have supported 5,661 vulnerable families in achieving sustained positive outcomes. We are confident we will exceed our 2021/22 target of turning around 761 families having already reached 75% of this target (571 families).

A physical environment contributing to good health

- 64 Work to develop a physical activity strategy for County Durham is currently being undertaken by the Physical Activity Strategy Committee. The strategy is being developed with stakeholder engagement across the system. Two further workshops are scheduled to be held in November 2021, with the strategy being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022.
- 65 The Active 30 Durham programme was relaunched to education settings on 16 September 2021. The programme now has a focus on 'getting active in the community' to encourage wider partners, such as the voluntary and community sector and holiday activity with food providers, to access a range of resources to embed physical activity and well-being activities into delivery. A launch event provided education settings with an overview of the campaign for the new academic year. Thirty two schools have signed up to the programme during quarter two and work is ongoing to promote the programme across the county.
- 66 The Holiday Activity with Food programme continues to be delivered through Area Action Partnership (AAP) locality-based provision, contracted provision (area-based and countywide) and Durham County Council service providers (including schools, culture, sport and leisure services and 0-19 family centres). Over the 2021 summer holidays, more than 100 projects were delivered through AAPs, schools and family centre hubs. These included swim activity camps, including free swimming, healthy food and snacks.
- 67 Young people were encouraged to visit our leisure centres during summer holidays with free summer pool activities for children and young people aged 18 and under living in County Durham. Activities ranged from fun with inflatables to general swimming and was aimed to encourage children and young people to have fun and be more active.

- 68 Swimming pools in the county have received the highest possible rating following an inspection by the Royal Lifesaving Society. The charity recently completed its annual audit of our pools and gave them an overall rating of excellent. The inspection, which included a detailed review of the pool at the Louisa Centre, looks at equipment, staff skills and experience and the delivery of training courses.
- 69 Working with partners through the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP), a number of schemes are underway or are in development to reduce carbon emissions across the county, including the installation of electric vehicle charging points, the Business Energy Efficiency Programme which last year provided support for 97 businesses, housing retrofit schemes at Chilton and Dean Bank, the installation of air source heat pumps in off gas communities, the exploration of mine water heat at Seaham Garden Village, blue carbon schemes, a bike loan scheme, the restoration of peatlands in the North Pennines and the roll out of high speed broadband. We are currently working with partners to review progress and develop the second CERP.
- 70 In October, Cabinet formally adopted the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Newton Aycliffe; the first of 12 which the council has committed to producing in order to prioritise investment in walking and cycling infrastructure and encourage active travel. It is hoped this will help double the number of cycling journeys, significantly increase walking, reduce the number of cyclists killed or injured each year and increase the percentage of school children who walk or cycle to school.
- 71 The plans will also support ambitions to develop active travel more broadly across the county, building on a number of infrastructure schemes, projects and campaigns already in place to encourage more people to walk and cycle. Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Newton Aycliffe have been chosen as the first three towns as they are sited on the line of the Great North Cycleway, linking the north and south of the county.
- 72 As well as improving the walking and cycling infrastructure across the county, the plans will also help the council to apply for further funding, with the Government prioritising financial support for authorities that have developed such plans. Following the completion of the first three plans, funding has already been secured from the Government's Active Travel Capability Fund to continue the work in nine other towns across the county: Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Consett, Crook, Peterlee, Seaham, Shildon, Spennymoor and Stanley. A town-based approach has been chosen because of the rural nature of the county, enabling more people to walk and cycle more often for every day journeys.

- 73 A free bike loan scheme supporting workers to save money and healthier travel is being rolled out across County Durham. Following the success of a pilot in Shildon last year, the Borrow a Bike scheme has now launched at Abbey Sports Centre, as part of Cycle September. Open to anyone who lives or works in Framwellgate Moor, Pity Me, Newton Hall and Brasside, it aims to support people returning to their workplace to travel actively and sustainably and improve their health and well-being. The scheme offers residents a complimentary bike loan for three months alongside equipment, training and support. Four more sites are set to open in the coming months, with the roll-out being funded as part of our action plan to tackle the climate emergency. Borrow a Bike will also be further developed to include a wider range of bikes and more facilities at the collection and storage points.
- 74 The current diversion from landfill rate is 90.1% for the 12 months ending June 2021, a decrease on the previous year (96.8%). A number of factors have led to the increase of waste going to landfill including the higher levels of waste and planned maintenance at the energy from waste plant. The capacity in the waste system usually is able to offer an alternative facility when the planned maintenance is scheduled however, the increased volumes of waste being experienced across the country due to COVID restrictions has resulted in reduced spare capacity. In the period July 2020 to June 2021, 276,876 tonnes of municipal waste was collected and disposed of, equating to over one tonne per household, this was an increase of 27,579 tonnes (11%) on the previous year.
- 75 The current recycling rate for the 12 months ending June 2021 is 38.1%, a decrease from 39.4% for the previous year. However, there has been some improvement in recent months as within quarter one there was a 3.1 percentage point improvement compared to last year. The amount of household waste collected remains high with 248,967 tonnes being collected and disposed of in the last 12 months, a 7% increase on the July 2019 to June 2020 period. This is a result of COVID restrictions during this period and continued changes in behaviours following the lifting of restrictions.
- 76 The current contamination rate of household recycling is 35.8%. In the last 12 months 7,795 notices have been issued for contaminated bins. This is a reduction of 22% on the previous period (Oct 2019 to Sep 2020) of 9,997. A number of campaigns are underway including the small electrical recycling project which continues to grow with almost 50 collection points across the county. Over four tonnes of small electrical and battery operated items have been collected so far. The project was shortlisted for the LARAC 'Best New Idea' award 2021 and for the National Recycling 'Local Authority Success' award 2021. In addition, as part of our partnership with Keep Britain Tidy, the 'Ted Says' (please don't put any nappies in your recycling) project has been shortlisted for a MRW National Recycling award for 'Campaign of the Year'.

Promoting positive behaviours

- 77 The Tobacco Control Alliance has continued to deliver against its dedicated action plan and has maximised the opportunity to address the negative outcomes around COVID for people who smoke. This included the implementation of a comprehensive communications plan helping to raise awareness of the impact of COVID on smokers.
- 78 Our Stop Smoking Service has maintained business continuity plans to ensure that the service has remained operational throughout the pandemic. A blended approach to service delivery has continued, to maintain client engagement via telephone consultations as the predominant method of support and distributing nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) through e-vouchers.
- 79 Support to treat tobacco dependency in pregnancy has continued during the pandemic and data from the Stop Smoking Service demonstrate an increasing number of clients referred and accessing the service to stop smoking. A proposal for a new incentive scheme to support pregnant women is being developed. Enhanced NRT / behavioural support for pregnant women and their significant others is also being extended beyond the standard 12-week programme.
- 80 The Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Strategy Group (ADHRSG) has continued to meet on a quarterly basis during the pandemic and has proved a valuable network during COVID-19, with an opportunity to share updates with partners and work collaboratively to help reduce the harm of alcohol and drugs. The 2021/22 action plan has been refreshed with partners and was presented for approval to the ADHRSG with implementation ongoing.

Better integration of health and social care services

- 81 The Suicide Prevention Action Plan has been updated for 2021-24 and the Suicide Prevention Alliance continues to review it on a quarterly basis, bringing together a range of partners to support delivery of the plan. The Time to Change Hub also continues to provide small grants and funding opportunities, and the latest round of funding commenced in quarter two 2021/22.
- 82 The Real Time Data Surveillance system indicates that the number of suspected suicides in 2020 remains comparable to previous years, with 59 in 2020, 45 in 2019 and 66 in 2018. This rate continues to be monitored as the challenges of the pandemic continue to unfold.

People will be supported to live independently for as long as possible

- 83 The adult social care service went live with AzeusCare, a new case management system on 23 June 2021. This coincided with the start of the quarter two reporting period. Whilst the transfer over from the old case management system, SSID, has

been very carefully managed, there has always been an expectation that performance data would likely be affected by the transition.

- 84 The percentage of service users assessed or reviewed in the last 12 months fell from 86.7% at quarter one to 77.1% at quarter two. This is due to the increased administrative work placed upon social workers by the system change. Forms in SSID would be pre-populated by data already known. Whilst historic SSID records have been transferred over to AzeusCare, the difference between the systems meant it was not possible to pre-populate AzeusCare forms with historic SSID data. This has resulted in social workers being required to complete assessment and review forms in their entirety. Once data has been inputted into AzeusCare it, like SSID, also pre-populates forms with known data. Once the administrative burden lightens, performance is expected to improve.
- 85 Latest data on the rate per 100,000 population of adults aged 65+ admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care is not available, this is due to the implementation of the new system, we are aiming to report it later in the year.
- 86 Latest data for the percentage of older people remaining at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement services are the highest (88.3%) for over two years and significantly higher than the figure from the same period last year (82.5%). This percentage has continued to rise during the pandemic. We also continue to perform better than national and regional averages.
- 87 In terms of individuals achieving their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process we continue to perform well. 94.0% achieved their desired outcome and, whilst this is a slight deterioration from 94.4% over the same period last year, it remains similar to previous quarters.

Tackling the stigma of poor mental health and building resilient communities

- 88 Durham County Council and key stakeholders developed a programme of events to mark World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2021. This year's theme was 'Mental health in an unequal world'. The programme included events held internally and across the region, many of which are delivered by our colleagues in the voluntary and community sector. For 2021, these included partnership roadshow events; things to do for World Mental Health Day; social media campaigns; community engagement activities; provision of anti-stigma training; and the promotion of real life accounts from community members with lived experience.
- 89 Public Health continues to work with partners to deliver the North East Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) and 79 organisations are now signed up to the award programme, reaching over 40,000 employees. In 2021, County Durham

was recognised as having recruited the highest number of workforce health advocates.

- 90 We now hold the 'Continuing Excellence' status for the BHAWA and work is ongoing to present a portfolio of evidence in support of an application for 'Maintaining Excellence' status. During quarter one, the council launched a staff health and well-being survey and this has been completed by approximately 2,500 staff. The survey results will be released in quarter three.

Connected Communities

- 91 The ambition of Connected Communities is linked to the following key objectives:
- (a) All children and young people will have a safe childhood;
 - (b) Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock;
 - (c) Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe;
 - (d) People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities;
 - (e) Communities will come together and support each other;
 - (f) Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents.

National, Regional and Local Picture

- 92 During the 12 months ending September 2021, there was a 7% decrease in recorded crime compared to the previous year, equating to more than 3,600 fewer crimes. Although reductions were across most crime categories, the decrease was more noticeable across theft-related offences, including vehicle crime, which has reduced by almost 30% and shoplifting which reduced by more than 15%.
- 93 The Government has announced that a Levelling Up White Paper is expected in autumn 2021. This is anticipated to detail further criteria in relation to future Levelling Up Fund rounds and wider expectations around a package of measures to level up opportunity across all parts of the UK through policy approaches, specific funds and interventions including growth deals, freeports and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Cabinet has already agreed to submit bids for schemes in rounds two and three, making full use of the total of £120m potentially available.
- 94 The 2021 town centre and retail park surveys were undertaken in June and July. The annual exercise looks at the occupancy rates and the type of occupiers of the

major retail and leisure destinations within County Durham. In some instances, occupancy rates have increased over the past year, most notably at Spennymoor, Tindale and Seaham.

	Occupancy Rate (%)		Difference
	2020	2021	
Barnard Castle	90.70	90.10	-0.60
Bishop Auckland	77.40	72.30	-5.10
Chester-le-Street	87.10	85.50	-1.60
Consett	90.50	86.90	-3.60
Crook	92.20	88.60	-3.60
Durham City	83.60	83.80	0.20
Ferryhill	90.00	91.10	1.10
Newton Aycliffe	77.70	73.80	-3.90
Peterlee	73.20	67.70	-5.50
Seaham	90.80	92.70	1.90
Shildon	88.40	84.20	-4.20
Spennymoor	77.50	82.70	5.20
Stanley	83.90	84.20	0.30
Arnison Centre	87.90	79.40	-8.50
Dragonville	97.30	97.70	0.40
Dalton Park	89.70	88.30	-1.40
Tindale	97.40	100.00	2.60
Hermiston	94.10	88.20	-5.90

- 95 Occupancy rates have decreased at most other centres. Of particular note, Bishop Auckland, Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe have the lowest occupancy rates across the county and all have seen quite a big fall in occupancy over the past year. Occupancy rates are now considerably below the national average (85.5%) in these centres. Outside of our town centres the Arnison Centre has seen the largest decrease in occupancy with seven units now vacant.
- 96 During the 12 months ending September 2021, reported fly-tipping incidents reduced by 0.4% compared to the 12 months ending September 2020. The in quarter figure of 1,510 is 24% less than the same period last year. The current numbers of fly-tipping are 12.7% higher than the pre-COVID levels in 2019-20.
- 97 The [ONS Annual Analysis of House Prices](#) explores median house prices in 1,082 towns in England and 104 in Wales looking at how they have changed over the period 2010 to 2020, differences in house prices by region and income deprivation and changes to house prices just before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis found that the median house price in England and Wales in 2020 was £250,000. The ten towns with the highest prices were in the South East of England and East of England, all within commuting distance to London. The ten towns with lowest median house prices were mining and industrial legacy communities, six of which were in County Durham – Ferryhill, Easington, Shildon, Annfield Plain, Peterlee and Murton.
- 98 In relation to price change between 2010 and 2020, the North East had a much larger proportion of its towns (33%) experience a decline in house prices

compared with the other regions with towns experiencing decline². Ferryhill was identified as the town with the largest decrease in price change of 47%.

- 99 Towns which had higher income deprivation experienced slower growth over the decade from 2010 to 2020 compared with lower deprivation towns and this trend continued over the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Council Services

All children and young people will enjoy a safe childhood

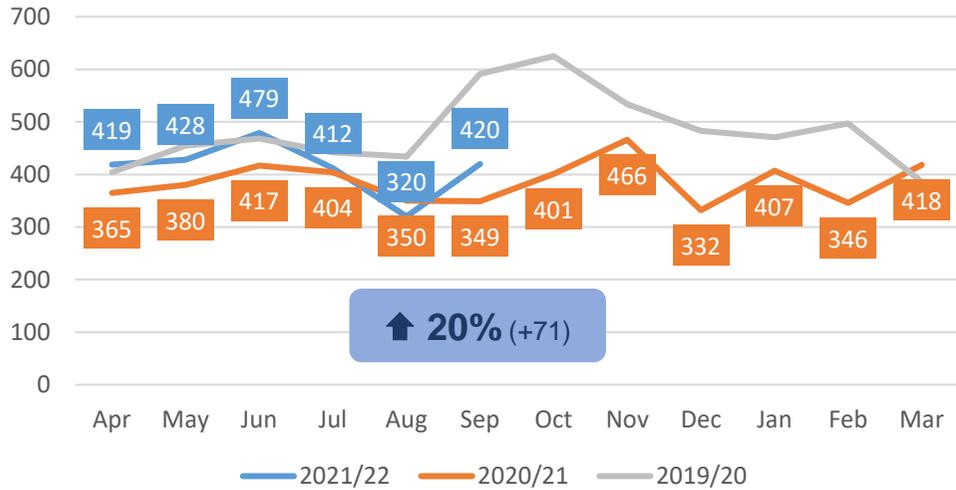
- 100 Formal [feedback from Ofsted](#) was received on 23 August 2021 following the Focused Visit in July 2021. We have developed an action plan in response to the recommendations made and have shared this with Ofsted.
- 101 Referrals to children's social care are generally lower over the summer and we did not see a spike in September as we often do when children return to school following the summer holidays. The last 18 months have been very different for children in school and there were staggered starts in some schools and we continue to closely monitor referrals as levels were high in both October and November in 2019.
- 102 Domestic abuse remains the most common reason for referrals into children's social care, followed by neglect and physical abuse. COVID and complexity of cases has led to an increase in children and young people who are open to statutory social care teams.
- 103 This has impacted on the social worker caseloads, and some have higher caseloads than we would want. Senior managers are aiming to address this with service redesign and continued close work with colleagues in early help. The council continues to support children's social care to recruit staff over-establishment.
- 104 A key area for improvement which we have focused on since 2019/20 was reducing the re-referral rate. This means children who are referred back into children's social care who had a previous referral in the last 12 months. This has decreased to 19% from 28% in 2019/20, and is now lower than in our national, statistical and regional neighbours.

² Other regions with towns experiencing decline: Wales (4%), the North West (2%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (1%)

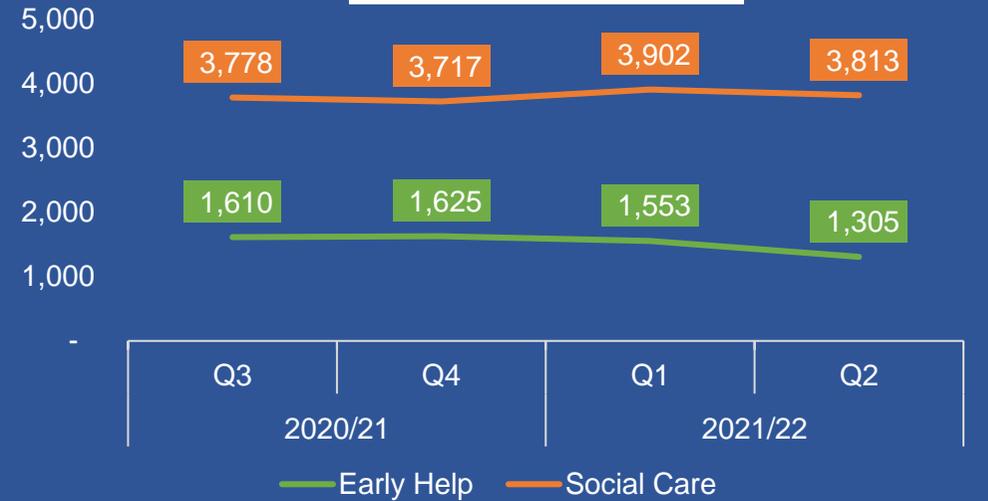
CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

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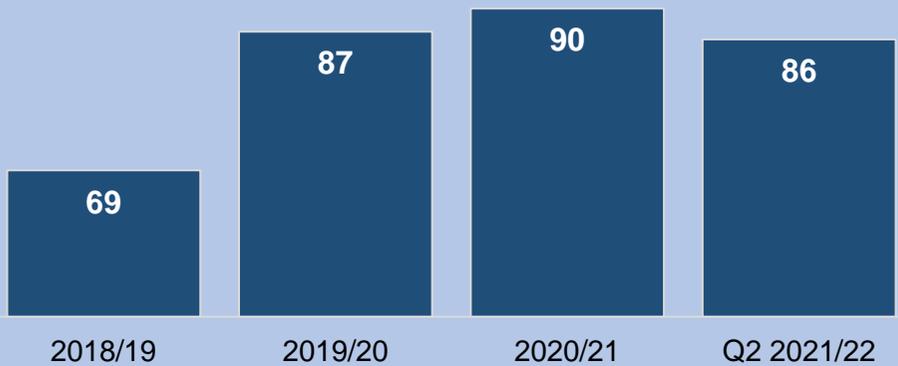
Referrals



No. of open cases



% ICPC held within 15 days of S.47 investigation commencing



No. of children subject to a child protection plan

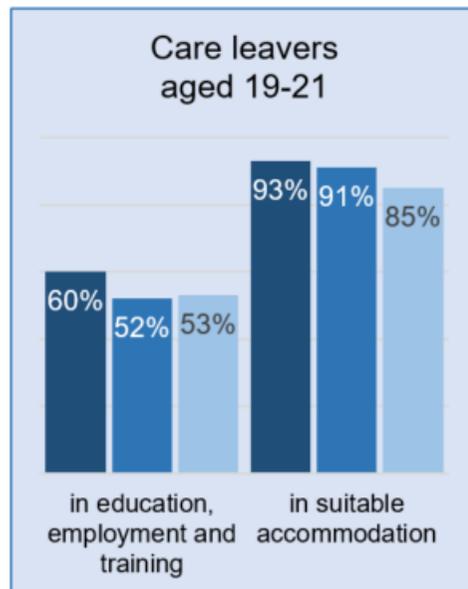
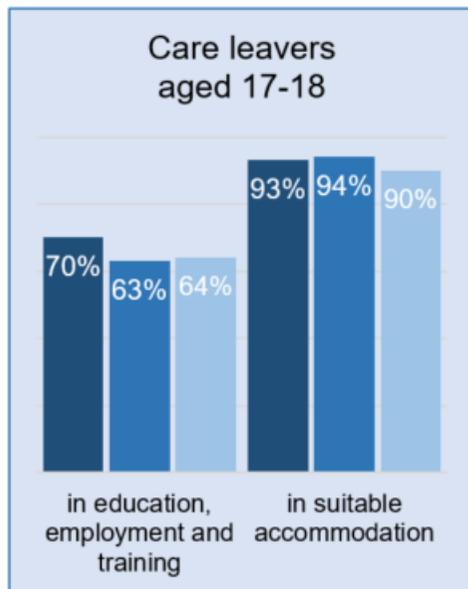
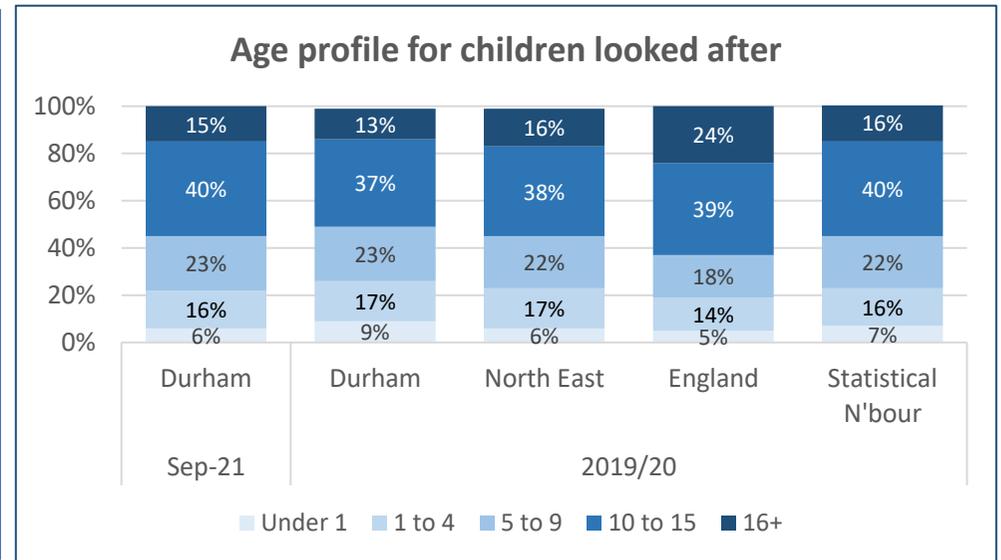
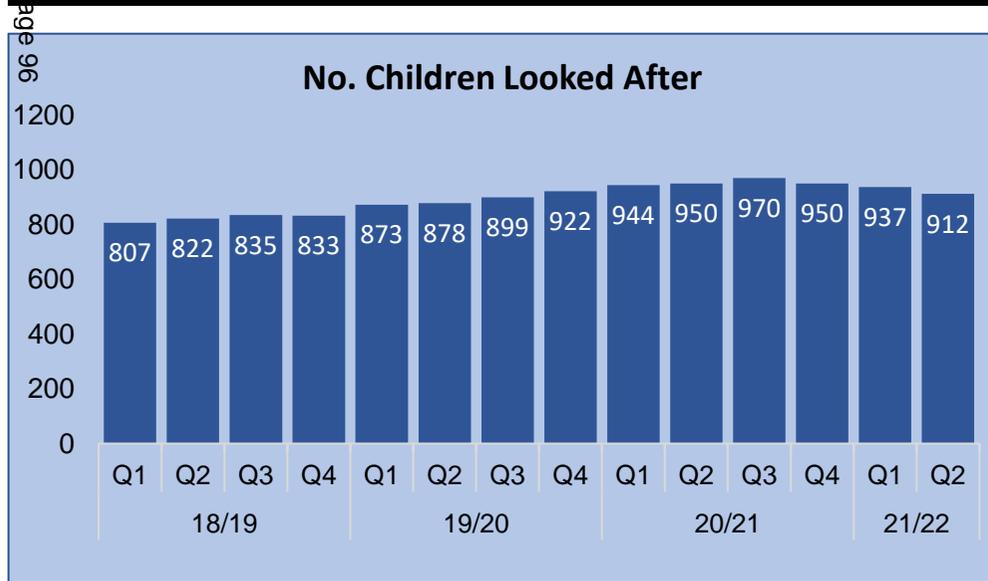


- 105 Whilst the number of children in care across the county has reduced following increases during COVID due to the inability for children to leave care due to court closures etc., we are experiencing significant placement pressures.
- 106 We continue to progress our Residential Care and Fostering Transformation Programmes with the aim of increasing in-house capacity through recruitment and retention of foster carers and longer-term development of new council children's residential homes.

Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe

- 107 Work is underway to develop masterplans for Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe which includes how occupancy can be increased within these centres. Masterplans are also being carried out for Stanley, Chester-le-Street and Crook. Bishop Auckland has been successful in securing bids through the Stronger Towns Fund and the Future High Streets Fund with the aim of addressing the recent decline in the town centre.
- 108 A free public wi-fi scheme in Durham City is expected to go live by the end of the financial year. Further roll out of the scheme to Crook, Spennymoor and Consett continues. The scheme encourages people to spend more time in our town centres and boost the local economy; as well as providing valuable anonymous information, which can then be used to shape future regeneration projects.
- 109 In September, Cabinet agreed the site selection for the Leisure Transformation Programme for Bishop Auckland and Chester-le-Street. Further due diligence is required on the Seaham site.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES



■ County Durham ■ North East ■ England

Where our children in care live

In-house foster care	43%	Independent living (incl. supported lodgings)	4%
Independent fostering agency	18%	Placed for adoption	4%
Friends and family	14%	In-house residential (incl. children's homes)	4%
Placed with parents	7%	NHS/ Health Trust	<0.5%
External residential (incl. children's homes and res school)	6%	Secure (incl. YOI and prison)	<0.5%

- 110 To help deter fly-tipping, during the period July 2020 to June 2021, 2,581 fly-tipping enforcement actions including further investigations, covert CCTV camera deployment, stop and search operations and issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices has been undertaken. This is a 32% increase on the previous year (1,950 actions). The proportion of incidents that have had an enforcement action during this period is 35%, an increase on the previous year which was 26%.
- 111 Our Community Action Team recently focused on South Moor dealing with rubbish accumulations, empty properties and pests. Working in partnership, 269 issues were logged with 91 legal notices served on 32 properties. A door knocking confidence questionnaire took place with 176 households participating and the results have been used to shape future work in the area.
- 112 With the easing of COVID restrictions over the summer some face to face road safety education and training has taken place with communities and individuals following COVID-safe guidelines. School based road safety education continues to be offered using a range of online curriculum linked resources as schools are predominantly focused on catching up with core curriculum learning and some education settings are still restricting visitors onto their sites.
- 113 In partnership with the County Durham and Darlington Road Safety Group, we supported Project EDWARD (Every Day Without A Road Death) during the week commencing 13 September. This is an annual UK-wide road safety campaign supported nationally by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Fire Chiefs Council. As part of Project EDWARD, the School Gate Parking initiative is now adopted in over 40 schools across the county.
- 114 After being temporarily stopped due to the pandemic, the Safer Driving with Age (SAGE) driving assessment restarted in July, Designed to help residents over-55 drive safely as they get older, SAGE consists of a 40-minute session with a qualified driving instructor who provides feedback on ways to make their driving safer.
- 115 Both water safety forums, responsible for managing water safety in the city centre and countywide, met during quarter two. The multi-agency groups reviewed risk assessments and planned controls for open water across the county, with a particular focus on Durham city centre.
- 116 The City Safety Group made progress against the revised action plan which was agreed and implemented in quarter one. A student induction week sub-group was formed and tasked with safety related planning for the induction week in early October 2021. Members of the task and finish group included representatives from the police, fire and rescue service, university, licensing, and neighbourhood wardens.

- 117 There was extensive communications and awareness campaigns targeted at public safety in open water and cold water shock via the council's dying to be cool campaign.

Communities will come together to support each other

- 118 Over the last 12 months there has been an increase of approximately 10.7% in the number of ASB incidents reported to the council. Most of this increase has been within nuisance, mainly noise incidents which account for 60% of all nuisance; and enviro-crime, mainly litter incidents which account for 44.2% of all enviro-crime and has seen a 39.2% increase in the last 12 months.
- 119 Following the recent month on month increase in police reported alcohol related ASB, with quarter one being higher than the last two years, this has shown a reduction during quarter two, and is back to pre-COVID levels.
- 120 Although there was a 6% reduction in domestic abuse incidents reported to the police during the 12 months ending 30 September, we remain concerned about the proportion of domestic related violence against the person offences that involve alcohol. During quarter two, demand for victim services was 30% higher than the same period last year and our specialist provider continues to report quarter on quarter increases. In addition, clients are presenting with more complex issues (especially mental health) so cases are taking longer to resolve.
- 121 Daily multi-agency screening of all domestic abuse incidents continues to be jointly undertaken by children's services, child health and police staff from the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Sharing information and decision making reduces any delay for children who need to be safeguarded. Almost 3,000 incidents have been screened in the last 12 months.
- 122 A wide range of activity has been undertaken through the multi-agency problem solving (MAPS) teams across the county. Examples of these include the clearing of the former Wheatley Hill Greyhound Stadium to prevent further arson and vandalism; target hardening locations in Wingate and Seaham to prevent access to quad bikes and unauthorised encampments; installation of shutters, fencing and anti-graffiti paint at the Old Board School at Stanley to prevent further incidents; and working with a local landowner at Shildon to target harden an area that was being used as an unauthorised encampment.
- 123 The council previously agreed to be part of the government funded Afghanistan Relocation and Assistance Programme (ARAP) and families have now started to arrive into County Durham as part of this scheme. In order to help the families settle into their new homes, and come to terms with the significant life changing events the council is working alongside a range of partners, including faith groups, the voluntary sector as well as comprehensive engagement with a

number of social landlords, to help ensure their transition to life in Durham is as positive as possible.

Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents

- 124 Phase one of the Targeted Delivery Plans (TDP)³ have all been approved. Wheatley Hill TDP is in the final stage of development and will be submitted for delegated approval in November alongside a proposal for the approach to the future progress of TDPs. TDPs form part of our Housing Strategy to improve the county's housing stock and wider residential environmental issue and focus on issues that are relevant to each area, including addressing long term empty homes.
- 125 Chapter Homes has completed construction of 67 new homes located at Oakerside Drive in Peterlee. Only seven homes are left to be reserved with the remaining 60 at reservation or sold stage. This is in line with expectations and on target to complete all sales by the target date of end of March 2022. External works are now progressing to ensure roads and open space are to an adoptable standard. Work continues on the Gilesgate site to construct 60 new homes by July 2022, with the new show home launched in September.

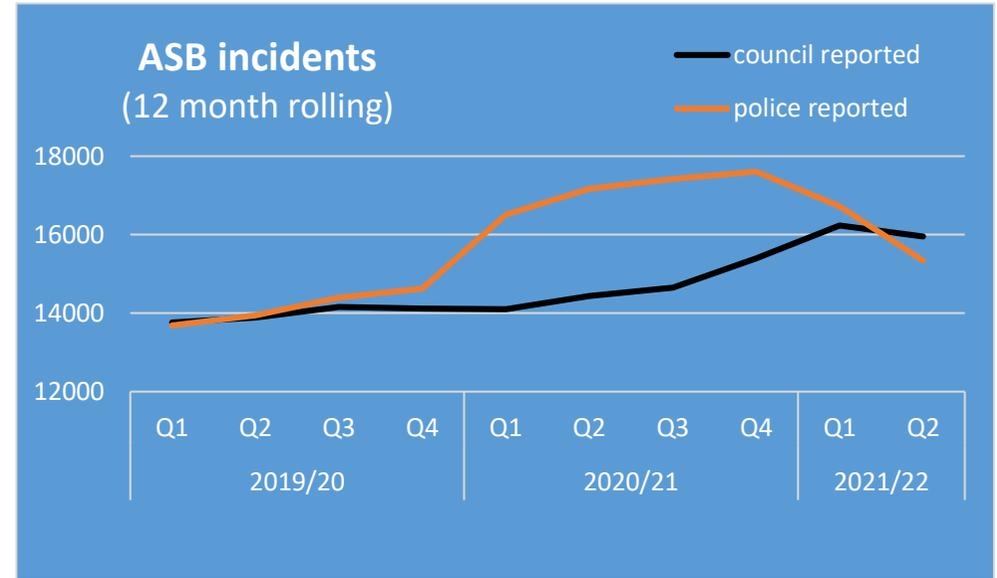
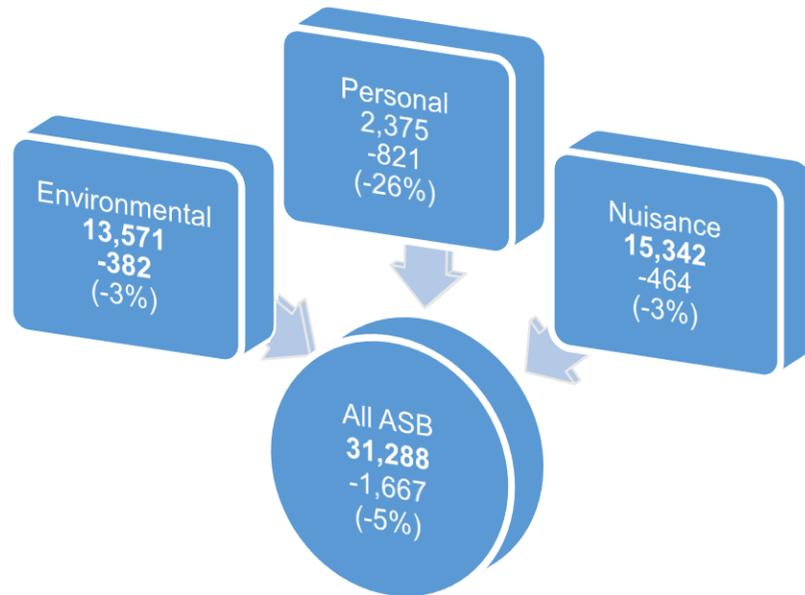
Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock

- 126 The number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention has almost doubled this quarter. The increase is due to the go live of the Northern Eastern project that has brought 17 single bed supported units in Spennymoor into use, 14 properties back into use via the Local Lettings Agency and one via Move on Fund. Other local authority intervention brought 22 empty properties back into use.
- 127 During the quarter, 279 households benefitted from energy efficiency measures, with total external grant funding of £436,800. The national ECO regulations have been amended resulting in more complicated procedures for ECO contractors which is slowing down contractors processing applications and installations.

³ New Kyo, Coundon Grange, Blackhall Colliery South, Thickley, Deneside East and Stanley Hall West

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

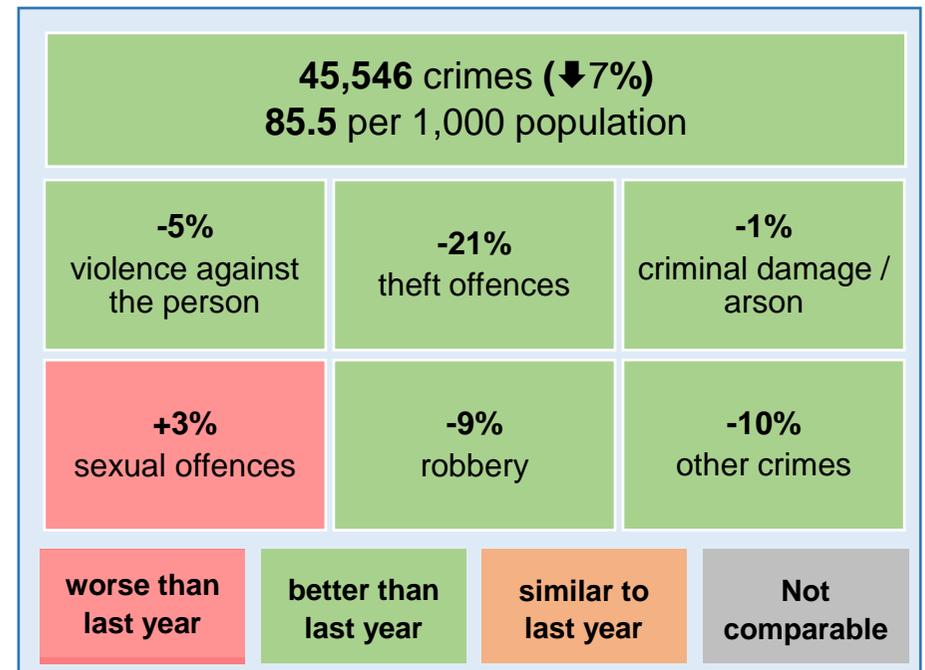
Police and council reported ASB



		12 months ending		Change	
		Sep 20	Sep 21		
Deliberate primary fires ¹	all	495	429	-66	-13%
	relating to road vehicles	316 (64%)	296 (69%)	-20	-6%
Deliberate secondary fires ²	all	1,857	2,047	+190	+10%
	relating to rubbish	1,055 (57%)	1,155 (56%)	+100	+10%

¹ more serious fires that harm people or damage property

² generally small outdoors fires



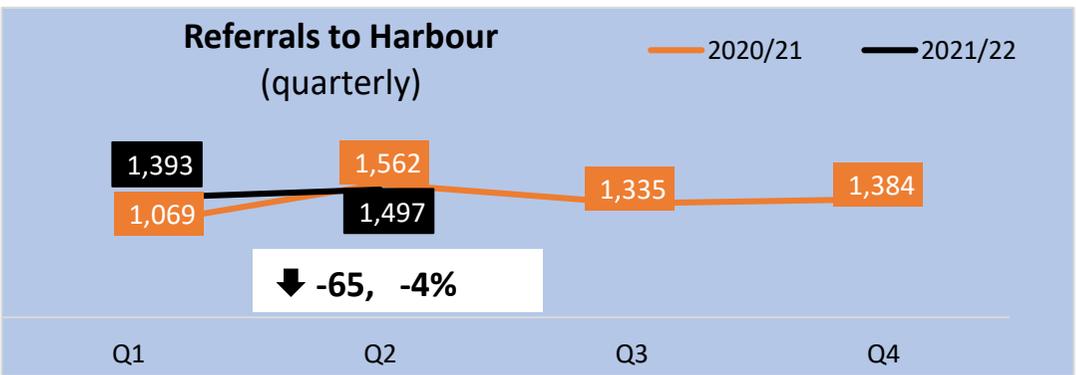
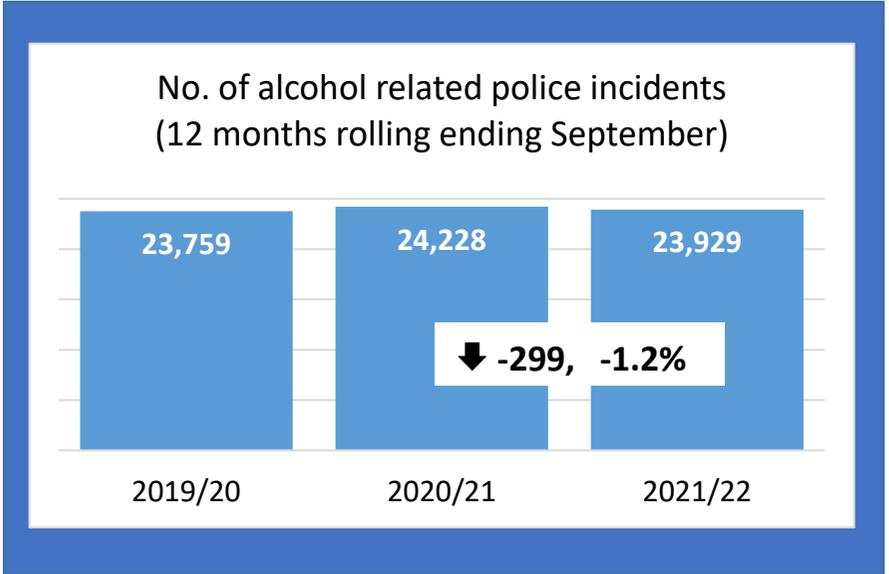
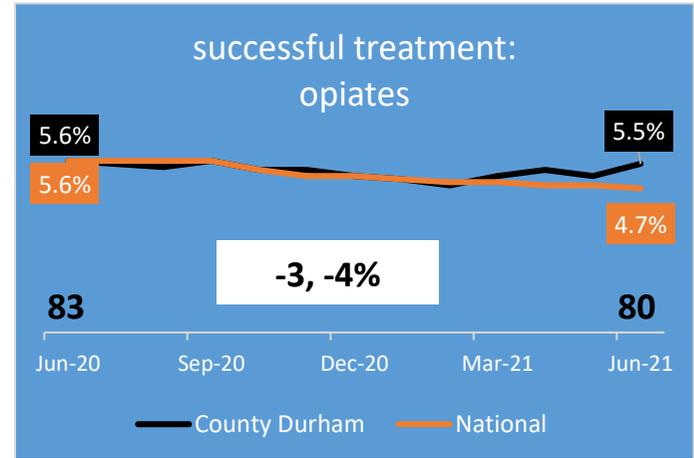
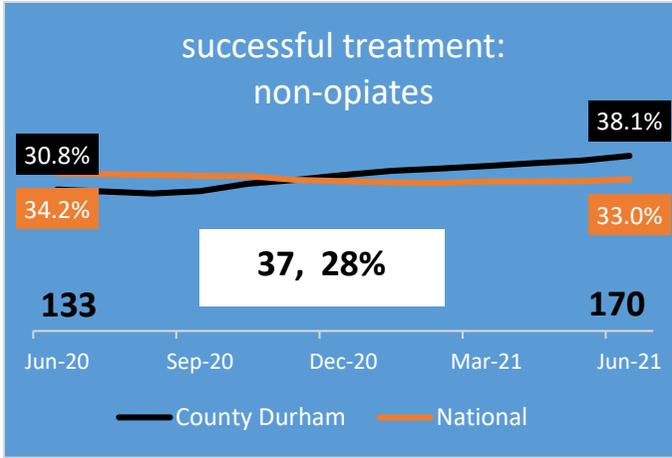
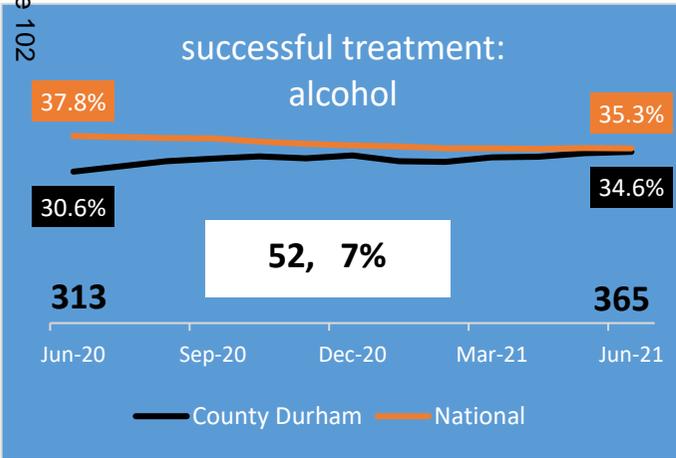
- 128 During quarter two, no decision was received from Government on our application for a selective licensing scheme. This means the implementation date for the scheme, if approved, has been moved to February 2022. However, this is dependent a decision being received by the end of October 2021 as a three-month notice period is required before licences can be issued. It should be noted that if a decision is not be received by end of October, the go live date for the scheme will need to be amended further. Despite the delay, work continues to ensure everything is in place for once a decision has been received.

People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities

- 129 The National Bus Strategy was launched in March 2021, setting out Government's vision for the future of bus services including the requirement for all Local Transport Authorities (LTA) to commit to working with bus operators to develop an Enhanced Partnership (EP). An EP is a statutory partnership between one or more LTAs and their local bus operators that sets out how they will work together to deliver a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP will need to set out how current arrangements meet the council's aspirations, and highlight what improvements need to be delivered through the EP and the investment plans of LTAs and bus operators. While detail of funding is pending further clarity from Government, it is anticipated that the BSIP will act as a bidding document to influence the share of the £3 billion transformation funding the region will receive from Government.
- 130 While the responsibility and power to make an EP lies with the North East Joint Transport Committee (NEJTC), the council, whilst not the Local Transport Authority, has a key role to play in the process with both its delegated transport functions and as Highway Authority as well as being a constituted member of the NEJTC. The publication of a BSIP is a key milestone in the process of development and implementation of an EP and it will be key that this plan reflects the needs of people in County Durham. As an enabler to engagement, a 'Vision for Buses' document has been compiled collaboratively with North East bus operators and members of the NEJTC and will provide evidence that engagement has been undertaken with the public and other key stakeholders. To extend this engagement, Local Bus Boards are also proposed, allowing local representatives to meet with bus representatives to increase understanding between the parties involved.

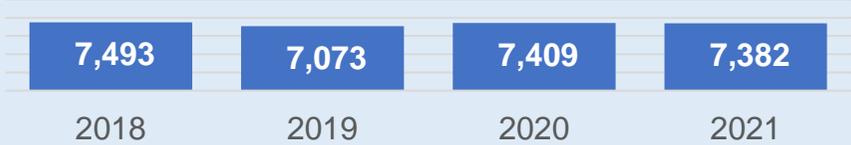
CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

page 102

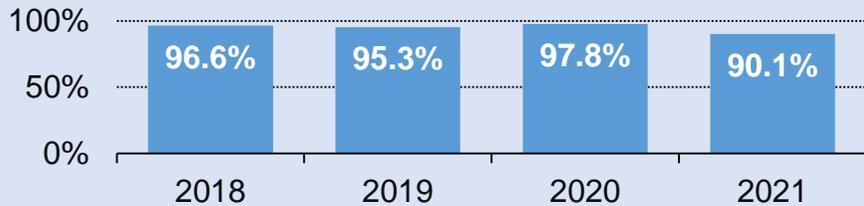


CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

reported fly-tipping incidents
(12 months ending 30 September)



municipal waste diverted from landfill



household waste re-used, recycled or composted



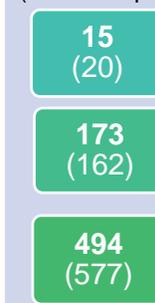
dry recyclable household waste collected from the kerbside which is contaminated



Road traffic collisions

- Killed
- Seriously injured
- Slightly injured

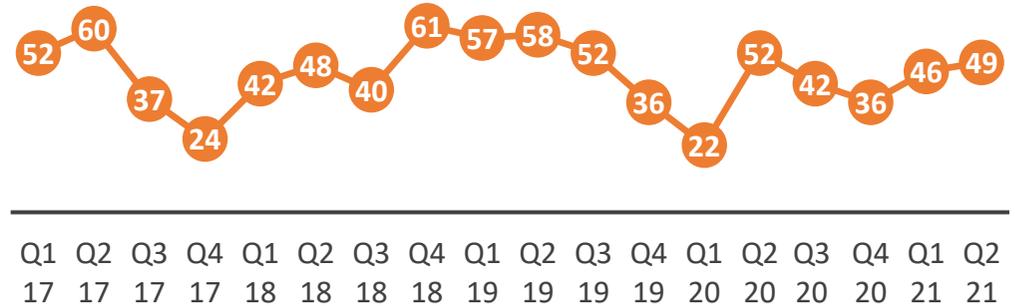
All casualties
Oct 20-Sep 21
(Oct 19-Sep 20)



Children
Oct 20-Sep 21
(Oct 19-Sep 20)



Serious Injuries



Fatalities



- 131 New Elvet Bridge re-opened at the end of October. The scheme has seen the northern joint repaired and the southern joint completely removed, extensive concrete repairs carried out and an electronic concrete protection system installed to provide additional protection for the years to come. Waterproofing and drainage works have been completed and surfacing of the bridge deck was undertaken.
- 132 The 2021/22 winter maintenance season commenced in October. Prior to the start of the season, a review of the 2020/21 season was undertaken, upgrades were carried out on the weather stations and the Winter Maintenance Plan and Policy were updated. Surveys were undertaken on the salt barns and repairs completed prior to salt replenishment commencing. Issues continue around salt deliveries as a consequence of HGV driver shortages, with an outstanding delivery of 4,500 tonnes of salt expected by the end of November.
- 133 Performance in relation to the proportion of category 2.2 highway defects being repaired within three months dropped below target throughout July to September due to an increase in the number of category 2.1 highway defects identified; meaning resource had to be diverted to more urgent works. This peaked in August with over 1,000 extra category 2.1 defects repaired compared to July.
- 134 As part of the [Restoring Your Railway 'Ideas Fund'](#) we have secured funding for three projects:
- *Consett to the Tyne* – following the award of £50K as part of the second round of funding to consider the feasibility, a strategic outline business case is currently being developed and will be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) shortly.
 - *Ferryhill Restoration (Teesside to Ferryhill)* – following the award of £50K as part of the second round of funding to consider the feasibility, a strategic outline business case was submitted to DfT in October. The Ferryhill station would utilise the existing Stillington line, currently only used for freight services, to create a passenger rail service running from Ferryhill to Teesside.
 - *Darlington – Durham Dales via Bishop Auckland* – we have been awarded £50K as part of the third round of funding. The money will help partners to develop an early stage proposal for plans to join the Bishop Auckland and Weardale railway lines. This study will consider the possibility of providing passenger rail access from the current heritage station to Darlington and the wider national rail network, potentially enabling communities to be better connected and supporting ambitious regeneration plans along the 31-mile heritage corridor.
- 135 As part of a wider programme of developments around Durham City, including Riverwalk and Milburngate, with an aim of improving the economic prosperity of Durham City as well as transport infrastructure and links to towns and villages

across the county, work has commenced on the new Durham Bus Station. The development will provide a welcoming transport hub for the city and will significantly increase the amount of space for passengers, will include improve toilet and baby changing facilities and improved security. The design will fit within the historic nature of its surroundings and includes a range of sustainable materials, as well as being fit for future greener transport options. Issues with a party wall agreement has delayed the programme of works, however, construction is due to recommence before the end of 2021 with completion expected in spring 2023.

