



## Special Cabinet

**Date** Wednesday 29 September 2021  
**Time** 9.30 am  
**Venue** Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

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### Business

#### Part A

#### Items which are open to the public and press

1. Declarations of Interest

#### Key Decision:

2. Leisure Transformation New Build Site Selection Update - Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth [**Key Decision: REG/07/21**] (Pages 3 - 44)

#### Ordinary Decisions:

3. Review of Durham County Council Headquarters - Joint Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 45 - 60)
4. Review of Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive and the potential future use of the former DLI Museum & Art Gallery and Grounds at Aykley Heads - Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 61 - 172)
5. Quarter One, 2021/22 Performance Management Report - Report of Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 173 - 242)
6. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
7. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

## **Part B**

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

8. Review of Durham County Council Headquarters - Joint Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Interim Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 243 - 410)
9. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Helen Lynch**

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
21 September 2021

To: **The Members of the Cabinet**

Councillors A Hopgood and R Bell (Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council) together with Councillors T Henderson, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

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**Cabinet**

**29 September 2021**

**Leisure Transformation New Build Site  
Selection Update**

**Key Decision REG/07/21**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy  
and Growth**

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Resources, Investment and Assets**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report provides an update on the due diligence activities undertaken since Cabinet approved the site preferences for three proposed new build leisure facilities in March 2021 subject to further due diligence and feasibility work.
- 2 The report seeks approval of the final site selection for two of the three new build leisure centres at Chester-le-Street and Bishop Auckland, and highlights the need to carry out further due diligence on the sites at Seaham before making a final decision.
- 3 The report also provides an update on the wider programme of leisure centre improvements across the County.

**Executive Summary**

- 4 In March 2021, Cabinet approved preferred sites for new build leisure centres in Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street and Seaham, subject to further due diligence and feasibility work.
- 5 Between April and August 2021, further due diligence has been undertaken across all sites to assure the deliverability and value for money for the preferred sites of the new centres and for the

redevelopment and refurbishment works to be undertaken across the other facilities.

- 6 In the March 2021 report to Cabinet, the analysis for Bishop Auckland showed two viable sites: the existing site at Woodhouse Close and Tindale Crescent. Following consideration of the analysis, Tindale Crescent was identified as the preferred site for Bishop Auckland. A key part of this option was the expectation of an associated proposal to develop a community hub on Woodhouse Close, the vacated site of the existing leisure centre.
- 7 Since the March report was considered, further work has been carried out to identify likely accessibility and transport improvements to fulfil access and equality issues as outlined in the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and public consultation, and on likely land and planning issues. An updated EIA relating to the proposed new build sites at Chester-le-Street and Bishop Auckland is attached at Appendix 2.
- 8 Key to this is the further work undertaken to identify an alternative Temporary Stop Over Area (TSOA). This is required to mitigate the displacement of the current TSOA at Tindale Crescent where the proposed new build leisure centre was to be located. Alternatives have been explored and a suitable alternative has not been found.
- 9 Initial assessments and feasibility studies have also been completed on the potential construction costs of a new facility and Community Hub on the vacated Woodhouse Close site. It is estimated that the costs of such a development could be in excess of £5 million.
- 10 The potential impact and mitigations that could be put in place during the construction phase at Woodhouse Close have been further considered. The existing Leisure Centre at Woodhouse Close would not need to close for the full construction period, although more detailed work is required before the final project schedule can be produced.
- 11 Further consideration has been given to the key components of a community hub. The benefits and outcomes relate to the services and programmes that will be delivered and co-delivered to users, rather than from the actual building itself. These services could be incorporated into a leisure centre designate at a much lower level of additional cost than an independent building and site.
- 12 The March 2021 report, which at that time identified the preferred location as Tindale Crescent, subject to further due diligence being undertaken, included analysis of the appraisals of the various sites in Bishop Auckland. This showed a marginal preference for Tindale Crescent over Woodhouse Close. The public consultation showed a

preference for the Woodhouse Close site over any others. In terms of the appraisals at that time, both sites met the criteria for a leisure investment.

- 13 The preferred location for a new leisure centre in Bishop Auckland has been reconsidered to take account of the more detailed work that has been carried out as set out above. The aggregated effect of the detailed work indicates the material impact on the viability of Tindale crescent as the optimum location for the new leisure centre.
- 14 Taking account of this further work that has been undertaken, a change to the preferred site option for Bishop Auckland is recommended. The Woodhouse Close area is now the preferred location for a new build leisure centre that will incorporate a Community Hub within the leisure centre itself. Further public engagement will be carried out in due course on the overall facilities mix for the new build facility.
- 15 The further due diligence undertaken on the Chester-le-Street site has revealed no new significant issues or causes for concern beyond the car parking and traffic issues initially identified, with the conclusion that these can be mitigated or dealt with during the next delivery phase, therefore the recommendation is that Chester-le-Street should progress as originally planned and move to further public engagement on the facilities mix for this site.
- 16 Further work on the Seaham dual sites new build proposals set out in the March 2021 report has identified significant deliverability challenges that need to be addressed in order to be able to progress with this preferred option. These include mitigating displaced car parking and the need for further planning considerations as a result of the height of the proposed buildings. These matters have not yet been satisfactorily resolved and further work is required before final proposals can be brought forward for Seaham.
- 17 The previous report identified a significant capital investment requirement of £78 million and it was noted that investment at that level would pose challenges in terms of the Council's VAT partial exemption limit – which is calculated on a seven-year average and seeks to cap the level of input tax that can be recovered on exempt (from VAT) activity. At the time of the March report, discussions were ongoing with HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) to seek further special dispensation to exceed the partial exemption seven-year average threshold.
- 18 Since the previous report, HMRC has provided the Council with special dispensation, albeit with clear instruction that the overall investment must not exceed £78 million. Any additional capital spending on the

leisure facilities above this level would be outside the approval given by HMRC and would expose the Council to financial penalties in the region of £14 million. The budget for the Leisure Transformation programme therefore must not exceed £78 million and all projects must be scoped within this cost envelope and with due regard to the need for significant levels of self-financing income, as previously identified.

- 19 In order to maintain a programme of appropriate pace and phasing to ensure optimum delivery in line with VAT regulations and the early health and wellbeing benefits of the investment in the County Durham Leisure Transformation programme, it is proposed that a number of individual centres refurbishments from the wider programme are initiated as soon as possible.
- 20 To facilitate this, a 'Leisure Conversation' phase is proposed, which will provide the opportunity for local public engagement on the programme and the facilities mix proposals on each site across the County. This will run alongside and throughout the first phase of the investment in order to maintain public engagement and involvement and for the Council to identify new and dynamic ways to engage, listen and respond to our residents.

## Recommendations

- 21 Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) agree to the final recommended site selections as follows:
    - i) **Bishop Auckland:** The existing site (Woodhouse Close);  
and
    - ii) **Chester-le-Street:** Former Civic Centre site;
  - (b) agree to carry out further due diligence on the viability of the dual site build proposals at Seaham;
  - (c) note the refurbishment projects (with the exception of Wolsingham, Shildon and Freeman's Quay, which will be considered in a second phase) to be commenced in 2022, subject to engagement with all key stakeholders and progress with design development;
  - (d) note the special dispensation provided by the HMRC for the seven-year average partial exemption limit, provided on the basis that the Council restricts total capital expenditure on the Leisure Programme within £78 million;
  - (e) note that updates will be provided in due course on the further due diligence and development work of this major capital

programme, with regular updates also provided through a wider communications and engagement plan across the County.

## Background

- 22 In January 2020, Cabinet agreed to a set of recommendations for an ambitious Leisure Transformation Programme. The January 2020 report set out a scope which focussed on transforming leisure centre venues in order to support health outcomes in the wider population, while improving the financial resilience of Council leisure centres. The programme would be part funded via additional net income generated from the improved facilities and part funded by prudential borrowing.
- 23 It was recommended that a further report on new build options be presented to Cabinet once the advanced feasibility work was completed, to include a health impact assessment and details of consultation.
- 24 A report was subsequently submitted to Cabinet in March 2021, setting out the details of the progress made on selecting appropriate site locations for new build leisure facilities in Seaham, Bishop Auckland, and Chester-le-Street. The March 2021 report detailed how an initial twenty-three site locations were considered, assessed, and eventually shortlisted to the nine most viable locations based on those assessments.
- 25 Having arrived at the nine most viable locations for the sites to be developed, a range of inputs were collated to complete an options appraisal to short-list to a preferred site for each of the three new build locations. This appraisal factored in details from five key inter-related evidence bases:
- (a) a **technical assessment** to appraise the physical viability of the various sites. This was undertaken in partnership with specialist leisure consultants, Alliance Leisure;
  - (b) the views from the **public engagement** exercise – a comprehensive consultation and engagement programme was undertaken to seek views on site location and facility options for the new sites as well as seeking early views on the wider facilities included in the broader programme. This included presentations to, and engagement with, all 14 Area Action Partnerships across County Durham;
  - (c) a **health impact assessment** - led by a licensed public health practitioner within the Council in order to robustly assess the health and wellbeing attributes of the various options;
  - (d) an **equality impact assessment (EIA)**, to identify and assess any potential impacts on any of the protected characteristics; and



- (e) **strategic place-based assessment** - undertaken by officers across the Council, enabling additional outcomes and benefits to be identified and fully taken into account, such as the wider place context of each leisure centre.
- 26 The five elements of the review process were designed to provide supporting evidence and inputs to inform a balanced assessment of the preferred site selection for each of the three new build locations.
- 27 In all instances and as identified in the March 2021 report, further detailed technical appraisal and due diligence was needed to consider the full viability of each of the preferred sites. This due diligence requires consideration of the forecast cost of each development, alongside the key issues that determine deliverability before final sites can be confirmed and requires engagement on the nature of the facilities within the centres.
- 28 These are major scale investments and further due diligence is in common with the complexities and scale of the public investment planned in the projects.
- 29 Given the significance of wider regeneration opportunities and the role that investment will play in our economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the strategic place based review was an important element, which influenced the Council's willingness to consider innovative or bespoke approaches in each location. As a result, the proposals for each location built on the local context of the place and had the potential to achieve greater impacts than a new leisure centre alone would be expected to deliver.
- 30 The March 2021 Cabinet report proposed the following preferred options for each of the three new build locations:
- (a) **New Build Site for Seaham** - a hybrid approach with new facilities at St John's Square and on the existing site, which was expected to produce significant regeneration benefits, as well as additional health outcomes from the proximity of aligned services and improved outdoor spaces;
  - (b) **New Build Site for Chester Le Street** – the selection of the former Civic Centre site was proposed, on the basis of there being ample space for the development and associated parking, with further sport and leisure opportunities being developed at the Riverside;
  - (c) **New Build Site for Bishop Auckland** - the recommendation was for a new build at Tindale Crescent, which would support regeneration in that locality, with additional proposals for a

Woodhouse Close community hub to be developed, with new facilities co-designed with local people on the existing site.

There was a marginal preference for Tindale Crescent over Woodhouse Close, even though the public consultation showed a preference for the Woodhouse Close site. In terms of the appraisals at that time, both sites met the criteria for a leisure investment.

- 31 The March 2021 Cabinet report highlighted a number of recommendations, including the need to review key areas of deliverability for the schemes and, significantly, the impact of the programme on the Council's VAT partial exemption position.
- 32 The due diligence issues that were identified in the March 2021 report, as part of recommending the preferred sites, were drawn out clearly and are summarised below:
- 33 **Seaham**
- (i) **Car Parking** – The loss of car parking through the development of the St John's site location would impact on the already challenging car parking situation within Seaham and this matter would need to be addressed through the development of the scheme. This was a specific issue noted throughout the consultation process;
  - (ii) **Planning concerns with regards to massing and stacking** – The St John's location presents a tight site which is bounded by other buildings, businesses, and residential properties on all sides and design will therefore need sensitive consideration;
  - (iii) **Public Utilities** – It was noted that a main public sewer main ran across the site, an electrical sub-station was also present and surface water drainage to the square also posed some challenges. All these issues require careful consideration through the planning and design of the site and would likely result in higher costs to build in this location.
- 34 **Chester-le-Street**
- (i) **Sewerage** - A concern was raised with regard to sewerage leaking near the proposed site;
  - (ii) **An archaeological survey** - will be required through the formal process of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stages.

## 35 Bishop Auckland

- (i) **Temporary Stop Over Area (TSOA) site** – The proposed site was identified as an existing Gypsy Roma Traveller community (GRTC) temporary stop over area (TSOA) and that alternate provision would need to be found;
- (ii) **Mines and contamination** – It was noted that there had been a mine in that locality and that the mine entrance was located on the site. Contamination of the site and the presence of gas were also noted; concerns that required further detailed investigation;
- (iii) **Transport links / Accessibility** – The site had limited access to both the public transport and public footpath networks;
- (iv) **Ecology survey** – An ecology survey would be required on the site;
- (v) **Community Hub** – the strategic place assessment identified the opportunity to develop a proposal for a community hub to serve the community of Woodhouse Close and recommended further work should be taken forward to identify options for a community hub to be developed on the vacated site.

## Financial and VAT Position

36 Time on large capital projects is a key consideration in terms of the effect that duration has on the cost of design and delivery. The Government's construction strategy refers to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) process for the stages of work that represent best practice methodology for delivery a construction scheme. There are 7 stages which can loosely be set out in 4 main elements of work, as detailed below.

Initiation	RIBA Stage 0	Defining what you want to do
	RIBA Stage 1	Preparing the details of what you want to achieve
	RIBA Stage 2	Initial concept design & initial costings
Development	RIBA Stage 3	Enhanced design & advanced costings
	RIBA Stage 4	Technical design & contractor delivery price

Delivery	RIBA Stage 5	Construction
Closure	RIBA Stage 6	Training and Handover
	RIBA Stage 7	In Use

- 37 At the time of taking the report to Cabinet in March 2021, with the above areas of risk taken into consideration as well as building inflation impacts of Brexit and the pandemic, an overall budget projection was included. This set out, that in order to deliver all of the aspects of the new build programme and the planned wider refurbishments and other projects, a capital investment requirement of circa £78 million would be required. This was a significant uplift on the original cost estimates of £62.8 million that had been reported to Cabinet in January 2020.
- 38 The plans included an assumption of significant elements of the capital investment being funded from additional income generated from the new and updated facilities, on a self-financing basis. In summary, it was anticipated that c£1.63 million of additional net income could be generated and that this would fund circa £38 million of the overall capital expenditure required by the programme.
- 39 The new build costs had been completed to RIBA 1 stage and as such were an initial cost assessment for the site proposals. At this time, the costs did not include complete details which could only be ascertained once full onsite surveys were completed and when progress with designs could continue. RIBA 1 was the best stage that could be reached before a preferred site selection decision could be made, further work would then follow the selection of preferred site locations.
- 40 Local authorities can recover all VAT it is legitimately charged and have special status in VAT law by virtue of Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 (as amended). Previous reports have detailed the VAT partial exemption (PE) risk in relation to the proposed significant investment in the leisure facilities.
- 41 As a Section 33 body, the Council can recover VAT on expenditure incurred in generating exempt income, subject to this not exceeding 5% of total VAT recovered. This is the PE calculation and generally the Council runs at around 3.7% of its overall VAT recovered being in relation to exempt activities.
- 42 If breached, all VAT recovered on activities that generate exempt income in the year in question is repayable to HMRC – this is a **revenue** cost. The Council's 5% threshold is normally circa £3.1 million per annum (based on a seven-year average of VAT recovered). This is the cost that would be incurred in each of the years the Council

breached its PE threshold should it exceed this on a seven-year average.

- 43 VAT incurred on capital expenditure where exempt income can be generated once completed, eg. new leisure centres, contributes to the PE calculation. An assessment has to be made on the proportion of income that will be generated by any new facility that will be exempt income before it is opened.
- 44 The January 2020 report to Cabinet, advised that based on a forecast £62.8 million capital investment, the annual 5% Partial Exemption limit would be breached in a number of years, however, HMRC had approved dispensation to utilise a seven-year averaging rather than individual annual assessments.
- 45 The calculation of the VAT PE seven-year average position is complex and volatile. It is based upon the previous two years, the current year and forecasts of VAT recovered in relation to exempt activity over the next four years. The calculations, based upon expenditure of circa £62.8 million phased over a four-year period, showed that the Council was able to maintain its PE position below the seven-year average dispensation provided by HMRC. The seven-year average peaked at a forecast 4.57%, which provided the Council with a level of flexibility if the programme costs escalated.
- 46 The increase in the forecast capital costs to circa £78 million however, posed significant further challenge and meant that the Council would have breached the seven-year average. Without further dispensation from HMRC, the Council faced the prospect of financial penalties (repayment of VAT recovered in relation to exempt activity in full for the years the seven-year average was breached) or a significantly longer investment period.
- 47 Following further consultation with HMRC, additional special dispensation has been provided for the Council to breach the seven-year average for PE. This is an unprecedented position and one which has been provided on the basis that the costs do not exceed £78 million.
- 48 HMRC has retained the right to rescind the special dispensation if the capital expenditure limits are exceeded, which would impact further on our PE calculation. On that basis it is recommended that the £78 million capital forecast is viewed as an absolute cap on the Leisure Transformation programme capital investment, unless the elements of the capital investment can be programmed beyond a period where the seven-year average is impacted, as this could mitigate the PE levels the Council needs to report to HMRC.

- 49 The situation will need to be carefully monitored and any impact on other projects fully considered as the programme progresses. The need to ensure the overall programme is in line with the HMRC guidance over the seven year period, may mean a careful balance in the complexities of the delivery of such a large capital programme over multiple sites and the desire of the County Council to meet public objectives for the level of investment and nature of the facilities.

### **Due Diligence and further Feasibility**

- 50 Further to the report in March 2021, a significant amount of further work has been undertaken to explore the necessary due diligence that is required to confirm the viability of the preferred site options and proposed refurbishments which the Cabinet approved at that time.
- 51 Across the portfolio of projects there are a number of aspects that must be satisfied for the projects to progress to the next stage, the key areas relate to planning, land ownership, overall costs and value for money. All aspects are considered individually and collectively when making an informed judgement regarding deliverability. For each of the three new build schemes the aspects are different and therefore the due diligence needs to reflect the specific issues of the individual locations. These are further set out below.

### *Seaham*

- 52 **Car Parking** – The loss of car parking through the development of the St John’s site location would impact on the already challenging car parking situation within Seaham. This was a specific issue noted throughout the consultation process. Considerable work has gone into finding suitable ways to support the development and delivery of improved and rationalised car parking in Seaham. To date the most viable solution requires the Council to acquire some land and buildings. Negotiations have taken place with the owner of these buildings however it has not been possible to reach a satisfactory outcome on terms that are agreeable to both parties, therefore this matter remains unresolved at this time.
- 53 **Planning concerns with regards to massing and stacking** – The St John’s town centre location presents a physically constrained site which is bounded by other buildings, businesses, and residential properties on all sides.
- 54 The design has subsequently developed through RIBA Stage 1, and following a facility mix review due to confirmation of the site, the size of the building has increased giving a greater emphasis to the massing

issue, and the edge of the proposed building has moved closer to the residential properties.

- 55 Planners have been reconsulted and have reviewed the updated Stage 1 layout site plan. Following further information received from the design team and further discussion with the planners there are concerns that the indicated 10m height for the buildings would be too oppressive for the properties opposite on Shelley Street. It would, therefore, need some articulation/modulation of the building to address that relationship as well as the inclusion of features in the elevations to provide some detailed/active frontage.
- 56 In order to progress this further, design development will be required. This will involve production of 3d models and consideration of building materials. Following this, further advice could be sought from the planners to try to resolve their concerns, but the likely impact would be that some of the facilities may have to be removed to get the massing down to such a size that the planners would find this acceptable. This would not however be acceptable to Leisure and is a risk if the design should proceed down this route.
- 57 The relationship with the adjacent Public House, the Volunteer Arms, looks somewhat problematic in terms of the close proximity of the proposed building and its setting, particularly given it is a non-designated heritage asset and the likely residential use of the upper floors.
- 58 **Public Utilities** – It was noted that a main public sewer main ran across the site, an electrical sub-station was also present and surface water drainage to the square. A utilities mapping survey has been completed and whilst it will be possible to divert and relocate the sewer and address the surface water drainage on the site, this is likely to result in a higher cost. The electricity cables running from the sub-station provide power to the other buildings around the site and would need to be carefully managed.

### *Chester-le-Street*

- 59 **Sewerage** - A concern was raised with regard to sewerage leaking near the proposed site. This has been checked by the utility provider and the issue has subsequently been resolved.
- 60 **An archaeological survey** – this investigation work is required and is planned during the RIBA Stage 2/3 design progress. This would be a consideration for most sites in and around the Chester-le-Street area and is not a significant cause for concern at this stage that would prevent the preferred site from progressing.

## *Bishop Auckland*

- 61 **TSOA site** – The proposed Tindale site was identified as an existing Gypsy Roma Traveller community (GRTC) temporary stop over area (TSOA). This represented the biggest challenge to overcome in terms of taking this site forward. Although work has been ongoing to find an alternative location for the TSOA, to date no suitable alternative has been identified.
- 62 The current TSOA at Tindale crescent was identified in 2017 following an extensive site identification process. This work was undertaken with the South West Durham GRT (Gypsy Romany Traveller) forum, which consists of relevant Council Services, both County Council and Parish Councillors as well as Blue Light Services. As part of this work, 15 sites were originally identified based on set criteria which included a requirement for any site to be located not ‘too far’ from the A688 corridor. The original list of fifteen sites was shortlisted to nine following a desktop study.
- 63 Following more detailed work, it was established that three sites were suitable to be utilised as a TSOA, with Tindale being one of these preferred locations. Sites were discounted for various reasons including proximity to roads, business and residential areas.
- 64 As part of the work that has been carried out since March 2021 to identify an alternative location options have been discussed with the South West GRT Forum. However, despite reviewing options, no suitable alternative site to Tindale has yet been identified and there are concerns about the impact this will have on the timescale for the development of the new leisure centre.
- 65 **Mines and contamination** – It was noted that there was a mine / mine entrance located on the proposed site at Tindale. Contamination of the site and the presence of gas were also noted; concerns that required further detailed investigation. The Council’s planning team have been able to access some historical site investigation records which suggest that the mine location is to the north of the site and also suggest that some previous remediation work has been carried out to address the contamination issues. Although the noted issues are of less concern following the review of this historical evidence, there remains a risk of these factors presenting further/ additional complications to the build which can only be drawn out through further and more detailed site investigations.
- 66 Work with highways and sustainable travel teams have identified a number of measures which could improve accessibility to the site, such as extensions to the public footpaths, inclusion of a dedicated cycle lane



and work to improve pedestrian routes for links with the public transport network. All of which have been deemed as feasible improvements, subject to more design work and development.