- 136 Throughout the pandemic, we have maintained support to ensure that services such as school transport continued. The COVID-19 Bus Services Support grant was provided to support local bus services, this ceased in September and was replaced by a Bus Service Recovery grant which is available to operators and local transport authorities until 31 March 2022.
- 137 Following this, any future funding for the local bus network will be via an any funding we receive via the Enhanced Partnership process. With regard to school transport, an additional Dedicated Home to School and College Transport grant was available between September 2020 and July 2021.

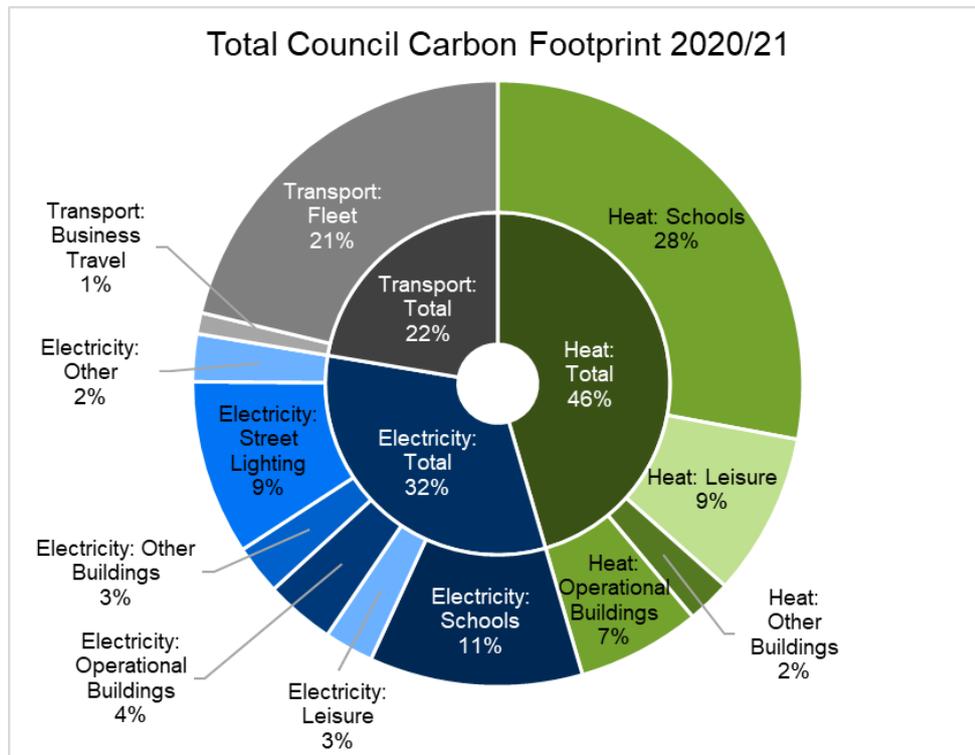
An Excellent Council

- 138 The ambition of an excellent council is structured around the following key objectives:
- (a) Our resources will be managed effectively;
 - (b) We will create a workforce for the future;
 - (c) We will design our services with service users;
 - (d) We will use data and technology more effectively
 - (e) We will actively performance manage our services.

Our resources will be managed effectively

- 139 The council continues to face significant financial pressure resulting from the pandemic. The additional costs incurred and loss of income are presently forecast to be around £24 million this year, offset by COVID-19 related underspends (relating to closure of facilities and disruption to normal service activity as a result of the pandemic) of £7.5 million – a net overspend of £16.7 million, which is presently within the forecast circa £17.2 million the council expects to receive from the Government to cover the financial impact of the pandemic.

140 The council's 2020/21 carbon footprint is made up as follows:



141 We continue to tackle heating issues with better heating controls, insulation, and low carbon heating systems. The level of fleet emissions will be addressed in coming years as we transition to electric vehicles.

142 The following table shows the changes in emissions from the 2009 baseline:

% change in CO ₂ emissions from council activity			
	tCO ₂ e		% difference
	2008/09	2020/21	
Social care	6,125	597	-90%
Business mileage	4,083	499	-88%
Street lighting	17,353	4,133	-76%
Electricity distribution	3,996	1,127	-72%
Secondary school	17,353	5,835	-66%
Leisure and culture	13,270	5,008	-62%
Operational buildings	11,229	4,538	-60%
Primary schools	16,332	9,710	-41%
Other schools	3,062	1,850	-40%
Miscellaneous	2,042	1,613	-21%
Fleet	11,229	9,409	-16%

143 Our buildings mainly use gas for heating and electricity to operate. Electricity in the grid is becoming less carbon intensive, and we have worked to improve the

efficiency of equipment in our buildings including gas boilers. It has been more difficult to drive reductions within schools as they have their own delegated budgets. A proportion of the reduction across social care is due to outsourcing (as more services are outsourced, we will adjust the baseline).

- 144 The reduction in street lighting has been achieved through decarbonisation of the electricity grid and replacing almost all of our street lights with LED lighting through the street lighting energy reduction project.
- 145 Miscellaneous includes a number of very small buildings such as community rooms. In the past, we prioritised larger buildings such as offices and leisure centres for energy efficiency works as it is more cost effective.
- 146 We continue to reduce emissions through actions set out in our Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP). Actions include, installing solar panels and LED lighting; developing a solar farm, battery storage and charging posts at Annfield Plain (zero carbon depot project); developing a new building energy management system to improve the control of energy; only using electric vehicles as pool cars; purchasing of an electric refuse vehicle, intend to monitor how well it performs on refuse routes.
- 147 Although the pandemic significantly impacted the collection of both council tax and business rates during 2020/21, gross payments in the latest quarter are higher than the same period last year. The withdrawal of Retail Relief for COVID-impacted businesses in June has led to the re-billing of many accounts.
- 148 We reinstated statutory collection for the current financial year on a gradual and cautious basis. Whilst there are still some legal and enforcement limitations in place, we continue offer flexible and supportive options to our residents and businesses. Collection rates reflect a steady improvement.

We will create a workforce for the future

- 149 During quarter two, our teams started returning to offices on a hybrid basis. The process of returning to offices is being phased in over seven weeks to avoid all teams returning on day one and to make appropriate provision for people classified as clinically extremely vulnerable or for whom there are mental health concerns. In exceptional circumstances where we are unable to make appropriate provision, staff will continue to work from home. All staff will be working this hybrid approach by 31 October (subject to government restrictions).
- 150 To acknowledge World Mental Health Day and National Work Life Week, and to recognise the hard work of our teams during the last year, we have awarded council staff an additional day's leave by way of a 'well-being day'.

- 151 Throughout the quarter, we continued to promote support mechanisms available to our staff that would increase emotional resilience and protect mental health – some long-established⁴, others developed in response to COVID-19⁵.
- 152 There were further improvements made to the employee well-being portal during quarter two in relation to increased promotion and the highlighting of key areas such as financial awareness, fertility/bereavement, and the menopause. In relation to menopause awareness eight sessions and 160 training places were arranged and made available for employees for this year.
- 153 Further proactive work was undertaken during the quarter in relation to employee mental health and well-being. This ranged from the preparation of a new employee well-being survey, winter flu campaign delivery, promotion of the employee assistance programme and the launch of a new employee well-being portal on the intranet.
- 154 As a consequence of the restrictions put in place throughout the pandemic (working from home, hand-washing, social distancing) both health and safety incidents and days lost to sickness have remained low, following the easing of restrictions, they have increased slightly.
- 155 Throughout the pandemic, our sickness rate showed a steady decline, reaching its lowest level since 2010/11 at year-end 2020/21. But, over the last six months our sickness rate has marginally increased and is now broadly in line with pre-COVID levels.
- 156 Of the days lost due to sickness during the 12 months ending 30 September, just under 10% was COVID-related (6,780 days) compared to 2% during the same period the previous year (1,666 days). Therefore, if we adjust our sickness rate by extracting sickness due to COVID-19 then our rate remains comparatively low (albeit increased over the last six months) at just over nine days per full time equivalent (FTE).
- 157 Although reductions in days lost have been noted across many sickness types, most notably stress (both work and non-work related), flu / colds, chest infections, strokes, broken bones / injuries, some categories have shown increases in both days lost and number of absences. These categories include cancer, anxiety disorders, back problems, fatigue, respiratory problems, and investigatory operations.

⁴ e.g., [employee well-being guide](#), [Employee Assistance Programme](#), 'mental health awareness for managers' training

⁵ Our well-being portal, CMT vlogs, e-learning courses (including building personal resilience; how to be effective, productive and maintain your resilience; managing remote teams; leading and managing dispersed teams; working at home in extraordinary circumstances)

- 158 We have reinstated our Performance Development Review (PDR) process on a phased top down approach starting October 2021 (leaders, managers then core employees). It is worth noting that although we suspended our PDR process early in the pandemic due to increased pressures on services and changes to our staffing structures (through furlough, redeployment, shielding, illness and self-isolation), managers continued to use existing PDRs as an ongoing support tool, maintaining regular online catch-ups and structured one to one/supervision meetings, reiterating the support mechanisms available and offering flexible working arrangements to any staff who needed them.
- 159 During quarter two, we developed a new approach for the induction of new managers. This includes meet and greet sessions with the Chief Executive and Head of People and Talent management, face-to-face sessions covering our culture and values, access to a new resource centre (via our Durham Learning and Development System) containing lots of helpful information such as training, systems, policies, and contacts.
- 160 We are developing a consultation programme to help us understand the level of digital skills currently in place across our workforce. The resulting baseline will support the development of a corporate digital training offer, and ensure resource is focused to the areas that need it most.
- 161 Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to both workforce development, and addressing current and future skills needs. Around 3.3% of our workforce is currently enrolled in the programme⁶, and the £7.6 million⁷ invested to date has allowed more than 1,100 employees to participate.
- 162 In addition to the 50 apprentices who joined the council in September, we are recruiting to a further 32 apprentice posts with start dates planned between October and December 2021 for successful candidates.
- 163 We have identified 81 job placements⁸ across the council as part of the government's kickstart scheme for young people (aged 16-24) claiming Universal Credit. Ten people have now been recruited and we are in the process of recruiting to the remaining 71 posts.

⁶ Made up of 292 apprentices and 213 employees upskilling – as at 30 September 2021.

⁷ invested via the apprenticeship levy since May 2017 - £334,000 has expired (i.e., not used within 24 months of entering our digital account) so was transferred to central government to fund apprenticeships for small employers. This equates to 0.5% of the total fund

⁸ The placements provide opportunities to build confidence, increase skills in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience – thereby increasing their likelihood of going on to find long-term, sustainable work.

Training & Development

1,113 apprenticeships started since 2017



Health & Wellbeing support

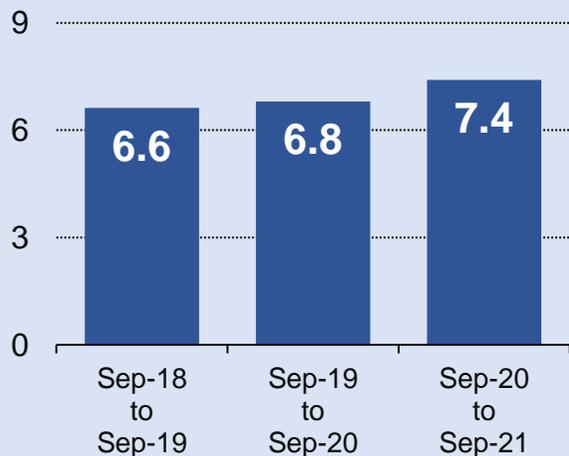
126
routine physiotherapy sessions

217
Mental Health First Aiders

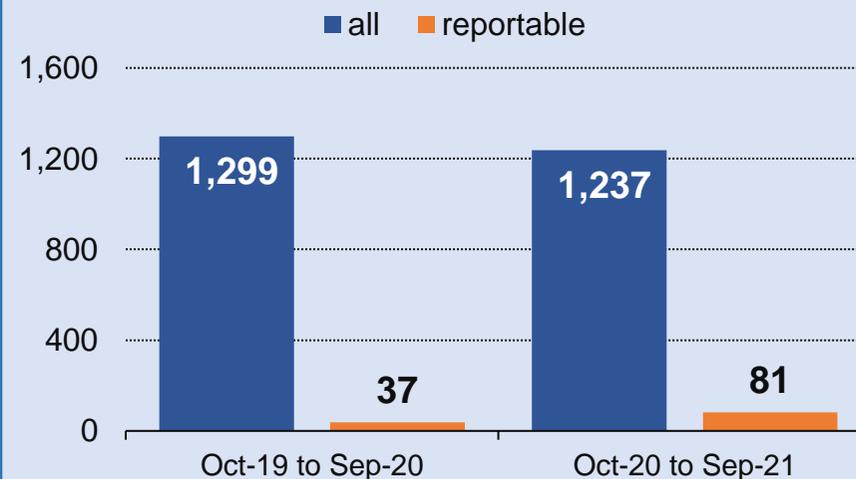
67
Health advocates

94
Anti-Stigma Ambassadors

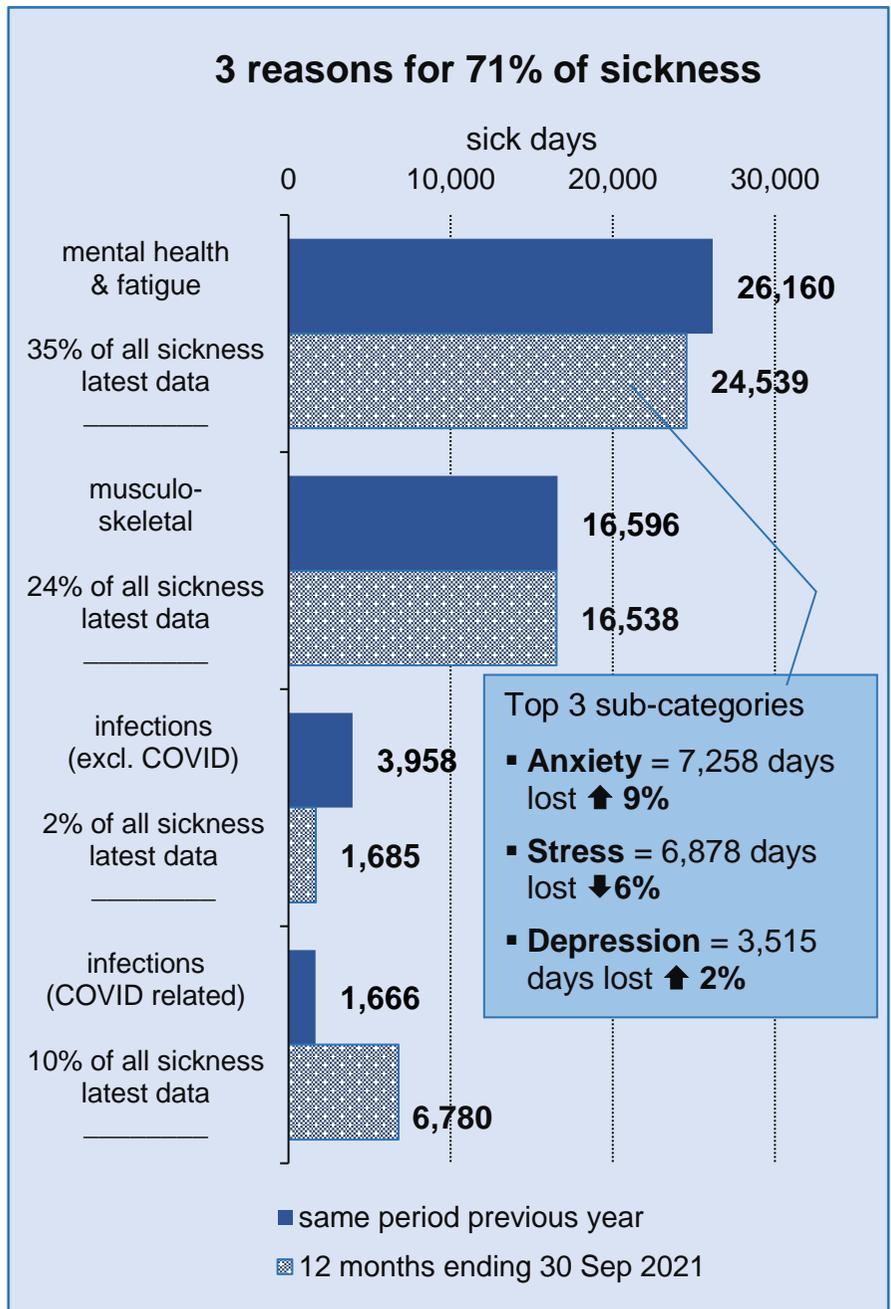
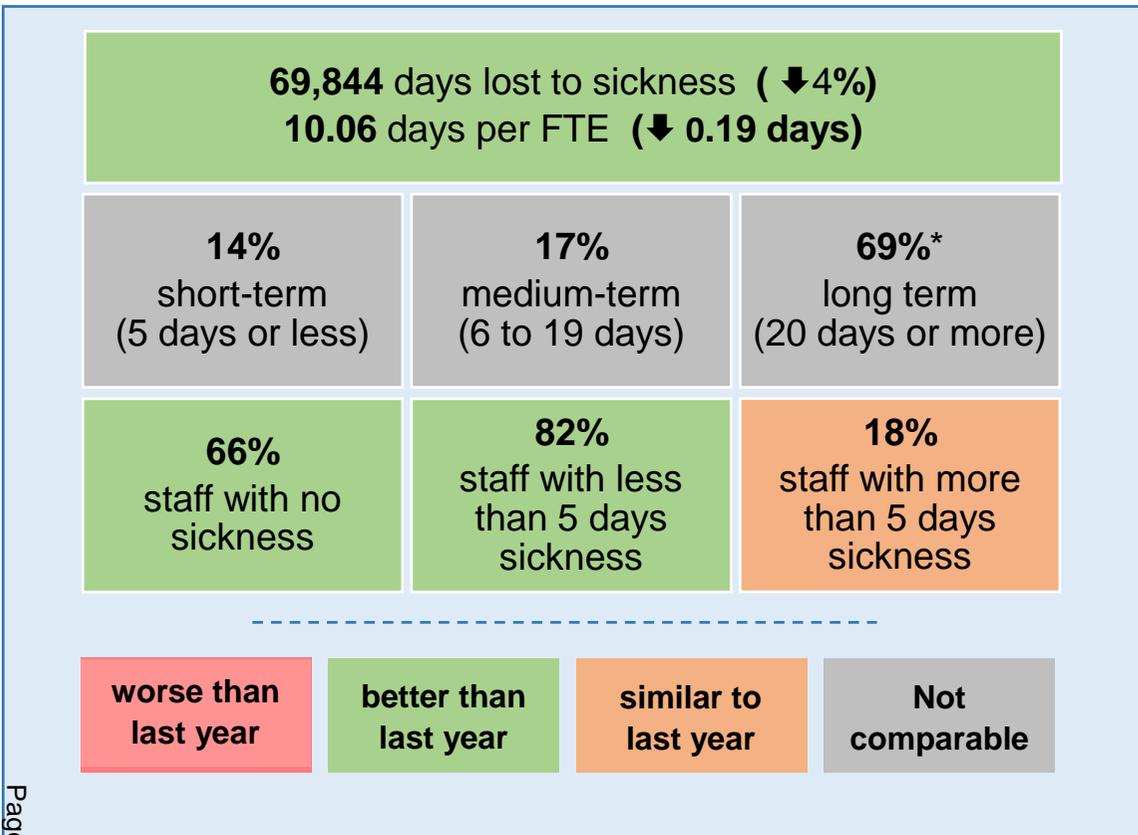
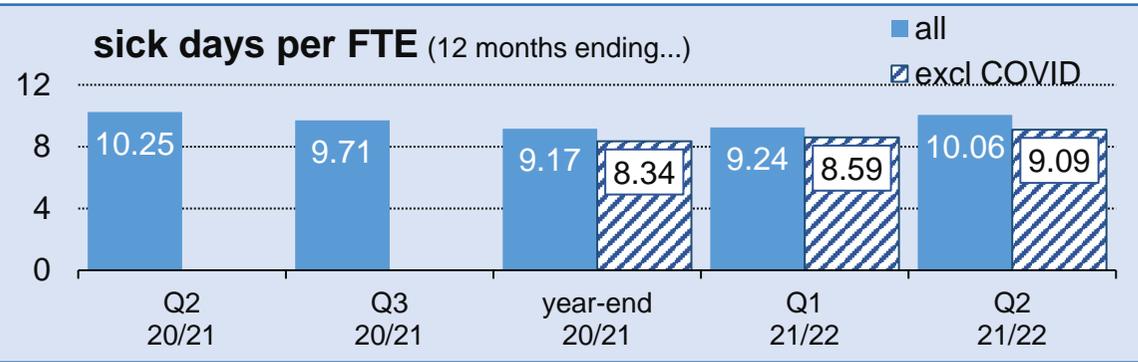
Staff Turnover (excl. school staff)



work related accidents/incidents



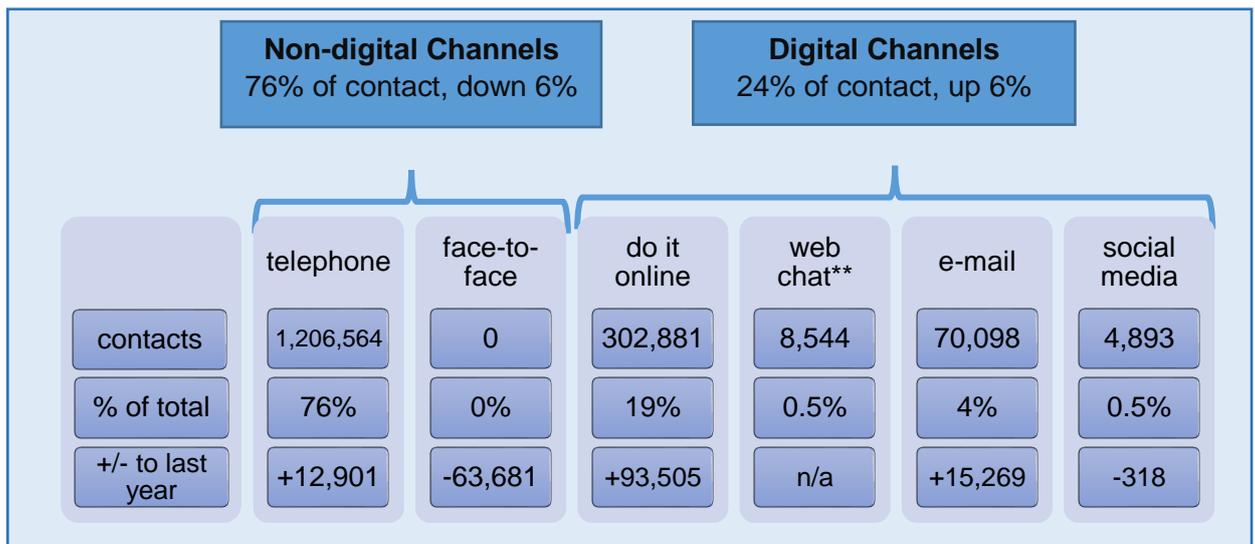
AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL



*Of 19 cases, 6 have been dismissed and are on notice (as at October 2021)

We will design our services with service users and will use data and technology more effectively

- 164 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 165 Throughout the 12 months ending 30 September 2021, we received almost 1.6 million contacts through our customer services team, as per the infographic below.