- 67 **Ecology survey** – An ecology survey is required on the site and must be carried out during the summer months. This has not been commissioned during summer 2021 due to the uncertainty around finding a suitable TSOA, which is a more critical factor at this stage.
- 68 **Community Hub** – Further consideration has been given to the key components of a community hub and this identifies that the key success criteria relate to the services and programmes delivered and co-delivered rather than from the actual building itself. Further work has been carried out on the opportunity to redevelop the Woodhouse Close site, including the impact on current provision during any construction period should a new leisure centre be developed on this site, the potential for new services for the area and a targeted programme for skills and education.
- 69 County Durham has a number of areas of high deprivation; the Woodhouse Close community is the most deprived ward in County Durham and falls within the top 10% nationally for levels of deprivation. Levels of deprivation around education, employment, income and health all fall within the top 10% nationally, so there is a clear need for positive impacts around all those areas of deprivation, not just improvements to health and wellbeing through leisure investment.
- 70 Deprivation indices are interrelated and should not be viewed in isolation. Nationally the most economically deprived areas have poorer health outcomes, and this is linked to the levels of employment and educational attainment as well as levels of disposable income. This is clearly reflected in the data for Woodhouse Close.
- 71 Initial assessments and feasibility studies have been completed on the potential construction costs of a new facility and Community Hub on the vacated Woodhouse Close site. It is expected that the costs of such a development could be in excess of £5 million.
- 72 While the development of a separate community hub on Woodhouse Close would provide undoubted benefit, the strong correlation between outcomes for health and wellbeing with outcomes for skills and employment metrics, provide a strong case for aggregated benefit which recognises the interrelatedness of these factors in the lives of our communities.
- 73 Therefore, aligning services and activity to support health, wellbeing, education and skills within the Woodhouse Close community will support holistic improvements across the locality. The opportunity to

house this in a single building is more cost-effective, more operationally viable and with greater benefit to the community and users. We have seen through past projects where co-location has been delivered, such as co-location of leisure, library and customer access services, that the outcome of this alignment of services is beneficial to all parties, whilst at the same time proving a more cost effective solution to the Council.

- 74 In addition, the co-location of facilities on Woodhouse Close aligns with feedback from the site selection consultation, where there was a preference for a new build in the existing location.

## **Optimal Sites**

- 75 Following the due diligence work undertaken, officers have developed further the proposals and reviewed the specific aspects identified in the March 2021 Cabinet report to assess the extent to which those delivery related aspects could be addressed, and if the initial preferred sites could be delivered.
- 76 This has resulted in the necessity to reflect on some key issues for the Bishop Auckland Tindale development and Seaham dual site locations. In these cases, it is particularly the culmination of a number of issues for delivery that creates the risk to delivery in these two localities.
- 77 The former Civic Centre site in Chester-le-Street remains viable and is still considered to be the best option available for the new leisure centre in this locality. The ongoing risk factors for delivery of the new facilities on this site are considered to be matters that can be addressed through project delivery.
- 78 The issues with the site at Tindale in Bishop Auckland are individually challenging but collectively present delivery issues considered too difficult to overcome and present unacceptable risk to the timeframe and cost of the overall programme.
- 79 The displacement of an essential TSOA would require the Council to find an alternative site. Alternatives have been sought by the Council without success, due to a combination of limited available land and evidence of negative public response when TSOAs are proposed. This issue has the potential to cause delays to the programme.
- 80 The due diligence on the Tindale crescent site with a new community hub developed at Woodhouse Close indicates a more costly build programme in a location that would require further additional investment to improve accessibility.
- 81 In particular for Bishop Auckland, the due diligence and further assessment undertaken also takes account of the fact that the initial

appraisal, which demonstrated that Woodhouse Close is a viable alternative to the Tindale proposal, with the co-location of facilities on Woodhouse Close also aligning with feedback from the site selection consultation, where there was a preference for a new build in the existing location.

- 82 A full detailed design for a community hub has not been developed however it is estimated that it would cost in the region of £5 to £7 million depending on the scale of the building. This is based on a building of approximately 600 sq.m including a BREEAM allowance, fees and fixture and fittings estimates.
- 83 This additional cost, when added to the £78 million capital programme, could impact on value for money and add additional risk to the available budget, especially in light of the VAT considerations that have been highlighted. It is therefore considered that the objectives of a community hub can be better met through co-located facilities and services, which can be included in the main new scheme design.
- 84 The further work that has been undertaken has also clarified the potential impact and mitigations that could be put in place during the construction phase at Woodhouse Close which will mean that the existing leisure centre will not need to close for the full duration of the construction.
- 85 The five assessments used to determine the preferred new build site location in March identified a marginal preference for Tindale Crescent over the existing Woodhouse Close site.
- 86 Taking account of the due diligence carried out to date, the preferred sites for the new leisure facilities are:
- i) **Bishop Auckland:** The existing site (Woodhouse Close);
  - ii) **Chester-le-Street:** Former Civic Centre site.
- 87 Although these sites represent the optimal locations, as with all major projects, risks remain – particularly with regards to estimated capital investment requirements and associated self-financing assumptions. However, for the Civic Site in Chester-le-Street the due diligence carried out to date does not suggest any immediate cause for concern.
- 88 Additional due diligence will be required for the Woodhouse Close site in Bishop Auckland but the presence of an existing leisure centre on the site provides the confidence required to confirm an option can be delivered. Further work will be required on project schedule and any required closure period during construction. Detailed work will be required to minimise disruption to the existing offer but at this stage it is

not possible to quantify how long the existing leisure centre or aspects of it will need to be closed. During RIBA 2 an assessment of the design principles will be informed via surveys to determine the most appropriate approach to construction of the New Build. This will then inform the brief during stages RIBA 3 and 4, in undertaking a cost-benefit assessment to consider the impact of phasing the new build in the most effective and efficient manner.

- 89 The site at Woodhouse Close allows the opportunity to further explore the co-location of the library service within the leisure centre and to broaden the offer to integrate services that were planned for the new community hub. The full details of this site will be subject to further public engagement.
- 90 For Seaham, the scale of the building and the need to 'stack' due to site constraints is challenging for design and planning. The mitigation measures for the displaced car parking provision requires further detailed work. Further due diligence work is therefore required before a final decision can be made on the suitability of the St John's Square site and this will be reported to Cabinet as part of a wider update early in 2022.

### ***Refurbishment of Other Leisure Centre Facilities***

- 91 While the March 2021 Cabinet report focussed primarily on the new-build options, an updated overall programme budget was agreed, including individual budgets for non-new build projects.
- 92 The improvements to existing centres cover a broad scale of works from general improvements to major refurbishments and updates to the overall offer at some centres. The estimated investment in the wider facilities is circa £19.3 million – or 25% of the overall programme budget.

### **Refurbishment and Improvement Programme Deliverability**

- 93 Since the previous report was considered, further work on developing the proposed facilities mix and deliverability of planned interventions has been progressed. It is forecast that all improvements, with the exception of Shildon, Wolsingham and Freemans Quay, could commence in 2022. Shildon and Wolsingham will be the subject of a second phase when further options have been developed for both sites. Freemans Quay improvements will be finalised when contractual income-share arrangements expire. The costs of refurbishing these facilities will need to be accommodated from within the overall budget.
- 94 In advance there will be a process to engage further with the local communities benefiting from each centre and should those

conversations result in significant changes to the schemes, adjustments will be made to the delivery programme and communicated accordingly.

- 95 To facilitate this, a ‘Leisure Conversation’ is proposed and more detail is set out later in the report.
- 96 During the coming months the project team will seek to continue to balance the ambition for the programme, different demands on the facilities mix, meaningful engagement, the consideration of the VAT exemption and the delivery of such a major capital programme. The Council therefore will continue to progress, engage and balance this position with transparency.
- 97 At this stage timing may change as the programme develops. The results of more detailed site surveys, the procurement route taken, material availability, material costs and planning and importantly the need to cap total expenditure at £78 million, could all impact the programme.
- 98 Since March 2021, further work has been carried out on the leisure centre improvement and refurbishment projects and the current works planned for each facility is outlined below. This is indicative and will be further refined and developed as the schemes are developed and the ‘Leisure Conversations’ are progressed. The outcome from more detailed site investigations, material availability and costs along with the outcome from discussions with the public regarding facilities mix may all impact on the ability to commence refurbishment works in 2022.

<b>Spennymoor</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocate the main reception to the centre of the building, creating a better / closer link to the town centre and high street</li> <li>• Improve the walkway / route from the main car park to the new entrance</li> <li>• Co-locate the library into the leisure centre</li> <li>• Utilise the area where reception is currently located to expand and improve on the leisure offer by installing a soft play area</li> <li>• Café provision.</li> <li>• Improve and add to the water play features offered by the leisure pool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No further considerations other than the management of impact on the day to day operation of the leisure centre</li> </ul>

<b>Spennymoor</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
(sprays and fountains and interactive sensory wall) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the opportunity to resolve various capitalised maintenance issues and to improve environmental sustainability</li> </ul>	

<b>Teesdale</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential maintenance issues and improvements / modernisation to the customer environment</li> <li>• Upgrades to pool plant to modernise the facilities behind the scenes and also to improve pool water quality standards (</li> <li>• New reception area and reception desk</li> <li>• Existing pool changing to be converted into a modern changing village</li> <li>• Installation of a Wellbeing offer (centred around toning)</li> <li>• General maintenance and upgrades to facilities</li> <li>• Using the opportunity to resolve various capitalised maintenance issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on squash courts and impact of proposed repurposing of these</li> <li>• Consideration of the management of disruption and the implications of the project on the day to day operation of the leisure centre</li> </ul>

<b>Abbey</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationalising the current fitness offer onto the first floor to overall modernise and improve the gym facilities.</li> <li>• Install a large-scale play centre in the main hall, utilising soft play for the 0-5 years as well as more adventure focussed activities that still maximise physical activity and fun through play,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on the impact of proposed repurposing of the sports hall and, sauna provision.</li> <li>• Consideration of the management of disruption and the implications of the project on the day to day</li> </ul>

<b>Abbey</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<p>such as Tag Active and trampolines, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of a Wellbeing offer (centred around toning)</li> <li>• Improve the group exercise spaces to allow for the development of a new and broader programme of activity.</li> <li>• Alterations to the site to reflect the new mix of facilities such as improvements to changing rooms and provision of suitable toilet facilities.</li> <li>• Café &amp; Catering</li> </ul>	<p>operation of the leisure centre</p>

<b>Peterlee</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocate the fitness suite and improve the overall offer</li> <li>• Install a “destination” venue, which is based around soft play, adventure play and tenpin bowling</li> <li>• Improve the group exercise spaces Install a catering offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on impact of proposed repurposing of the sports hall</li> <li>• Consideration of the management of disruption, phasing of the planned changes and the implications of the project on the day to day operation of the leisure centre</li> </ul>

<b>Riverside</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential works to the athletics track and ancillary facilities to return it to the required standard to meet club and community needs</li> <li>• Resurface the existing 3G pitch</li> <li>• Install a second 3G pitch on the site</li> <li>• Refurbish the changing rooms in the pavilion</li> <li>• Refurbish the current outdoor hard-court space to a useable standard for club, community and recreational use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further work is required to understand the role of and potential contribution of partners into the proposals at the site.</li> <li>• Exploration of potential external funding available to support delivery of the project</li> </ul>

<b>Riverside</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate a strength and conditioning offer within the pavilion to support all clubs and users</li> </ul>	

<b>Consett</b>	
This project which is currently on site will be completed in Spring 2022.	

<b>Louisa Centre</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of adventure activities into half the sports hall (aimed at the teenage / family market) – Clip and Climb / TAG Active.</li> <li>• Improvement and expansion of the soft play offer (0-5 years and family)</li> <li>• Installation of a Wellbeing offer (centred around toning) to expand the health benefits and commercial opportunity at the site and in that area.</li> <li>• Café / catering offer to support the junior play and adventure play activities</li> <li>• Expansion and improvement of group exercise spaces including the adoption of immersive digital technologies (e.g. Virtual Spinning</li> <li>• physical infrastructure to allow consideration of emerging E-sports demand within the activity programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on impact of proposed repurposing of the sports hall</li> <li>• A considerable amount of building condition work is also required at the Louisa Centre and is to be explored to consider the delivery of a single project covering all condition and transformation works in one scheme.</li> <li>• Consideration of the management of disruption, phasing of the planned changes and the implications of the project on the day to day operation of the leisure centre</li> </ul>

<b>Newton Aycliffe</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential maintenance works and condition improvements</li> <li>• Improvements to changing rooms and toilets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This building has already benefited from significant investment throughout the building and through the previous co-location of the library.</li> </ul>



<b>Meadowfield</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to group exercise spaces to allow for more classes and development of the offer. This will aid the service to realise latent fitness demand for this site.</li> <li>• Consolidation and improvement of the fitness offer through the transformation of the sports hall into a gym and functional exercise area.</li> <li>• Essential maintenance works to changing and toilets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on impact of proposed repurposing of sports hall and squash courts.</li> <li>• Consideration of the management of disruption, phasing of the planned changes and the implications of the project on the day to day operation of the leisure centre</li> </ul>

- 99 The proposals above could (based on current forecasts) commence at different points during 2022 depending on the scheme concerned. The Council intends to progress a very ambitious programme to ensure that the sites can commence as soon as possible, the programme may need to be agile to reflect any significant feedback from the leisure conversation that results in fundamental changes requiring redesign as well as the VAT position.

**Phase 2:**

<b>Shildon</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategically important outdoor leisure sites with investment already in the athletics track.</li> <li>• Essential maintenance and condition works planned for the leisure centre building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options regarding optimum leisure centre provision once a long-term plan for the adjoining school is confirmed.</li> </ul>

<b>Wolsingham</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvements have already been made at Wolsingham since the Council took over its operation in September 2020: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car Park surface works</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further works subject to funding and ongoing exploration of options</li> </ul>

<b>Wolsingham</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure management system and ICT / Digital / Telephony infrastructure</li> <li>• General maintenance items (windows, doors, rainwater goods)</li> <li>• Pool Tank lining and various pool plant work</li> <li>• Site “face lift” (signage / decoration / branding)</li> </ul>	

<b>Freemans Quay</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to the group exercise facilities to embrace digital and immersive exercise experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to current income share contracts in operation further work is required to confirm the timescale of proposals</li> </ul>

100 For completeness the facilities mix for the new build leisure Centres has been included in the table below:

<b>New Builds – facility mix core principles</b>	
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Further Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming Pools</li> <li>• Children’s play</li> <li>• Fitness Suite</li> <li>• Group Exercise Studios</li> <li>• Food &amp; Beverage offer</li> <li>• Outdoor areas / space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to;</li> <li>• Site confirmation</li> <li>• Site surveys &amp; due diligence</li> <li>• Design progress</li> <li>• Consultation</li> </ul>

## **The Leisure Conversation**

101 A significant consultation process was undertaken in advance of the development of the March 2021 report to inform site selection, health impact assessment and to identify key drivers for leisure centre use from existing leisure centre users and the wider public.

102 To move the programme forward, a ‘Leisure Conversation’ phase is now proposed, which will provide the opportunity for local public engagement on the programme and the facilities mix proposals on each site across the County. This will run alongside and throughout the first

phase of the investment in order to maintain public engagement and involvement and for the Council to identify new and dynamic ways to engage, listen and respond to our residents.

- 103 It is proposed to deliver consultation activities across a number of phased cohorts. Given the different stages of development the various projects, it is necessary to bring these forward to share with the public as and when proposals are confirmed and individual designs progress to a sufficient stage that there are meaningful details to share.
- 104 It is intended to take the same approach for each cohort and to maintain a constant dialogue throughout the programme with various users and special interest groups.
- 105 For the first phase refurbishment projects it is proposed to engage residents, stakeholders and users in a dynamic dialogue to support the development and delivery of the projects. The process will use a range of methods to ensure local involvement with proposals including:
- (a) Local members sessions for each area;
  - (b) Information provided for Local AAP sessions;
  - (c) Information and feedback sessions onsite and online using instant feedback platforms;
  - (d) 'Town Hall' ideas sessions for leisure and sports programming in the refurbished centres;
  - (e) Focus groups with disabled and young people as outlined in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA);
  - (f) Stakeholder round tables to share ideas and expertise; and
  - (g) Sessions within existing leisure centres.
- 106 Times of the day will be varied to ensure the maximum accessibility for our communities. The dialogue will be ongoing during the project development and delivery. Post-delivery analysis, including understanding the experiences of users of similar facilities elsewhere, will also be conducted.
- 107 The methods outlined above will ensure a sufficient breadth of engagement activities and given the different levels of changes proposed for each project, these activities will ensure the approach is both proportional to the changes and reasonable in its duration and content.

108 The below tables sets out the indicative approach to the cohorts, the level of changes and pitch of the approach to consultation. The intention is for the activities in cohort 1 and 2 being delivered over 4-week periods. The activity in cohort 1 is planned to begin in October.

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Level of Change</b>	<b>Consultation type</b>
Cohort 1	Abbey	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Spennymoor	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Teesdale	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Peterlee	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Consett	None	Communication of work planned
Cohort 2	Meadowfield	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Louisa	Minimal	Consultation through conversation
	Riverside	Minimal	Consultation through conversation and communication of work planned
	Newton Aycliffe	None	Communication of work planned

109 Consultation will be held for the new build sites and a further cohort including Shildon, Wolsingham and Freemans Quay when further plans for those sites are established.

110 Taking only a traditional approach to consulting means the programme delivery will pause for the duration of the consultation period and evaluation of the results. As a result, the delivery timeline for all projects will be affected by length and outcome of the consultation, either through the time allowed for the consultation activities or as a result of any re-design work that may be necessary to take account of feedback received. Once responses to the consultations have been

evaluated, it may be necessary to engage in further design work on individual sites. This work may lengthen delivery timescales.

- 111 However, ensuring a bespoke combination of consultation and conversation techniques which are proportionate to the individual proposals at each centre and to the expectations of their users, potential users, community and stakeholders will allow for optimum programme progression.
- 112 The individual projects within the transformation programme will be carefully scoped and managed to ensure that those early projects do not exceed budget allocations and reduce the scope of projects that commence later in the programme. Indicative spend profiles for all projects will be needed before commencing.

## **Conclusion**

- 113 For the new build sites, Chester-le-Street former Civic Centre site remains the optimal site.
- 114 For Bishop Auckland, the Tindale Crescent site presents a number of challenges which taken on an individual basis although problematic could be overcome. However, the cumulative impact of these challenges presents a specific risk to the Bishop Auckland project and to the overall financial deliverability of the Leisure programme. It is considered therefore, that at this stage in the programme it is appropriate to mitigate this risk by developing the new leisure centre on the Woodhouse Close site and incorporating the Community Hub within it.
- 115 The outcome of the further due diligence work carried out at Seaham has highlighted some concerns which require further, more detailed investigations before a final decision can be made on the suitability of the St John's Square site and this will be reported to Cabinet as part of a wider update early in 2022.
- 116 The refurbishment projects, with the exception of Shildon, Wolsingham and Freemans Quay will commence during 2022 subject to agreement to the final facilities mix.
- 117 Shildon and Wolsingham will be the subject of a second phase when further options have been developed for both sites. Freemans Quay improvements will be finalised when contractual profit-share arrangements expire.

## **Background papers**

- None.

### **Other useful documents**

- Cabinet report January 2020
- Cabinet report March 2021.

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council has the power under s19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide, and charge for, such recreational facilities as are outlined within the report.

Local authorities can recover all VAT it is legitimately charged and have special status in VAT law by virtue of Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 (as amended). As a Section 33 body, the Council can recover VAT on expenditure incurred in generating exempt income, subject to this not exceeding 5% of total VAT recovered.

### **Finance**

The report to Cabinet in March 2021 identified a need for capital investment, with a proportion of that expected to be funded on a self-financing basis from the additional net income forecast to be generated. The estimated capital funding to deliver the Leisure Transformation programme is £78 million, split £58.7 million in relation to the three new builds and £19.3 million in relation to the refurbishment and repurposing of the other leisure facilities. In terms of the self-financing element, it is anticipated that c£1.6m of additional net income could be generated from the new and updated facilities, which would fund circa £38 million of the overall capital expenditure required by the programme.

Special dispensation has been given by the HMRC to exceed the Partial Exemption seven-year average but only on the basis that capital expenditure is contained within the £78 million forecast reported to HMRC. Any additional capital spending on the leisure facilities above this level would be outside the approval given by HMRC and render the VAT recovered as part of the programme as outside the scope and expose the Council to financial penalties in the region of £14 million.

### **Consultation**

An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken in November and December of 2020 in relation to the facility mix considerations and the new build, potential site locations. This exercise included a Health Impact Assessment and an Equalities Impact Assessment which were both used, in conjunction with the consultation feedback as evidence bases within the overall decision to select three preferred site locations in March 2021.

A further round of engagement activities is planned, delivered across a phased number of cohorts where individual site-specific proposals are to be shared with all key stakeholders through a number of focussed and general

engagement mediums. The approach will be to enact a conversation over a 4 week period for each cohort that will be both sufficient and proportional to the scale of the proposed facility changes.

In addition to the cohorts, which will focus upon the refurbishment schemes, a consultation exercise will be delivered focusing on the new builds.

The engagement activities across all projects will require time to be allocated within the programme to sufficiently evaluate all feedback and ensure this is considered against each of the facility development proposals.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The programme identified will have a positive impact on the Council's equality duty and a full equality impact assessment (EIA) is attached to this report. Expected temporary disruption (and the impact of this in terms of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity) during construction phase at the proposed Woodhouse Close location at Bishop Auckland will be minimised with ongoing community engagement. Engagement activity will also include the ongoing dialogue with key special interest focus groups to ensure that sufficient feedback is included in the designs as they progress. An updated EIA is at Appendix 2.

### **Climate Change**

The Leisure Centre Transformation Programme and supporting initiatives should provide a contribution towards corporate carbon reduction targets of the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan and will also provide opportunities to encourage local supply chain partners to support this Plan.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Although not specifically detailed in this report, it is still expected that the Leisure Centre Transformation Programme will have a positive contribution to overall social value, which will include crime and disorder, but also a much broader and holistic impact across a number of dimensions.

### **Staffing**

Although not directly referenced in this report, the programme does have the potential to create an increase FTE in order to deliver the improvements identified across the leisure centre venues. This is all wrapped into financial considerations across the programme and subject to further detailed work.



## **Accommodation**

The outcome of this report will lead to co-locations of other services in several locations. There will be no change to the number of leisure facilities but may lead to a reduction or change of use in other Council buildings.

## **Risk**

There are a number of programme level risks identified as there are with any significant programme of this nature.

One of the key risks is financial, linked to the revenue risks associated with any invest to save initiative. The programme team has engaged the specialist services of a leisure transformation / leisure sector specialist to support the Council. This also includes the option of the partner continuing to work with the Council until the identified business planning assumptions are achieved. This therefore shares the risk, as the support package from the partner is delivered at their cost. This is one of the key factors which makes the figures more prudent and achievable.

Other risks relate to the potential for capital costs to increase further as detailed design and feasibility work is progressed over the coming months. Environmental sustainability and low carbon opportunities are costed as a percentage of the overall capital cost at this stage. These opportunities will be further developed at the design stage, ensuring our commitments to carbon reduction are intrinsic to the new builds and to any redevelopment of the other sites.

The risk associated with the VAT Partial Exemption limits being breached has been mitigated by the additional special dispensation provided by HMRC, but only on the basis that capital expenditure is contained within the £78 million forecast and reported to HMRC. Any additional capital spending on the leisure facilities above this level would be outside the approval given by HMRC and render the VAT recovered as part of the programme as outside the scope and expose the Council to financial penalties in the region of £14 million.

The challenges with car parking displacement with both the development of St John's Square site as a standalone facility or as part of the development of a dual site have not yet been resolved. A resolution to this issue is a critical factor in the acceptability of this location and should it not be possible to resolve this matter alternative options may have to be considered for Seaham.

## **Procurement**

All procurement in relation to this programme will be undertaken under the Council's contract procurement rules and with advice of the corporate procurement team.

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## Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment

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### Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

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

#### Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Regeneration Economy and Growth; Culture, Sport & Tourism Corporate Property & Land
<b>Lead Officers</b>	Alison Clark, Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism  Susan Robinson, Head of Corporate Property & Land
<b>Title</b>	Leisure Transformation New Build Site Selection Update (September 2021)
<b>MFTP Reference (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
<b>Start Date</b>	January 2020
<b>Review Date</b>	January 2021
<b>Review Date</b>	April 2021
<b>Review Date</b>	June 2021
<b>Review Date</b>	September 2021

#### Subject of the Impact Assessment

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

The Proposal is the transformation of Durham county council leisure centres, including the replacement of facilities in Chester-Le-Street, Seaham and Bishop Auckland.

Following the initial site preferences approved by Cabinet in March 2021, further due diligence activities have been completed on the new build sites. For Seaham there are still several areas of due diligence work to complete before it will be possible to bring forward a recommendation. **For Bishop Auckland and Chester-Le-Street, final sites are now being proposed and these are therefore the subject of this assessment.**

The wider programme of improvements, where changes are proposed to the facility and activity mix will be the subject of a further EIA once these plans are confirmed and have been considered through public engagement activities. These changes along with proposals for Seaham will be brought forward to Cabinet in early 2022.

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

Durham County residents  
 Durham County Council members and officers  
 Service users (current and future)  
 Schools and colleges  
 Special interest groups  
 Clubs and other organisations (particularly those who hire current facilities)  
 AAPs

**Screening**

**Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?**

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	N
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	N	Y

Sexual orientation	N	Y
Transgender	N	Y

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

The proposed leisure centre improvements, or in some cases, new facilities being built, will provide the opportunity to address some building condition issues, this will likely improve the overall ability of the leisure services to provide access and cater for all groups.

Initially concerns were noted as part of the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) accompanying the site selection report presented to Cabinet in March 2021, that young people, older people, and those with disabilities might be affected by the change of site location most of all, but this was dependant upon which sites were preferred from a shortlist of 9 possible locations.

Following the further work which has been completed since the initial site selection preferences were set, the only site which is now being finally recommended to change from its current location is Chester-Le-Street. The initial concerns noted above have been explored as part of the due diligence activities and the move from the existing site to the Civic Site in Chester-Le-Street is likely to have an overall positive impact due to its improved proximity to pedestrian and public transport links. The beneficial impacts from the location change, coupled with the obvious opportunities to improve physical accessibility standards of the building and programme mean an overall improvement.

There could be some impact during the construction phase at Bishop Auckland now that this is proposed for the existing leisure centre site at Woodhouse close. This could potentially impact all users, but could have a disproportionate negative affect for younger, older, and disabled people who may or may not be able to travel to alternate provision. However initial work suggests service disruption may be able to be kept to a minimum, although some disruption will still likely occur it is proposed to explore ways of mitigating this through the further development of construction proposals for this site and through engagement with the current users and wider community.

The original EIA noted that the land adjacent to the football club at Tindale Crescent, Bishop Auckland is currently used as a temporary stop over site for Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers (GRT). With the final decision to place the Bishop Auckland site at the existing leisure centre location (Woodhouse Close) the negative affect upon Race is no longer a consideration.

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

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

Enhanced leisure provision via the new build of leisure centres is positive to all. New builds will meet higher accessibility standards which is positive for disabled people. This is also likely to be particularly beneficial in terms of age (younger and young working age families) as well as disability where there are more barriers (cost/choice/access) to using alternative leisure provision in the private sector for these groups. As a public provider of leisure services, provision can be tailored to meet the needs of particular groups and this is potentially beneficial in terms of age, disability, sex and religious belief.

Consultation and engagement will ensure that all residents of Durham can feed into the proposals. Where relevant, specific groups, such as the Disability Partnership, will be included. This impact assessment has been updated in the evidence section below with relevant information to this assessment, but full information on the due diligence activities, the proposals and the consultation are detailed in the Cabinet paper aligned to this assessment.

## Evidence

**What evidence do you have to support your findings?**

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

### **Baseline data on current leisure centre users**

Roughly 3% of our customers are aged between 75 – 96 and 12% are aged between 8 – 15 and might reasonably expect to attend services without an adult. Although we don't collect information on member accounts regarding disability status, from surveys and other data we have collected, we can estimate that we have circa 10% of our members who identify as having a disability.

Age profile breakdown:

Age group	Number	Percentage
0-15	7418	22%
16-24	5225	16%
25-34	5193	16%
35-44	4438	14%
45-54	4131	13%
55+	5751	17%
Undisclosed	562	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32718</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Technical due diligence** – since the site preferences were agreed at the March 2021 Cabinet meeting, further work has been undertaken and is detailed in the Cabinet paper associated with this assessment. New builds will meet higher accessibility standards which is positive. The concept of inclusive design considers how all groups of people use a building and future proofs a building aiming to ensure building design is as inclusive as possible.

**Earlier Consultation** – through an initial phase of consultation through November and into December 2020 feedback was captured on the site selection preferences and on the general activity mix proposals, in total there were 2559 responses to the consultation and engagement surveys, 709 responses to the consultation regarding site selection and 1850 on the engagement covering facility and activity mix.

Specific consultation took place with the South West Durham GRT (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller) forum and it noted there was no suitable alternative to replace the temporary stop over site at Tindale.

**This impact assessment addresses the review of the site selection and change to Woodhouse Close in Bishop Auckland instead of the previous preference for a development at Tindale Crescent. The Cabinet report details the full range of due diligence activities undertaken to support this change of site selection preference for Bishop Auckland and notes the overall positive impact as a result of the development on the Civic Site in Chester-Le-Street.**

It is still planned, that consultation will take place onwards through the life of the programme. It is planned to deliver localised sites specific engagement as well as a range of focus groups, especially focussing on the older generation, those with disabilities, young people, and families. The Cabinet paper associated with this assessment details full proposals on the approach to consulting on the projects and delivery of this across a number of cohorts.

Once detailed designs are completed, this assessment will be revisited and specific reviews of accessibility to the new venues at the chosen locations and the overall new activities proposed across the programme will be considered as part of a further update to Cabinet early in 2022.

### Screening Summary

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

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Programme Manager, leisure transformation	Date: 20 September 2021
Service equality representative sign off: Equality and Diversity Team Leader	Date: 20 September 2021

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

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

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

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>				
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.			What further action or mitigation is required?
Enhanced leisure provision via the new build of leisure centres is positive to all. This could be particularly beneficial in terms of age (younger and young working age families).  As a public provider of leisure services, provision can be tailored to meet the needs of particular groups and this is potentially beneficial for all age groups, in particular younger	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	Explore ways of mitigating construction disruption at Bishop Auckland site through the further development of construction proposals for this site and through engagement with the current users and wider community including focussed engagement
	0-15	7418	22%	
	16-24	5225	16%	
	25-34	5193	16%	
	35-44	4438	14%	
	45-54	4131	13%	
	55+	5751	17%	
	Undisclosed	562	2%	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32718</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Table: Age profile of current customers				
Initial scoping suggests service disruption at Bishop Auckland may be able to be kept to a minimum, although some disruption will still likely occur.				

<p>(under 25 years) and older age groups where choice in the private sector is less accessible or tailored to need.</p> <p>There could be some impact during the construction phase at Bishop Auckland now that this is proposed for the existing leisure centre site at Woodhouse close. This could potentially impact all users, but could have a disproportionate negative affect for different age groups who may or may not be able to travel to alternate provision.</p>		<p>across different age groups.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Enhanced leisure provision via the new build of leisure centres is positive to all. New builds will meet higher accessibility standards which is positive for disabled people. As a public provider of leisure services, provision can be tailored to meet the needs of particular groups and this is potentially beneficial in terms of disability.</p> <p>There could be some impact during the construction phase at Bishop Auckland now that this is proposed for the existing leisure centre site at Woodhouse close.</p>	<p>Initial scoping suggests service disruption at Bishop Auckland may be able to be kept to a minimum, although some disruption will still likely occur.</p>	<p>Explore ways of mitigating construction disruption at Bishop Auckland site through the further development of construction proposals for this site and through engagement with the current users and wider community, including focussed engagement with disability groups.</p>



<p>This could potentially impact all users, but could have a disproportionate negative affect for disabled people who may or may not be able to travel to alternate provision.</p>		<p>Reasonable adjustments for disabled customers and staff will be considered where necessary.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>There could be some impact during the construction phase at Bishop Auckland now that this is proposed for the existing leisure centre site at Woodhouse close. This could potentially impact all users, but could have a disproportionate negative affect in terms of pregnancy and maternity.</p>	<p>Initial scoping suggests service disruption at Bishop Auckland may be able to be kept to a minimum, although some disruption will still likely occur.</p>	<p>Explore ways of mitigating construction disruption at Bishop Auckland site through the further development of construction proposals for this site and through engagement with the current users and wider community.</p>

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race (ethnicity)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The original EIA noted that the land adjacent to the football club at Tindale Crescent, Bishop Auckland is currently used as a temporary stop over site for Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers (GRT). With the</p>	<p>Specific consultation took place with the South West Durham GRT (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller) forum and it noted there was no suitable alternative to replace the temporary stop over site at Tindale.</p>	

final decision to place the Bishop Auckland site at the existing leisure centre location (Woodhouse Close) the negative affect upon Race is no longer a consideration.		
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex (gender)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Transgender</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

**Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.**

Positive.

- Improvements to the physical environment which will improve general access to the leisure centres and activities / services.
- The concept of inclusive design considers how all groups of people use a building and future proofs a building aiming to ensure building design is as inclusive as possible. Part M building reg will ensure a building meets minimum access standards such as inclusion of a changing place. Good practice design guidelines will be followed where possible e.g. Sport England and Swim England, to ensure enhanced accessibility.
- New builds will allow the chance to re-shape the activity / facility mix in a way that is less practical when refurbishing existing sites. Therefore, allowing greater flexibility to the range of services on offer.
- Accessibility audits, particularly for new build facilities will ensure the designs maximise the opportunity to promote accessibility.

Negative.

- There will be impact during construction phase due to the likely affect upon services. This potentially impacts all users but does appear to be manageable through a range of measures to be identified through the design development stage.

**Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?**

- Ongoing, proportionate, and suitable consultation and engagement will provide opportunities for feedback by all residents throughout the life of the programme.
- The formation of key focus groups will allow the sharing of feedback and input from a wide range of special interest areas.
- As work progresses there will be the chance to deliver walk-rounds and on-site sessions with key focus groups, which in itself is a chance to bring people into facilities and promote access and inclusion.

**Action Plan**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescales for implementation</b>	<b>In which plan will the action appear?</b>
Accessibility input into the designs for the new builds	S. Shaw	In-line with the development of the designs	The leisure transformation programme plan.
Further consultation and engagement cohorts across the programme	B. Kelsey	In-line with the development of the designs	The leisure transformation programme plan.
A further EIA alongside a report to cabinet in early 2022 updating on the further work required for the Seaham site and wider impacts of the changes proposed to the facility and activity mix.	B. Kelsey	Early 2022	The leisure transformation programme plan.

### Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	N
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	January 2022

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Programme Manager, leisure transformation	Date: 20 September 2021
Service equality representative sign off: Equality and Diversity Team Leader	Date: 20 September 2021

Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

**Cabinet**

**29 September 2021**

**Review of Durham County Council  
Headquarters**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources [Interim]**

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investments and Assets**

**Councillor Richard Bell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 On 16 June 2021, Cabinet agreed that a review would be carried out into the options for use of the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters (HQ) at the Sands in Durham City. The scope of the review was as follows:
  - (a) review the options for utilising the new building at the Sands, Durham City;
  - (b) consider the options for the location of HQ functions taking account of the review of the new building and assessing the options for the existing HQ site at Aykley Heads; and
  - (c) ensure that the strategic employment site proposals for Aykley Heads are fully considered as part of the review.
- 2 This report provides Cabinet with the evidence from the review findings and makes a series of recommendations linked to this evidence. This analysis includes any contractual, legal and financial implications

including those relating to the timescales of any decision. The report addresses wider considerations including the economic outcomes, Council office accommodation and an options appraisal for new HQ building that is being constructed on the Sands. The report addresses the public interest and value for money considerations that need to inform any change in the original plans for the Council to occupy the building.

## **Executive Summary**

- 3 The outcome of the review into the options for use of the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters at The Sands demonstrates that the only viable alternative to the Council taking occupation is for it to be occupied by a single third party.
- 4 The market for such a third party is limited however, there is a potential interest from a third party. Preliminary discussions have taken place with the interested third party although further, more detailed negotiations are required.
- 5 The findings from the review into whether County Hall could be refurbished set out that this does not represent a viable option due to the estimated costs that would be incurred because of the design, age and condition of County Hall. Added to this, the redevelopment of Aykley Heads will be negatively impact by leaving County Hall either partially or totally in situ. This means that the only viable option is for County Hall to be demolished and the Aykley Heads site to be redeveloped.
- 6 The review found that it would be feasible for a new Headquarters to be constructed on the Aykley Heads site although further, more detailed work is required which would include determining the size, scale and cost of the building, the location on the Aykley Heads site and how this would fit with the overall Aykley Heads masterplan.
- 7 The outcome from the review as to whether there are alternative locations to both Aykley Heads and the Sands for a new headquarters suggests that, based on the strategic objectives set out in the original business case, along with the size of site needed to accommodate a building of the scale of the HQ, there are unlikely to be other sites in Durham City which meet the criteria. However, there are sites and buildings across the county (both in DCC and private ownership) that could potentially be suitable to provide office and civic accommodation. An options appraisal will need to be carried out in order to review site and building availability based on the Council's aspirations for its office and civic accommodation and which has regard to economic, financial, commercial management and strategic objectives.

- 8 If a decision is taken not to occupy the newly built HQ on the Sands then a viable, value for money alternative that delivers the benefits of the original plans will be required.
- 9 Based on the current position and evidence gathered to date, and considering the interest shown in the building on the Sands, there is an opportunity to explore the potential broader economic impacts that could be achieved through disposal of the building to the interested third party.
- 10 In view of this there is a need to complete, as a matter of urgency, a business case to determine the Council's options for moving forward with its office and civic accommodation. This will need to address the following factors:
  - (a) the business case for the Council to follow a new strategy for provision of its HQ facilities;
  - (b) the alternative plan for the Council's office and civic/committee accommodation if the new HQ on the Sands is not occupied;
  - (c) the resources, costs and other implications of disposing of the HQ to a third party; and
  - (d) the wider impacts of the decision, including the wider economic investment strategy for the County.
- 11 Marketing of Aykley Heads will not take place until there is certainty around the future strategy for the replacement of County Hall, however, the development work required to go to market will continue.
- 12 A common element to all potential alternative scenarios is the need to consider and limit the timescales to implementation. This is a critical issue to any future decision making, as it will impact on a number of the necessary financial and economic assessments. These considerations will need to be reflected in the business case for any decision and it is considered that the Council will need to conclude its decision by summer 2022.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 13 Cabinet, having regard to the corresponding exempt report, is recommended to:
  - (a) agree that the only viable alternative to the Council occupying the building on the Sands would be for disposal or letting to a single occupier;

- (b) note the key risks that need to be considered prior to any final decision not to occupy the building and dispose of it to a third-party interest;
- (c) agree to the development of a business case that considers a range of relevant issues including the alternative options for office accommodation and civic space for the County Council whilst ensuring the achievement of outcomes for the Aykley Heads development;
- (d) note that the role of the business case, (which will be reported to Cabinet not later than Summer 2022) is to assure the decision-making process of the council and have clear regard to economic, financial, commercial, management and strategic objectives;
- (e) delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and Interim Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet members for Resources, Investments and Assets and for Finance to agree the scope of the business case;
- (f) note that officers will progress negotiations with the interested third party on a subject to contract basis at the same time as preparing a business case;
- (g) agree that refurbishment of County Hall either for DCC staff or to let in the marketplace as office accommodation does not represent a viable alternative or good value for money;
- (h) agree that partial demolition of County Hall is not a practical or viable option and does not represent value for money;
- (i) agree that the Council remains committed to the development of Aykley Heads as a Strategic Employment Site and that to facilitate this, County Hall is to be demolished to enable this development; and
- (j) agree that should it not be possible to reach a satisfactory outcome from negotiations with the interested third party within agreed timeframes set out that the Council will occupy the building on the Sands as its new HQ.



## Background

- 14 In June 2021, Cabinet committed to reviewing the options for use of the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters (HQ) at the Sands in Durham City and an approach for reviewing the options for the Council's HQ functions.
- 15 The decision to relocate the Council's HQ to a new building at the Sands in Durham City and to develop Aykley Heads as a strategic employment site was agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2018.
- 16 The review that was initiated in June 2021 has sought to address three questions:
- **Question 1:** What are the options to repurpose the existing building under construction on the Durham Sands for alternative use eg. hotel or offices, this is to include options for letting the building floor by floor?
  - **Question 2:** If the new HQ was put to an alternative use and Durham County Council were to remain in County Hall, what are the options to improve the building and still deliver the significant proposed development?
  - **Question 3:** Can the Council find alternative locations to both Aykley Heads and The Sands for a new Headquarters what are the options, benefits and risks of this approach?
- 17 This review was undertaken throughout July to September 2021. Having a clear rationale and business case for any change in direction that satisfies the public interest and value for money tests have been key considerations.
- 18 There are a number of key issues and risks that need to be addressed when re-visiting the decision to occupy the new HQ on the Sands. These include the following factors, which must be satisfied from a public interest and value for money perspective:
- (a) the business case for the Council to follow a new strategy for provision of its HQ facilities;
  - (b) the alternative plan for the Council's office and civic/committee if the new HQ on the Sands is not occupied;
  - (c) the resources, costs and other implications of disposing of the HQ to a third party; and
  - (d) the wider impacts of the decision, including the wider economic investment strategy for the County.

- 19 The Council is under a statutory duty to make arrangements for securing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources. Cabinet must be satisfied that any decision taken is in the public interest and achieves value for money. Such matters will be considered by the Council's external auditor as part of the Council's value for money assessment and as part of their external audit work, and a failure to demonstrate decisions are in the public interest and represent value for money could result in the Council's accounts being qualified or a report in the public interest being published.