Non-Digital Channels

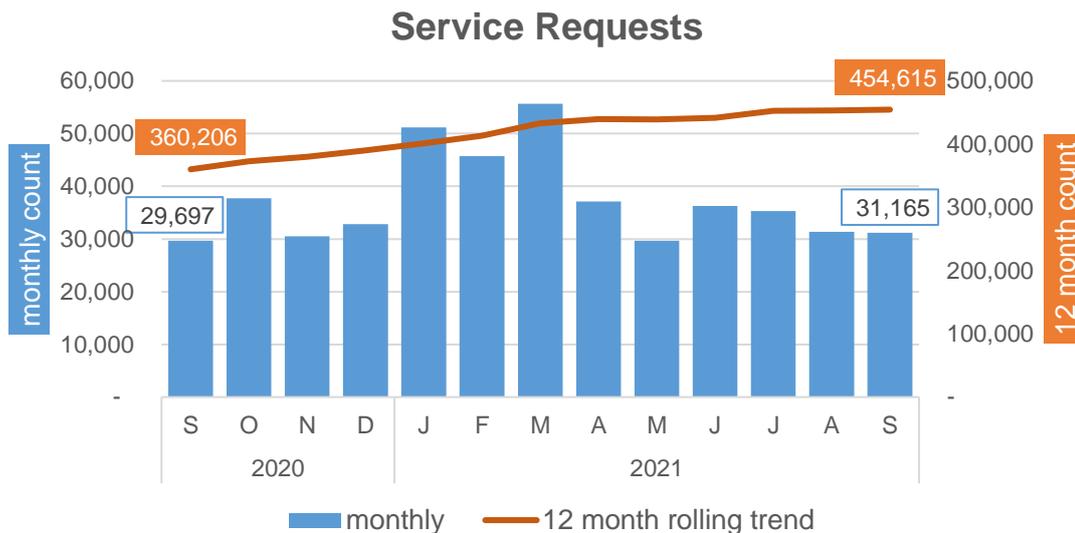
- 166 The telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us, with nearly eight in every ten customers choosing this method. Whilst reported call volumes appear to have increased during the pandemic, this is mainly due to our ongoing initiative to increase and enhance the volume and quality of data we hold and report on by transferring non-ACD lines (calls routed directly to a telephone extension) to our ACD system (calls routed to groups of agents based on a first-in-first answered criteria).
- 167 Historically, only calls received via our ACD system have been included in our telephone statistics. Transferring non-ACD lines to the ACD system not only allows us to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, it allows us to identify opportunities to enhance the customer experience.
- 168 Since the last report, an additional five telephony lines have been transferred to our ACD system (pest control, clean and green, litter, bereavement and MyView),

Digital Channels

- 169 Although the telephone remains popular overall, we continue to see more customers choosing to interact with us via our digital channels.
- 170 During quarter two, more than 22,000 residents signed up for an online account – taking the numbers of residents who engage with us through this method to more than 225,000.
- 171 If we look at the contact channels chosen by customers to log a service request (via our CRM system / customer services), we can see a clear shift from telephone to online.

		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 30 Sep	
		2020	2021
Non digital	Telephone	34%	27%
	Face to face	4%	0%
	Total	38%	27%
Digital	Do it online portal	57%	67%
	Other digital	5%	6%
	Total	62%	73%

- 172 In addition to their online account residents can contact us, at their convenience, through additional digital methods which include, social media (Facebook and twitter), web chat and virtual appointments.
- 173 Our webchat service is now available across more than 30 web pages. Whilst there had previously been a quarter-on-quarter decrease in webchat interactions, over the last quarter webchats increased by 41%, with increases across benefits and council tax (1,039, +60%), COVID-19 support (368, +37%) and general enquiries (542 +31%).
- 174 Generally, just over a quarter of all contact leads to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters are from customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.
- 175 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received. Almost 95,000 additional service requests were received in the 12 months ending 30 September 2021, an increase of 26%.



- 176 This increase reflects the impact of the pandemic across many areas of the council, additional residents contacting us to seek financial help (both personal and business related) or report issues arising from spending more time at home (especially environmental issues such as litter and fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour issues such as noise), and the need to enforce various COVID-19 restrictions.
- 177 Although the number of service requests is continuing to increase, the rate of increase is slowing.
- 178 To enable us to monitor the delivery timescales of service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM), we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
- 179 However, we do not apply performance standards if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. Nor did we apply to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.
- 180 76% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 September were assessed against a performance standard. And, of these, the standard was met in 74% of cases – slightly lower than the 77% recorded for the same period last year. However, it should be noted that over the same period, service requests increased by 26%.
- 181 Our CRM System is configured to automatically send customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 182 This allows us to potentially reach customers linked to around 70% of the service requests recorded in our CRM. However, as we are only able to reach those who

have provided a valid email address, we can only contact around 55%. To improve on this percentage, we are continuing to deliver a range of activity to increase the number of valid email addresses and other contact information we hold.

- 183 As can be seen in the table below, our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low but improving.

Service requests linked to our customer satisfaction survey		
Number	1 Oct 2019 to 30 Sep 2020	1 Oct 2020 to 30 Sep 2021
SR types	105	117
SRs received	289,498	342,533
Surveys emailed to customer	214,049 (74%)	104,814 (31%)
Responses to survey	10,039 (4.7%)	15,691 (15.0%)
Response as a % of service requests	3.5%	4.6%

- 184 The data for the 12 months ending September 2021 has been reset since last reported, we now have more accurate reporting. This data has been impacted by issues with closures, 80% of these have been resolved with the remainder in progress. Therefore, we expect this to increase going forward.

- 185 Much of the improvement in the service response rate is due to linking the survey to more service requests and capturing more customer email addresses. Over the last two years, the number of responses has increased by 60%.



- 186 Whilst the satisfaction survey is linked to 117 service request types, 70% of the survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 September related to only eight service request types. Half of these (36% of total responses) followed a report of a missed collection. The remaining half was made up of responses following requests to clear fly-tipping, collect bulky waste, make a complaint,

report a street lighting, road or footpath issue, report a change of circumstances to the council tax team or join the garden waste scheme.

- 187 Whilst increased response percentages were seen over five of the eight service request types there was significant variance in response rates ranging from 19% to 0.9%. This can be linked to both the volume of requests we receive for different types of request and the nature of the requests themselves. We continue to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback.
- 188 Despite the pandemic, we are continuing with developments that enhance the customer experience.
- 189 Extending channel choice is a core element of our digital transformation programme, and we have included new modern communication channels on platforms such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp within our refreshed Unified Communications Programme.
- 190 We are continuing to drive improvements across customer services through our Integrated Customer Service Initiative which will develop a unitised model for customer service across the council. This will be achieved by implementing consistent first point of contact principles in line with the following three main workstreams:
- (a) Standardisation: Unifying and standardising our technology platform to support an agile and flexible workforce in delivering high quality services to customers, wherever and whenever they are needed.
 - (b) Harmonisation: Using technology and data to gather more robust and wide-reaching demand, quality, and satisfaction data to support a holistic view of our customer.
 - (c) Unitisation: delivering all first point of contact interactions through a single unitised customer service function to ensure consistency when responding to customers and improving the overall customer experience.
- 191 As we move to new modern ways of working in line with our transformation programme, it essential we ensure that agents have the right tools to do the job.
- 192 We have continued with developments that enhance the customer experience and drive improvements across customer services through our Integrated Customer Service initiative and Unified Communications Strategy.
- 193 Project SignVideo will provide access to immediate telephony support for British Sign Language individuals (BSL) to communicate over video telephones and similar technologies with hearing people in real-time, via a sign language interpreter through a Video Relay Service. This project is due for implementation

into corporate customer service in quarter four and aims to improve the ease and speed of contact for BSL users at first point of contact.

- 194 Extending channel choice is a core element of our digital transformation programme, having the ability to engage with residents in both new and traditional ways increases our ability to engage with and understand better the needs of our customers.
- 195 Project Bizvu is aligned to the enablement of new modern communication channels on platforms such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp into our contact centres and is due for implementation in 2022.
- 196 During quarter two, we continued to roll-out our new softphone-based telephony platform giving users access to contact centre features from their laptop allowing them to work from any location with an adequate internet connection. 14 more teams⁹ moved to the new solution meaning the project is 77% complete and on track for all contact centres to be standardised by 31 December 2021.
- 197 During quarter one 2021/22, the Customer Access Point operating model was revised to facilitate a primary focus on digital inclusion through access to devices and assisted self-service support, capacity for officers to provide fully supported self-serve sessions with those customers who need it was created by moving all face-to-face interactions to 'appointment only'.
- 198 These changes were reflected in our revised Customer Service Charter and Standards and reflect our customer service ethos and the changing needs and expectations of our customers.
- 199 We are also in the process of updating our customer satisfaction survey to both implement the changes required to reflect the adjusted Charter and Standards and to provide richer customer service. The changes are due to be tested and refined in quarter three with implementation planned by January 2021 to ensure a full data set for quarter four.

We will actively performance manage our services.

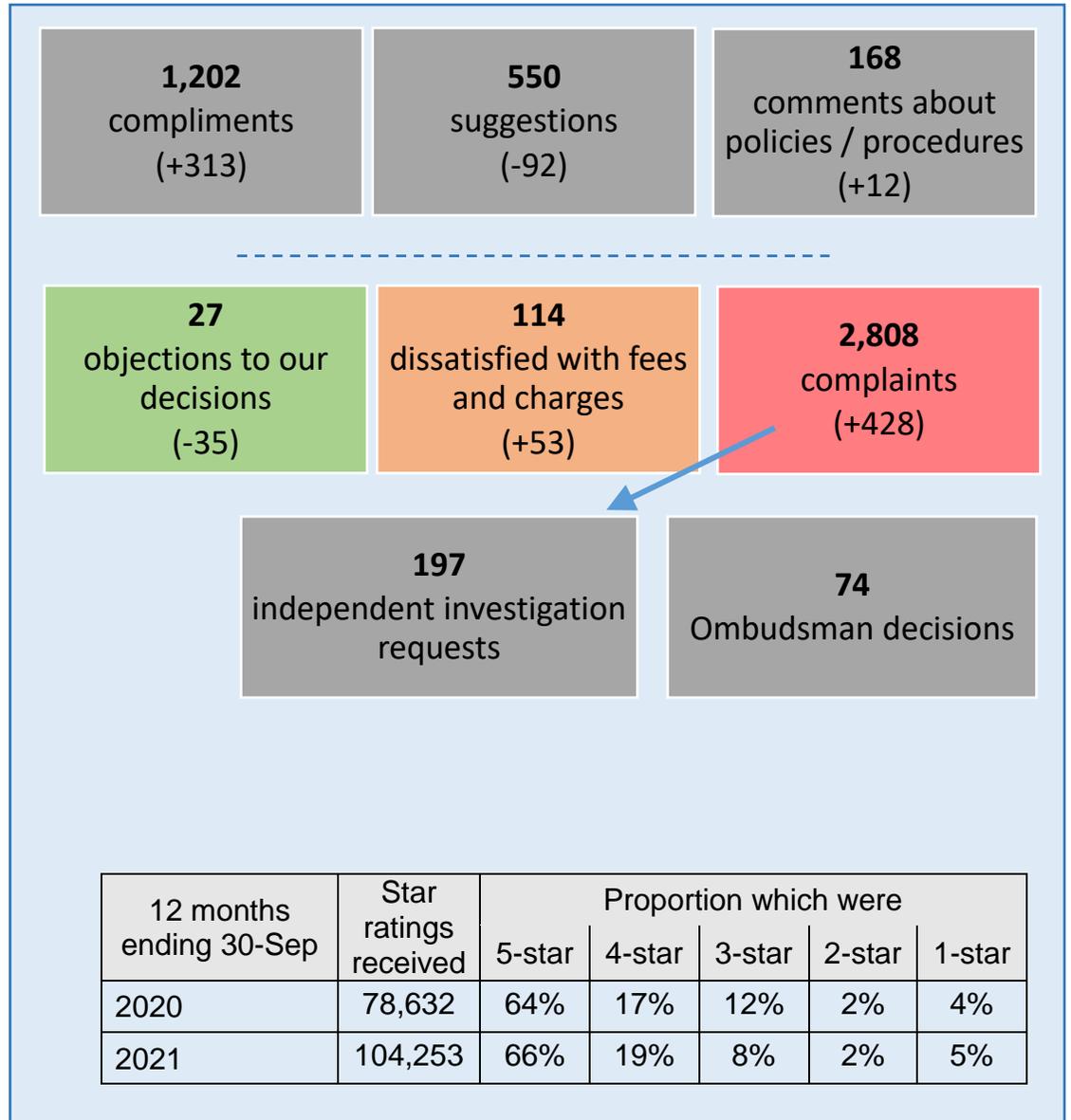
- 200 Care Connect, which provides a 24-hour monitoring and response service to help residents live independently in their own home, has retained its accreditation with the Telecare Services Association (TSA). In addition, its annual customer

⁹ Sundry Debtors, Welfare Assistance, Blue Badge, Financial Assessment, Deputy and Appointee, Integrated Transport Unit, Trade Waste, Refuse and Recycling, Payroll Menu, AHS collections and recovery, Enforcement, Bereavement, MyView helpdesk and Pest Control

satisfaction survey shows customer satisfaction increased in the last year, despite extremely challenging circumstances, with 100% of customers stating their support needs were met and that staff were helpful and respectful.

- 201 During quarter two, Care Connect answered almost 96.7% of calls within a minute, a slight drop on the previous quarter (97.0%) due to staffing resource issues and an increase in call volumes. The team are working to address these issues and five vacant Telecare operator posts have been filled during this quarter. The Care Connect emergency response rate (arriving at property within 45 minutes of a call) is consistently above the 90% target and this quarter was 98.3%, with 5,187 calls responded to within 20 minutes.

AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL



Key Performance Indicators – Data Tables

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There are two types of performance indicators throughout this document:

- (a) Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
- (b) Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and/or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

A guide is available which provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources for the 2020/21 corporate indicator set. This is available to view either internally from the intranet or can be requested from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

KEY TO SYMBOLS

	Direction of travel	Benchmarking	Performance against target
GREEN	Same or better than comparable period	Same or better than comparable group	Meeting or exceeding target
AMBER	Worse than comparable period (within 2% tolerance)	Worse than comparable group (within 2% tolerance)	Performance within 2% of target
RED	Worse than comparable period (greater than 2%)	Worse than comparable group (greater than 2%)	Performance >2% behind target

National Benchmarking

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, for example educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

North East Benchmarking

The North East figure is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region, i.e., County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-On-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

MORE AND BETTER JOBS

Do residents have good job prospects?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
1	% of working age population in employment	71.3	Jul 2020-Jun 2021	73 (red)	71.6 (green)	74.7 (red)	70.5 (green)			Yes
2	Per capita household disposable income (£)	16,617	2019	Tracker	16,315 (green)	21,978 (red)	17,096 (red)			Yes
3	Gross jobs created / safeguarded as a result of Business Durham activity	2,015	Jul-Sep 2021	Tracker	552 (green)					Yes
4	% of 16 to 17 year olds in an apprenticeship	5.5	as at Aug 2021	Tracker	6.8 (red)	4.2 (green)	6.4 (red)	6.2 (red)		Yes

Is County Durham a good place to do business?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
5	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita in County Durham (£)	16,925	2019	Tracker	16,501 (green)	30,239 (red)	20,727 (red)			Yes
6	No. of registered businesses in County Durham	14,565	Mar 2021	Tracker	14,105 (green)					Yes
7	Value (£ million) of new contracts secured	8,173,215	2020/21	8 (green)	907,439 (green)					No
8	Value (£ million) of GVA growth from jobs created	59,148,310	Jul-Sep 2021	7,000,000 (green)	0 (green)					Yes
9	No. of Inward Investments secured	8	Jul-Sep 2021	1 (green)	0 (green)					Yes
10	% of Business Durham business floor space that is occupied	94.8	Jul-Sep 2021	85 (green)	79.7 (green)					Yes

How well do tourism and cultural events contribute to our local economy?

Page 22 Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
11	No. visitors to County Durham (million)	11.39	2020	Tracker	20.13 (red)					No
12	No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	6,794	2020	Tracker	12,133 (red)					No
13	Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	506.75	2020	Tracker	980.72 (red)					No

Do our young people have access to good quality education and training?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
14	Average Attainment 8 score	48.8	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	53.1 (red)	48.4 (green)			No
15	Average point score per A level entry of state-funded school students	39.9	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	39.5 (green)	38.3 (green)			No
16	% of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (KS2)*	65	2018/19 (academic year)	Tracker	67	65 (green)	67 (red)	61 (green)		No
17	% of 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training	5.8	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	4.8 (red)	3.0 (red)	4.9 (red)			No
18	Gap between average Attainment 8 score of Durham disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally (KS4)	-14.4	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	-13.5 (red)	-15.1 (green)			No
19	% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a Good Level of Development*	71.8	2018/19 (academic year)	64 (green)	72.8 (amber)	71.8 (green)	71.8 (green)			No
20	Gap between % of disadvantaged pupils and % of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally who achieve expected standard in reading, writing and maths (KS2)*	-19.8	2018/19 (academic year)	Tracker	-15.1 (red)	-20 (green)	-18 (red)			No

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
21	Ofsted % of Primary schools judged good or better	89	as at 30 Sep 2021	Tracker	89 (green)	87 (green)	91 (red)			Yes
22	Ofsted % of secondary schools judged good or better	69	as at 30 Sep 2021	Tracker	64 (green)	76 (red)	60 (green)			Yes
23	Exclusion from school of all Durham children - percentage of children with at least one fixed exclusion	1.88	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	2.2 (green)	1.87 (amber)	2.22 (green)	2.39 (green)		No

*not reporting for 2019/20 as assessments did not take place

LONG AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

Are children, young people and families in receipt of universal services appropriately supported?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
24	% of free school meals (FSM) eligible pupils taking FSM	76.0	Jan 2021	Tracker	75.8 (green)	82.6 (red)	82.6 (red)			No
25	Under-18 conception rate per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 17	19.0	2019	Tracker	26.4 (green)	15.7 (red)	21.8 (green)	21.5 (green)		Yes
26	% of five year old children free from dental decay	73.2	2019	Tracker	74.2 (amber)	76.6 (red)	76.7 (red)	71.7 (green)		No
27	Alcohol specific hospital admissions for under 18s (rate per 100,000)	52.8	2017/18-2019/20	Tracker	54.7 (green)	30.7 (red)	55.4 (green)	55.3 (green)		No
28	Young people aged 10-24 admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm (rate per 100,000)	361.2	2019/20	Tracker	354.3 (red)	439.2 (green)	536.6 (green)	656.3 (green)		No
29	% of children aged 4 to 5 years classified as overweight or obese**	24.9	2019/20	Tracker	24.0 (red)	23.0 (red)	24.8 (amber)	25.0 (green)		No
30	% of children aged 10 to 11 years classified as overweight or obese**	37.6	2019/20	Tracker	37.7 (green)	35.2 (red)	37.5 (amber)	37.2 (amber)		No
31	% of Education Health and Care Plans completed in the statutory 20 week time period (excl. exceptions)	62	Jan-Sep 2021	Tracker	60 (green)	58 (green)	75.9 (red)	82.0 (red)	2020	Yes

**The National Child Measurement Programme ended in March 2020 when schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparisons to North East and Nearest Statistical Neighbours should be treated with caution as not all submitted of their measurements.