## **Overview**

- 20 The County Council has been, and is, implementing an assets rationalisation and realisation strategy in regard to its operational estate, considering a number of key issues including using sites and assets to unlock regeneration and economic growth as well as the functional needs of the local authority in a modern office context. The County Council also has to ensure that in investing and managing its estate, this reflects good value for money and is underpinned by strong financial decision making.
- 21 On the creation of the new unitary authority in 2009, the Council brought together a large work force who worked within a highly fragmented property portfolio across forty main office buildings. Rationalising the portfolio presented a unique opportunity to improve organisational performance and deliver significant savings. This involved a detailed appraisal of the real estate strategy, processes, policies, departmental structures, and team profiles.
- 22 It was determined by the Council at that time, that the most appropriate way forward was to complete a costed 'options appraisal' to inform decision-making and investment in relation to the Council's future property strategy. Key to this was the future of the County Hall building in Durham City. Deloittes Real Estate (DRE) were engaged to support the Council during the preparation of the Options Appraisal.
- 23 This options appraisal was carried out following a process that was in line with HM Treasury Green Book requirements. The conclusions it ultimately reached led to the decision to build a new HQ in Durham City on the site at The Sands.
- 24 The subsequent new building at The Sands is substantially complete and is nearing practical completion, with the final fit out currently being completed. Handover of the building and the new multi storey car park (MSCP) from Kier Property is expected to take place in early 2022, though occupation of the building will not be possible until the sprinkler tanks are installed. The locating and installation of the sprinkler tanks is

pending the outcome of the de-registration of the common land, which has been subject to a public inquiry.

## **Findings from review**

- 25 Question 1 sought to consider the options to repurpose the existing building under construction on the Durham Sands for alternative use eg. hotel or offices, including options for letting the building floor by floor.
- 26 The findings from the review into whether the building could be converted to a hotel clearly set out that the building as it is currently designed is aligned with modern office standards for single occupancy use by a municipal public sector body (the Council). To convert the building into a hotel (a potential alternative use for a building of this size), there are a number of commercial, technical and statutory issues to be considered. Any conversion would require significant design and construction intervention which could take some 30 months from start on site.
- 27 Conversion of this building into a hotel would be cost prohibitive when considered alongside the existing construction costs which are further explored in the corresponding exempt from publication report considered later on the agenda. It can clearly be demonstrated that conversion to a hotel does not represent value for money for this building and that the visitor economy aspiration is best met by considering alternative locations. It would not be in the public interest and is not a viable option to progress this option financially.
- 28 When considering the suitability of the building for office accommodation to be let in the market place, the review has highlighted that post Covid office occupiers are more focused than ever on taking high quality accommodation that delivers on sustainability and wellbeing to create an environment to attract and retain staff. The best route to meeting that objective is to move into accommodation that has been designed and delivered with all of these considerations having been addressed; in this regard the building on the Sands meets these objectives.
- 29 The critical consideration, were the building to be offered to let in the open market, is whether it meets local and regional market demand at a market driven level of price, layout, flexibility and, crucially, market alignment in terms of the size of accommodation offered.
- 30 It is on these core fundamentals of office design and layout where the building is very much compromised when considering its capability to be repurposed. In meeting the original design brief to create a forward-looking local authority headquarters building so successfully, the result

is a building that is not suited to traditional occupier needs when compared to competing accommodation across the region.

- 31 The base design and layout of the building on the Sands significantly hinders the success of an open marketing campaign, unless certain critical aspects are addressed, and even then, the compromise due the physical layout will continue to limit its appeal. Furthermore, the cost implications of this reverse engineering exercise are likely to be significant, which when added to the original construction cost results in a building that is not financially viable from a commercial letting perspective based on the rentals occupiers are prepared to pay in the market. This is further explored in the corresponding exempt from publication report considered later on the Agenda.
- 32 The only other option available would be to let or agree the freehold sale of the building to a single occupier. There is no evidence of a single private sector transaction within the North East City Centre markets of this scale. This is because of the scale of the accommodation and the size of organisation or institution that would have demand for such a space and the buying power to acquire it. However, disposal or letting to a single occupier either from the private or public sector remains the only viable alternative to the Council taking occupation of the building as its new HQ.
- 33 During the review period, the Council was made aware of a potential interest in the building from a third-party occupier. They have expressed a very real and viable interest in acquiring the building on the Sands. Negotiations are at a very early stage however and there are significant issues that need to be considered and addressed prior to giving any firm commitment to the final decision not to occupy the building on the Sands and to dispose of it to a third-party.
- 34 The common element to all scenarios is the need to consider and limit the timescales to implementation. This is a critical issue to any decision making as it will impact on a number of the necessary financial and economic assessments. These considerations will need to be reflected in the business case for any decision and it is considered that the Council needs to conclude its decision by summer 2022, with an appropriate business case to substantiate any decision made that clearly satisfies the public interest and value for money tests.
- 35 Question 2 sought to consider that if the new HQ was put to an alternative use and Durham County Council was to remain in County Hall, what options existed to improve the current building and still deliver the significant proposed development.

- 36 The review has revisited the original business case for the new HQ, specifically the issues around the need for new office accommodation and the potential to remodel the existing County Hall building as a modern fit for purpose office building.
- 37 County Hall is a 1960s reinforced concrete frame and single glazed building. It occupies the prime location on the proposed Aykley heads strategic employment site. The building has asbestos throughout but the high content in all of the locations where services run is particularly problematic. Over the years the building has had various adaptations made to it in an attempt to create a more modern office environment eg. some partition walls have been removed to create open plan office areas. However, the design of the building along with the presence of asbestos means that there are limitations to what can easily be changed. The result is an inefficient building with an overall footprint that is too large (circa 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> GIA) and which is costly to run.
- 38 An estimate of the costs for a full refurbishment of the building which would include stripping out the asbestos, addressing all backlog maintenance issues and replacing the heating system and other utilities including major components such as new lifts, ensuring the building met with all relevant standards with the flexibility to be sublet to third parties, and provided a modern office environment which was future proofed would be cost prohibitive. This is explored in more detailed in the corresponding exempt from publication report considered later on the Agenda.
- 39 The design and asbestos content within County Hall makes it a difficult building to work with and limits the options for partial demolition. County Hall was designed and constructed as one building and any proposal to reduce the size of the building (for example, removing a wing), will need a full structural assessment and is likely to lead to costly work to ensure the structural integrity of the remaining building.
- 40 In addition, as the services within the building are all interconnected, for example, the heating ducted air system and electrics run up services risers from floor to floor and branch out on each floor running in the ceiling voids, it would still be necessary to carry out a full asbestos strip across the whole of the building prior to any partial demolition works.
- 41 Leaving County Hall in situ (either as a complete building or with partial demolition) will negatively impact on the proposed redevelopment of Aykley Heads. County Hall is located on Plot A, North Aykley Heads which in the current masterplan and outline planning permission is to accommodate a 663 place multi storey car park, and two buildings comprising in total a 7,000sqm gross internal floor area.

- 42 These plots are considered to be 'prime' and 'gateway' development plots for Aykley Heads and also integrate with other development plots sharing car parking and access infrastructure. They will attract higher rental values given their location and closer proximity to the train station and city centre.
- 43 To leave County Hall in situ will consume prime development sites, reduce the scale of the development site available and impair a developer's ability to create a new campus style destination. It will also have the potential to adversely impact on infrastructure enabling work required for the wider Aykley Heads development. Architecturally, the building would not be in keeping with the proposed development and this would impact negatively on the ability to develop and attract businesses to the site.
- 44 For all of the reasons outlined above it is not considered practical, viable or to represent value for money to leave County Hall, either partially or as it currently stands on Aykley Heads. If a decision was taken not to occupy the newly built HQ on The Sands, then a viable value for money alternative that delivers all the benefits of the original plans will be required to satisfy the public interest test.
- 45 The Aykley Heads development could accommodate a new Headquarters building for the Council. Careful consideration would need to be given to the location and size of a new building on the Aykley Heads site.
- 46 A more detailed assessment of the Council's exact requirements will be needed prior to providing a definitive assessment of the overall impact of a new building on the site.
- 47 Question 3 sought to address whether the Council could find alternative locations to Aykley Heads and The Sands for a new Headquarters and the options, benefits and risks of such an approach.
- 48 The findings from the review as to whether the Council can find an alternative location to both Aykley Heads and The Sands for a new Headquarters are inconclusive at this stage. As part of the work that was carried out in preparing the outline business case for the new HQ on The Sands, a site appraisal assessment was undertaken. This considered the sites that were available within the city at the time to meet the desired objectives and whether they were suitable to support the development of a new HQ.
- 49 The site search was based on the strategic objectives that were set out in the business case along with the size of site needed to accommodate a building of the scale of the HQ. Although this was completed approximately four years ago, there has been no significant change to

the availability of DCC or privately owned sites in the city based on the original criteria.

- 50 There are however sites and buildings across the county (both in DCC and private ownership) that could potentially be suitable to provide office and civic accommodation. An options appraisal will need to be undertaken to adequately review sites and building availability in other localities. This options appraisal will need to be carried out based on a business case. The business case will need to be carefully scoped to ensure that it adequately captures the Council's aspirations for its office and civic accommodation moving forward and has clear regard to economic, financial, commercial, management and strategic objectives.
- 51 The marketing of Aykley Heads will not commence until there is certainty around the future strategy for the replacement of County Hall, however, the development work required to go to market will continue.
- 52 If a building of the size and scale of the HQ office on the Sands was to be procured again, the costs of construction will be higher than those incurred on the Sands building, because of building inflation. The construction cost of any building can be affected by particular site constraints and ground conditions such as building on reclaimed land or a flood plain. The business case will need to assess the Council's future requirements including building size and design, taking account of future business requirements and any further learning from Covid.
- 53 Based on the current position, evidence gathered to date and the interest shown in the building on the Sands, there is an opportunity for the Council to explore the potential broader economic impacts that could be achieved through disposal of the building to the interested third party.
- 54 In view of this there is a need to complete, as a matter of urgency, a business case to determine the future direction for the Council's office and civic estate. This will determine alternative options available to the Council.

### **Background papers**

- None.

### **Other useful documents**

- None.

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council is under a statutory duty to make arrangements for securing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources. The Council's external auditors are tasked with satisfying themselves that those arrangements are proper. Should the external auditor not be satisfied they could qualify the Council's accounts or issue a public interest report to the Council. Cabinet must therefore be satisfied that any decision taken is in the public interest and achieves value for money.

Should the Council not occupy the new building on the Sands it will be important from a public interest perspective that the Council can demonstrate that on the whole, the regeneration and other benefits envisaged from the original business case can be delivered or exceeded by any alternative course of action.

The Council is also under a statutory duty to dispose of land for the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained.

### **Finance**

The review has evidenced that the only other option to the Council occupying the building as originally planned would be to let or agree the freehold sale of the building to a single occupier. Whilst there was no evidence of a single private sector transaction within the North East City Centre markets on the scale required, during the review period an approach was made to a potential third-party occupier. They have expressed a very real and viable interest in acquiring the building on the Sands.

Negotiations are at a very early stage however and there are significant issues that need to be considered and addressed prior to giving any firm commitment to the final decision not to occupy the building on the Sands and to dispose of it to a third-party.

The common element to all scenarios is the need to consider and limit the timescales to implementation and it is considered that the Council will need to conclude its decision by summer 2022, with an appropriate business case to substantiate any decision made that clearly satisfies the public interest and value for money tests.

A further options appraisal / feasibility study is to be commissioned, the cost of which will be met from corporate contingencies. The outcome of that study will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in Summer 2022. This will include full consideration of the MTFP and budget impacts of any alternative course of action – both revenue and capital.

## **Consultation**

Significant work has been undertaken in terms of planning for the move to the new HQ and staff and their representatives have been engaged in the planning.

## **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equalities Impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the more detailed feasibility.

## **Climate Change**

The new building on the Sands has been designed to British Council for Offices (BCO) standard and to meet all modern design and sustainability credentials being BREEAM Very Good and EPC A rated. This represents a significant improvement on the existing County Hall, and when allied to energy efficiency and other measures factored into its design and construction (including limitations on car parking available to promote sustainable transport usage), and the fact it is significantly smaller than the current County Hall, it will contribute positively to the Council's Climate Change and Carbon Reduction plans.

Climate Change and Carbon Reduction considerations will need to form a key part of the options appraisal and business case for any potential alternative course of action.

## **Human Rights**

None specific to this report.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None specific to this report.

## **Staffing**

The review to date has been undertaken using existing staffing resources, through reprioritising activity, supplemented by the support of external consultants to undertake the independent assessment of the options being explored.

Following a rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation, the Council's core office based workforce are located in one of five main offices: Seaham, Spennymoor, Crook and Meadowfield and the HQ. The capacities of these buildings has been increased through implementing the Inspire principles and more recently following a review of the accommodation needs post COVID, which has seen a significant reduction in the desk ratios available and a move towards a hybrid working model going forward.

Considerable investment has been made in improving the strategic sites and the standard of the existing County Hall accommodation is poor by comparison. Availability of onsite parking is a key concern for those staff aligned to the new HQ and these concerns were already under considerations in terms of access to available spaces and potential concessions in terms of access to Park and Ride.

As part of the development of the options appraisal and business case for a possible potential alternative strategy should the Council not subsequently occupy the Sands building, careful consideration should be given to ensuring the alternative fit for future service delivery and provides a working environment that encourages staff engagement, staff retention and aids staff recruitment etc, which were fundamental considerations to the previous strategy.

### **Accommodation**

The new building at the Sands is substantially complete and is nearing practical completion, with handover of the building and the new multi storey car park (MSCP) from Kier Property expected to take place early 2022, though occupation of the building will not be possible until the sprinkler tanks are installed. The locating and installation of the sprinkler tanks is pending the outcome of the de-registration of the common land, which has been subject to a public enquiry.

The current gross internal area of the new building is 10,278m<sup>2</sup>, arranged over three full levels and a further two-part level to the upper floors. The building has been designed specifically for the Council to use as its administrative HQ.

### **Risk**

There are also some significant reputational risks and other issues that need to be addressed when re-visiting the decision to occupy the new HQ on the Sands. These include the following factors, which must be satisfied from a public interest and value for money perspective:

- (a) the business case for the Council to follow a new strategy for provision of its HQ facilities;
- (b) the alternative plan for the council's office and civic/committee if the new HQ on the Sands is not occupied;
- (c) the resources, costs and other implications of disposing of the HQ to a third party; and
- (d) the wider impacts of the decision, including the wider economic investment strategy for the County.

The review has evidenced that repurposing the building as a hotel or as a multi-let office facility are not financially viable and do not pass the value for money or public interest tests and therefore cannot be pursued.

Based on the work undertaken the only viable option available, other than the Council occupying it as originally planned, is for a let or sale to a single occupier on commercially viable terms.

A common and significant risk element to all potential alternative scenarios is the need to consider and limit the timescales to implementation. This is a critical issue to any future decision making, as it will impact on a number of the necessary financial and economic assessments. The risks are not wholly within the Council's control, with reliance on the third party to progress their interest and, crucially, to resolve any planning issues they may have in terms of change of use conditions, considered a key risk.

These considerations will need to be reflected in the business case for any decision and it is considered that the Council must conclude its decision by summer 2022.

## **Procurement**

The review has necessitated the commissioning of external independent consultancy support, through the engagement of Avison Young, Cushman and Wakefield and Tomorrow Advisory Services. Further consultancy support will be required to help complete the next stage of the review and the development of an options appraisal and business case for any potential alternative course of action to the Council occupying the new HQ building on the Sands. The procurement of any consultants to support this review has been undertaken in line with the Council's Contract Procedure rules.

Commercial negotiations are ongoing with the interested third party. A Non-Disclosure Agreement has been signed by both parties whilst discussions are progressed.

**Cabinet**

**29 September 2021**



**Review of Durham Light Infantry (DLI)  
Collection and Archive and the potential  
future use of the former DLI Museum & Art  
Gallery and Grounds at Aykley Heads**

**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and  
Growth**

**Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy  
and Partnerships**

**Councillor James Rowlandson Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Resources Investment and Assets**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report presents the findings of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) review. It outlines an approach to bring back into use the former building as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue.
- 2 It sets out the benefits of this approach which include providing dedicated exhibition space for the DLI collection items to complement the History Centre exhibition plans; provision of storage capacity for smaller non DLI Council collections as well as the provision of an art gallery facility in the city, which would meet a current gap in our cultural offer. Benefits also include the provision of a new cultural visitor attraction and café which would contribute to the county's City of Culture 2025 bid and fill an identified gap in the visitor economy in the city

**Executive summary**

- 3 The DLI object and archive collection is one of the most coherent regimental collections in the UK with full chronological coverage from its 1750s origins to amalgamation of the Regiment in the 1960s and beyond.
- 4 The collection is owned by the trustees of The Regimental and Chattels Charity of the Former Durham Light Infantry (referred to as the DLI

Trustees). Its managed and cared for under a partnership arrangement with Durham County Council.

- 5 The DLI Museum & Art Gallery was built at Aykley Heads to house the DLI collection and was opened in 1969. The DLI Museum & Art Gallery stored the object collection and displayed around 5% of the collection. A contemporary art gallery displaying touring exhibitions was a key feature of the facility along with education space and a café.
- 6 In December 2015, Cabinet considered and agreed a report that recommended closure of the museum and a new model of service delivery for the collection, agreed in consultation with the DLI Trustees.
- 7 The building subsequently closed in March 2016, and a new 'deconstructed museum' model of operation commenced - rebranded as the DLI Collection. The new operating model comprised a research and study centre open to the public, with secure object stores and a public programme of temporary exhibitions, outreach and learning opportunities. A new permanent DLI gallery and display was opened at Palace Green Library in Durham City and access to the medal collection through the Barker Reading Room was made possible via a formal agreement with Durham University.
- 8 In 2019, it was confirmed that the DLI Collection would become part of plans for a new state-of-the-art History Centre to be developed on the site of Mount Oswald Manor House in Durham City. This was fully supported by the DLI Trustees.
- 9 In preparation for the plans to move the DLI collection and archive to the new Durham History Centre, updated terms have been agreed with and signed by the parties. Whilst these terms were agreed in April 2021, the agreement needs to be formally executed to satisfy the requirements of the NLHF in respect of grant funding awarded for the History Centre project.
- 10 In June 2021, Cabinet agreed to review options for the potential future use of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and surrounding grounds. The review addressed two key questions:
  - (a) can the former DLI Museum be brought back into use to house the DLI collection?
  - (b) what are the options to repurpose the former DLI building/site for alternative uses?
- 11 The review was undertaken throughout July and August 2021 and has been supported by two separate independent reports that were commissioned to underpin the review. The Director of the National Conservation Service provided an assessment of the current and planned care and storage of the collection and archive, as well as a high-

level observation of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building from a conservation perspective. Global real estate advisors, Avison Young, provided architectural, planning and market appraisals for the building and its prospective potential uses should it be brought back into use.

- 12 A meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) took place on 28 July 2021. The meeting was open to the public and was broadcast live. It provided an opportunity to consider the review questions and key stakeholders were invited to submit representations on the issues from their perspectives. The outcome of that meeting has been fully considered as part of the evidence base for the review.
- 13 The review has considered the current condition of the building and options for displaying, storing and care of DLI collection in the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building, including a full assessment of risks, financial, legal and value for money issues.
- 14 The review has also considered the impacts on the new Durham History Centre, including impact on funding and on the storage, display and care of other DCC collections.
- 15 It has been established that returning the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building to its former use would not have the full support of key stakeholders such as the Army Museum Ogilby Trust and the DLI Trustees, who are committed to the History Centre proposals.
- 16 The DLI collection and archive is integral to the Durham History Centre project and withdrawing in its entirety would present significant risk to the Durham History Centre – a £19.6 million investment that is currently under construction and for which significant National Heritage Lottery Funding has been secured.
- 17 In light of the numerous implications of reopening the building to house the DLI collection in its entirety, the review has concluded that this is not practicable or recommended.
- 18 In answering the second question, the review has considered high level options assessments for suitable alternative uses for the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and the grounds and environment around the site.
- 19 The options for repurposing the building were found to be relatively limited, primarily due to location, market conditions and planning restrictions. The analysis identified that repurposing the building in line with cultural use presented the only real feasible approach, though more work is required to firm up the costs and other implications associated with bringing the facility back into use.

- 20 This approach would have the following benefits:
- (a) provide dedicated exhibition space for the DLI collection items to complement History Centre exhibition plans;
  - (b) provide storage capacity for smaller non-DLI Council collections;
  - (c) provide an art gallery facility in the city which is a current gap in our cultural offer; and
  - (d) provide a new cultural visitor attraction and cafe which would contribute to the county's City of Culture 2025 bid and fill an identified gap in the visitor economy in the city.
- 21 The review also concluded that the grounds surrounding the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building should be considered sensitively, as they had been used over a number of years as an informal site for the scattering of veteran's ashes. The report identifies the opportunity to develop a peace and contemplation garden in the grounds.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 22 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) note the review process, and the evidence and analysis that underpins it.
  - (b) note the options to bring the building back into use as a wider culture and visitor destination, incorporating a significant dedicated space for items from the DLI collection.
  - (c) request officers to commission further detailed feasibility work into:
    - (i) refurbishment of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building as an exhibition centre, gallery, exhibition and café venue including dedicated space for display of DLI collection items that will complement plans for exhibitions in Durham History Centre (DHC), noting the purpose built DHC will be the permanent base for the collection and its storage care and curation;
    - (ii) an appropriate funding strategy, operational model, and business plan including a marketing strategy for the venue and an assessment of the wider opportunities of connections to new and existing sites in the city such as Wharton Park and the new History Centre; and
    - (iii) an appropriate peace and contemplation garden in the grounds;



- (d) agree that the outcome of the further feasibility (which includes full consideration of the MTFP and revenue and capital budgetary impacts) of bringing the building back into use, should be presented to Cabinet for consideration on this option in early 2022;
- (e) delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to execute the agreement between the Council and the DLI Trustees, which is a pre-condition of National Heritage Lottery Funding awarded for the Durham History Centre Project.