Are children, young people and families in receipt of early help services appropriately supported?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
32	% of successful interventions (families turned around) via the Stronger Families Programme (Phase 4)	75 ¹⁰ [571/761]	Apr-Sep 2021	381 (green)	76.8 [567/730]					Yes
33	% of children aged 0-2 years in the top 30% IMD registered with a Family Centre and having sustained contact	87.7	Jul-Sep 2021	80 (green)	88.8 (amber)					Yes

Are our services improving the health of our residents?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
34	% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.0	Jan-Mar 2021	14.7 (amber)	16.6 (green)	8.9 (red)	12.8 (red)	13.4 (red)		No
35	Four week smoking quitters per 100,000 smoking population	2,452 [1,830]	Apr 2020 - Mar 2021	Tracker	2,945 [2,198] (red)	1,670 (green)	2,213 (green)	2,736 (red)		Yes
36	Male life expectancy at birth (years)	77.8	2018-20	Tracker	78.3 (amber)	79.4 (red)	77.6 (green)	77.9 (amber)		Yes
37	Female life expectancy at birth (years)	81.2	2018-20	Tracker	81.8 (amber)	83.1 (red)	81.5 (amber)	81.6 (amber)		Yes
38	Female healthy life expectancy at birth (years)	58.3	2017-19	Tracker	58.4 (amber)	63.5 (red)	59.0 (amber)	61.0 (red)		No
39	Male healthy life expectancy at birth (years)	59.6	2017-19	Tracker	59.3 (green)	63.2 (red)	59.4 (green)	60.5 (amber)		No
40	Excess weight in adults (Proportion of adults classified as overweight or obese)	64.8	2019/20	Tracker	63.3 (red)	62.8 (red)	67.6 (green)	69.6 (green)		No

¹⁰ Annual target of 761

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
41	Suicide rate (deaths from suicide and injury of undetermined intent) per 100,000 population	14.3	2018-20	Tracker	13.4 (red)	10.4 (red)	12.4 (red)	12.6 (red)		Yes
42	Prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth (%)	29.1	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	31.4 (red)	48.0 (red)	34.4 (red)	34.0 (red)	2019/20	Yes
43	Estimated smoking prevalence of persons aged 18 and over	17.0	2019	Tracker	15.0 (red)	13.9 (red)	15.3 (red)	15.2 (red)		No
44	Self-reported well-being - people with a low happiness score	10.9	2019/20	Tracker	9.5 (red)	8.7 (red)	10.6 (amber)	9.6 (red)		No
45	Participation in Sport and Physical Activity: active	58.7%	May 2020-May 2021	Tracker	58.1% (amber)	60.9% (amber)	59.7% (amber)			Yes
46	Participation in Sport and Physical Activity: inactive	31.3%	May 2020-May 2021	Tracker	30.6% (red)	27.5% (red)	28.9% (amber)			Yes

Are people needing adult social care supported to live safe, healthy and independent lives?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
47	Adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care	175.0	Apr-Jun 2021	N/a	97.0 (red)					No
48	% of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services	88.3	Jan-Jun 2021	N/a	82.5 (green)	79.1 (green)	72.1 (green)	80.0 (green)	2020/21	Yes
49	% of individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process	94.0	Apr-Sep 2021	Tracker	94.4% (amber)	94.8% (amber)	94.9% (amber)	96.0 (red)	2020/21	Yes
50	% of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months	77.1	Apr-Sep 2021	Tracker	92.4 (red)					Yes
51	Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support	69.6	2019/20	Tracker	67.8 (green)	64.2 (green)	67.5 (green)	66.2* (green)		No

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
52	Overall satisfaction of carers with the support and services they receive (Biennial survey)	51.2	2018/19	Tracker	43.3** (green)	38.6 (green)	47.2 (green)	41.8* (green)		No
53	Daily delayed transfers of care beds, all, per 100,000 population age 18+	2.9	Feb 2020	Tracker	1.5 (red)	11.0 (green)	7.0 (green)	11.0* (green)		No
54	% of adult social care service users who report they have enough choice over the care and support services they receive	77.6	2019/20	Tracker	75.1 (green)	66.6 (green)	73.0 (green)	69.2* (green)		No

*unitary authorities

** results from 2016/17 survey

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – SAFER

Are children, young people and families in receipt of social work services appropriately supported and safeguarded?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
55	% of statutory referrals received by the First Contact Team or Emergency Duty Team processed within 1 working day	95 [2,202 / 2,319]	Apr-Sep 2021	Tracker	93 (green)					Yes
56	% of statutory children in need referrals occurring within 12 months of a previous referral	18 [458]	Apr-Sep 2021	Tracker	23 [561] (green)	23 (green)	22 (green)	20 (green)	2019/20	Yes
57	% of single assessments completed within 45 working days	80 [2,002]	Apr-Sep 2021	Tracker	85.5 [2150] (red)	84 (red)	89 (red)	87 (red)	2019/20	Yes
58	Rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 population aged under 18	47.05 [473]	as at Sep 2021	Tracker	47.05 [473] (green)	43	70	58	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
59	Rate of children in need per 10,000 population (Cases open to Children's Social Care)	379 [3,813]	as at Sep 2021	Tracker	351.4 [3,533] (red)	324	463	414	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
60	Rate of children open to One Point (early help) 10,000 population aged under 18	128 [1,305]	as at Sep 2021	Tracker	148 [1,497]					Yes

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
61	% of strategy meetings initiated which led to an initial child protection conference being held within 15 working days	86 [340 of 397]	Apr – Sep 2021	75 (green)	93 [340] (red)	78 (green)	83 (green)	82 (green)	2019/20	Yes
62	% of Social Workers with fewer than 20 cases	52	as at Sep 2021	Tracker	60 (red)					Yes
63	% of Statutory Case File Audits which are given a scaling score of 6 or above	85.2	Jul-Sep 2021	80	84.1 (green)					Yes

Are we being a good corporate parent to Children Looked After (CLA)?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
64	Rate of CLA per 10,000 population aged under 18	90.3 [912]	as at 27 Sep 2021	Tracker	94.0 [950]	67	108	99	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
65	% of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care)			Tracker	16	12	12	18	2019/20	
66	% of CLA who are fostered incl. friends and family, independent fostering agency, In-house foster care	75 [684]	as at 27 Sep 2021	Tracker	76 [725]	72	74	73	2019/20	Yes
67	% of external residential placements	6 [55]	as at 27 Sep 2021	Tracker	5 [43]					Yes
68	% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more who had a dental check	58	Sep 2021	Tracker	49 (green)	90 (red)	86 (red)	86 (red)	2019/20	Yes
69	% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more who have had the required number of health assessments	93	Jun 2021	Tracker	90 (green)	90 (green)	92 (green)	93 (green)	2019/20	Yes
70	Emotional and behavioural health of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more (score between 0 to 40)	14	2020/21 [prov.]	Tracker	15.5 (green)	14.2 (green)	14.1 (green)	14.0 (green)	2018/19	No
127	Average Attainment Tracker 8 score of Children Looked After	20.5	2019/20	Tracker	25.6 (red)	21.4 (red)	21.7 (green)	22.4 (red)		No

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
72	% of CLA achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (at KS2)**	55	2018/19	Tracker	39.5 (green)	36 (green)	47 (green)			No
73	% of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training	70	Sep 2021	Tracker	67 (green)	64 (green)	63 (green)	65 (green)	2019/20	Yes
74	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training	60	Sep 2021	Tracker	56 (green)	53 (green)	52 (green)	53 (green)	2019/20	Yes
75	% of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	93	Sep 2021	Tracker	93 (green)	90 (green)	94 (amber)	100 (red)	2019/20	Yes
76	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	93	Sep 2021	Tracker	95 (red)	85 (green)	91 (green)	90 (green)	2019/20	Yes

*provisional data **not reporting for 2019/20

How effective are we are tackling crime and disorder?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
77	First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10 to 17 (per 100,000 population aged 10 to 17)	186	2020	Tracker		220 (green)	303 (green)	231 (green)	2019/20	Yes
78	Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	85.5	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	92.4 (green)	77.0 (red)				Yes
79	Rate of theft offences per 1,000 population	18.1	2020/21	Tracker	23.0 (green)					Yes
80	Proportion of all offenders who re-offend in a 12 month period (%)	30.6	Apr-Jun 2019	Tracker	30.8 (green)	31.7 (green)	35.7 (green)	30.0 (red)	2016/17	No
81	Proven re-offending by young people (who offend) in a 12 month period (%)	34.8	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Tracker	TBC	38.4 (green)	41.8 (green)		Oct 2017 – Sept 2018	Yes

How effective are we at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
82	Satisfaction with the way that the council and police are dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime issues in your area.	56.4	Mar 2020	Tracker	50.1 (red)			53.7 (red)	Jun 2019	No
83	No. police reported incidents of anti-social behaviour	15,335	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	16,511 (red)					Yes
84	No. council reported incidents of anti-social behaviour	15,953	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	14,437 (red)					Yes

How well do we reduce misuse of drugs and alcohol?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
85	% of successful completions of those in alcohol treatment	34.6	Jul 2020-Jun 2021	Tracker	30.6 (green)	35.3 (amber)	30.7 (green)			Yes
86	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - opiates	5.5	Jul 2020-Jun 2021	Tracker	5.6 (amber)	4.7 (green)	3.3 (green)			Yes
87	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - non-opiates	38.1	Jul 2020-Jun 2021	Tracker	30.8 (green)	33.0 (green)	30.0 (green)			Yes
88	% of anti-social behaviour incidents that are alcohol related	13.5	2020/21	Tracker	18.5 (green)					Yes
89	% of violent crime that is alcohol related	33.7	2020/21	Tracker	32.5 (green)					Yes
90	Alcohol seizures	194**	Apr-Jun 2018	Tracker	398 (green)					No

**under review

How well do we tackle abuse of vulnerable people, including domestic abuse, child exploitation and radicalisation?

Page 130 Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
91	Building resilience to terrorism (self-assessment). Score - level 1(low) to 5(high)	3*	2017/18	Tracker	3 (green)					No
92	No of individuals with a referral for 1:1 CSE Support from Supporting Solutions Team**	61	2020/21	Tracker	new**					No

*under review ** New definition – Includes all children - High/Medium/Low Risk (Previously only High-Risk referred to Supporting Solutions)

How do we keep our environment safe, including roads and waterways?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
93	No. of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities - No. of seriously injured	188 15 173	Oct 2020 - Sep 2021	Tracker	182 (red) 20 162					Yes
94	No. of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities - No. of seriously injured	21 0 21	Oct 2020 - Sep 2021	Tracker	16 (red) 1 15					Yes

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – SUSTAINABILITY

How clean and tidy is my local environment?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
95	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level	5.96	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					No
96	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level	12.14	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					No

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
97	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of dog fouling that fall below an acceptable level	0.79	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					No
98	Number of fly-tipping incidents	7,382	Jul 20 – Jun 2021	Tracker	7,409 (green)					Yes

Are we reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
99	% reduction in CO ₂ emissions in County Durham (carbon neutral by 2050)	54	2019	Tracker	52 (green)					Yes
100	% reduction in CO ₂ emissions from local authority operations compared to the 2008/09 baseline, 80% by 2030	58	2020/21	Tracker	51 (green)					Yes

How effective and sustainable is our collection and disposal of waste?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
101	% of municipal waste diverted from landfill	90.1	Jul 2020 – Jun 2021	95 (red)	96.8 (red)	91.5 (red)	94.4 (red)		2019/20	Yes
102	% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	38.1	Jul 2020 – Jun 2021	Tracker	39.4 (red)	43.8 (red)	35.5 (green)		2019/20	Yes

Do residents have access to decent and affordable housing?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
103	Number of properties improved, adapted or brought back into use	569	Jul-Sep 2021	Tracker	406 (green)					Yes

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
104	Number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention	54	Jul-Sep 2021	50 (red)	40 (red)					Yes
105	Number of net homes completed	407	Jul-Sep 2021	327 (green)	385 (green)					Yes
106	Number of affordable homes delivered	466	2020/21	300 (green)	628 (red)					No
107	Number of households accessing the Housing Solutions Service	3,505	Jul-Sep 2021	Tracker	3,063 (green)					Yes
108	Number of households helped to stay in their home	360	Jul-Sep 2021	Tracker	334 (green)					Yes
109	Number of households helped to move to alternative accommodation	231	Jul-Sep 2021	Tracker	205 (green)					Yes

Is it easy to travel around the county?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
110	% of A roads where maintenance is recommended	3.0	2019	Tracker	2.6 (red)	3.38 (green)	1.92 (green)		2019	No
111	% of B roads where maintenance is recommended	3.3	2019	Tracker	4.7 (green)	4.57 (green)	2.83 (green)		2019	No
112	% of C roads where maintenance is recommended	4.3	2019	Tracker	3.7 (red)	4.57 (green)	2.83 (green)		2019	No
113	% of unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	21.3	2019	Tracker	21.0 (amber)	15.08 (red)	16.25 (red)		2019	No
114	Highways maintenance backlog (£millions)	172.6	2019	Tracker	179.7 (green)					No
115	Bridge Stock Condition – Principal Roads*	80.7**	2019	Tracker	80.7 (green)					No
116	Bridge Stock Condition – Non-Principal Roads*	79.9**	2019	Tracker	79.9 (green)					No

* Bridge stock condition (>=90 very good condition / >=80 good condition / >=65 fair condition / >=40 poor condition / <40 very poor condition)

** last year's data has been used due to issues with obtaining current values

EXCELLENT COUNCIL

How well do we look after our people?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
117	% of performance appraisals completed on current posts in rolling year period (excluding schools)***	N/a*	N/a	N/a	N/a					No
118	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence (all services excluding schools)	10.06	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	11.20 (green)	10.25 (green)	9.2** (red)			2017/18	Yes
119	% posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	66.39	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	63.71 (green)					Yes
120	% of sickness absence which is short term	13.79	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	10.77					Yes
121	% of sickness absence which is medium term	16.98	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	12.47					Yes
122	% of sickness absence which is long term	69.23	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	76.76					Yes
123	% of employees having five days or less sickness per 12 month period	81.80	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	80.95 (green)					Yes

*Due to new system introduction

**includes school support staff but excludes teachers. All single/upper tier councils [Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18](#)

*** Having put all Personal Development Reviews on hold due to COVID-19, we are now reinstating the process, starting with our leaders in October 2021.

Are our resources being managed for the best possible outcomes for residents and customers?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
124	% of council tax collected in-year	54.8	Apr-Sep 2021	Not Set	53.9 (green)					Yes
125	% of business rates collected in-year	53.9	Apr-Sep 2021	Not Set	56.7 (red)					Yes

How good are our services to customers and the public?

Page 34 Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
126	% Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days	83	Jul - Sep 2021	90 (red)	78 (green)					Yes
127	Customer contacts: telephone*	1,206,564	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	1,193,663					Yes
128	Customer contacts: face to face**	n/a	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	63,681					Yes
129	Customer contacts: web forms	302,881	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	209,376					Yes
130	Customer contacts: emails	70,098	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	54,829					Yes
131	Customer contacts: social media	4,893	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	5,211					Yes
132	% of calls answered	93	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	94*					Yes
133	% of calls answered within 3 minutes	89	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Tracker	89*					Yes

*data is not comparable as new telephony lines are continuing to be added to ACD

** data is not available as customer access points have been closed during 2020/21

COSMB**21 January 2022****Poverty Issues****Ordinary Decision****Report of Corporate Management Team****Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources****Councillor Alan Shield, Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide COSMB with an update on:
 - (a) the most recent welfare, economic and poverty indicators for the county;
 - (b) expenditure which specifically supports poverty related activities; funded by both central government and from council budgets, enabling support to be delivered to vulnerable households by the council and key partners, and;
 - (c) the progress of the council and partners in addressing and alleviating poverty, including our response to the negative financial impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive summary

- 2 The factors influencing poverty are multi-faceted. Its impacts are felt at an individual, household and community level. Given this complexity it is difficult to determine a single definition and measure of poverty. This report aims to describe the work of the council and partners to address and help alleviate the pressures which contribute to vulnerability arising from an individual's inability to meet their personal needs.
- 3 The council continues to have a strong approach to supporting financial inclusion and has maintained its commitment to effective "core" support mechanisms for low-income households through delivery of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS), Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme, and Welfare Assistance Scheme (WAS) for those in crisis, plus through the council's commitment to supporting advice

provision. Over the last two years, these schemes have been augmented with a range of other interventions.

- 4 The council continues to support financial inclusion through the work of the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG). The council has committed significant investment to support residents needing financial help, supplementing the additional funding provided by the government to support households impacted by the restrictions to control the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5 The work of PASG is directed by the Poverty Action Plan which is currently being reviewed in line with current data and intelligence, and engagement with support providers. This review will aim to bring an updated plan for Cabinet consideration in March 2022. The plan confirms the council's strategic approach in terms of all the key strands which address the issues surrounding poverty; including access to well-paid employment, training, welfare support, housing and food. It also describes the key interventions put in place to facilitate individuals and communities to move out of poverty and access the support they need.
- 6 Although a major focus of the last 21 months has been effectively supporting vulnerable households impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, the council and its partners have continued to address the underlying issues experienced by low-income households.
- 7 It is also important to note that the issues and challenges highlighted in this report cut across the key objectives in the Council Plan and link to the work on the council's Economic Strategy and Digital Durham programme, ensuring access to better jobs, training, skills development and addressing digital inclusion. In particular, the provision of county-wide, fast and reliable broadband connectivity and support of the digital inclusion agenda underpin the council's ambitions for economic growth and increasing employment opportunities.
- 8 Moving forward, the focus will be on a strong strategic approach to supporting residents through co-ordinated advice and guidance, with partners playing a key role in delivery. It will involve helping residents move away from accessing food through crisis intervention support such as food banks, working with key providers such as the credit unions to improve access to low-cost loans and supporting work to address fuel poverty and digital exclusion.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 COSMB is recommended to note:
 - (a) the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing the impacts of poverty and the wider issues including the recent and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;

- (b) the review of the Poverty Action Plan with a revised plan to be brought to Cabinet for approval in March 2022.

Background

- 10 This is the latest annual update report setting out the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing poverty issues across the county. It builds on the previous update report, presented to Cabinet 18 November 2020.
- 11 Pre-pandemic, financial pressures on lower-income households were already increasing. County Durham is ranked the 26th most deprived area in England for employment and the 42nd most deprived for income (of 151 upper tier local authorities, 2019).
- 12 An estimated 21.5 percent of households across the county were living in relative poverty¹ before housing costs. A quarter of these households had at least one working adult. This compares with an England average of 17.1 percent of households – the relative poverty gap between County Durham and England has widened in recent years.
- 13 In addition, our comparatively low level of gross household disposable income had increased at a slower rate than the rest of the country, again widening the gap both regionally and with the rest of England.

	Gross household disposable income		
	2019	County Durham Gap	Increase on previous year
County Durham	£16,617		1.9%
North East	£17,096	£479, (3%)	2.2%
England	£21,978	£5,361, (32%)	2.5%

- 14 The arrival of COVID-19 impacted the economy swiftly and severely. Although the government reacted by investing quickly and heavily to mitigate the worst of the economic shock and keep families afloat, lower income households faced increasing financial pressure as furlough (loss in income), increasing basic living costs and additional expenditure incurred due to school closures/staying at home (meals, heating, equipping children for online learning) hit those with the least disposable income hard – especially as they could no longer access their normal coping strategies, e.g. eating at friends and families, accessing the internet in their local library, buying essentials from charity shops.
- 15 At the start of the pandemic (March 2020), 10 percent of our 16-64 population were claiming Universal Credit. This peaked at 15.9 percent in March 2021 and is currently 15.5 percent (September 2021 - 51,270 individuals across 44,495 households). Research has shown that many of

¹ Living in households with less than 60% of median household income

the low-paid workers who lost their jobs had few, if any, savings to fall back on.

- 16 Eligibility for free school meals increased accordingly, the additional 3,200 children and young people (aged 0 to 19) pushed the total to 20,410, more than one in four, although 24 percent are not being claimed.
- 17 For those working, the gap in earnings with the rest of England continued to grow as average wages, which increased across the North East and England, decreased across County Durham.

	Average Wages		
	2019	2020	Change
County Durham	£24,000	£23,877	-£123
North East	£22,613	£23,559	£946
England	£25,150	£26,055	£905
Gap with England	-£1,150	-£2,178	Widening

- 18 Research² into the experiences of families with children claiming Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit during the pandemic shows that 70 percent cut back on essentials (including food), 60 percent borrowed money (mainly through credit cards and payday loans) and more than 50 percent fell behind on rent or other essential bills.
- 19 This is in stark contrast to those higher up the income scale, where 57 percent of adults in the top 20 percent of working-age family incomes, spent less and saved more as lockdown restricted non-essential spending.
- 20 The council continues to co-ordinate its efforts to tackle poverty through the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG). This is a cross-council senior officer group, chaired by the Corporate Director of Resources and attended by the Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion.
- 21 The council works closely with its key partners to share intelligence on emerging issues and direct pooled resources toward those most in need.
- 22 In helping to alleviate the financial hardship many of our residents are experiencing, the council has increased available support through significant financial investment, administering government hardship funds³, and through specific council-funded projects and initiatives.
- 23 At the start of the pandemic, we established the County Durham Together Community Hub to provide advice and guidance and to fast-track

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children

³ the main sources of financial support specific to the pandemic were - Test and Trace Support Payments, COVID Local Support Grant (formerly the COVID Winter Grant Scheme), Additional Restrictions Grants, and Business Rate Relief.

applications for food and essential supplies, provide emergency food and support foodbanks; help more residents quickly access welfare and daily living expenses payments, including our council tax reduction and hardships scheme and grants for return to school costs.

- 24 The long-term effect of the pandemic on poverty is still unclear, and it is likely to be several years before the full impact is fully known and understood – particularly the impact on education outcomes and opportunities for young people.

National Policy update: Welfare and COVID-19

- 25 The following section sets out updates to national policy (welfare and COVID-19 related) that have been made since the last report was presented to Cabinet.

Temporary “uplift” to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit

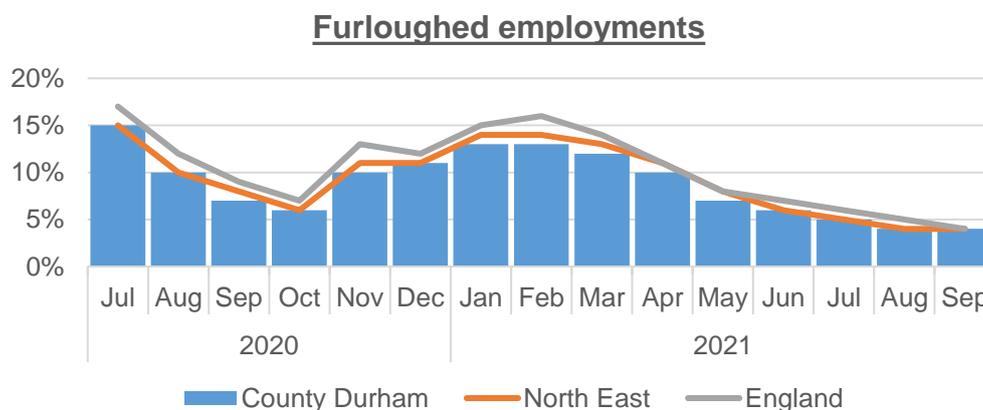
- 26 A temporary £20 per week increase to the standard allowance of Universal Credit (UC) and Working Tax Credit, was introduced in March 2020 at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. It was intended to support people newly unemployed or experiencing reduced incomes resulting from restrictions implemented to control the virus. The uplift was intended to initially last 12 months and expected to expire in April 2021. In the March 2021 Budget, however, the government announced that the UC Uplift would be extended for a further six months from April 2021, ending on 6 October 2021 and that Working Tax Credit claimants would instead receive a one-off £500 payment. An estimated 8,600 people across the county benefitted from this payment to Working Tax Credit claimants – which totalled £4.3 million in the six months to 30 September 2021 . This one-off payment ended on 30 September 2021.
- 27 The table below presents the increases in UC claimants in County Durham between March 2020 and September 2021 since the start of the pandemic.

UC claimants	Mar-20	Sep-21 (provisional)	Change	
Individuals	32,870	51,270	18,400	+56%
Households	28,498	44,495	15,997	+56%
Households with dependent children	11,656	17,941	6,285	+54%

- 28 In relation to the Universal Credit uplift, it is estimated that around 11,000 households, almost 9,000 of which have dependent children, benefitted from the temporary uplift and therefore will be impacted by its removal, equating to approximately £11 million a year removed from the local economy.

Job Retention Scheme (JRS or ‘Furlough’)

- 29 Initially launched on 20 April 2020, the JRS gave government grants to employers to pay ‘furloughed’ staff the equivalent of 80 percent of their wages (up to £2,500). The scheme also met some of the employer’s contributions for pensions and National Insurance until the end of July 2020.
- 30 Over time the scheme evolved, and from July 2020 employees could be furloughed for some hours and work the remainder (flexible furlough). The government’s contribution started to taper down from July 2021 but employees who remained on furlough continued to receive 80 percent of their wages, until the scheme finally ended on 30 September 2021. At this point, employers were left to decide whether to bring employees back to work or make them redundant.
- 31 It is estimated that around 82,900 unique jobs across the county were furloughed at some time during the 18 months the JRS was in place, around 40.5 percent of eligible employments. At its peak, in July 2020, the scheme was supporting 32,400 employments.
- 32 At the end of September 2021, around 7,600 employments in County Durham (4 percent of all eligible employments) were furloughed. Almost half of these employments were either in the manufacturing sector (30 percent) or Accommodation and Food Services (12 percent).



Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)

- 33 Introduced to support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) with profits of less than £50,000, and whose income was negatively impacted by COVID-19. The SEISS gave taxable grants of up to £2,500 a month (up to 80 percent of monthly profits, averaged over the last three years).
- 34 Similar to the JRS, the SEISS was in place for 18 months and closed on 30 September 2021. It is estimated that around 51,900 claims were made by 16,500 self-employed people in County Durham, with the total value of support being around £131 million.

Test and Trace Support Payments

- 35 From 28 September 2020, it became a legal requirement for everybody testing positive for coronavirus, or who was contacted by NHS Test and Trace, to self-isolate.
- 36 Following concerns that some people were hesitant to self-isolate due to financial constraints, a £500 lump sum support payment was introduced for those on low incomes who were unable to work from home and had lost income due to self-isolating.
- 37 The scheme subsequently evolved, with various changes being made to the eligibility criteria to increase access to the payments; this included enabling those who had to stay at home to care for children who were self-isolating to make a claim if they met the main eligibility criteria.
- 38 Across County Durham, 2,542 payments totalling almost £1.3 million have been awarded to date.