## **Background: History and Context**

### *The Collection*

- 23 The Regimental Collection of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) has collected objects and archive material since the 1920s. Comprising over 15,000 objects and thousands of archive items, the collection is one of the most extensive and coherent Regimental collections in the UK, with full chronological coverage from its 1750s origins to amalgamation of the Regiment in the 1960s and beyond.
- 24 Dating from 1758 – 2011, the object collection includes firearms, uniforms, medals and ceremonial items including key objects of significance such as the Wakenshaw 2lb anti-tank gun, Somme Memorial and Victoria Crosses.
- 25 The Regimental Archive consists of documents, manuscripts and photographs covering the entire history of the Regiment. Of particular importance in the archive are the collections of material on the Durham Militia, local Napoleonic Volunteers, and the extensive collection of War Diaries, battalion records, personal papers and ephemera from the First and Second World Wars and from the Korean War. Both the DLI object collection and archive are historically significant for the county, however, they are not Designated Collections under the national Designation Scheme.

### *Timeline and context of DLI Museum & Durham Art Gallery*

- 26 For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the collection moved with the Regiment to various barracks and headquarters around the region, including Fenham Barracks and Brancepeth Castle.
- 27 The collection was briefly in storage at the Bowes Museum between the closure of Brancepeth Castle and the move to the former museum building at Aykley Heads in 1968.
- 28 In 1960, the DLI Collection was established as a charity with trustees appointed to manage and care for the collection on behalf of the Regiment.
- 29 The new museum building, whilst winning many architectural plaudits at the time, did not provide ideal conditions for the display of the Regimental collection, as the floor-to-ceiling single-glazing provided minimal physical security and an unstable environment, whilst allowing unfiltered sunlight to flood the two galleries, irreparably damaging textiles and other sensitive materials (Figure 1). During the 1980s, plastic film was applied to the glass in an attempt to limit the effects of sunlight,

whilst the windows at ground level were lined with wooden boards to improve perimeter security.<sup>1</sup>



*Figure 1. The DLI Museum & Durham Art Gallery circa. 1974*

- 30 In 1997, an environmental and collection condition survey of the DLI Museum and Art Gallery was carried out by an independent conservator from the Conservation Advisory Network. This survey recommended that the archive collection should be relocated to more appropriate storage, as the archive could not be satisfactorily housed within the existing building.
- 31 Discussions led to an agreement between the Durham County Record Office (DCRO) and the DLI Trustees regarding a move of the archive to the DCRO strongrooms at County Hall, which fully met the British Standard BS5454. The agreement also covered that the Record Office would catalogue the collection to archival standards, which would provide greatly improved public access. In 1998, the archive collection was moved from the DLI Museum and Art Gallery building into the DCRO in County Hall and was subsequently catalogued over the next five years by a professional archivist; a post part funded by the DLI Trustees.
- 32 In 2013, a review of funding to museums was carried out. This was in response to the significant budget challenges the Council faced at that time as a result of reductions to public spending and the austerity programme that was implemented nationally in response to the banking crisis. The review and subsequent report set out a strategy to achieve a range of MTFP savings associated with the provision of museums,

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<sup>1</sup> In March 1972, a lower ground floor window was smashed, and a Bren gun stolen from open display. The machine gun was not recovered by the Police, in spite of an extensive search. In 1980's there was a further theft of silver objects, thieves broke in the same way as in 1972 through the glazed façade.

including the DLI Museum & Durham Art Gallery, Killhope Lead Mining Museum, Locomotion, Beamish Museum and Bowes Museum.

- 33 Following this, in early 2014, a further saving review set out the broader approach and actions to deliver a £105,000 of efficiency savings from 2014/15. This was achieved through reducing the days and hours of the DLI Museum and Art Gallery was open to the public from seven to five days a week.
- 34 Later in 2014, work commenced on the options for the relocation of DCRO in response to the Office Accommodation Programme that was progressing at that time, which would potentially see the Council's headquarters relocated away from Aykley Heads to release the site as a strategic employment site. This work would later lead to the creation of the Durham History Centre Project.
- 35 In late 2015, Cabinet considered and agreed a further report on 'Future DLI Arrangements,' which analysed the cost and visitor numbers and sought agreement for closure of the DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and the development of a new service delivery model. This followed extensive discussions with the DLI Trustees.
- 36 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings of £241,984 were realised from the closure of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery and were factored into the budgets, with an ongoing annual revenue cost of £50,000 for the storage and display of the Collection under the revised arrangements proposed and £20,000 for learning staff support being required going forward. In addition, there were one off capital costs of £76,000 to create new collection storage at Sevenhills in Spennymoor, and one-off costs of £175,000 for the creation of a new DLI gallery within Durham University. The provision for a new visual arts offer was not included in the service going forward.
- 37 By 2016, the Council had entered into a partnership agreement with Durham University which included:
  - (a) creation of a new DLI Gallery in Palace Green Library, '*Courage, Comrades and Community*' showcasing key items from the collection including the Lambton Cap, Victoria Cross and Somme memorial cross;
  - (b) loan of the medal collection, to be housed in secure strongrooms and available to view by request in the Barker Reading Room;
  - (c) the creation of five temporary exhibitions and delivery of outreach and learning experiences related to the collection. The first of these temporary exhibitions '*Somme 2016*' ran from March-October 2016 and attracted 30,000 visitors – higher than the visitor numbers that were being attracted to the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building.

- 38 In 2016, extensive and positive discussions with Army Museums Ogilby Trust (AMOT), the national representative body of all regimental museums, took place regarding the new museum model and support was gained for the new proposal which was seen as a sector leading approach at a time when several regimental museums across the UK were at risk due to funding constraints.
- 39 The former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building at Aykley Heads closed at the end of March 2016, and the new 'deconstructed museum' model of operation commenced thereafter. The new operating model comprised a research and study centre open to the public, new secure stores, collections access room, temporary exhibitions, learning and outreach programme, volunteering programme and a partnership with Durham University creating a new dedicated DLI gallery at Palace Green Library in Durham City and access to the medal collection through the Barker Reading Room.
- 40 Over the next 6 months the DLI object collections were carefully packed and relocated to the new gallery and medal storage at Durham University, to venues which loaned objects including Locomotion and North East Sea Land & Air Museum (NESLAM), and to an existing DCC facility at Sevenhills in Spennymoor, where the reserve collections were transferred to new stores with enhanced security and fitted out with museum standard racking and storage furniture. The DLI Research & Study Centre, notwithstanding recent pandemic restrictions, is normally open to the public two days a week to use the research library or to view objects by appointment. The centre is facilitated by DLI volunteers, DLI Friends and members of the DLI Association.
- 41 In 2017, the Trustees of the Former Durham Light Infantry underwent a change in their charitable status and became known as The Regimental and Chattels Charity of the Former Durham Light Infantry (referred to as the DLI Trustees).
- 42 During 2017, as plans for the Durham History Centre Project progressed it was recognised that there was an opportunity to bring together several heritage assets and related services, including the DLI Collection, with the DCRO collection and archives in a new and innovative service model delivered through the new venue at Mount Oswald in Durham City.
- 43 A public consultation in early 2018 asked members of the public and key partners and stakeholders for their views on proposals to bring the following five services together under the History Centre Scheme:
- (a) Durham County Records Office (including DLI archives);
  - (b) DLI Collection;
  - (c) the Historic Environment Record;

- (d) Local Studies Collection; and
  - (e) Registration Service, including Historic Registration Records, the register office function for Durham City and Registrars HQ for County Durham.
- 44 High level results from this survey indicated that 83% of respondents were in favour of the proposals.
- 45 At the same time Arts Council England (ACE), which had replaced MLA as the arms-length body of central government for Museums undertook a review of the new DLI Collection model with regards to the Accreditation status of the DLI Collection. ACE agreed the new model met the criteria for Museum Accreditation and updated the status of the DLI Collection to Provisional Accreditation ahead of a full accreditation review to be carried out in 2019. This has since been submitted but the accreditation review panel has been delayed as result of the Covid-19 pandemic and as such the status remains provisional at this point.
- 46 Over the course of 2019 and 2020, significant progress was made on the History Centre project, two further rounds of public consultation were carried out and planning permission for the capital scheme was granted. Mount Oswald was legally transferred to DCC ownership for the nominal sum of £1 in December 2020. Kier Construction Ltd was appointed as the main contractor for the scheme in early 2021 and construction began on site in April. The project represents a significant capital investment of £19.6 million. In June, the project received news that it had been successful with a stage 2 bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) of £1.207 million as part of a £2 million project for a five-year activity programme; the DLI Collection and its inter-relationship with the other collections is intrinsic to this funding approval.
- 47 At the point that the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building closed, the display cases and lighting were inadequate and did not meet museum standard, many of the large cases could not be accessed and contents therefore could not be changed.
- 48 The building also included the Durham Art Gallery, which had a focus on contemporary visual art. The art gallery was situated on the second floor and occupied around 43% of the total display area of the building. It was the only dedicated contemporary gallery space in the city. The art exhibitions regularly tied in with wider events in Durham such as Brass and some artistic commissions were paid for by funding from such events.
- 49 Between 2009 and 2012 the Northern Rock Foundation funded a three-year programme of contemporary art exhibitions, totalling £60,000. Following this, project funding was required from the core DLI Museum and Art Gallery budget to continue the programme. Exhibitions from

2012 onwards required additional fundraising to cover costs, engagement activities, commissions, and marketing.

- 50 From 2012 onwards, the Durham Art Gallery changed exhibitions three to four times a year, with a maximum of 12 different exhibitions in any given year across three gallery spaces. Art forms could be in various media including print, audio visual, sculptural, and interactive, and be a combination of touring exhibitions, commissions and speculative requests by artists. The galleries were curated by a specialist Art Curator who was contracted on a part time basis at that time.

### **DLI Archive displays and exhibitions**

- 51 Before the transfer of the DLI Archive into the DCRO only a few archive based exhibitions featuring the DLI had been delivered. However, since 1998, the DLI Archive has featured in almost every display the record office has curated. Exhibitions are prepared for in-house and event display, loan to community heritage groups, community centres, libraries etc.
- 52 Joint exhibitions have also been curated with the DLI Collection and individual archives have been loaned to venues with suitable environmental conditions and security.

### **DLI Collection display and exhibitions since 2016**

- 53 As part of the partnership arrangements with Durham University, two exhibition elements were included to provide a permanent exhibition and a changing programme of temporary exhibitions.
- 54 The permanent exhibition based at Palace Green Library and curated by Durham University but funded by DCC, 'Courage, Comrades and Community' includes objects, audio-visual display, interpretation panels and a family friendly game. The gallery is free and open to the public seven days a week.
- 55 The gallery is situated in an area of historical significance to the DLI, in close proximity to the DLI Chapel, DLI Memorial Garden and several DLI memorials inside the Cathedral. There are multiple memorials on Palace Green including the Boer War Memorial and VC Memorial. Palace Green is also the area where DLI parades, events, commemorations and celebrations have taken place over many years and is still host to DLI Remembrance events today. Just a short walk to the marketplace there is also a DLI Memorial, installed in 2014.
- 56 Three temporary exhibitions have been delivered so far with the exhibition in 2020 postponed due to Covid-19. The exhibitions vary in size and content depending on the venue, object selection, story and interpretation. More than 76,500 people have visited these temporary exhibitions since the closure of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building.

## **Engagement and visitor figures DLI building, DLI Collection & DLI Archive**

- 57 Prior to its closure, the number of visitors to the DLI building varied between a high of almost 70,000 in 1977/78, to a low of just 28,597 in 2015/16 (excluding 1999/-000 when the museum was closed for refurbishment).
- 58 On average, between 1969-2016, the museum and art gallery attracted 39,618 visitors per year. There is no data available to give an accurate split between visitors to the DLI collection and exhibits vs those that came to view the various art exhibitions.
- 59 Visitor data does, however, show that the years with the highest footfalls correlate with key art exhibitions. They also show that the change in opening hours from seven to five days a week in 2014 had little effect on the overall volume of visitors.
- 60 The data also indicates that footfall has not reduced since the closure of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and that in-person visits to the deconstructed museum model have performed better than the footfall in the 20 years before closure, and since the refurbishment in 2000 (excluding during closures for Covid-19 restrictions).
- 61 Although the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building had an admission charge, the vast majority of visitors did not pay, either because they were independent visitors to the café, annual card and culture card holders, DLI Association members, VIPs, or were attending previews, events or conferences.
- 62 Peak educational visit numbers in the period 2005-2007 and in 2014-15 can be attributed to special education programmes with additional resources and funding provided at that time. These included DLI anniversaries, such as the anniversary of the end of WW2 and WW1, and specific art gallery exhibitions.
- 63 In years without additional external funding and special programming, the numbers of visits were not sustained. Declining numbers also coincide with periods where there was no dedicated learning officer support to drive development.
- 64 Since 2016, almost 13,000 school pupils have been directly engaged by visits to the deconstructed museum model. School visits have grown year on year, with almost 4,500 pupils engaged in programmes in 2020/21. It should be noted that these figures do not capture the number of school visits to the permanent DLI gallery at Palace Green.
- 65 In addition to in-person and school visits each year both the DLI Archive and DLI Collection respond to a significant number of public and research enquiries.



## Durham History Centre Project: planned display, exhibitions and interpretation

- 66 The development of exhibition and interpretation content for the new Durham History Centre has been ongoing through the last two years. The interpretive offer is split across the main exhibition space and the level one digital forum, as well as the external landscape and through small installations/ interventions around Oswald House.
- 67 Rather than being divided along collection lines, the exhibitions will be designed around a thematic approach, which will enable the Council to use the collections to tell more holistic stories of the county. This approach aligns to modern practice and visitor expectations.
- 68 The aim is to bring the five collections (DLI, DCRO, Historic Environment Record, Local Studies & Historic Registration) together under the overarching theme '*Record of a Lifetime*' and to present '*personal lifetimes*' at the forefront of the exhibition and interpretation.
- 69 The exhibition is being designed around a thematic approach that is geared towards a person-led style which will focus on the stories of everyday people and families and will introduce and inspire local audiences to connect with their collective heritage.
- 70 The centre's dynamic and state of the art exhibition space featuring the story of working lives in County Durham, of which the story of military lives is a key part, will tell the stories of the people of the Regiment represented in displays through objects and archive, including medals, uniform, historic film, photographs and everyday items, across seven of the eight exhibition themes; the key themes are:
- (a) *Who am I?* - Visitors will encounter a number of real peoples' 'lifetimes' and will be encouraged to consider what makes them who they are and how the different types of information our collections hold allows us to build up an image of a person;
  - (b) *Transformation* – focussed on exploring the changing connections and physical transformation of the County over time utilising the significant map collections held by DCRO;
  - (c) *Living together* - looking at how community spirit has developed in the County, especially in times of need, including during war time, and focussing on local communities to learn about how life has changed over the years;
  - (d) *Making a living* - delving into the most valued industries and exploring some of the newer industries continuing Durham's legacy as an industrial county;

- (e) *Making connections* - exploring the relationship between County Durham and the world, exports, immigration, achievements;
- (f) *Changing perceptions* - challenging the perception that County Durham's story is only industrial and military, showcasing Durham's other achievements;
- (g) *In focus* - a deeper look into stories that have garnered interest from visitors through a programme of temporary exhibitions. The in-focus theme is being designed to change on a regular basis. This will allow us to create temporary exhibitions responding to key events such as the Stockton and Darlington Railway 200th anniversary in 2025, or the anniversary of the Battle of Kohima in 2024;
- (h) *Hidden Treasures* - Using an object-led approach, we will display the hidden treasures that best represent the five collections, including interesting and surprising objects. This area will also encourage visitors to explore and engage with the opportunities that the search rooms on the first floor provide for heritage discovery, building of heritage skills and deeper visitor interaction with the collections.

71 The use of the different collections, their inclusion and the rich diversity of stories they represent, is a key component of the interpretive approach. Because the exhibition is being designed thematically, display cases will not be assigned to individual collections but to the key stories that will be told. It is expected that all cases, except those which make up the Hidden Treasures topic, will have objects/ archive from more than one collection displayed in them.

72 The DHC project is currently in RIBA Stage 4<sup>2</sup> (detailed technical design) for the exhibition design development and work is being undertaken on the 3D scheme design. At this stage of the design development, the exact number of cases for the exhibition space is not finalised so it is not possible to say exactly how many cases will include DLI objects and archive. However, at this stage, 65% of the identified exhibition stories include DLI objects and archive – with the collection being an intrinsic and fundamental part of the proposals.

73 The thematic approach was specifically developed so these collections could appeal to the broadest of audiences creating new encounters with heritage, history, collections and archives. The DLI stories are integrated and intrinsically woven through the thematic approach to the DHC interpretive design. They are part of a narrative that offers unique interwoven stories of the whole of County Durham over its full recorded

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<sup>2</sup> RIBA Plan of Work: [2020RIBAPlanofWorktemplatepdf.pdf \(architecture.com\)](https://www.architecture.com/2020RIBAPlanofWorktemplatepdf.pdf)

history making it the only Heritage Centre to offer a complete picture of an evolving county, documenting changing ways of life, death and work.

### **Collection Storage and Access**

- 74 By 2015, storage for the DLI object collection within the DLI building had become problematic. The collection had progressively outgrown the capacity of the secure stores and the stores themselves did not meet the then British Standard (BS5454) for the care of heritage collections.
- 75 The collection was relocated to Sevenhills in 2016 and there are currently 85m<sup>2</sup> of strongroom space allocated to it, more than twice the storage space of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building. In addition, Sevenhills also provided dedicated collection access and working spaces as well as an area for the display and storage of the DLI reference library and spaces for volunteers to engage with objects and work with curatorial and engagement staff.
- 76 The DLI archive collection has significantly grown since it was moved into the DCRO in County Hall in 1998 and now occupies more than twice the volume of space from when it first moved in.
- 77 As well as state-of-art archive strongrooms, there is also 209m<sup>2</sup> of strongroom space allocated to the DLI Collection in the DHC; this is almost five times the object storage of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building. The DLI Collection and Archive will benefit from 252m<sup>2</sup> of collection working rooms planned for the DHC, including a conservation suite, digitisation studio, processing rooms and drop off and isolation stores.

### **Projected visitor figures Durham History Centre project**

- 78 Estimating annual visitor numbers, particularly for new attractions, is difficult although it is possible to use data from similar centres where the attraction, existing infrastructure and demographics are comparable, combined with market research to establish potential numbers.
- 79 Independent consultants have forecast 70,000 in person visits per annum to the History Centre, this forecast is supported by considerable audience research and visitor market segment analysis.
- 80 The forecast of 70,000 visitors per annum places the expected performance of the History Centre within the top ten visitor attractions within County Durham<sup>3</sup> (Figure 8.). The projected visitor footfall for the

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<sup>3</sup> Data from Visit Britain: Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions 2019; and 2019 visitor figures from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA). Data on Oriental Museum, Museum of Archaeology and Durham Castle Museum provided by Durham University. Note that this list excludes those which do not report their visitor numbers to the attraction monitor or ALVA.

History Centre is more than twice the average number of visitors attracted to the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building in its last three years of operation and is 1.75 times the average number of visitors to the current deconstructed museum model.

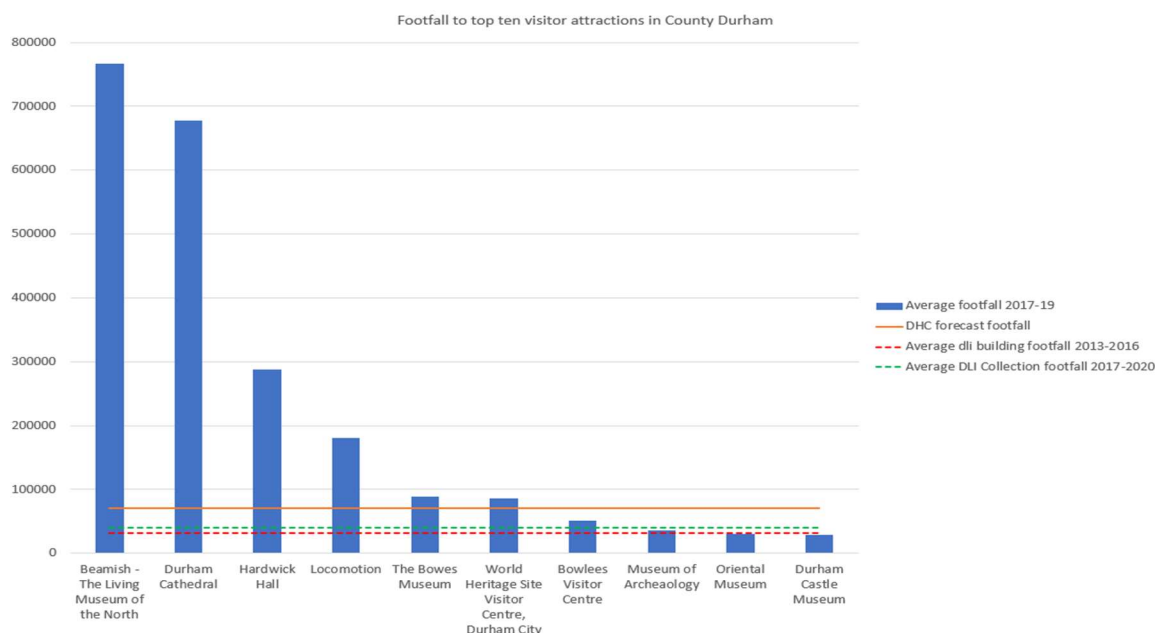


Figure 8. Average visitor figures to County Durham's top ten visitor attractions 2017-2019. Beamish - The Living Museum of the North is the number one attraction over the measured period with an average of 766,560 visitors per year.