Kickstart Scheme

- 39 The Kickstart scheme provides funding for job placements for young people (aged 16 to 24) claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.
- 40 Funding covers 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 six months, associated employer National Insurance contributions, employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions, and a grant of £1,500 per job to cover setup costs and employability support.
- 41 Eighty one job placements are available across the council, all of which are benefiting from additional council funding which ensures all participants receive the Durham Living Wage. Ten people have now been recruited and we are in the process of recruiting to the remaining 71 posts.

Free School Meal Vouchers

- 42 During the initial lockdown periods of the pandemic, government-funded vouchers (worth £15 a week) were offered to children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). However, the national scheme was withdrawn prior to the October 2020 half term. In response, the council set up a local scheme to enable those Free School Meals eligible households previously eligible, to access a payment to access support, prior to further government support being provided through the Covid Winter Support Grant.
- 43 Since the Spring of 2020, an additional 3,200 pupils have become eligible for FSM, raising the overall number to 20,410 children (28 percent of all children living in and attending County Durham schools). Twenty four percent of eligible children are still not claiming this assistance.

COVID Winter Support Grant/Covid Local Support Grant

- 44 In December 2020, the COVID Winter Support Grant Scheme was set up. This was then extended and morphed into the Covid Local Support Grant; funding provided to the Council through these schemes has amounted to £4,726,442. These grants enabled local authorities to support people struggling with the cost of food, energy and water bills, and other associated costs arising from the pandemic. The funding for these schemes ended on 30 September 2021.
- 45 Between December 2020 and September 2021, using this funding, the council distributed 295 hampers to our most vulnerable families, 273 food vouchers worth £80 to care leavers, 600 food vouchers worth £80 to kinship carers, and more than 101,100 vouchers, worth £20 per child per week and covering the school holiday periods, providing support to over 21,000 0- to 19-year-olds across the county.
- 46 We also awarded £270,000 through 330 grants to support vulnerable households with children enabling them to be safe, secure and have access to cooking facilities over the winter and allocated £100,000 to the East Durham Trust and the Durham Foodbanks to administer fuel vouchers.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

- 47 The Household Support Fund (HSF) is the latest iteration of the government support to vulnerable households. The council has been allocated £4,676,100 to administer the HSF, covering support from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 48 Although local authorities have some discretion as to how HSF funding is used, at least 50% must be spent on families with children. It is primarily to support people with food, energy, and water bills, but can be used to support households with other essential costs. In cases of genuine emergency, it can also be used to support housing costs if existing housing support schemes do not meet this need.
- 49 Our HSF scheme replicates some of the targeted support initiatives delivered as part of the COVID Winter and Local Support Grants, as well as introducing some new initiatives which will widen our eligibility criteria. Working with our partners to target 'hard to reach' households, our scheme includes a wide range of initiatives.
- 50 Bulk food/fuel vouchers will be available for vulnerable households. In addition, vouchers, worth £60 per child, will be issued to households with children eligible for free school meals in the lead up to Christmas and Easter, and will also be provided for kinship carers and care leavers. We will once again be issuing food hampers to vulnerable households, including care leavers.
- 51 Grants will also be made available to schools to help vulnerable households purchase essential items and buy winter clothing (including shoes and school uniforms) for children identified as most in need. For

those experiencing fuel poverty, help is being offered through the Warm Homes GP referral scheme, to provide help with the cost of fuel, boiler servicing and repairs.

- 52 Other vulnerable households who need additional support and have not accessed this through the main scheme strands as described above, will be provided with food/fuel vouchers through a discretionary grant scheme administered through the council's Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

- 53 The council was allocated £2,383,860 by the Department for Education (DfE) to co-ordinate and deliver free holiday activities and healthy food for children eligible for free school meals during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2021. Each event also had effective signposting for families to access further advice and support.
- 54 With partners, we delivered a wide range of sessions including performing arts, sports camps; cookery sessions; arts and craft sessions; and themed outdoor family activities etc.
- 55 During the Easter holiday period 2021, 6,860 children, of which 757 were children with special educational needs and disability, engaged in activities and received a free healthy meal.
- 56 During the six weeks summer holiday period 2021, more than 18,000 children, of which more than 700 were children with special educational needs and disability, engaged in activities and received a free healthy meal. In addition, more than 4,100 activity packs and resources were delivered to community groups and families and nearly 2,000 free food parcels were distributed.
- 57 As DfE funding could not be used for provision during the May and October half term holidays in 2021, additional council funding was allocated to meet this need. The council invested £143,000 in extending these schemes to those holiday periods, with over 5,500 benefitting.
- 58 In October 2021 (autumn budget), the government announced further funding to continue the holiday activities and food programme going forward. £200 million of national funding was announced, but we await the funding allocations to the council.

Healthy Start Scheme

- 59 In April 2021, weekly payments increased from £3.10 to £4.25 for the government's Healthy Start scheme, which helps with the cost of buying milk, baby milk and some foods. The scheme also gives access to free vitamins.
- 60 The scheme changed in the autumn of 2021 to make it easier to use and more flexible. A new digital scheme will replace paper vouchers with a

prepaid account that will be automatically topped up every four weeks with the payment.

- 61 The uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers has traditionally been low. To help increase take-up in Durham, we continue to promote and raise awareness of the programme with both families and partners.
- 62 Specific actions to increase uptake have included setting up a working group with partners; Public Health have developed bitesize training sessions for practitioners in order to help raise awareness of the programme- over 500 staff were trained. The partnership approach has focussed on increasing engagement and marketing of the Healthy Start programme underpinned by an action and a communications plan.
- 63 A localised healthy start voucher leaflet has also been developed recently and circulated to partners. Work by the NHS Business Services Authority is also being progressed to launch a digitised Healthy Start Scheme.
- 64 The focus on take-up in Durham has led to an increase over the last year – increasing from 54 percent in September 2020 to 68 percent in September 2021 (there are currently 3,820 individuals benefitting from this scheme in County Durham against 5,633 who are eligible). The current 68 percent take-up is higher than both the regional average (67.9 percent) and the national average (60.6 percent).

Council Tax Hardship Fund

- 65 As part of the Spending Round announcements last year, on 25 November 2020 the government announced additional grant funding to enable councils to continue reducing council tax bills for those least able to pay. This provided around £7 million of further funding to the council, building on the £7 million of additional funding provided in 2020/21. There were no specific requirements connected to the grant and the design of the 2021/22 council tax support scheme was a matter for individual billing authorities.
- 66 Last year, support through this scheme totalled approximately £4.1 million. To date, we have paid just over £3.2 million in Support Payments to residents facing financial hardship, in addition to more than £61 million through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Cabinet has recently agreed to extend the support in relation to the Support Payments, using the Hardship Funding, making a maximum additional payment of up to £150 to eligible Council Tax Reduction claimants in 2022/23 and up to £75 in 2023/24.

Housing Benefit disregard

- 67 The Housing Benefit disregard in relation to Working Tax Credit, was increased to £37.10 in 2020/21, but returned to £17.10 a week from April 2021. This ensured that around 1,200 households in County Durham did

not see a reduction in their Housing Benefit as a result of the temporary Working Tax Credit increase.

- 68 Claimants who were furloughed, self-isolating or shielding were able to be treated as being in work for a period by Working Tax Credit so to ensure all those affected by coronavirus were treated equally, with the 'additional earnings disregard' being applied to their Housing Benefit.

Housing – rental sector

- 69 The ban on bailiff-enforced rental sector evictions in England, which was introduced in March 2020 as an emergency measure during the pandemic, suspended new evictions from social or private rented accommodation during the national emergency and no new possession proceedings through applications to the court were able to start during the crisis.
- 70 On 10 March 2021, the government, announced a further extension to the ban on bailiff-enforced evictions – up to end May 2021 - and the requirement for landlords to provide six-month notice periods to tenants before they evict. This was removed from 1 August 2021, meaning landlords now need to give two months' notice for evictions, or four weeks if tenants owed more than four months' rent.
- 71 National data shows that only 85 properties have been repossessed using a county court bailiff in England and Wales since the pandemic began. In comparison there were 20,000 of these in 2019 across the social and private rented sectors'⁴
- 72 Research⁵ has identified the impact the resumption of enforcement visits by bailiffs has had on those experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic. StepChange (a national debt charity) noted a 652 percent increase in traffic to their bailiff advice webpages in August as households began to worry about potential visits. Nationally, Citizens Advice has seen 5,600 clients in relation to bailiff enforcement since visits resumed.
- 73 Within County Durham, an additional 491 households, (3,505 households in total) contacted Housing Solutions during the period July to September 2021 compared with the previous quarter, which is the largest quarter-to-quarter increase since 2019. Many households were presenting as homeless or facing homelessness due to the lifting of the eviction ban. In addition, our Private Rented Sector Team received more complaints of disrepair and illegal eviction allegations in September which may be linked to the eviction ban ending.

The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme 2021-24

⁴ Quote from the National Residential Landlord Association on the 5 November 2021 in the Parliamentary Briefing, Coronavirus: Support for landlords and tenants, reporting

⁵ [StepChange](#) – National Debt Charity.

- 74 Launched in March 2021, the aim of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme is to help rough sleepers rebuild their lives away from the streets through investment in dedicated homes. Homes are being made available in every region of England, enabling people who sleep rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, to be rehoused in secure, long-term accommodation.
- 75 Through this scheme, rough sleepers are supported by specialist staff to access the help they need, such as support for mental health or substance misuse needs, so they can move towards training and work, and finding a permanent home.
- 76 In the last quarter, the council continued to see high levels of rough sleepers across County Durham. One hundred and sixty cases were reported, of which 58 were located and assisted. Although levels are similar to the same period last year, the needs of rough sleepers have become more complex, with more mental health and substance related problems being seen. We continue to invest to increase suitable accommodation for rough sleepers and those with complex needs.

National Insurance

- 77 From 6 April 2022, National Insurance contributions will increase by 1.25 percent to help fund the NHS and social care system. This means somebody earning £20,000 a year will pay an extra £130 a year, somebody earning £50,000 will pay an extra £505.
- 78 As the median salary across County Durham, before deductions, is £28,259, it is estimated our residents would pay an extra £234 a year on average.

National Food Strategy

- 79 Commissioned by the government in 2019, this aims to address the growing problem of food security, ensure the security of our food supply, maximise the benefits in agricultural technology, and develop a new integrated National Food Strategy.
- 80 In its report of July 2021, the National Food Strategy recognises that the sugar and salt tax is likely to put extra financial strain on the poorest families. In a series of recommendations, designed to get fresh food and ingredients to low-income households with children, it recommends:
- (a) money raised from the new taxes is used to extend free school meals to families with a household income of £20,000 or less, much higher than the current ceiling of £7,400;
 - (b) increasing spending on schemes which improve the diets of families on low incomes and improve food education; and

- (c) trialling a "Community Eatwell" programme which would involve GPs prescribing fruit and vegetables to people with poor diets and low incomes.

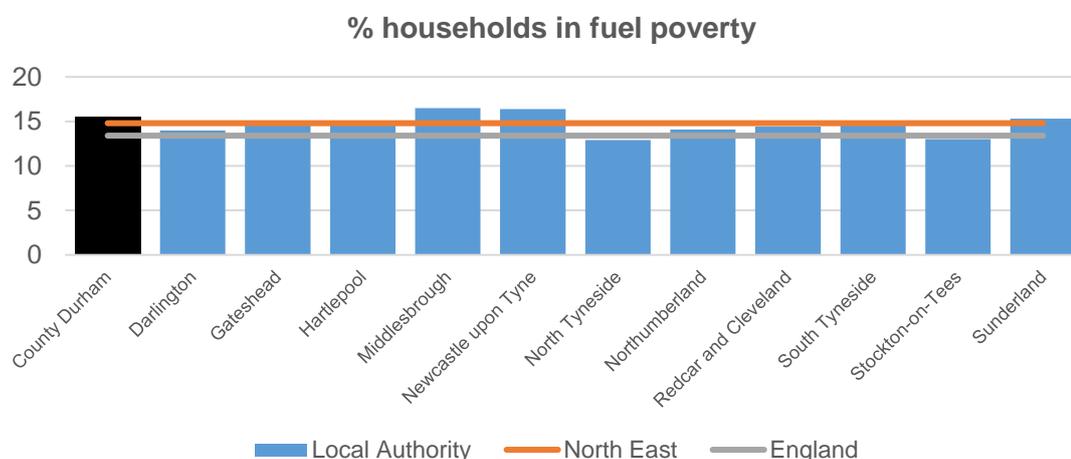
81 The government is due to respond with proposals for future laws within six months.

Fuel Poverty Strategy

82 Published in February 2021, Sustainable Warmth (the updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England) sets out how the government will tackle fuel poverty, while at the same time decarbonising buildings.

83 The strategy announced the expansion of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) which will run from 2022 to 2026, and with an increase in value from £640 million to £1 billion per year. The updated strategy additionally announces details of new funding of £150 million for the Home Upgrade Grant. It builds on the 2015 fuel poverty strategy, and is supported by feedback from the 2019 consultation on a fuel poverty strategy for England.

84 Latest data (2019) estimates that around 36,600 households across the county (15.5 percent of the total) experienced fuel poverty. This is higher than the average both across England (13.4 percent) and regionally (14.8 percent). It also ranks County Durham as 46 from 151 upper tier authorities and 3rd highest across the North East.



85 Nationally, the average fuel poverty gap is estimated to be £216 and younger family households are more likely to be fuel poor.

86 Since September 2020, the council has secured over £10 million of grant funding for insulation and renewable heating measures in 600 fuel poor homes across County Durham. We have also assisted 1,724 fuel poor households to receive a grant for energy efficiency measures, equating to more than £2.9 million of external funding.

- 87 In addition, between April 2020 and August 2021, our Managing Money Better (MMB) Service assisted 796 low-income households collectively to reduce their energy bills by £65,800.

The Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021

- 88 Statutory guidance for the new law passed by Parliament in April 2021, which will make school uniforms cheaper in England has recently been announced.
- 89 This policy will make schools place affordability at the centre of their uniform policy and is expected to limit the number of logos on uniforms, allowing parents to buy more items from supermarkets and shops other than a school's main supplier.
- 90 There is also a 'strong emphasis on second-hand uniform, advocating the benefits of this and requiring all schools to make this available to parents in some way. For example, they could either provide this service themselves or participate in other appropriate established local schemes.

Increase to the National Living Wage

- 91 From 1 April 2022, the National Living Wage will increase by 6.6 percent to £9.50 an hour. Approximately 26 percent of employees in County Durham currently earn less than £9.50 per hour. This equates to around 40,000 employees and is a higher proportion of the workforce below that level than the England average of 24 percent. Women are hardest hit with around 31 percent being paid less than the living wage, compared with around 20 percent of men.

Cut to Universal Credit Taper Rate

- 92 From 1 December 2021, the Universal Credit taper rate has been cut from 63 percent to 55 percent - meaning that people claiming Universal Credit will be able to keep more of the money they earn before their benefits are taken away. For example, someone earning £100 above their work allowance in a month would now lose £55 from their monthly universal credit claim, compared to £63 previously. Work to provide an analysis of this in terms of County Durham residents is being undertaken.

Council Investment

- 93 The council has adopted a strategic and co-ordinated approach to addressing poverty issues within the county, changes to the welfare system and the financial impact on our residents of COVID-19.
- 94 The council's investment in tackling poverty is multi-faceted and reflects a range of policy interventions to support vulnerable low-income households, including:
- (a) **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)** – there are currently 56,280 LCTRS claimants in County Durham, of which

21,104 (37 percent) are pensioners and 35,176 (63 percent) are working age claimants. Almost 80 percent of all working age claimants receive maximum help, leaving them with no council tax to pay, with LCTRS support forecast to be around £62 million this year;

- (b) **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Top Up Payments** - the government provided local authorities with grant funding in 2020/21 and again in 2021/22 to provide additional support to economically vulnerable people and households during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Council has received circa £14 million of government grant funding and last year introduced a scheme that provided double the level of top up support to those households on LCTR that still had a bill to pay than what the government expected – providing additional top up payments of up to £300. The scheme was extended into the current year when the additional funding for this year was made available.

Not all councils did this, with some choosing to utilise the funding to offset tax base impacts when setting their 2021/22 budgets.

The council could afford to have a scheme which provides up to £300 of additional support because of the LCTRS is has in place – where 80 percent of working age households are in receipt of 100 percent LCTRS and have no bill to pay.

The council has utilised £1 million of the funding provided to augment its Welfare Assistance Scheme and £1.4 million of the funding to provide one-off funding to Area Action Partnerships this year to provide additional community-based support as communities recover from the pandemic. This is in line with the grant conditions.

The council spent circa £4.2 million last year making additional top-up payments and is forecast to spend a further £4 million this year and in November Cabinet agreed to extend the scheme across the next two years, but on a tapered basis, with the level of additional support provided reduced by 50 percent next year to a max of £150 and then by a further 50 percent the year after to a maximum of £75 before these top-up payments are removed in 2024/25. This will ensure that the full £14 million of government grant support provided will be spent supporting economically vulnerable people and households as they deal with and recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

- (c) **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme** – each year the council receives a specific grant from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to fund a local scheme which can provide top up payments to meet any shortfall in housing rental costs.

Any underspending against the DHP grant at year end must be returned to DWP and cannot be carried forward, even if there are

commitments against it for the following financial year. The council is allowed to supplement DHP grant with its own resources and can spend up to 2.5 times the grant provided.

An earmarked reserve exists to support any overage against the grant – where demand can fluctuate and where the council is not permitted to merely stop making payments once its grant funding is exhausted. To reduce/manage expenditure the DHP policy must be changed instead and then new applications from that point are assessed against it. In 2019/20 for instance the council had to utilise £617,859 of its own resources to augment the grant available in that year, before the grant was increased in 2020/21. The forecast balance on this reserve is £1.179 million to 31 March 2022 – reflecting one-off funding allocations over the last few years to ensure there was a buffer to meet any shortfall in the grant.

The DHP Policy is regularly reviewed, by Housing Benefits, Housing Solutions and Housing Providers to update the policy and processes where relevant, in order to ensure it is accessible and that we are spending the full grant.

Some councils do not fully utilise the funding available through the DHP grant. The council however has a strong track record in fully utilising the grant allocations available so that local residents benefit from the funding available and is constantly reviewing and adapting the local policy to manage demand and resources.

Over the last five years, DHP payments have totalled £7,374,317 largely funded by DWP grant totalling £6,512,556, but requiring council top-up funding of £861,761. In the current year the most up to date forecast shows that £1,179,886 of DHP payments will be made, which is in line with the DWP grant available; however, claims have recently increased which may necessitate use of the contingency funding available within the Welfare Assistance Scheme Reserve.

- (d) **Welfare Assistance Scheme (WAS)** - as part of Welfare Reform Act 2012, the discretionary elements of the DWP social fund transferred to local authorities and from April 2013, councils became responsible for adopting a local policy and for providing support to people in crisis through daily living expenses and settlement grants.

From April 2013 to March 2015, Durham County Council's Welfare Assistance Scheme was administrated by a local charity, Five Lamps, but was brought in house from April 2016.

The government initially provided £1.9 million of specific grant funding for these schemes, which was reduced to £1 million in 2015/16 and the funding subsumed into general formula grant. The council has maintained a budget in line with the allocation that was

subsumed into general formula grant, despite the fact that general formula grant was subsequently reduced.

The annual WAS budget is £1 million – of which £860,000 is available for spending on awards and £140,000 is a contribution to the administration costs of the scheme. The funding available for direct awards is allocated as follows:

- Area Action Partnership - £140,000 (£10,000 per AAP)
- The Durham Foodbank - £50,000
- FEED Project (East Durham Trust) - £2,700
- NE First Credit Union - £10,000 (under write of loan default)
- Daily Living Expenses and Settlement Grants - £ 657,000

The budgets were augmented with an additional £500,000 of one-off funding in 2020/21 and again in 2021/22 as part of the anti-poverty investments built into the MTFP.

Any underspending against this budget is retained in an earmarked reserve that is overseen by the Poverty Action Steering Group to help fund a range of interventions set out in the Poverty Action Plan. This has included the following:

Scheme/Initiative	£
Grant to Citizens Advice County Durham for Covid Proofing their buildings	58,091
Care Leavers Christmas Support	81,514
Homeless Emergency Packs	7,248
School Benevolent Fund	10,000
Holiday Hunger - October Half Term	160,350
That Bread and Butter Thing & Fair Shares Licenses	125,000
Holiday Activities with Food	140,000
Employability Team	300,000
Progression & Learning Team	150,000

The reserve was further augmented with £1 million of funding from the Hardship Fund government grant received in 2020/21.

Over the last five years the Welfare Assistance Scheme payments have totalled £2,966,551. In the current year it is forecast that £530,866 will be spent on this scheme.

The forecast earmarked reserve balance that will be carried over to next year is £2,484,000.

- (e) **Council Tax Exemption for Care Leavers** – from 1 April 2017 the council implemented a policy of exempting care leavers from council tax up to the age of 25. This policy offers additional support to those leaving care to facilitate their transition to independent living. This support totalled around £0.17 million of council tax reductions in 2020/21.
- (f) **New Burdens and Miscellaneous Funds** – since 2013, there have been various amounts allocated to the council from government departments to support the administration of new schemes and initiatives linked to welfare reforms and other temporary schemes aimed at financially vulnerable households; termed “new burdens” funding.

This funding has been allocated to support the council’s approach to tackling poverty; overseen and utilised by the Poverty Action Steering Group to enable a range of interventions to be implemented, for example for work with partners on advice and guidance and also to support initiatives within Housing Solutions and the Money Matters service.

During 2020/21, £247,652 of funding was allocated through the new burdens funding and in 2021/22 an additional £251,093 has been aligned to support poverty related work.

Poverty Action Strategy and Plan

- 95 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 direct control. Therefore, we have developed a poverty action strategy focused on improving services and opportunity for those residents in County Durham who are experiencing poverty.
- 96 Our ambition is to do more than passively support residents to claim benefits and pay their rent. 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”*.
- 97 As the COVID-19 pandemic evolved and residents and communities were ‘locked down’, we started to see a shift in reported issues, particularly in relation to family finance.
- 98 The poverty action strategy and plan were updated to reflect this. Existing actions in our action plan were brought forward to address the impacts of the pandemic and some new short-to-medium term initiatives and investments were added.

99 Emerging actions required to help our residents' financial circumstances during the pandemic were captured under four workstreams and taken forward with key partners and stakeholders:

- (a) Community resilience;
- (b) Employment and personal sense of worth;
- (c) Welfare and money matters; and
- (d) Children and families.

Community Resilience

100 Over the last 21 months, £2.9 million⁶ has been allocated across 292 projects combatting the effects of COVID-19.

101 Annual grants have been made to the Durham Foodbank (£50,000) and the East Durham Trust (£2,700) to fund core countywide infrastructure.

102 £250,000 has been allocated to setting up 10 food hubs through the 'That Bread and Butter Thing'. Approximately 50 families engage with each of the five operational hubs each week – which provides access to low-cost food and access to advice and provides a stepping stone from the crisis support through food banks and through the Welfare Assistance Scheme. Work is underway with community groups to open a further five hubs in the coming months.

103 We have continued to work with the County Durham Together Community Hub to proactively support residents and businesses, including 70,000 people identified as potentially vulnerable.

104 The Hub contacted more than 4,000 residents identified as Extremely Vulnerable to COVID-19, responded to almost 17,000 calls and 4,000 e-mails from residents seeking advice or support, contacted almost 7,500 positive COVID-19 cases (Local Tracing Partnership) and supported a further 500 identified by the national Test and Trace team as needing to self-isolate.

105 Wrap around COVID-19 support to almost 10,000 residents, in collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and local statutory organisations. Emergency food parcels or a personal shopping service was provided to more than 3,000 vulnerable residents.

Employment and Personal Sense of Worth

⁶ £1.5 million from the council and £1.4 million in match funding

- 106 Almost 4,000 referrals have been made to Employability Durham since July 2018. The programme helps residents overcome barriers to employment, education and training. Services which switched to online and telephone contact during the pandemic are now moving back into the community with face-to-face client interaction and pre-planned sessions at Job Centre Plus offices.
- 107 Around 1,280 people have engaged with Durham Advance since September 2018, with more than 600 participants moving into employment or self-employment as a result. The programme supports those out of work and aged 25 and over with health conditions, as well as residents over 50 years old.
- 108 In excess of 480 people have engaged with LINKCD since July 2019, with more than 150 participants moving into employment or self-employment as a result. The programme supports residents who are most disadvantaged and most distant from the labour market to overcome multiple and complex barriers and move closer to or back into employment, education or training.
- 109 Between October 2018 and October 2021, more than 205 people moved into employment or self-employment through the Community Led Development programme, which uses project grants to increase jobs and growth in deprived areas across the county.
- 110 Since January 2021, 138 residents have been referred to Durham FLEX, a programme which supports the newly unemployed, those in a low paid employment and those at threat of redundancy. Fifty five participants have moved into employment or self-employment.
- 111 Durham Works, a £29 million programme which supports unemployed young people aged 16-24 to progress into work, training, education or volunteering, has supported 8,750 young people since it started in 2016. Of these, 7,116 have completed the programme and 5,830 (82 percent) have progressed into employment, education, training or gained a qualification. The programme is funded by the European Social Fund/Youth Employment Initiative (£21.8 million) with match funding of £7.2 million provided by the council and its delivery partners. The programme is working to progress as many young people as possible prior to December 2021 when the main programme will end. After this date, DurhamWorks will continue, as £16 million of additional funding has been secured until December 2023

Welfare and money matters

- 112 We continue to provide emergency food support to residents experiencing financial hardship and have provided more than 3,000 vulnerable residents with an emergency food parcel or a personal shopping service.

- 113 In the current year to date, we have made almost 1,500 Discretionary Housing Payments, committing just over £1 million to help residents with rental costs.
- 114 As part of our Welfare Assistance Scheme, we have paid £284,574 in Daily Living Expenses (DLE) and Settlement Grant (SG) awards during the current year to date.
- 115 To September 2021, we had paid almost £2.9 million in additional Council Tax Top Up Relief to residents facing financial hardship, in addition to more than £61 million provided through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 116 In relation to Durham Savers, a revised action plan is being delivered to promote and encourage financial awareness and develop a savings culture. Training is available to residents, businesses, schools and council employees for topics such as money management, safe credit options and 'routes out of poverty'. The council's staff salary savings scheme passed the cumulative £2.5 million in savings and loans, NEfirst Credit Union has recently passed the £6 million savings mark for County Durham residents.
- 117 Since April 2021 to November, a range of initiatives encompassing the Warm Homes Campaign and Warm and Healthy Homes have:
- supported 949 households with Energy Company Obligation grants for new heating boilers and insulation measures, equating to over £1.58 million of grants;
 - secured a significant amount of external grant funding for insulation and renewable heating measures in fuel poor homes across County Durham;
 - assisted 409 low-income households, collectively reducing their energy bills by £39,875 through the Managing Money Better (MMB) Service.
- 118 Loss of tenancy in the private rented sector continues to be one of the main drivers for homelessness, although the temporary eviction bans during the pandemic saw a pause on evictions. Housing Solutions continues to work with social housing providers to ensure tenants are referred at an early stage to help reduce evictions, have introduced 'stop b4 u serve' for tenants living in the private rented sector and are continuing to support tenants in financial difficulty.

Children and Families

- 119 The PASG allocated £143,000 for countywide holiday activities with healthy food during the May and October 2021 half terms (periods which Department for Education funding did not cover). During the May half term, 47 projects were delivered across the county, engaging with more than 2,500 children and young people. During the October half term, 74

projects were delivered across the county, engaging with approximately 3,000 children.

- 120 The council resumed temporary administrative responsibilities for the Benevolent Fund (a charitable trust) in October 2020 and approved more than 655 applications for a £35 grant towards winter coats and/or school shoes. Trustees of the fund are currently being consulted on the review of the fund and future administrative arrangements.

Advice in County Durham Partnership (AiCDP)

- 121 The AiCDP is a network of statutory and community and voluntary sector organisations working together to provide advice services across the county. Its comprehensive communications programme ensures claimants understand changes and are signposted to the most appropriate source of advice, help and support. Council employees, particularly those in customer-facing roles, receive regular updates and training so they fully understand changes to welfare and poverty issues, and the help available through the council and its partners.
- 122 During the last 12 months, more than 70 organisations have used the referral system enabling 3,578 residents to access advice and support – supporting the “no wrong door” philosophy that underpins the partnership. We anticipate that referrals will increase substantially over the next 12 months as we enter the COVID recovery period, see a return of face-to-face services within the community and initiatives such as furlough, the Universal Credit uplift and the eviction ban come to an end.
- 123 In September 2021, the AiCDP launched a new referral portal and website to improve the referral process.

Future Direction

- 124 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 vulnerable residents and their families.
- 125 To help develop a new Economic Strategy for the county, we have conducted an economic review and developed a new economic statement. This provides an overview of our economic performance, suggests the areas of the economy that we need to collectively support, and firmly positions the county in regional and national conversations relating to economic growth and levelling-up. Production of a Durham County Economic Strategy in partnership with key stakeholders and following consultation will be completed by Autumn 2022.
- 126 The PASG are reviewing the current poverty action plan and associated strategy. This includes consulting with services across the council and with key partners to make best use of our collective resources, learn from

what has worked well and identify any gaps, and use our data and local intelligence to ensure the support is targeted to where it is needed.

- 127 The review will consider the council's economic statement and wider policy and consider how we can increase access to fresh, healthy, affordable food, support residents struggling with increases in cost-of-living expenses and loss of income; access to decent and affordable housing, low cost loans and how we can help residents improve their overall financial circumstances.
- 128 Initial workshops are being held in December 2021, with further work being carried out in January 2022 to refresh the Action Plan, with a view to approval in line with the refresh of the Council Plan.

Conclusion

- 129 During the pandemic our efforts to address and alleviate poverty increased significantly but there is still much to do. By maintaining our partnership-based approach to delivering the Poverty Action Strategy and action plan, we are making it everyone's business to respond to poverty and the risk to financial exclusion.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- [Cabinet report, Poverty Issues, November 2020](#)
- [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](#)
- [Poverty Dashboard – Durham Insight](#)

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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 on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nature and extent of these implications are unknown and officers continue to monitor changes in primary legislation for the pandemic and EU Exit 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 longer-term financial implications for the council are at this stage difficult to quantify, and are dependent on, future 'lockdowns' or local restrictions and the speed of economic recovery.

Consultation

The review of the Poverty Action Plan and Strategy which is currently underway will be informed by feedback and engagement through consultation with council services and partners during the coming months.

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

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

21 January 2022

County Durham Partnership Update

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

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

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

**Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy
and 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 Excellent partnership working has always been the County Durham Partnership's strength and it continues to be of paramount importance as we support our communities through the coronavirus pandemic. Our County Durham Vision 2035 was agreed before the pandemic but has put the partnership in good stead to address the ambitions for our County during a challenging time – the Vision Ambitions are for:
 - (i) more and better jobs;
 - (ii) people live long and independent lives;
 - (iii) connected communities.
- 3 Following the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November 2021, which saw global leaders discussing what actions are needed to protect the

planet for future generations, the **County Durham Partnership** held an event aimed at building on COP26 at a local level.

- 4 Since the previous report, the programme for **Holiday Activities with Healthy Food** continued in the Summer and Christmas holidays during 2021. Recognising that the need and demand for holiday activities with healthy food remains during half term holidays (which the Department for Education (DfE) does not provide funding for) an additional £70,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for the May and October half terms 2021.
- 5 **All 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)** now have additional funding to help improve their local towns and villages. This is a dedicated 'Towns & Villages Fund' allocation of £210,000 per AAP that will add value to our local communities. Equally, all our local Councillors also have an additional £10,000 to spend within their divisions for related Towns & Villages projects.
- 6 A new and refreshed **Armed Forces Covenant** has been signed by the Leader of the Council. This demonstrates our continuing commitment to ensuring that members of the Armed Forces Community are treated fairly and that no one is disadvantaged in accessing public services because of their military service.
- 7 County Durham has made it to the next stage in the **UK City of Culture 2025** competition. County Durham is among the eight locations to have been selected from the 20 bidding locations and now has until January 2022 to finalise its bid. This exciting opportunity can support the county's efforts in becoming carbon neutral by 2050 by utilising the breath-taking landscapes, outstanding cultural attractions, unparalleled grassroots sport, world-first heritage, spectacular events, world class research and a growing sector of artists and entrepreneurs.
- 8 **Lumiere** took place on 18-21 November 2021. For the first time since it began in 2009, Lumiere linked city and the wider county through six commissions that transformed significant landmarks across County Durham from the Apollo Pavilion at Peterlee to Raby Castle at Staindrop.
- 9 **Storm Arwen** hit the north east of England on the afternoon of Friday 26 November 2021 and that night caused extensive damage all the way across northern England. In County Durham, 14,891 utility customers were affected by a loss of power. This included 3,000 plus residents with multiple health and social vulnerabilities who would need extra support. The outages affected all parts of the county and many residents were without power for several days before power was restored to all properties on Thursday 9 December.

- 10 In response to the storm, the **County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF)** implemented its multi-agency incident procedures on the morning of Saturday 27 November, to coordinate response to storm damage incidents. Durham County Council, in partnership with the police and fire services, responded to fallen trees and debris affecting the highways network, damaged and dangerous structures and snow drifts on the A66. Services also responded to requests for help from residential care homes affected by power outages.
- 11 A major incident was declared on 30 November and military support was agreed in order to support residents and also to ensure consistent communication.
- 12 Effective partnership working through the LRF (including Area Action Partnerships) took place directly with communities, the voluntary and faith sectors and those affected residents were provided with help and support ranging from welfare centres, hot meals, food, stoves, heaters and support supplies and where required, arranging alternative temporary accommodation.

Recommendation

- 13 COSMB is recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of this update.

Background

- 14 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 **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership, 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 and forum

- 15 The **County Durham Partnership** Board met in September and November 2021. At the meetings, partners were updated on work taking place to address Covid-19 as well as an update on how the flu vaccine programme has been delivered to support the expected increase in flu cases over the winter. 'Contain' Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) was received from the government totalling £19.4 million. Partners received some examples of how funding had been spent, including children and young people's emotional wellbeing and bereavement counselling, reopening of school swimming pools, mutual aid and VCS emergency support and community grant schemes.
- 16 At the September meeting, partners looked at the work taking place to support our Better Health at Work Award. The scheme has reached over 40,000 employees with 79 signatory organisations.
- 17 At the November meeting partners discussed how the **Poverty Action Steering Group** was supporting those residents/families experiencing poverty issues in the County. Taking a holistic view of issues relating to the pandemic whilst delivering targeted interventions to support the poorest household in greatest need, has been key. This approach has had a focus on preventative work to avoid households getting into financial difficulties, where possible. Some examples of partnership working were shared, including:
- (a) Advice in County Durham Referral portal as a one stop shop to signpost and refer residents for support;
 - (b) Private landlords "stop before you serve" in relation to housing evictions;
 - (c) GP – Warm Homes Referrals for support with insulation and other heating related issues;

- (d) “The Bread and Butter Thing” grant funding to support those who require food for the fraction of the price;
 - (e) Credit Union – promoting safe credit.
- 18 A revised Poverty Action Strategy and Plan will be developed for 2022/23 to outline the actions partners will take to support those in greatest need in terms of the impact of deprivation and poverty, given that 21.5% of County Durham resident population are said to be living in relative poverty (before housing costs) compared to the North East average of 21.5% and the England average of 17.1%.
- 19 This wider work is supported by the **Advice in County Durham (AiCD) Partnership** which held a Development Day virtually in December with a good mix of partners in attendance. The revised Terms of Reference were agreed, and the main focus of the day was the development of a AiCD Members’ Survey that will be distributed in the new year. The AiCD is also carrying out implementation of the next phase of the Advice Referral Portal refresh. This is looking at user journeys and ensuring a smooth transition from the existing portal to the new and improved one. Other workstreams are looking at further web development as well as communications and engagement.

County Durham Partnership Annual Event/Durham COP

20 Following the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November 2021, which saw global leaders discussing what actions are needed to protect the planet for future generations, our local events to support Environment and Climate Change activities in County Durham took place.

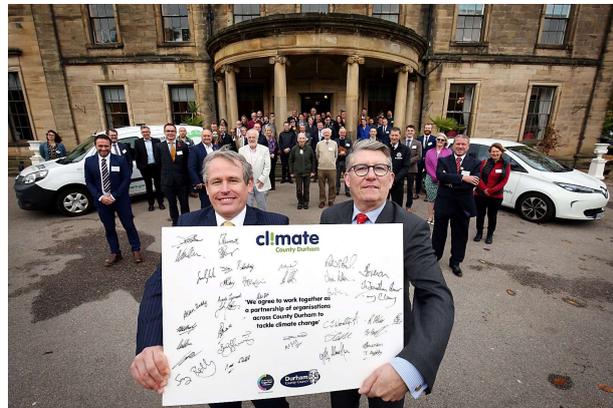
21 Culminating in our County Durham Partnership event on 26 November 2021, our keynote speaker was television presenter, podcaster and author, Tom Heap who was joined by representatives from the County Durham Partnership at an event aimed at strengthening County Durham’s response to climate change.



Tom Heap speaking at the CDP annual event

22 Durham County Council was among the first local authorities in the country to declare a climate emergency in 2019 and at the event partners discussed further actions that could help the county reach its target of being carbon neutral by 2050. They also looked at ways to conserve natural assets for future generations to enjoy and how to ensure County Durham is more sustainable and resilient.

23 In addition, at the beginning of November, leaders from key organisations across the North East signed the County Durham Climate Change Agreement, demonstrating their commitment to tackling climate change. A new website



County Durham Climate Change Agreement

www.climatecountydurham.org.uk was also launched for members of the public, community organisations and small businesses to find out how they can play their part.

UK City of Culture 2025

24 County Durham is among the eight locations to have been selected from the 20 bidding locations and now has until January 2022 to finalise its bid.

25 We submitted the initial expression of interest with principal partner Durham University on behalf of Culture Durham. Our bid is on behalf of the whole of County Durham and we believe it is our diverse heritage, landscapes and communities that make it so special. Our aim is to deliver an inclusive cultural programme that resonates with our communities and reflects our desire to innovate, inspire and grow. This exciting opportunity can support the county's efforts in becoming carbon neutral by 2050 by utilising the breath-taking landscapes, outstanding cultural attractions, unparalleled grassroots sport, world-first heritage, spectacular events, world class research and a growing sector of artists and entrepreneurs.

26 As one of the final eight locations, County Durham will receive £40,000 from the government department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to develop its bid.

27 It is expected that the overall winner will be declared in May 2022. The winning location will then take on the baton from Coventry, UK City of

Culture 2021, which has so far attracted more than £100 million in capital investment to support cultural projects.

Lumiere

28 Lumiere took place from 18 to 21 November 2021. It is 12 years since the County Durham Partnership agreed to the first Lumiere, and for the first time the festival took world-class light art across the county for people to view in their immediate surroundings, both in the city and the surrounding countryside and coast.

29 For Marks in the Landscape, international artists have responded to iconic landmarks spanning 500 years of history, from the 13th century ruins of Finchale Priory to the Penshaw Monument, a 70ft Victorian structure which can be seen from 20 miles away. Other locations which have been transformed include Raby Castle, Ushaw Historic House, the Apollo Pavilion and Seaham Marina.



'Solitude' artwork at Finchale Priory

30 Commissioned by Durham County Council and produced by Artichoke, Lumiere wouldn't be possible without the support of major event partners that include Durham University and Durham Cathedral; backing from a wide range of local businesses for example Believe Housing and Atom Bank; and the assistance of partners Durham Constabulary and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. However, key to the success of the festival has been the support of more than 12,000 local people across County Durham, who have been involved in making Lumiere happen since the UK's leading light festival began in 2009. In 2021 alone, Lumiere has worked with community groups including school children, mental health service users, veterans and young carers through creative projects. This includes 685 individuals, 25 schools, six BRILIANT artists, across five Learning and Participation projects.

31 This community focused approach is also at the heart of County Durham's bid to be UK City of Culture 2025, which aims to build on the success of events like Lumiere to create even more opportunities for people to engage in the arts.

Covid-19

- 32 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** received an update at its November 2021 meeting, outlining the inequalities of the Covid-19 vaccine take up across the county, which is driven by multiple factors, and identifying where we can do more to encourage people to get vaccinated.
- 33 Uptake at County level is comparable in Durham to anywhere in the North East, however mapping at sub county level shows that there is significant variation in Durham for both doses across age, gender and social gradient, and this information has been used to identify where targeted work should take place, for example, pop up vaccination centres.
- 34 The County Durham Vaccine Inequalities Group has been established and a comprehensive action plan has also been developed to underpin this work to ensure no one is left behind.
- 35 Much of the focus across all 14 AAPs is on being visible and supporting communities to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. **Durham AAP** has funded the Waddington Street Centre, which provides essential support for young people living with mental health issues. Last year, it piloted online sessions for young people who were moving from child to adult services very successfully, but this still left a gap for 22-25 year olds. The online support sessions have been now extended to ensure that this service continues. As one service user put it, "I'm 21 now but I'm 22 in a few weeks and I do worry that this is the end of the road for me, I'd be so grateful if there was another group like this so it could continue."
- 36 **Stanley AAP** provided a grant to PACT House to support it in the delivery of its Weekend Warmers project. PACT House has seen a dramatic increase of local people who require support either through food parcels, collection of prescriptions, providing community meals, and mental health support. More and more working age families are facing financial hardship, older residents are socially isolated and younger people are struggling to have active community lives. This has resulted in a culmination of anxieties and fears which is having a detrimental impact on people's health and wellbeing.
- 37 The Weekend Warmers project enables PACT House to re-engage with local people by offering two hot meals over the weekend period, one each day. This weekend opening allows people to reconnect with the world, breaks down isolation and brings a normality back into lives, whilst supporting those most vulnerable to food poverty. The project will be a mix of sit in / take away meals that will be offered depending on

Covid-19 guidance and numbers of people allowed to sit in or outside the premises.

- 38 Due to Covid restrictions, classroom cohesion has had a massive impact on the wellbeing of our children. In **Weardale AAP**, 550 school attending children have benefitted from a whole school enrichment programme, working with specialists, children have been engaging in team building, mindfulness and structured activities, with the desired output of preparing the school children to re-engage in the school environment.

Holiday activities with healthy food countywide programme

- 39 As previously reported, the holiday activities with healthy food countywide programme continues with the Child Poverty Working Group responsible for coordinating the programme in County Durham to ensure that for children who attend provision:
- (a) eat more healthily over the school holidays;
 - (b) are more active during the school holidays;
 - (c) take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider education attainment;
 - (d) are safe and not socially isolated;
 - (e) have greater knowledge of health nutrition;
 - (f) are more engaged with school and other local services and children and families develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and are effectively signposted towards other information and support for example health, employment, and education.
- 40 Since the last report in July 2021, a total of 19,127 children and young people took part in activities including 984 children with additional needs. A total of 128 projects have been delivered over 243 community venues and 29 schools.
- 41 Provision over the summer holidays was predominantly face to face, delivery partners worked hard to develop a creative and engaging programme whilst supporting children and young people to feel safe and engage with activities in their community. Activities delivered

included gorge walking, woodwork, laser quest, dance, tennis, day trips, climbing, sailing and much more. A short video has been produced to showcase some of the fabulous projects that took place over the summer - [Summer 2021 Fun and Food Video](#).



- 42 DfE funding does not cover half term holidays, but additional funding of £47,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for the October half term, which supported 74 projects across the AAPs.
- 43 **Spennymoor AAP** provided Fun and Food funding to Step to the Occasion to operate a holiday club which operated during the October half term.
- 44 The sessions were oversubscribed and a total of 20-25 children attended the sessions on a daily basis. A variety of activities were undertaken with children which included:
- (a) **Physical activity** – including daily walk/jog in the park, stretching exercises, fun cardio activities, ball games, skipping games, crazy golf, football, tennis, cheer leading games, parachute activities;
 - (b) **Healthy Eating** – each day a healthy packed lunch was provided for each child along with free fruit and vegetables which were provided to families from Spennymoor Community Garden. Healthy eating advice was also provided to children and at the end of the programme and a leaflet was provided to each family which included information on healthy eating options and suggested recipes;
 - (c) **Mental Health with Poppy Bear** – using the organisations mental health mascot Poppy Bear the project also undertook a mental health and emotional well-being session with the children, discussing their feelings;
 - (d) **Arts & Craft Activities** – a selection of arts and craft activities were also undertaken with a focus on Autumn and Halloween. Activities included autumn canvas painting, Halloween mask making, colouring activities and clay model making;
 - (e) **Preparing Food** - the children also helped to prepare pumpkin soup which they had for their lunch during one of the sessions.

- 45 Following the project an evaluation report was produced and positive feedback was received from the children who attended the sessions.
- 46 A range of activities have been delivered at venues across the county and the wider region during the Christmas holiday period, including locally run Christmas parties, visits to the panto at the Gala theatre and ice skating at the Centre for Life in Newcastle. Information from the projects is currently being collated.

Safeguarding

- 47 The Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP) continued working towards achieving the Strategic Plan for 2020-2022. The coronavirus pandemic continues to remain an area of focus. The DSAP regularly shares and promotes relevant key messages for safeguarding adults. Statutory and relevant partners, as well as wider stakeholders, continue to inform and assure the DSAP of local safeguarding adults' activity (including where Covid-19 may be a feature).

In recent months the DSAP has shared key briefings with all partners which include:

- (a) Practitioner Newsflash related to 'Professional Curiosity';
 - (b) Mental Capacity Act Assessments – 'what good looks like';
 - (c) DSAP newsletters (including Covid-19 themed updates).
- 48 The DSAP has shared more than 28 e-bulletins which include:
- (a) learning from national Safeguarding Adult Reviews and related analysis;
 - (b) briefings related to local and national emerged themes;
 - (c) Hate Crime Awareness Week and related e-learning opportunities;
 - (d) 16 days of action against Domestic Abuse.
- 49 In November 2021, the DSAP hosted its fourth safeguarding week, (and its second virtually). That week took place in parallel to the National Safeguarding Adults Week 15 to 22 November 2021. The event was supported by the Safe Durham Partnership and Durham Community Action. The DSAP Independent Chair launched the week reiterating the responsibilities for all statutory and relevant partners to ensure practitioners, professionals and volunteers who work with adults are confident in recognising and reporting abuse.

- 50 More than 20 learning opportunities were made available during the week and through a range of dedicated workshops which included Mental Capacity Act 2005, Safeguarding and Supporting Alcohol Dependent Drinkers, Understanding Safeguarding for Voluntary and Community Organisations, Workshop to Raise Awareness of PREVENT (and the related duty).
- 51 **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)** continues to fulfil its obligations under the Statutory Guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 which operate under a now well-defined set of Vision and Values:
- (a) **Prevention Through Early Intervention** – we will work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity;
 - (b) **Joined up Response** - we will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others;
 - (c) **Listening** – we will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out;
 - (d) **Identifying** – we will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively;
 - (e) **Challenging** – we will challenge, learn and continuously improve.
- 52 In October 2021, the DSCP published its Annual Report, a statutory requirement every 12 months. The focus was around the achievements the DSCP made as a partnership and the impact this work was having on children and their families.
- 53 The report also gave an overview of the work of the various sub-groups and the intended focus for the coming year, with added emphasis on scrutiny and the assessment of the impact of our services in keeping children safe.
- 54 Additionally, in terms of communication, the DSCP is in the final stages of the development of a new website, due for launch in early 2022. The new e-bulletin is now well embedded with evidence that it improves stakeholder access to key information and DSCP messages.