## Durham History Centre Project: Public Consultation

- 81 There have been three major rounds of public consultation for the History Centre project. The first, in early 2018, asked about respondents current use and engagement with the five collection areas which the History Centre proposed to bring together, which functions respondents thought should be included in the History Centre, what activities and learning opportunities they would consider using (e.g. archive and heritage skills learning, exhibitions), what facilities respondents thought were important in a History Centre (e.g. parking, space for hire), and whether respondents agreed or disagreed with proposed project.
- 82 In addition to feedback from focus groups and stakeholder interviews, 607 individual survey responses were received with 83% of respondents in favour of the proposals to bring the five services, including the DLI Collection, together into one venue, while 11% disagreed with the proposals.
- 83 21% of other comments in a free text area were positive towards the full DLI collection being co-located as part of the History Centre scheme.
- 84 The second public consultation took place in 2019. The purpose of this consultation was to inform the development of plans for how services could be delivered at the History Centre, whether that be from the new

centre, digitally/virtually or as community outreach. Views were sought on the proposed design and layout of the building, themes for exhibitions, digital access to the collections and use of the register office services. This consultation was supported by an external independent consultant as part of the development of the Stage 1 NLHF bid.

- 85 In addition to feedback from focus groups and stakeholder interviews, 195 individual survey responses were received. Respondents were positive about the proposed designs with the exhibition space being the most liked element. 71% of respondents wanted to learn about local history, including the story of the DLI at the proposed History Centre.
- 86 The most recent round of public consultation took place in autumn 2020. Results from this consultation were used to support and develop the stage 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund bid and focussed on making a visit and public programmes. 356 individual survey responses were received in addition to feedback from focus groups and stakeholder interviews. To support and inform the on-going exhibition and interpretation development for the History Centre, this consultation also asked respondents to comment on what comes to mind when they think about the heritage of County Durham. The top 5 answers (in popularity order) were: mining, DLI, religion, industry and natural heritage.

### **Running costs of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building**

- 87 In the last four years of operation, the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery net annual revenue costs averaged £421,157. This included expenditure on staffing, supplies and services, premises and management costs, and costs and income associated with the café and small retail operation.
- 88 Since 2016, revenue costs for the DLI Collection have averaged £146,000 annually. These costs include expenditure associated with the formal agreement with Durham University, engagement and collection staff, costs of the DLI Research and Study Centre at Sevenhills, and a small amount of expenditure related to collections management.
- 89 In addition, empty property costs of £23,274 per annum have been incurred in respect of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery since it was closed.

### **Review Questions**

- 90 The following sections answer the two key questions considered as part of this review:
- (a) can the former DLI building be brought back into use to house the DLI Collection?
  - (b) what are the options to repurpose the former DLI building/site for alternative uses?

- 91 In order to collate the necessary evidence to address these issues, the review has utilised the services of the Director of the National Conservation Service (NCS) and has been supported by independent reports from global real estate advisor, Avison Young.
- 92 A high level review of the suitability of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building for the permanent storage and display of archive and object collections has been provided.
- 93 Avison Young is a global real estate advisor, which provides a comprehensive suite of commercial real estate services, including transaction, management, financial and advisory services. The company has provided services for over 316 local authorities in the UK.
- 94 Avison Young has carried out an assessment of the options for repurposing the building and also provided costs for various options to inform the answer to both key questions that the review sought to address.
- 95 The following sections should be read in conjunction with the relevant technical reports from both consultants. These have been included at Appendix 2 and 3.

### Stakeholder views

- 96 In addition to independent views from the National Conservation Service and the findings from the Avison Young report, the review has also considered stakeholder feedback, expressed in the special meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) held on 28 July 2021.
- 97 The special meeting of the COSMB was held as an open consultative session for both members and key stakeholder organisations. Senior officers from the Council presented an update and stakeholders were asked to either provide a statement or attend to offer their views. Members of the public were also invited to ask questions and the debate and the discussion on the day was very engaged with a number of questions from the well-attended meeting.

**Table 9.** Summary of the views of key stakeholders represented at the special Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 28 July 2021

Stakeholder	Context	Position
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Heritage funder & development agency; funded DHC & DLI museum	That they support the development of the DHC project and would wish to see education engagement as part of any outcome

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Position</b>
The National Archives	Archive funder, developer and accreditation agency	Recognise the importance of the dli archive and note the development of the DHC as a significant achievement
Arts Council England	Arts & Museums funder, developer and accreditation agency	That any option for the collection should maintain strong curatorial values and that the closure of the art gallery left a gap in the visual arts infrastructure
DLI Trustees	Legal owners of the DLI collection & archive	That the collection be professionally conserved and cared for, and that DHC offers the best option for this
Army Museums Ogilby Trust & National Army Museum	Development & support for regimental museums; have an MOU with DCC; funder DLI projects	That the History Centre is a model for the future of regimental museums and they reject the return of a DLI museum on the Aykley heads site
The Faithful Durhams	Community/campaign group to keep the memory of The Durham Light Infantry in the hearts and minds of the people of County Durham	That the Council closed the former museum without consultation and it should re-open to store and display entire DLI collection and archive

- 98 There was support from all committee members and stakeholder organisations, except the ‘Faithful Durhams’ group, for the History Centre and recognition that it would be the appropriate setting for a permanent DLI collection and archive.
- 99 Strong support was given to a suggestion that a memorial garden or protected space should be established in the former grounds of the DLI Museum, with a potential monument, in recognition that the site has become perceived as a memorial, as members of the public have scattered ashes nearby.

- 100 There was support for investigating the feasibility of repurposing the existing building, for alternative use which could include a DLI component, alongside suggestions for an art gallery.
- 101 No committee members and only one stakeholder group supported the reinstatement of the DLI museum to its original format, as it was prior to 2015. A copy of the COSMB report on the outcome of their meeting is attached at Appendix 4.

### **Current condition of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building**

- 102 The former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building was closed in March 2016 and since that date only essential maintenance has been carried out to maintain the integrity of the building.
- 103 The last asset condition survey was undertaken in April 2015, which identified not insignificant capital investments required to replace or upgrade the heating systems, drainage and lifts, together with major works required to the roofing.
- 104 Building condition surveys do not provide a detailed intrusive survey of key building elements and are utilised to provide a desktop and visual assessment of the general condition of a property. These surveys identify potential defects and items of disrepair and offer an indicative cost for a like-for-like replacement. No improvements are factored into these surveys and, importantly for heritage collection purposes, adherence to the key technical museum standards is not included.
- 105 In light of current carbon emission targets, the proposed works to the heating system within the survey would need to be revisited by a mechanical engineer should the building be brought back into use.
- 106 It is therefore not appropriate to rely on the previous condition survey information as part of this review.
- 107 Both NCS and Avison Young have provided comments on the condition of the building as part of their assessments and these comments have been referenced in the following sections.

### **Options Review Assessment Question 1: Can the former DLI building be brought back into use to house the DLI Collection**

- 108 In addressing the first question the review gathered evidence on key issues:
- (a) Planning implications;
  - (b) Building issues;
  - (c) Collection implications;



- (d) Staffing, visitor and business model implications;
- (e) Impact on Durham History Centre; and
- (f) Legal implications.

### *History Centre Planning implications*

109 The building has previously been used for the purpose of housing the DLI collection and both permanent and temporary exhibitions/display, therefore reuse under planning regulations would be permitted. The building / site does not form part of the proposed development of the Aykley Heads site as a strategic employment site as it sits outside of the permitted development area. However, early engagement with planning officers will be necessary to ensure that, should the building be re-opened, the proposed future use and any re-modelling meets planning requirements.

### *Condition issues*

- 110 Evidence of water ingress is prevalent in a number of areas with the build-up of calcite deposits and emergence of stalagmite identified. The boiler plant, lifts and mechanical services have also not been utilised extensively and may no longer be suitable for sustained use. There are capital investments required to bring the building back into operation regardless of its potential use – to address backlog maintenance requirements. The cost of these investments will need to be determined by revisiting the condition surveys and undertaking more detailed feasibility work. This work has not been undertaken at this stage of the review but will be considered in detail at the next stage.
- 111 The specific types of heritage materials which form the DLI Collection are vulnerable to extremes and fluctuations of humidity and temperature. Due to their historical importance and value, a high level of security and protection from flooding, fire and related hazards would be required.
- 112 Therefore, in order to correctly appraise the potential to reopen the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building to house the DLI collection, the requirements of the relevant standards BS 4971:2017 and BS EN 16893:2018 must be considered. The necessary standards for management of collections and the buildings which house such collections, are detailed in these two standards respectively. It is when examining the suitability of the building against the requirements within these standards, that its inadequacy emerges and the need for significant additional investment becomes apparent.
- 113 Since it was closed, the remaining display facilities on the lower ground floor have been partly dismantled. Relative humidity cannot be stabilised in these cases. The glass to some of the cases is large and presents risks to staff when removing it to access the display space within. These

cases, in conjunction with the presence of air conditioning vents in the ceiling, support the suggestion that temperature and relative humidity of the whole room was controlled through mechanical means as opposed to using modern standard display cases. This situation is unsuitable for the safe display of heritage collections.

- 114 BS EN 16893 details specific requirements regarding building specifications and states consideration in new or refurbished buildings should be given to protecting collections through passive or low energy means where possible. As the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building was constructed in the late 1960s, significant building alteration would be required to achieve the specification detailed within the standard.
- 115 The building's storage areas have also been assessed, with one of the storage areas, formerly used for objects, textiles and framed items, now in a dilapidated state. The storage equipment in this area fails to meet the standards for heritage shelf equipment under BS 4971:2017. Additional issues with this area include a door which provides low attack, and minimal fire, resistance, again below the standards required under BS EN 16893. A single-skin construction and heating pipework – which would affect the internal climate – are also present. This area could not be used as a store in its existing condition, failing to meet BS EN 16893.
- 116 A second store area contains no racking and would also only provide limited storage capacity, given its small size of circa 3m x 5m. This room, without investment, could never achieve accreditation.
- 117 Given the storage areas are inadequate, a new store would need to be constructed elsewhere within the building; specifically, a heavily insulated, air and watertight structure with a four-hour fire resistance rating. A security resistance class of RC4 would ensure compliance with BS EN 16893:2018; however, a higher level of RC6 is both advisable, given the building's remote location and this level of security may ultimately be necessary for firearms storage licensing. The storage facility would also require improved fire detection and response systems over what is currently installed within the building.
- 118 Additionally, display areas would need to be carefully considered. The nature of the DLI collection demands secure casing capable of displaying high value items in accordance with the necessary standards for such items, or for items loaned under the Government Indemnity Scheme. Such secure display cases can cost thousands of pounds each and financial, security and space implications may ultimately dictate how much of the collection can be displayed at any one time.
- 119 Consideration must also be given to the potential growth of the collection and archive. The archive has approximately doubled in size since 1998,

which equates to an average annual increase of 5 linear metres since relocation to the Durham County Record Office.

- 120 The former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building is not currently fully compliant with part M of the building regulations (access to and use of buildings. Should the building be re-opened, it will need to meet the relevant standards.
- 121 The former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building is therefore, in its current condition, **not** suitable for and would require significant refurbishment to meet the required technical standards and to achieve accreditation of the DLI Archive and Collection. The impacts of not meeting the required technical standards and/or losing accreditation are significant and are addressed fully later in this report.
- 122 In addition to any capital costs associated with bringing the building back into use, and the associated ongoing cost of facilities management, there would also be ongoing operational costs associated with the building and an appropriate staffing model would need to be formulated. When considering options to re-open the building, an estimate of future operating models and running costs will need to be developed, taking into account the future operating model and ongoing building related costs. This will be a material factor in any future decision to reopen the building and will include exploring opportunities for franchising of the café facilities and the ability to attract external investment and support through a friends / voluntary sector operation to minimise the ongoing revenue impacts on the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.

### *Risks*

- 123 The review has evidenced that building in its current condition not be reopened without additional capital investment and without additional investment on top of this will not meet the national standards and requirements to store heritage collections. The required heritage collection standards BS4971.2017 and EN 16893.2018 are found at Appendix 2. Cultural heritage collections are intended to be kept for future as well as current generations. Their long-term conservation can only be achieved if the sites and buildings that house them support this goal and do not place them at risk.
- 124 Building features that are intended to protect collections are primarily structural, involving resilience against external and internal hazards including fire, water, pests, criminal activity and environments that interact with heritage materials. Environmental considerations for collections are influenced by the nature of their materials, their condition and the uses to which they are put. They are also influenced by policies relating to conservation objectives, such as longevity of collections, and by the nature and costs of energy required to achieve these objectives.

- 125 The DLI deconstructed museum model and collection currently has Provisional Museum Accreditation Status – with an application outstanding to achieve full accreditation pending. The Museum Accreditation scheme is run for museums and galleries of all sizes and types across the UK and has led the way in raising museum standards in the UK. The Accreditation Scheme does this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors, and are governed appropriately by encouraging all museums and galleries to meet an agreed standard in how they're run; how they manage their collections and how they engage with their users. Accreditation is the benchmark for a well-run museum / archive.
- 126 The DLI Archive as part of DCRO also has Accredited Status awarded by The National Archive, however, it should be noted that this is dependent on continuing progress towards rehousing the archive collections in as part of the History Centre project.
- 127 If the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building was brought back into use to store and display the DLI Collection and Archive without meeting the required technical standard it is likely that both the DLI Collection and DLI Archive, and by extension DCRO, would lose their accredited status.
- 128 Loss of accreditation would have several implications for the Council including, but not limited to:
- (a) significant reputational damage;
  - (b) loss of access to external funding from bodies that require grantees to hold accreditation;
  - (c) loss of approval as a 'Place of Deposit' status for DCRO; and
  - (d) loss of museums firearms licence.
- 129 Although the DLI Archives do not constitute 'Public Records' under the meaning of the Public Records Act 1958, while in the care of DCRO, the DLI archives benefit from the same level of statutory protection that must be provided for other public and local authority records, and which is required for Archives Accreditation by TNA. Were Accreditation to be lost, the Council would be required to bear the cost of alternative, accredited storage arrangements for items covered by the Public Records Act 1958, such as the records of courts, prisons, Coroner, hospitals and formerly nationalised industries.
- 130 Loss of *Approval as a Place of Deposit* for Public Records carries a reputational as well as a financial risk. The Council would be seen to be unfit to care for archives, uncaring of its heritage, meaning potential depositors would look elsewhere for a safe home for their collections, and some may choose to remove highly significant archives from its care.

- 131 The firearms and related weaponry content of the DLI object holdings are the subject of statutory controls in the form of firearms licensing law for museums, which in addition to mandatory procedures, requires that a museum is accredited in order to be granted a license. Were this licence to be revoked the Council would be required to bear the cost of alternative storage arrangements within an appropriately licenced premises.
- 132 The grant from the NLHF of £1.207 million as part of a £2 million project to support a five-year activity programme would be at risk if the DLI Collection and Archive are withdrawn from the History Centre scheme as the DLI Collection, and its inter-relationship with the other collections being brought together in the DHC, is intrinsic to this funding approval.
- 133 A range of financial grants, advice, training and professional support have been provided by AMOT and the National Army Museum (NAM) in respect of the DLI museum and collection/archive. Over the last five years the DLI Collection and archives have received over £100,000 in direct grants and matched funding. In a joint statement provided to the special Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Board (28 July 2021) AMOT and NAM stated their strong support for move of the DLI Collection and Archive to the new History Centre and indicated that they may look to recover grant funding awarded to the collection and archive following the closure of the DLI building in 2016, should a decision to re-open the dli building as it was in 2015 be taken.

### *Legal implications*

- 134 A review of the legal title has confirmed that there are no issues which would prevent the building reopening under its former use.
- 135 The DLI collection is owned by the DLI Trustees. In 2017, the Trustees and the Council entered into an agreement whereby the Council displays and stores the content and exhibits of the DLI collection. Since the closure of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building, the Council has continued to store the collection and the location and duration of displays have been agreed in partnership with the Trustees. In preparation for the move to the DHC, updated terms have been agreed with and signed by the parties.
- 136 The principles under which the two parties have worked together and which are included in the revised terms include the following:
- (a) the Council will house the Regimental Collection (RC) and properly display the whole/part of the collection to the public in accordance with the requirements of an Accredited Archive/Museum Service;
  - (b) the Charity and the Council shall work in partnership to determine which items in the RC shall be displayed, in which locations and

for what durations. The Council has editorial control so long as it adheres to the requirements of Accreditation;

- (c) the Charity has a right to inspect and if it deems that items are not properly displayed it will notify the Council in writing of any concerns;
- (d) items cannot be removed from the custody of the Council or disposed by the Council without written consent of the Trustees; and
- (e) the Charity can give notice to remove items for display in temporary exhibitions.

137 Whilst these terms were agreed in April 2021, the agreement needs to be formally executed to satisfy the requirements of the NLHF in respect of grant funding awarded for the History Centre project. A delegation is sought from Cabinet to enable officers to complete the relevant formalities.

138 The decision as to whether to re-open the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building is a matter for Cabinet to consider and as part of this fully consider the revenue and capital implications arising from that course of action. However, if it wishes to use the re-opened building to display parts of the DLI Collection, this needs to be agreed with the DLI Trustees in accordance with existing arrangements. The Council would also need to ensure that the display/storage arrangements at the re-opened museum meet the required accreditation.

139 The Council entered into partnership arrangements with Durham University in 2016 when the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery closed and continues to work collaboratively with the University to deliver a programme of temporary exhibitions and public engagement programmes utilising the DLI Collection. It was envisaged that this partnership working would continue at least until the opening of the History Centre, when the medal collection is planned to move to the new collection stores. implications of any changes to these plans will need to be explored further in light of the options to be considered.

### *Indicative forecast of demand / visitors*

140 It is difficult to estimate potential demand and in person visits to a reopened facility without detailed market research and a clear understanding of the service offer. However, given the average footfall over the life of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building it is possible to make an estimate based on previous performance. Between the refurbishment of the building and displays in 2000, and the closure in 2016, on average 36,262 in person visits were made to the dli building each year. This compares well with other similar museum and heritage attractions within Durham City, for example the Oriental Museum which

attracts around 30,000 visitors per year and the University's Museum of Archaeology which attracts around 36,000 visitors per year. This suggests that if the DLI Museum and Art Gallery building were to re-open in line with its former offer that it might also be expected to attract around 36,000 visitors per annum.

### *Impact on plans for the new History Centre*

- 141 The DLI Collection has been a key part of the plans for the Durham History Centre Project (DHC) since its inception in 2018. The History Centre represents a significant capital investment of circa £19.1 million, with construction underway. In the current plans, as well as new exhibition and interpretation spaces, the History Centre will also provide new state-of-the-art strongrooms, collection working rooms and public research facilities for the DLI Collection and Archive which meet, and in some cases exceed, the minimum requirements of BS EN 196893.
- 142 There would be a significant cost impact for the removal of DLI storage requirements from the DHC scheme as design and production of the bespoke storage systems required is well underway, removal of the DLI Collection and Archive from this scheme to re-store and re-display at the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building would also have a significant impact on the interpretation plans for the History Centre.
- 143 The development of interpretation content has been ongoing for more than two years based around a thematic arrangement of stories and collections. The DLI stories are integrated and intrinsically woven through this thematic approach.
- 144 When developing the initial narrative and criteria for what stories are included a series of curatorial principles were agreed. One key principle states: 'stories must be supported by a tangible object from the collections held'. The removal of the DLI collections from the DHC would invariably lead to all references to the DLI potentially being removed within the main narrative if this principle is to be upheld.
- 145 The omission of DLI stories would not only reduce the overall quantity of the offer, but more importantly, it would remove some of the perspectives, human stories and voices that are woven into the narrative. These voices are seen as an important part of creating content that connects to the diverse range of audiences identified as part of the project's development. Alternative 'peopling' would need to be researched and added in to ensure a broad range of human stories from a diverse range of backgrounds and eras is included.
- 146 The interpretive design also considers how specific audience groups will use and engage with the displays. Spaces and resource are included that will appeal to schools and young learners. Some curriculum links are specifically catered for using collections across the proposed thematic arrangement. The omission of a specific portion of the DLI

content could reduce the appeal to those visiting with specific educational needs.

- 147 The thematic arrangement of content within the interpretive scheme does allow for change within stories and collections without too great an impact on the overall narrative. However, the 3D objects and the diversity of stories within the DLI collections will leave significant gaps in several areas across the exhibition space.
- 148 As an initial assessment there are different approaches that could be considered when looking at how the removal of these collections could be accommodated. These have implications for budget, space and visitor experience in varying degrees:
- (a) *Spatial reallocation* - this would be the easiest to identify and make changes from a design perspective and would involve removing all infrastructures dedicated to the DLI collections and adjusting the other areas to suit. It would also, however, remove some of the impactful displays and key 3D objects creating a screen heavy experience with smaller 2D material resigned to drawers or flatter display cases. This would have impact only in the curatorial development of content and some spatial reallocation. There are drawings and schedules to amend, alterations to digital strategies and accommodation of potential replacement content to consider which will require additional design fees and there would also be costs associated with master programme delay;
  - (b) *Virtual collections* - DHC has a strong digital agenda and the integration of virtual DLI collections could fill in some of the gaps that taking out the main content and collections relating to the DLI creates. This would go against some of the principles of interpretation that were established early on in the process whereby stories and collections were selected based on some simple criteria, the main one being representations of the actual collections held at DHC. Virtual collections could slot onto existing media and interactive AV exhibits. This would have impact in the curatorial development of content and some spatial reallocation. Signposting to where the DLI collections are held would be required within the exhibition. Additional design fees would be incurred and there would also be costs associated with master programme delay;
  - (c) *Change Thematic Approach* - This would be the most time consuming and create the most amount of aborted work from a design and content perspective. It would have serious impact on the critical path of the master programme and would incur the greatest additional cost;



- (d) *Partial Removal of DLI* - This option could consider some of the DLI collection remaining at the DHC. The stories of soldiers, their lives, families and impact in and out of the County are an intrinsic thread through the identity of County Durham. The DHC's thematic approach would allow some DLI stories to be told from very different perspectives than a more dedicated military museum. Additional design fees would be incurred and there would also be costs associated with master programme delay.