Storm Arwen

- 55 Storm Arwen hit the north east of England on the afternoon of Friday 26 November 2021 and that night caused extensive damage all the way across northern England. The storm was followed immediately by a period of cold weather with freezing temperatures and snow in the high Pennines areas.

- 56 As well as causing damage to property, trees and localised flooding, the storm caused significant and extensive damage to the power distribution network with widespread power outages affecting tens of thousands of properties across the wider region.
- 57 In County Durham, 14,891 utility customers were affected by a loss of power. This included 3,000 plus residents with multiple health and social vulnerabilities who would need extra support. The outages affected all parts of the county and many residents were without power for several days before power was restored to all properties on Thursday 9 December.
- 58 In response to the storm, the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF) implemented its multi-agency incident procedures on the morning of Saturday 27 November, to coordinate response to storm damage incidents. Durham County Council, in partnership with the police and fire services, responded to fallen trees and debris affecting the highways network, damaged and dangerous structures and snow drifts on the A66. Services also responded to requests for help from residential care homes affected by power outages.
- 59 Initially it was understood that most properties would be reconnected by midnight on Saturday 27 November and then Sunday 28 November. However, it was discovered that the damage was far more extensive than initially thought and by the beginning of the following week it was clear that it would take days to get customers onto temporary generated power, and weeks to rebuild and repair parts of the power distribution network.
- 60 On Tuesday 30 November, the LRF stood-up a strategic coordination Group (SCG) and on Wednesday 1 December it declared a major incident. A request for Military Assistance to Civil Authorities (MACA) was submitted and approved by the military and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on Thursday 2 December. From the morning of Friday 3 December, 100 plus troops from the Royal Lancers operated from two bases in the county to help with checks on isolated residents, vulnerable people and to distribute food and support packages.
- 61 The military deployment augmented the work which had been on-going throughout the week by the voluntary and community sector, local residents, the Council, the area action partnerships, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Durham Constabulary, NHS trusts, the North East Ambulance Service, utility companies, housing providers, local Elected Members, town and parish councils and faith groups. The agencies worked together with local communities to

contact and visit vulnerable people, and to provide affected residents with help and support ranging from welfare centres, hot meals, food, stoves, heaters and support supplies and where required, arranging alternative temporary accommodation. The Council also assisted (and continues to assist) with welfare and hardship payments while people wait for compensation claims to be processed.

- 62 In total, over 5,000 visits were made to check on vulnerable residents. This was in addition to checks made on people in receipt of social care packages via commissioned services and the Council's in-house social care teams. 330 care packs containing heaters, stoves, torches, batteries and other emergency items were issued where they were required. The Council commissioned 41 visits by mobile catering units to 11 different localities across the county between 1 and 8 December and helped place 14 households in emergency alternative accommodation.
- 63 As with previous incidents and the response to Covid-19, community, voluntary and faith groups across the county were outstanding in rallying-round and providing rapid and spontaneous support, which ranged from checking on isolated people, providing food and supplies, to opening-up community centres, halls and churches to provide places for shelter, company and warmth. Given the duration and widespread nature of the outages, community, voluntary and faith groups responses were invaluable in helping people affected by the storm.

Vision 2035: More and better jobs

- 64 The **Economic Partnership** is continuing to develop an economic statement setting out the county's high-level economic strengths and challenges. A robust consultation process will take place in January to March 2022 ensuring that local businesses, and the public have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the strategy at the early stages to ensure ownership. A 12-to-18-month timetable is proposed to consult, develop, sign off and launch the strategy, utilising various and innovative methods of engagement will be key to this process.
- 65 The UK Government published the UK Innovation Strategy, setting out its vision to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035:
- (a) The Strategy makes clear that research and innovation are central to the UK's domestic plan for growth and its global aspirations. The Strategy lays out a long-term vision, while also providing a plan for action for the next three to twelve months. The Innovation Strategy recognises the UK Government's role in creating an effective innovation system across four pillars;
 - (b) The four pillars of the strategy are:

- (i) **Unleashing Business** - Fuelling businesses who want to innovate;
- (ii) **People** - Creating the most exciting place in the world for innovation talent, individuals and teams;
- (iii) **Institutions and Places** - Ensuring that research, development and innovation institutions serve the needs of businesses and places across the UK;
- (iv) **Missions and Technologies** - Stimulating innovation in technology to tackle societal and global challenges.

- 66 The £220 million UK Community Renewal Fund was launched by the Government as part of a number of funding measures, including the Levelling Up Fund in the Budget Statement 2021. The aim of the fund is to trial new approaches to support communities and the local economy and help areas prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, due to launch in 2022.
- 67 On 8 November, Durham County Council received confirmation it was successful in its £800,000 bid for an Emerging Markets Innovation Accelerator, working in partnership with Durham University and CPI (Centre for Process Innovation). The project comprises four work packages designed to further develop an innovation culture in County Durham, focusing on opportunities in emerging markets and harnessing the capabilities of the three key innovation partners in the County – Durham University, CPI and Durham County Council (Business Durham).
- 68 The four work packages are:
- (a) Durham Advanced Materials Innovation Alliance (DAMIA);
 - (b) Innovation Acceleration Plans;
 - (c) Emerging Markets Animation;
 - (d) Apprenticeship Programme Development Fund.
- 69 The **Derwent Valley Partnership AAP** is financially supporting the ‘Fit for The Future’ project being delivered by the Do Business Network. This is an intensive programme of support for micro and small businesses in Derwent Valley delivered by local experts and comprising of 24 online business training workshops to enable businesses to:
- (a) plan for the future;
 - (b) improve risk management and efficiency;

- (c) improve adaptability;
- (d) win new customers and trade over a bigger area;
- (e) enter new markets;
- (f) enhance business resilience for the future;
- (g) build management confidence and impact.

This project will also deliver business resilience and continuity tests and action planning with 30 businesses, offer 1-1 advice to any small business in the Derwent Valley such as signposting and links to support and grants, facilitate peer to peer mentoring and expand a video training library for small businesses to access on-demand training.

- 70 Through **Teesdale AAP's (TAP)** Town and Village funding a targeted business improvement scheme will be offered to businesses throughout Teesdale. TAP is contributing £65,000 to the scheme, with a further £46,000 in match funding contributions coming from DCC and grant beneficiaries.
- 71 Durham County Council Regeneration Team has run a business improvement grant scheme for the last 7 years mainly in Barnard Castle and latterly also Middleton in Teesdale. In the last 3 years this has supported 12 new businesses, creating 10 new FTEs, and gaining match funding of £124,901. TAP funding will be used to enhance and expand the current Barnard Castle and Middleton in Teesdale Targeted Business Improvement Scheme to cover the smaller retail centres in Staindrop, Evenwood, Cockfield and Gainford. Typically grants are offered at a maximum contribution of 70% or a grant average figure which is set each year. Teesdale Business Improvement Grant Scheme will provide grants to local businesses to carry out capital works to vacant premises or to improve/develop existing business premises. The overriding aim of the scheme is to support new or existing businesses to improve premises or bring vacant premises back into use for retail/office or overnight accommodation uses. Works can include exterior improvements as well as internal works to lower and upper floors. The project will look to support local businesses in major employment sectors such as retail, tourism, and services.
- 72 **Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH) AAP**, supported by other AAPs funded the Employability, Upskilling & Discretionary Project. This project is delivered by Bishop Auckland College and provides funding support to individuals to help them overcome barriers and move closer to, or into employment, further training, or volunteering. The amount of funding that can be applied for is capped at £1,000 and funds available are:

- (a) Employability Skills Fund aimed at responding to specific training needs, where there is no mainstream funding available, for example, forklift truck training, tiling, plumbing and plastering, security training etc;
- (b) Upskilling Fund, aimed at responding to specific training needs, where there is no mainstream funding available to upskill and acquire skills/qualification to be able to change career, direction or gain additional work in a new sector;
- (c) Discretionary Fund aimed at removing barriers, for example, travel, childcare, resources that prevent clients from accessing training.

Case Study

Ron was unemployed, after being made redundant, and had just relocated to the North East. He was determined to gain employment, but finances were an issue to complete relevant training to secure available jobs.

Ron said "Thankfully through the BASH funding, I was able to undertake forklift truck training, and secure relevant qualifications. I completed the training with Forklift Truck Academy, Seaham, and Scott Court and his team were brilliant and would highly recommend them, without hesitation. This training has assisted me tremendously in my current employment. I am very grateful, to say the least, for the assistance I have received. This included Bishop Auckland College, National Career Service, Funding Provider, Course Tutors etc. I'm very happy working for my employer and can actually see myself retiring there. Again, much appreciation for the assistance, support and funding provided."

People live long and independent lives

- 73 The **County Durham Together Partnership (CDT)** met in November and invited updates from the number of workstreams actively progressing the work previously agreed. The co-production workstream is now progressing and there is a focus on rolling out varying levels of training initially so that partners understand how to work with residents

to ensure they help shape services and initiatives. Evaluation is also important for this area of work as it will be integrated into many other areas of the broader work. A key role of the workstream will be to look at DCC forward plans and those of partners to identify potential for co-production of these. This will be presented in more detail at the January meeting. An element that may also be co-produced is the 'Community Book', engaging with potential users of a digital solution for signposting to community and health information as to the current options and any gaps before developing any potential solution.

- 74 Another key area of the CDT work is around Connecting Communities with several different elements to this. A Link Workers Network for those who work with residents, patients and services users in the community has been developed and evaluation and engagement work are continuing, with Teesside University supporting on this.
- 75 Sam Allen has been appointed as Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). It is anticipated that she will take up the post at the end of January 2022 ahead of the ICS becoming a statutory organisation from April 2022.
- 76 As reported previously, the County Durham Care Partnership Executive (CDCPE) arrangements to further integrate health and social care service are formalised. As part of this, it has been agreed that a Forum will meet 2/3 times a year as an informal meeting of governing body lay members, ICS leads, senior Councillors and NHS Trust non-executives. The Forum will focus on the ICS and health inequalities across the County, which will feed into the CDCPE to influence the place-based integration work. The first Forum took place on 29 November where it was agreed that the focus of the Forum would be to have a joint voice for Durham, to communicate key messages and be an influencing Forum in relation to the integration of health and care. The next Forum is scheduled for March 2022. **Health and Wellbeing Boards** will continue to have a leadership role at the place-based level in these new arrangements to represent the views of County Durham.
- 77 A Health and Wellbeing Framework for schools and education settings has been launched to develop 'healthy settings' and improve outcomes for children and young people, staff, and the education settings. This aligns into the 'starting well' and 'living well' priorities in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 78 **Great Aycliffe and Middridge (GAMP) AAP** supported the development of a new Sensory Room at St Mary's Primary School in Newton Aycliffe, facilitated outside the main school building to create a safe environment and a space for children to feel their needs are being

met through nurture and sensory support. Additionally, there will be a separate facility to make this easily accessible to the wider community, other schools and external users. This will provide a facility to the local community for parental groups, toddler groups, and parent/carers outreach support to cater for the needs and emotional wellbeing of individuals. The project will



St Mary's Sensory Room in Newton Aycliffe

help the emotional wellbeing for families and their children, having a sensory building provides an enriched learning environment and a place for children and families to access throughout the day.

79 **Mid Durham AAP** has supported the Handcrafted Care Leaver Support project specifically aimed at care leavers to support them during the lockdowns and help transition those young people who are struggling with a wide range of issues into a healthier lifestyle.

80 The project engaged with Care Leavers in the Mid-Durham area who lacked some basic living skills and confidence and ran a two weekly dedicated woodwork and cooking session at their Langley Moor hub. From the skills, training and self-esteem built by this project this helped care-leavers improve their mental health, enter employment and build self-sustaining lives.



Handcrafted Care Leaver Support staff

Since the lockdown began in March 2020, the project will have housed a minimum of 6 care leavers in a stable living environment to break the patterns of a chaotic lifestyle.

81 The Premier Foundation secured funding from the **4 Together AAP** to deliver a school holiday programme of multi-sport activity, to traditionally 'hard to engage' young people (5-12 years). The programme has provided a total of 20 days' worth of provision, during school summer holidays. Sessions were attended by 707 young people across the 20 days.

- 82 Young people took part in a range of activities such as soft archery, football, cricket, scooter-board games, dodgeball, and other multi-skill games. The programme worked with 10 local schools to target young people who would not normally have access to such activities due to their socio-economic status. All activities were developed and delivered to support children in a collaborative, community-focused environment via these themes: resilience, perseverance, having a 'Can do' attitude, try something new, make new friends, and respect each other. The activities had a positive impact on young people's physical and mental wellbeing following lack of opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown.
- 83 There are clear links between the quality of housing and the influence this has on a person's health and wellbeing, for example physical housing conditions such as cold and damp can affect health, as can factors such as accessibility.
- 84 **Chester-le-Street AAP** has provided funding to "Moving On" Durham, which provide transitional housing in local communities for young people who find themselves homeless. Its accompanying support programme is intended to enable each young person to live independently when their stay with the charity has finished. Support workers, part funded through the AAPs in the North of the County, help their clients to build up independent living skills whilst maintaining close contact to prevent social isolation.
- 85 Our **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)** is rooted in local people, places and in action. We have a stable, creative and resilient sector, working effectively together and sharing resources, insight and support. County Durham is a great place to volunteer because of it. We have launched a 'Talking Heads' [video](#) to showcase our wide and varied voluntary and community sector and volunteering opportunities.
- 86 The **Better Together VCS Forum** held an online policy conference bringing together VCS leaders with public sector commissioners. This was an opportunity to hear some of the key asks from Health and Social Care, as well as show case examples of current work which is supporting vulnerable people in our communities and which adds value to the range of NHS and Local Authority care and support services. The aim was to explore connections and ways of working which can help the sector to engage effectively. Also, to identify what we need to be in place to make relationships between commissioning and operational delivery of community support, more responsive and targeted to where it is needed most.

Connected communities

- 87 Anti-Social Behaviour is a key priority for the **Safe Durham Partnership** (SDP) and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and both are working together to review the way in which we deal with anti-social behaviour across the County including a strategic approach to set the direction for a new Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference to complement the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group and work across the Area Action Partnerships. A directory of diversionary services has been shared across the partnership so that partners are aware what is available in communities for children and young people in order to provide places to go and things to do for young people. The SDP continue to provide reports through to the **Safer Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** in relation to this issue.
- 88 **East Durham AAP** have supported Durham Constabulary with over £65,000 for the purchase of ANPR surveillance cameras giving police the opportunity of covering a number of avenues into East Durham not previously covered.
- 89 One specific area of anti-social behaviour included in the Safe Durham Partnership Plan is nuisance off-road motorcycles and quads. A Time Limited Action Plan Group has been established to address the issue and includes partners from a range of agencies including Durham Constabulary, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Housing providers, Durham County Council departments and many others. The key messages of the action plan are:
- (a) the improper use of motorbikes, mopeds and quads is illegal;
 - (b) they are a public nuisance;
 - (c) often linked to other crime and disorder issues;
 - (d) often cause damage and are uninsured;
 - (e) risk to public safety.
- 90 The action plan will be continually reviewed over its lifetime and the outcomes reported back to the Safe Durham Partnership once completed and fully assessed.
- 91 Durham Constabulary hosted virtual events as part of this year's National Hate Crime awareness week which took place from 9 to 16 October. National Hate Crime Awareness Week is a week of action to raise awareness of hate crime, to remember those we have lost and

support those who need our ongoing support. The events held included:

- (a) What happens when you report a hate crime?
- (b) The Criminal Justice System and how your experience then translates into an offence going through the various stages to court.
- (c) What support is available to victims of hate crime.

92 A cyber security event was held at New College Durham by members of the Safer Cyber Group (subgroup of Safe Durham Partnership) on Wednesday 17 November (digital safeguarding day as part of National Safeguarding Adults Week). Various sessions took place including Cyber Lego, password resilience and online safety. Feedback noted *“Fantastic event which was very informative and well received by all of the students present”*.



Students at a Cyber Lego event

93 **East Durham Rural Corridor (EDRC) AAP** supported its Youth Forum with a project that involves Cyber Harm Reduction Officers from Durham Constabulary working with young people to divert them away from cybercrime, advise the public on how to stay safe online and prevent it from happening. A high number of those that commit cyber offences are teenagers, so they work along the line of PREVENT to ensure that they are aware of cybercrime and divert them away from getting involved in it. Work is taking place with the existing EDRC AAP Youth Forum to help them learn about cybercrime, and to train them to be able to support others to learn about it.

94 The EDRC AAP Youth Forum had already developed a Facebook group 'Live, Listen, Speak Project' to allow relevant information to be circulated quickly and enable children and young people in the area to have continuous dialogue and have a say. Working with the Cyber Harm Reduction Officers has made sure that the online Youth Forum is safe and secure.

95 The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (a subgroup of the Safe Durham Partnership) delivered the 16 days of action against domestic abuse campaign started in November 2021 to support workplaces to be better equipped to acknowledge the signs that indicate it may be going on. The 16 days of action against domestic abuse campaign started on 25 November, the International Day for the

Elimination of Violence against Women, and ran until 10 December, Human Rights Day. Several online events took place which highlighted what multi agency partners and companies can do to aid their employees who endure domestic violence, to train those who witness it, and to protect staff, with the goal of securing safety.

- 96 The domestic abuse workplace champions programme was also relaunched during the 16 days to offer greater support to all its employees, regardless of age, gender and sexuality, as part of its commitment to support employee health, wellbeing and safety at work.

- 97 The Council commissions Harbour Support to help families and individuals affected by domestic abuse. Harbour Support Services offers advice, guidance and support to people across the county experiencing abuse, as well as those displaying abusive behaviour. As part of the 16 days campaign, Harbour has also worked with children across the county to produce artwork and poems which highlight the impact of domestic abuse. Some of the artwork was shared on social media during the campaign to help raise awareness of the issue and develop a better understanding of abuse among members of the public.



Children's artwork from the 16 days campaign

- 98 The 32nd County Durham Environment Awards, run by the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership (ECCP)**, were launched on 10 June with a litter pick at the entrance to Kynren, in Bishop Auckland. The categories for 2021 were climate change, community partnership, craftsmanship, greener business, natural environment, places and spaces, schools and colleges and volunteer groups. Entries were submitted throughout the Summer and the judging panel met in the Autumn to consider the applications. The panel shortlisted 35 entries as either category winners or highly commended entries. The winners will be announced at a virtual ceremony, which will be broadcast on the Council's You Tube channel, in early February 2022.
- 99 The ECCP has been successful in a joint bid to the European Union Cities Fund to support a project to 'green' underutilised car parks across the county, adding renewable energy and biodiversity features. The

Durham bid was the only successful UK application, one of 60 across Europe, and will receive €60,000 to support the project.

- 100 The **3 Towns AAP** has supported a number of environmental projects in its area to support a sense of civic pride and community spirit as well as support resident's health and wellbeing. This includes the Willing to Bloom project which includes a year-round "Welcome to Willington" display, rainbow of hope on the town green, healing and calm garden, midwinter fire feature and snowdrop path. The project links in with the local primary schools who will be involved in the planting.



Young people creating a Willing to Bloom display

- 101 The **County Durham Faith Network** which seeks to promote, and foster inter faith dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect and to help people from different faith, traditions and those with none, to engage with one another to increase mutual understanding, held an evening of virtual inter faith encounter in November to celebrate Inter Faith Week. Contributors from six different faiths addressed the topic of 'Human Flourishing: Living Well in Challenging Times'.
- 102 A new and refreshed **Armed Forces Covenant** has been signed by the Leader of the Council. This demonstrates our continuing commitment to ensuring that members of the Armed Forces Community are treated fairly and that no one is disadvantaged in accessing public services by their military service.
- 103 **The Armed Forces Forum** held a meeting hosted by 8th Battalion the Rifles in Bishop Auckland. The Forum heard about the development of a new Veterans Community Hub in Newton Aycliffe which brings together seven different organisations to support veterans in the community with their health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

- 104 The impact of the coronavirus pandemic is set to remain for the foreseeable future. As we continue to follow Government guidance, we will work in partnership to ensure we do our collective best for our communities.

- 105 The County Durham Partnership, including our Safeguarding Boards, Better Together VCS Forum and our 14 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.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- None.

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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.

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 thematic 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**



21 January 2022

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 held on 19 February 2022. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 31 May 2022.

Contact:	Ros Layfield	Tel: 03000 269708
	Andy Palmer	Tel: 03000 268551

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/21/02	09-Feb-22	Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services Tel. 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of MTFP 12 through COSMB meetings

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
CYPS/02/2022	09 Feb 2022	School Admission Arrangements - Academic Year 2023/24		Cabinet 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

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
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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
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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

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

21 January 2022

**Information update from the Chairs of
the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**



Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to members an information update of overview and scrutiny activity from December 2021 – January 2022.

Executive summary

- 2 This report sets out a chairs' update of all scrutiny activity for the period from the last COSMB meeting up to January 2022.
- 3 The report is for information only and will be submitted to all Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Boards.

Recommendation(s)

- 4 Members are invited to receive the report and note the information.

Background

- 5 Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) are encouraged to be involved in any area of overview and scrutiny activity via thematic committees and talk to scrutiny committee chairs and overview and scrutiny officers on areas of project and overview activity.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>COSMB on 3 December 2021 received reports on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIPA Annual Review of the Council's use of powers • Resources – Q2 Forecast of Revenue and Capital outturn 2021/22 • Q2 2021/22 Customer Feedback • Overview and Scrutiny Six Monthly report • Refresh of non-statutory, non-voting overview and scrutiny co-optees • Update on Petitions • Notice of key decisions • Chair's update

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWH OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified.
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>AWH OSC on 14 January 2022 received reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing QWELL Digital Mental Health Services for Adults • 2021/22 Q2 Adults and Health Services Budget Outturn • Q2 2021/22 Performance Management report • County Durham and Darlington Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery services • Director of Public Health County Durham Annual Report 2020/21 • Local Outbreak Management Plan

Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYP OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>The CYP OSC on 7 January 2022 received reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Poverty in County Durham • Free School Meals • Q2 21/22 Performance management • Q2 21/22 Revenue and Capital outturn report

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&E OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	A report on support provided to the retail sector by Durham County Council was considered at the meeting on 20 December 2021.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified.
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>A meeting of the E&E OSC on 20 December 2021 considered reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Pipelines • Q2 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Outturn • Q2 2021/22 Performance Management • Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership 20 September 2021

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&S OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report for this period.
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Scrutiny Review Activity	A special meeting of the ESC OSC on 13 December 2021 considered a report and presentation on whether Cabinet should declare an ecological emergency.
Overview reports/ Presentations	ESC OSC on 18 January 2022 will consider reports and presentations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 2 Revenue and Capital Outturn • Q2 Performance Management

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SSC OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	SSC OSC on 6 December 2021 received reports and presentations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Risk Management Plan • Nuisance Motorbikes and Quads • Community Protection Service • Public Protection Service

Regional Scrutiny

- 6 The NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held an informal meeting on 16 December 2021 and received reports and presentations on:
- NECA budget proposals 2022/23
 - Digital Exclusion in the North East
 - Forward Plan and Work Programme update
 - Public Health and Social Care – Winter Pressures
- 7 The NECA & North of Tyne CA Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee held an informal meeting on 16 December 2021 and received reports and presentations on:
- Integrated Rail Plan and Leamside Line

- Application of Transport Assurances Framework
- JTC Budget Proposals 2022/23
- JTC Forward Plan and Work Programme report

Conclusion

- 13 This report contains the key issues considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the period December 2021 – January 2022 and is provided for members information only.

Contact: Andy Palmer

Tel: 03000 268551

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

N/A.

Finance

N/A.

Climate Change

Any climate change implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

Consultation

N/A.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

N/A.

Human Rights

N/A.

Crime and Disorder

N/A.

Staffing

N/A.

Accommodation

N/A.

Risk

N/A.

Procurement

N/A.