- 149 Regardless of the options noted above, to assess, respond and reorganise the content and design it is anticipated a minimum period of six months would be needed over the current content and design programme to accommodate the potential loss of the DLI collection and stories from the scheme. This would include reevaluation of the thematic approach, research, identification and inclusion of substitute content, provision of updated design schemes and associated representations for approval.
- 150 There would also be costs incurred in abortive design works and additional design team resource needed. Additional costs would be incurred as a result of the delay to the critical path for the delivery of the DHC.
- 151 The DLI is also represented on the external concrete artwork design, which as part of the curtain walling for the new extension at Mount Oswald is on the critical path. Part of the design brief for the external artwork has always been to reflect the County but also to draw inspiration from the collections held within the DHC. There may be expectation issues on the centre representing the human story of the DLI in the design if those collections aren't present in the main centre.

#### *Impact on storage, display and care of other DCC collections*

- 152 The DLI Collection is one of several heritage collections in the Council's care. In addition to the DLI Collection and DCRO holdings, the Council owns the following heritage collections:
  - (a) DCC Art & Heritage – wide scope ranging from art (with paintings by Tom McGuinness, Norman Cornish and Clement Burlison), to civic regalia and the suit and effects of the Little Count;
  - (b) Durham Learning Resource (DLR) – includes some high value art works by artists such as Lowry and Hockney;
  - (c) The Hackworth Collection – social history artefacts relating to Timothy Hackworth and early railways;
  - (d) The Killhope Collection – minerals, spar boxes and industrial heritage objects and structures; and

- (e) Archaeology – at least 43,000 artefacts and the Historic Environment Record. DCC is the Statutory County Repository for Archaeology and the collection continues to grow year on year with a significant volume of archaeology objects deposited in the last 2-3 years.

153 The Council also currently provides storage space for some social history and architectural items for the Bowes Museum. With the exception of the DLR collection, which is managed by Children’s Services, these collections and the DLI Collection, are all cared for and managed by the Museum and Heritage Manager (1 full time equivalent) within the Council’s Culture, Sport and Tourism service area. Additional collection support comes from volunteers and occasionally via externally funded grants. For example, there is currently a fixed term curatorial assistant role supporting project work on the DLI Collection fully funded by AMOT.

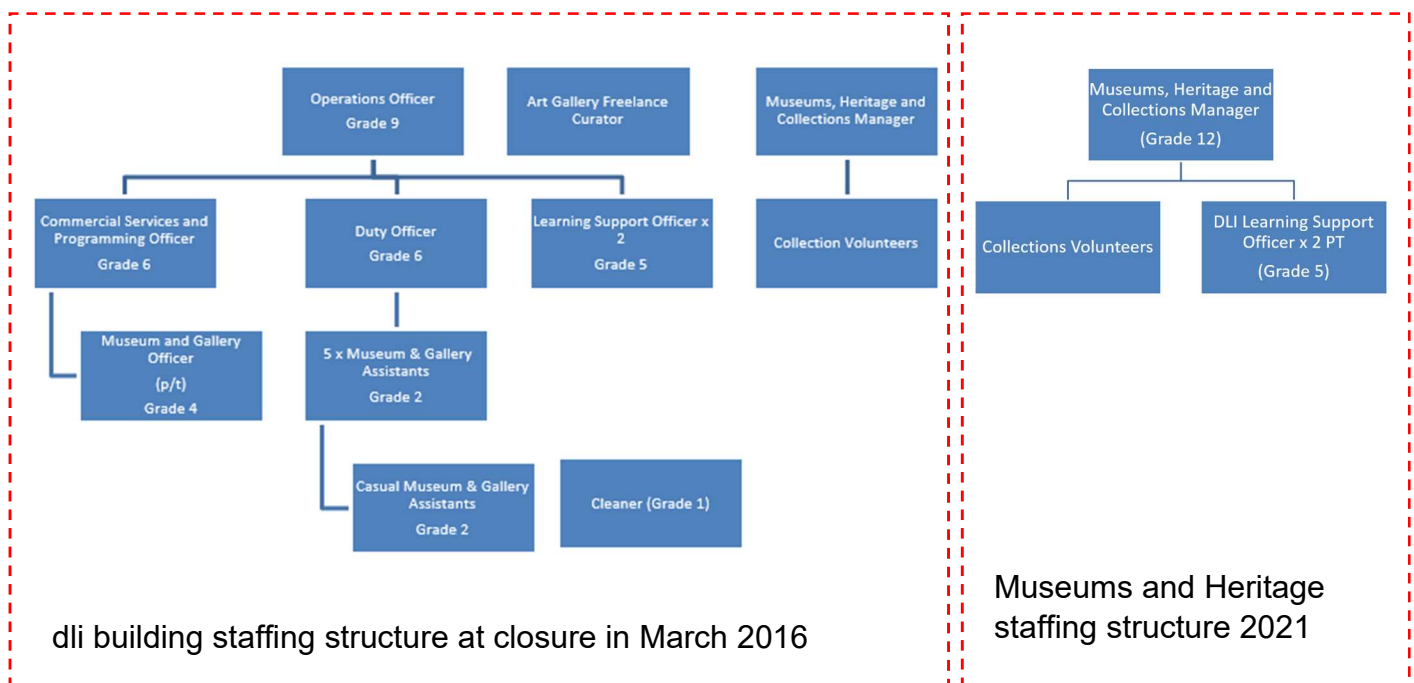


Figure 11. Organograms showing the staffing structure for the dli building and the current structure of the Museums and Heritage Team

154 If the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building was brought back into use to store and display the DLI Collection, additional staffing resource would be required. Any proposed staffing model would need to take account of the requirements of other collections as well as the DLI Collection.

## Options Review Assessment Question 2: What are the options to repurpose the former DLI building/site for an alternative use?

### *Options Appraisal*

- 155 The following categories of use have been considered as part of an options appraisal to consider potential alternative uses for the building:
- **Retail;**
  - **Residential** (Including Apartments and Single House Conversions);
  - **Community** (Including community Art & Sculpture Exhibition Centre & Gardens, Community Group Use, Sports Facilities, Youth Centre & Art House Cinema);
  - **Education** (Including Higher, Further, School Age and Pre-School Age Uses);
  - **Commercial** (Including Café/Restaurant, Small Hotel, Office, Gym and Social Club);
  - **Museum or Art Gallery with café.**
- 156 Avison Young has assessed each of the above categories of use against **Planning, Architectural, Environmental and Market Demand** considerations, providing a rating for each category. These ratings have been included as individual tables within each subsection below, however full details for each are available in the relevant section within the Avison Young Report attached at Appendix 3. A final options appraisal grid comprising all categories and considerations, is included at the end of this section as **Table 6**. For the full reasoning behind each finding, this section should be read in conjunction with the Avison Young Report.

### *Planning Implications*

- 157 The site is located within the Green Belt and therefore policy 20 of the County Durham Plan states that development proposals will be determined in accordance with the NPPF.
- 158 The site is also located within a number of areas designated within the County Durham Plan. The areas have been summarised in **Table 2** below and additional considerations include the number of trees on site (Planning Policy 40) and the site location within a Minerals Safeguarding Area. These considerations and the considerations in Table 1 will apply to the site regardless of any development. A list of policies relevant to the categories are set out in the Avison Young report.

**Table 2.** Showing the Areas Designated Within the County Durham Plan Applicable to the Former DLI Building and the Relevant Policy:

County Durham Plan Designated Area	County Durham Plan Policy
Green Belt	Policy 20
Safeguarded Area	Policy 28
Coalfield Development High Risk Area	Policy 32
Area of High Landscape Value	Policy 39
Conservation Area	Policy 44

- 159 The suitability of each of the options considered has been appraised against the relevant planning considerations. Avison Young has considered **Retail** use to be unsuitable. **Museum** use and some **Community** uses are considered suitable, with **Residential, Education** and **Commercial** uses also considered suitable but with issues to be resolved should these uses be progressed.
- 160 **Table 3** below summarises the suitability for each category and full details for each rating can be found in the **Planning Assessment** section of the Avison Young Report.

**Table 3.** Showing a Summary of Avison Young’s Assessment of Suitability of Uses Based on Planning Considerations.

Category and Sub-Category of Use		Suitability
Community	Art and Sculpture Exhibition Centre & Gardens	Suitable
	Community Groups and Combined Club House	Suitable
	Sports Changing and Club House	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
	Youth Centre	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
	Art House Cinema	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
Museum/Art Gallery (including hybrid option of including café/restaurant)		Suitable (display/exhibition)

Education	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
Commercial	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
Residential	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
Retail	Unsuitable

### *Architectural Review*

- 161 The building was constructed in 1966 and there are a number of issues which would need to be addressed from an architectural perspective for any repurposing.
- 162 The building was purpose designed and the findings in the independent consultant's report is that any repurposing would require a significant amount of alteration. It is also considered that the building does not embrace or maximise the potential of its surroundings. The building is also deep plan, which makes natural lighting and ventilation difficult. The vertical circulation of the building would need to be addressed with the accessibility of the building carefully considered when planning any future use.
- 163 The services of the building would need to be addressed if the building was brought back into use, with the roof and lifts reported to be nearing end of life and one of the oil fired boilers being inoperable, whilst the other is also approaching end of life. Additionally, the small and basic nature of the current kitchen/dining facility would need to be enhanced in order to accommodate larger demand and/or repurposing of the café / restaurant offer.
- 164 In relation to architectural issues, a summary of the suitability of repurposing the building in line with the specified options has been included below in **Table 4**. Full details for each rating can be found in the **Architectural Assessment** section of the Avison Young Report.

**Table 4. Showing a Summary of Avison Young's Assessment of Suitability of Uses Based on Architectural Considerations**

Category and Sub-Category of Use		Suitability
Community	Art and Sculpture Exhibition Centre & Gardens	Suitable
	Community Groups and Combined Club House	Suitable
	Sports Changing and Club House	Suitable
	Youth Centre	Suitable
	Art House Cinema	Suitable
Museum (including hybrid option of including café/restaurant)		Suitable
Education	Full time school	Unsuitable
	Pre-School or Nursery	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
	Further/Higher	Suitable
Commercial	Leisure Facility or Venue	Suitable
	Hotel	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved
	Office	Unsuitable
Residential		Unsuitable
Retail		Unsuitable

### *Market Demand*

- 165 The Avison Young Report sets out high level demand considerations for the uses identified.
- 166 The report states there would be a limited demand for **Retail** use. The limited footfall potential and remoteness of the former DLI building significantly impacting on its retail viability.

- 167 The report concludes that demand for **Residential** use would be limited due to the size of the building and significant alteration and costs required. Additionally, environmental considerations would inhibit measures required to safeguard and 'privatise' the property.
- 168 It is noted that since the building closed, no community groups have made expressions of interest to manage the building therefore the demand for **Community** use (as this is a market demand assessment, this is also defined as 'community-led') is considered unlikely.
- 169 A range of **Education** uses has been considered, however the building would not be suitable for use as a full time school due to the lack of a large multi-purpose hall. Avison Young has considered the potential for the building to be used by a pre and post-school age educational establishments and although there is potential for the building to be adapted for these uses, the report states the demand for either option is likely to be limited.
- 170 **Commercial** uses, comprising café/restaurant, hotel, office accommodation and gym options, have been considered. However due to reasons such as the level of adaptation required, location, changing office use trends and hotel operators in particular mostly now operating 'asset-light' strategies, demand from commercial organisations is considered unlikely and therefore not viable. Avison Young does however, consider there would be demand for a café/restaurant offer alongside other usage of the building which has the ability to create higher footfall.
- 171 The use of the building as a **museum/gallery** with café / restaurant to display visual art and to potentially house other Council collections has been considered. Currently, the Council stores part of the DLI Collection (along with other collections) at Sevenhills; which is leased accommodation. Following the relocation of the DLI Collection from Sevenhills to the new History Centre, the future location of remaining collections (*The Hackworth Collection, DLR, DCC Archaeology, Part of the Killhope Collection and part of the DCC Art & Heritage Collection*) will need to be more fully considered. In addition, there are other collections or objects elsewhere that the Council is responsible for that will require conservation and storage, including items currently stored in County Hall such as paintings from the art collection.
- 172 The independent professional advice is that there is likely to be demand for a quality café/restaurant offer as part of a use for the building which has the potential to generate higher footfall through gallery visitors, tourists and professional research activity being undertaken in the building
- 173 The Durham Tourism destination plan highlights that in comparison to other historical cities, Durham has too few visitor attractions and a

cluster of visitor attractions in Durham City is required. Premier historic cities such as York, Bath, Oxford and Chester have more than one nationally recognised attraction, while York has three very high profile attractions and fourteen within walking distance of the city centre. All comparator locations have a city art gallery. While the UNESCO world heritage site is undoubtedly a draw, Durham lacks critical mass and, as a result, struggles to keep people in the city for longer than half a day. A gallery, exhibition and café venue would potentially make a significant contribution to a critical mass.

- 174 Moreover, a venue of this nature could provide dedicated display space for items from the DLI collection. This would support curatorial connections with the History Centre and other institutions, further adding to critical mass and dwell time in the city.
- 175 Durham is bidding to become UK city of Culture 2025. The bid aims to double the number of overnight stays by visitors, and improved cultural infrastructure such as a new gallery would make a key contribution to this aim.
- 176 A summary of the Consultant’s Market Demand Assessment of the building in line with the specified categories has been included below in **Table 5**. Full details for each rating can be found in the **Market Demand Assessment** section of the Avison Young Report.

*Table 5. Showing a Summary of Avison Young’s Assessment of Market Demand of Uses*

Category and Sub-Category of Use		Level of Demand/Need
Community Led		No Demand / Need
Museum/gallery (including hybrid option of including café/restaurant)		Proven Demand / Need
Education	Full time school	No Demand / Need and Unsuitable
	Pre-School or Nursery	No Demand / Need
	Further/Higher	No Demand / Need
Commercial	Gym	No Demand / Need
	Hotel	No Demand / Need
	Office	No Demand / Need



	Restaurant/Café	No Demand / Need
Residential		No Demand / Need
Retail		No Demand / Need

### *Environmental Considerations*

- 177 Avison Young has carried out a high-level assessment of the external areas around the building and also carried out an environmental appraisal against the range of identified uses.
- 178 The site is considered detached and slightly remote to other functions, heavily wooded to the north/west and with steeply sloping terrain.
- 179 The external areas, although considered adequate, do require some renewal, principally to paving, tarmac and tree encroachment. Further investigation is recommended to the soil/leaf coverage of hard surfaces and retaining walls.
- 180 An important consideration when proposing any works to the external environment is, despite a lack of consecration, that the grounds have served a memorial purpose.
- 181 **Retail** and **Residential** uses are considered to be unsuitable from an environmental perspective. **Education** use would be suitable if issues regarding the exposure of the site could be mitigated, **Community** and **Museum** uses are both deemed suitable and within **Commercial** uses. The Consultant does not deem a hotel to be suitable but considers a leisure facility or venue to have suitability with the grounds utilised to the building's advantage.
- 182 A summary of the Environmental Assessment of the building in line with the specified categories has been included below in **Table 6**. Full details for each rating can be found in the **Environmental Assessment** section of the Avison Young Report.

**Table 6.** Showing a Summary of Avison Young's Assessment of Suitability of Uses Based on Environmental Considerations

Category and Sub-Category of Use	Suitability
Community	Suitable
Museum/gallery (including hybrid option of including café/restaurant)	Suitable
Education	Suitable with Issues to be Resolved

Commercial	Leisure Facility or Venue	Suitable
	Hotel	Unsuitable
	Office	Unsuitable
Residential		Unsuitable
Retail		Unsuitable

### *Legal Title Implications*

- 183 The review has not identified any restrictions or legal impediments which would prevent the building being repurposed for an alternative function. However, should alternative functions be considered, a full and detailed assessment would need to be undertaken.
- 184 There are no known leases or licences which significantly affect the property, other than current use of the car park for Covid-19 testing and the various charity events and runs which take place around the grounds.
- 185 As detailed in the planning implications section, there are a number of Designated Areas which apply to the building. Should repurposing be considered, a detailed appraisal against the relevant policies relating to these Designated Areas and the proposed alternate use must be undertaken.

### *Options Appraisal*

- 186 Within the report, Avison Young has summarised the findings from the planning, environmental, architectural and market demand considerations against the identified categories of use. A summary of the appraisal is included below in **Table 7**, and full details are found in the **Shortlist of Feasible Options** section of the report.

**Table 7.** Showing a Summary of Avison Young’s Shortlist of Feasible Options

Category of Use		Environmental	Architectural	Planning	Market Demand	Legal Title Review	Overall Feasibility
Community (Community managed in the case of market demand)	Community Arts Exhibition Centre & Gardens	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
	Community Group and Club House	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
	Sports Changing and Club House	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Youth Centre	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Art House Cinema	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
Museum/gallery(including hybrid option of including café/restaurant)		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Education	Primary or Secondary	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Pre-School or Nursery	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Further/Higher	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
Commercial	Standalone Restaurant/Café	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Leisure Facility or Venue	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
	Hotel	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Green	Red

	Office						
	Residential						
	Retail						

- 187 **Table 7** above shows the Consultant’s appraisal of suitability for each category, with the exception of Market Demand where it reflects an assessment of the level of demand/need. Additionally, the Market Demand assessment for the Community Building Type refers to a Community managed venture as well as the Community building category.
- 188 The assessment by Avison Young has concluded that a Museum/Gallery option is the most suitable option for any potential future use of the building should the decision be taken to reopen it, though there are a number of cost and operational considerations that need to be considered further.
- 189 Repurposing the building as an art gallery and cultural venue capable of displaying and storing collections and art would increase the Council’s cultural offer and would offer a location for other DCC collections to be displayed. This could include a permanent display of some of the DLI collection on site. Additional facilities such as a catering and small retail offer would add value to the visit and such a facility would potentially support the Council’s bid of being named UK City of Culture 2025.
- 190 However, given the current condition of the building, a significant refurbishment would need to be undertaken and any proposal would need to acknowledge the sensitive nature of the surrounding grounds. The costs for various refurbishment options will need to be carefully considered as part of the next phase of the review. In addition, the operating model and revenue implications arising from reopening the building will need to be carefully considered and taken into account as part of any future decision to reopen the building.

*Grounds of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building*

- 191 When considering any future use of the site, planning considerations must be taken into account as outlined in the planning implications section above.
- 192 The grounds of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building have historically been an important space for the residents of Durham and contain footpaths and walkways which link with many surrounding areas. This is supported by heatmaps, which show the site and surrounding areas with are well used for recreation purposes. The Covid-19 pandemic has also highlighted the positive contribution of being outdoors

towards people's mental health and wellbeing. The site is seen as an important green space to the north of the city.

- 193 As previously mentioned, the grounds have been used as a location to place the ashes of loved ones.
- 194 Given these factors, there is a strong argument to provide, within the grounds an area for reflection and contemplation. Further work will be required on the most appropriate location for such a space along with more detailed work to understand the design, extent and management of the ground along with consideration to any financial, legal and staffing implications.

## History Centre Conclusions

- 195 This report outlines the findings of the review into the options for display and storage and care of the DLI collection and considers the key issues and implications in terms of potential uses of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building, based on the evidence gathered as part of the review and the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in the review process. The report includes an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre, the impact on the care of other DCC collections.
- 196 These considerations are discussed in detail, to answer the key questions of whether the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building can be brought back into use to store and display the DLI Collection and if not, what are the options to repurpose the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and site for an alternative use.
- 197 Firstly, when considering the viability of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery DLI building to be brought back into use to house the DLI Collection, it is important to consider not only the technical standards required to achieve this purpose from a collections and building suitability perspective, but also the wider impacts on other Council collections. These include accreditation and the potential impact upon the Durham History Centre and the County Record service. As part of these considerations, there are numerous implications identified, with the overall conclusion being that it is not considered appropriate to house the full permanent DLI collection in this building going forward.
- 198 The independent advice received demonstrates that the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building currently **does not** meet the required technical standards for both storage and display of the DLI Collection and that there will be additional capital costs incurred in meeting those standards should the Council wish to proceed along those lines. There are capital investment requirements to bring the building up to standard regardless of the use to which the building might be use.

- 199 There are also financial commitments to consider in terms of revenue operations. Whilst the previous running costs of the building are set out in this report, future costs will be dependent on the efficiency of the building and the business model used to provide services from the building. Further work is required to assess the viability of franchising the café / restaurant facilities and to explore alternative delivery models. Any ongoing revenue implications would need to be accommodated in the councils Medium Term Financial Plan in due course.
- 200 If the building was refurbished in a manner which met the required technical standards and renewed display and storage options were purchased, there would still be implications to consider if the decision was made to return the DLI Collection to the former dli building. These include risks to funding and the cost and time implications necessary to amend the key themes of the new History Centre and programme delay as well as reputational damage from abortive work. Funding bodies will review the financial support provided towards the History Centre, having made their original decision based on the inclusion of the DLI collection and archive.
- 201 Additionally, the Council may also lose its museum and archive accreditations which have been provisionally awarded based on current plans. This would be a significant loss, which could lead to the loss of access to external funding, loss of approval as a 'Place of Deposit' for the DCRO, and the loss of the Council's museums firearms licence. The latter two implications would mean the Council could no longer legally store and display firearms from the DLI Collection and Public Records and would need to cover the costs of storage with an alternative licence/ accredited holder.
- 202 Secondly, when addressing the key question of repurposing the building, a range of alternative uses for the building and the grounds has been considered. As part of this assessment, the independent external consultant, Avison Young, has examined considered a museum and/or art related venue to be the most suitable when assessed against the likely market demand and environmental, architectural and planning considerations.
- 203 Repurposing the building as a gallery, exhibition and café venue with dedicated space for display of items from the DLI collection would increase the Council's cultural offer and would offer a location for other DCC collections and potentially other national and international touring exhibitions and would support the Council's bid of being named UK City of Culture 2025.
- 204 In light of the numerous implications of reopening the building under its previous use, this is not recommended but consideration should be given to utilising the building for a similar art, collection or other cultural venue.

- 205 However, even if the building were not to be used for the storage and collection of heritage artefacts, it would still require a substantial refurbishment.
- 206 A suitable feasibility study would need to be undertaken to determine the full extent of works to be carried out, in line with a detailed brief specific to the proposed use of the building.
- 207 Should the building be repurposed and footfall be maintained, there is likely to be demand for a catering offer to supplement the venue. This will require some investment as the existing facilities are inadequate. All options will be explored including leasing to external operators, although the Avison Young report indicates potential limitations for a commercial offer due to location and availability of city centre sites.

### **Background papers**

- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board - Review of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive.

### **Other useful documents**

- Cabinet Report October 2015
- Cabinet Report June 2021

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council has the power to operate museums and art galleries under s12 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Whilst there is no lawful impediment to prevent the Council reopening the DLI Museum in its former guise, doing so may place the Council in breach of its agreements with the DLI Trustees, the consequence of which may be the loss of the DLI Collection and Archive and the associated reputational loss.

### **Finance**

The review has necessitated the commissioning of external independent consultancy support, through the engagement of Director of National Conservation Service and Avison Young. The cost for this is being met from corporate contingencies in the current year.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings of £241,984 were realised from the closure of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery and were factored into the budget, with an ongoing annual revenue cost of £50,000 for the storage and display of the Collection under the revised arrangements proposed and £20,000 for learning staff support being required going forward. In addition, there were one off capital costs of £76,000 to create new collection storage at Sevenhills in Spennymoor, and one-off costs of £175,000 for the creation of a new DLI gallery within Durham University.

The report identifies that there will be a need for capital investment to address backlog maintenance and refurbish it to an acceptable standard to facilitate the re-opening / potential repurposing of the building.

A further feasibility study is to be commissioned the cost of which will be met from corporate contingencies. The outcome of that study will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in early 2022. This will include full consideration of the MTFP and budget impacts of bringing the building back into use – both revenue and capital.

### **Consultation**

In addition to independent views from the National Conservation Service and the findings from the Avison Young report, the review has also considered stakeholder feedback, expressed in the special meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) held on 28 July 2021.

The COSMB meeting was open to the public and was broadcast live. It provided an opportunity to consider the review questions and key stakeholders were invited to submit representations on the issues from their perspectives. The outcome of that meeting has been fully considered as part of the evidence



base for the review and the report prepared by the COSMB is attached at Appendix 4.

## **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equalities Impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the more detailed feasibility.

## **Climate Change**

The current building does not meet relevant BREEAM standards. Before being brought back into use this will be addressed.

## **Human Rights**

None specific to this report.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None specific to this report.

## **Staffing**

The review to date has been undertaken using existing staffing resources, through reprioritising activity, supplemented by the support of external consultants to undertake the independent assessment of the options being explored.

## **Accommodation**

The review has considered the current condition of the building and options for displaying, storing and care of DLI collection in the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building, including a full assessment of risks, financial, legal and value for money issues.

The review has also considered the impacts on the new Durham History Centre, including impact on funding and on the storage, display and care of other DCC collections.

It has been identified that significant investment would be required to bring the building back into use and that the level of investment would be significantly increased in order to bring storage areas up to the relevant British standards. The current storage footprint is too small to reasonably store and conserve the DLI collection.

The review to date has also established that returning the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building to its former use would not have the full support of key stakeholders such as the Army Museum Ogilby Trust and the DLI Trustees, who are committed to the History Centre proposals.

The DLI collection and archive is integral to the Durham History Centre project and withdrawing in its entirety would present significant risk to the Durham

History Centre – a £19.6 million investment that is currently under construction and for which significant National Heritage Lottery Funding has been secured.

The options for repurposing the building are relatively limited, primarily due to location, market conditions and planning restrictions. The analysis has identified that repurposing the building in line with cultural use presented the only real feasible approach, though more work is required to firm up the costs and other implications associated with bringing the facility back into use.

## **Risk**

The review has evidenced that the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building in its current condition could not be reopened without additional capital investment and that additional investment on top of this would be needed to meet the national standards and requirements to store heritage collections. There are also some significant reputational and other risks associated with reopening the building in line with its previous use – not least of which the impact on the Durham History centre project and a range of external funding arrangements.

All options considered have been assessed against the evidence available including an assessment of key issues such as planning, building, collection implications, future viability / market assessment and any legal considerations.

Based on the work undertaken the refurbishment of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building as a gallery, exhibition and café venue including dedicated space for display of DLI collection items – to complement the displays at the History Centre (noting the History Centre will be the permanent home of the DLI collection) is considered to be the preferred solution.

Further detailed feasibility studies are required to progress this option. This will include full consideration of the MTFP and budget impacts of bringing the building back into use – both revenue and capital – and will include the viability of franchising the café / restaurant facilities and explore alternative delivery models. Any ongoing revenue implications would need to be accommodated in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan in due course.

## **Procurement**

The review has necessitated the commissioning of external independent consultancy support, through the engagement of Avison Young. Further consultancy support will be required to help complete the next stage of the review. The procurement of any consultants to support this review has been undertaken in line with the Council's Contract Procedure rules.

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## **Appendix 2: Report of National Conservation Service**

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Attached as a separate document.

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## **Appendix 3: Report of Avison Young**

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Attached as a separate document.

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**Appendix 4: Minutes of DCC Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board meeting on 28 July 2021**

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Attached as a separate document.

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CMR 169 07-08-01

## **Durham Light Infantry Museum & Gallery - A review of suitability for use for permanent storage and display of archive and object collections**

### **Executive Summary**

- i. This report is the outcome of an assessment of information and site visits to two DLI collections-holding facilities and to the, now closed, DLI museum building at Aykley Heads, Durham, a former location of the DLI object collections. The purpose is to help inform a review of the decision in 2015 to close the museum and to consider whether and how the building might be used in the future for any DLI-related display and activities.
- ii. Currently DLI-related collections are held in three locations: the Durham County Record Office, where the DLI archives are stored and used; the DLI Research and Study Centre at Sevenhills, Spennymoor, where most of the object collections are stored, as well as other Durham County heritage collections, and Durham University, where the DLI medals collection is stored currently (not seen). A new Durham History Centre is under development, to store and display collections, including the combined DLI collections together at one site along with other heritage and archival collections.
- iii. The needs of the types of heritage materials that form the DLI collections are described. Most of the materials are vulnerable to extremes of humidity and temperature and wide and rapid fluctuations. They are historically important and valuable and require a high level of security and of protection from fire, flood and other hazards. The nature of the necessary protection and of buildings that provide it are set out in two British Standards and these were used in this study to define both what is needed in a suitable repository and how current locations and the Aykley Heads museum building compare.
- iv. The old DLI museum site at Aykley Heads is described in some detail (see section 3.). It was always inadequate in some respects, even against earlier standards, and these weaknesses are set out. The building was not constructed such that it could meet the required standards currently and would need very considerable investment just to bring it up to a quality such that it could be used as a general cultural venue, c. £2 - 3 million. To upgrade it further to allow for heritage collections permanently to be displayed and stored at the site would cost more, probably another £2.5 million.
- v. The proposed new History Centre represents a massive improvement in the protection of the DCRO and the DLI collections, as well as meeting the needs of The National Archives and others that have statutory and quasi-statutory authority to assess and evaluate the levels of protection provided by local authority archives and museums. In this context, it would be important to consider not only the capital cost of upgrading Aykley Heads but also the duplication of revenue expenditure required. The site, however, could be refurbished at a much lower cost sufficient to provide a cultural events and performance location and possibly as a memorial and place of reflection, however it should be noted that there already exists a formal DLI memorial garden at Durham Cathedral which is recognised by the Regiment.

1 NCS membership is provided through a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales no. 7707608, VAT reg. 202361951. NCS consultancy is provided through Conservation Ltd, a company registered in England & Wales no. 6659286 VAT reg. 981696269. Both companies are registered at 21 Albemarle St, Mayfair, W1S 4BS.

## **I. Introduction and context**

I.1 This report is the outcome of an assessment of information and site visits to DLI collections-holding facilities and to the, now closed, DLI museum building at Aykley Heads, Durham, a former location of the DLI object collections. The purpose is to help inform a review of the decision in 2015 to close the museum and to consider whether and how the building might be used in the future for any DLI-related display and activities.

I.2 Currently DLI-related collections are held in three locations: the Durham County Record Office, where the DLI archives are stored and used; the DLI Research and Study Centre at Sevenhills, Spennymoor, where most of the object collections are stored, as well as other Durham County heritage collections, and Durham University, where the DLI medals collection is stored currently. A new Durham History Centre is under development, to store and display collections, including the combined DLI collections together at one site along with other heritage and archival collections.

I.3 An assessment of the qualities of the respective sites must be carried out objectively and for this review they are evaluated against the British Standards for managing such collections and for the buildings that hold collections, BS 4971:2017 and BS EN 16893:2018 respectively.<sup>1</sup> These standards' committees and their work on drafting and developing them is led by BSI and by the NCS consultant employed for this review, who is chairman of both of the committees. These standards are defined by the needs of the different types of collections that suitable buildings will hold.

I.4 These standards also underpin the respective Accreditation schemes for Archives (directed by The National Archives - TNA) and for Museums (directed by the Arts Council England - ACE).<sup>2</sup> The DLI archives do not constitute 'Public Records' under the meaning of the Public Records Act 1958. Those pre-1920 records relating to DLI that are Public Records were sent to the then Public Records Office (now TNA) by the relevant ministry at the time of the Act, 1958, and the post-1920 records are held by the Ministry of Defence in Glasgow. While in the care of DCRO, the DLI collections benefit from the same level of statutory protection that must be provided for other, Public and Local Authority Records and which requires Archives Accreditation by TNA. The firearms and related weaponry content of the museum holdings are the subject of statutory controls in the form of firearms licensing law for museums, which in addition to mandatory procedures, requires that a museum is Accredited in order to be granted a license.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. The DLI collections & their needs**

2.1 The heritage collections of the DLI can broadly be categorised as being archives, objects and art works. The collections were in part the residue of heritage items that the regiment accrued over the many decades from the precursor, the 68<sup>th</sup> Durham Regiment of Foot (Light Infantry) formed in 1758 and from the time of its amalgamation with the 106<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot (Bombay Light Infantry) in 1881. The collections predominantly date up to the time of the DLI's eventual merger with other Light Infantry regiments into The Light Infantry in 1968, later The Rifles.

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<sup>1</sup> BS 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archival and library collections*, BSI, London 2017; BS EN 16893:2018 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections*, BSI, London 2018

<sup>2</sup> See: Archive Service Accreditation <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation/> and UK Museum Accreditation Scheme <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/>

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-or-manage-a-section-5-shooting-club-or-museum-licence#museum-licence>



2.2 A fuller description of the collections can be found in other documentation but in summary the museum and art collections comprise approximately 15,000 items, while the archive collection currently has over 75,000 individual items, with around 53,000 catalogue entries. The objects and art comprise the entire museological holdings of the DLI (with some archival materials within it). The DLI archives represent 1.4% of the total County Record Office holdings. All of the archive holdings are hygroscopic (able to absorb moisture) in nature (paper, photographs, parchment, leather and cloth), requiring suitable packaging and an environment in storage that avoids risks of high humidity (above 60% relative humidity - RH) and, particularly in use, the risks of very low humidity (less than 35% RH). These materials need to be held in a moderate to low temperature (annual average of less than 18 °C) and protected from temperature levels above 24 °C. A major proportion of the museum holdings are similarly sensitive to RH and heat, including as they do textiles, leather and wood in many examples (for example handheld firearms) where these materials are combined with non-hygroscopic metals, which presents the need for a measure of stability in RH.

2.3 The DLI archives are predominantly from the 20<sup>th</sup> century but also contain much material from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, including unique and highly significant early photographs. The papers used for documentation and correspondence, particularly those produced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>, are very vulnerable to acidification of their fibres and consequent discolouration and embrittlement. While in some cases the severity of these inherent weaknesses can only be partly ameliorated by remedial treatments, a key protection is to ensure they are not continuously exposed to relatively high temperatures, above 24 °C and not continuously above c.20 °C. Such temperature, all year round, accelerates their decomposition, further exacerbated by periods of elevated RH. The most effective passive protection of these materials is good packaging (using stable materials that do not themselves contaminate the documents) and control over the ambient temperature in storage in such a way that any warmer seasonal periods are offset by much cooler periods. This does not require constant mechanical control unless the building housing the collections is inadequate (poor insulation, extensive internal heating, warm lights etc.).

2.4 Similarly, episodes of very high RH present an extreme risk to these and similar hygroscopic materials and the most effective protection is packaged storage in air-tight, water-tight and heavily insulated store locations where there are no extraneous water supply and drainage routes and where the construction prevents external flooding and leaks. The impact of very high RH, consistently above 65%, caused by air infiltration through the porous fabric of unsuitable building construction, by ventilations systems and by leaks etc. is the promotion of mould germination on what are very nutritious materials for fungi and bacteria. Existing fungal infections in buildings enhance the likelihood of re-growth and contamination of collections even at relatively moderate RH peaks reaching 65% for fairly short periods. Mould infections of archival and other hygroscopic materials are extremely damaging, both in the short and the longer term and high spore levels in buildings present a health risk to staff and users.<sup>4</sup>

2.5 All of the archival collection and much of the museum collection need to be protected from insect pests and rodents. The textiles in particular are at constant risk of moth and other insects that use silk (e.g. flags) and wool (e.g. uniforms) for their eggs and the subsequent larvae consume them. These materials need to be protected when on display from the damaging effects of light exposure over time and will decay rapidly when exposed to Ultra Violet radiation from sunlight (including North light)

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: World Health Organisation *Guidelines for indoor air quality: dampness and mould*  
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789289041683>

and some older lamps such as fluorescent strips and halogen spotlights. Cumulative exposure on display, even without UV radiation, causes inks, colours and silver halide photographic emulsions to fade.

2.6 It should go without saying that most archive and museum objects are of value, in market terms as well as for historical and emotional reasons. This makes them at risk of being stolen, particularly from displays and reading rooms and even from stores. In addition, a collection that contains weaponry and armaments represents a very high risk of theft and may be a potential for terrorist attention as a source. In addition to the law surrounding weaponry, there are security standards for the protection of heritage collections, most specifically those in the building standard BS EN 16893:2018 chapter 7. These emphasise a high level of attack resistance for a museum and archive building, as well as a complex and sophisticated system of invigilation, detection and response.

2.7 The needs of the DLI collections are only partly met by their two key current locations: DCRO and Sevenhills. The DCRO archive stores are very well managed by staff but within a far from ideal setting, on the lower ground floor of County Hall and in numerous locations across the site. Old vault rooms and more recently offices and print works rooms have been racked out and fitted with fire and security infrastructure as far as possible. These spaces do not have the structural fire resistance required by BS EN 16893 and their environments are unstable. Air conditioning systems are installed in the older stores but these are antiquated and, because the structure is not sufficiently air tight or thermally stable, they struggle to maintain suitable conditions, while generating a considerable annual revenue cost in energy, repairs and maintenance. There remains the ever present risk of a fire starting in the offices above and around the record office and spreading into or even collapsing into the archives (as happened for example at Norwich Central Library in 1994), of flooding caused by fire fighting in that eventuality or simply because of drainage or supply problems further up the building, and resulting contamination from asbestos throughout the building. Only a modern purpose-built, standards-compliant store will meet the needs of the DCRO collections and do so without continuous recourse to air conditioning systems and the revenue expenditure and carbon impact that this causes for the County. TNA has only offered Accreditation for the DCRO service because of the plans to relocate to a purpose-built history centre, precisely because the current accommodation is so inadequate.

2.8 The second principal store location for DLI collections is at Sevenhills, Spennymoor. Here, there is a research room and office, for people wishing to learn more about DLI history, and two principal storage areas for the DLI object collections. Staff have been doing a superb job in packaging and managing the collections but the stores are far from being suitable to current standards. The main store has only a suspended ceiling below the roof, and walls and doors do not meet the necessary security standard. The environment is very unstable, with very high RH in summer and very low RH in winter. There is a form of air conditioning system in place but it appears to provide only ventilation and monitoring data shows clearly it cannot provide stability.

2.9 The other DLI store is simply a caged area at the end of the very large library resources warehouse structure at the site. RH conditions are wildly erratic and temperature largely uncontrolled. There is a considerable risk of pest infestation in this location especially as there is no means of containing the space.

2.10 There are other heritage collections stored in the warehouse at Spennymoor. The County's archaeology archive and finds, including human remains, are stored there in new purpose building mobile racks. Staff have been systematically working through the collections to package them, with some more vulnerable objects inside microclimate boxes, protected from extremes of RH. However, the vast majority of the collections are only in standard card boxes and as such are at risk of environmentally induced deterioration, particularly mould germination, as there is no way consistently to manage the RH

for most of the collection. There is a small art store at one end of the office section of the building. The art works are well packaged and this does probably provide some buffering and protection from any extremes of RH, but the temperature cannot be controlled. The door to the store is not sufficiently secure and would not provide the necessary resistance were a burglar to enter the site out of hours.

2.11 A very concerning aspect about the DLI collections being held at Sevenhills is the fire risk: the DLI centre sits atop a packaging business warehouse. In addition to the lack of control of fire safety measures below, the fire load of stored cardboard packaging is immense and if a fire were to start it would spread up to reach the DLI collections above it (the principle objects store) and quite probably cause the collapse of the floor structure, tipping the collections into the fire. There is a sprinkler system in the building but it is not clear if it extends to the packaging business premises below nor whether the necessary fire maintenance measures are fully complied with. It is a fundamental requirement of the standards that a heritage store location is not within a shared management structure such as this, where the separation between the two appears so vulnerable. The same may be said for other heritage collections at the Spennymoor site.

2.12 The development of the proposed History Centre is intended to remedy the storage needs of the DCRO and DLI collections. They will provide the necessary separation of management, the fire resistance, security resistance and flood protection required by BS EN 16893. They will reduce the annual revenue costs of managing environment, reduce the services' carbon impact and ensure that they are preserved. (It will not receive the other object collections that DCC is currently looking after at Spennymoor, so they will continue to be exposed to the risks referred to.) In addition to massively improving the qualities of protection afforded to DCRO and DLI collections it will also offer a modern and safe environment for researchers and those wishing to explore displayed collections. It will also ensure that DCC's archives and the DLI museum collections achieve Accreditation, opening doors to programme and conservation funding that are otherwise closed (not least the National Heritage Memorial fund's £2 million contribution to programme for these collections).

### **3. Building qualities - Aykley Heads DLI Museum & Gallery**

3.1 The DLI museum at Aykley Heads was constructed in the late 1960s initially as the County Museum, then it became an arts venue and subsequently it was decided that it would also be the focus for the DLI collections. It is largely of steel frame and concrete construction and has been modified a number of times since. It is on a split level of ground, cut into a hillside, with originally a glazed 'curtain wall' under a rendered concrete façade, the glazing along the lower ground floor front and glazing at the entrance on ground level at the side, as viewed from the parkland steeply sloping before it (see figures 1., 2. and 3. below, the glazing no longer present). In the early 1970s the glazed wall was attacked and a Bren machine-gun was stolen, and in the 1980s another, similar attack culminated in the theft of silverware. These thefts resulted in substantial changes to its external appearance, for improved security. The glazed areas were blocked in and a new entrance lobby built onto the side at the lower ground level. These attacks were reported widely and may be said to have heightened an understanding in the museums world for greater structural security standards.

3.2 In 1999-2000, the building and the Regimental displays underwent a comprehensive HLF-funded refurbishment. The lower ground level comprises an added lobby and a display area for DLI collection materials. Upstairs on 'floor 2' or the higher ground level, were further display areas, including one for the medal collections, and access to a workshop area and two stores leading from the workshop. There was also access from that level to a landing with a lift and stairs to the top floor, which comprises large temporary exhibition and events spaces and staff offices.



Figures 1., 2. & 3. Views of Aykley Heads including loading entrance, formerly glazed public entrance.

3.3 The display facilities on the lower ground level are now empty and partly dismantled (see figures 4. and 5. below). The cases have no internal climate buffering facilities ('gel trays') that would otherwise permit stabilisation of RH inside them, something that is standard nowadays. The larger of the cases present risks to staff in requiring very large sheets of glass to be removed in order to access the vitrine (the space inside a display case). The cases are lit internally with fluorescent strip lights. It was reported that access to alter the lighting was challenging, being from the top of the wall panel/case structure. Spotlights in the ceiling complement the case lights and the bulbs appear to be LEDs. The whole display area is run down and partly dismantled. The absence of seals and of the capacity to buffer cases means that they could no longer be used to display heritage safely. It is likely that an air conditioning system, with vents visible in the ceiling, was relied upon to try to control temperature and RH of the whole room, rather than fitting modern standard display cases. Interviews with staff including those working in the years before closure in 2016, revealed testimony such as:

*“The 2000 refurbishment, though costing a million plus, was underfunded, with the resulting displays, though superficially well done, plagued with problems (poor lighting, unsealed cases, inadequate labelling, etc). Also, the ‘new’ displays of 2000 had an expected shelf-life of just ten years, but there was no planning or...investment for a renewal [after that time]... the displays were unchanged when the building closed in April 2016.”*

3.4 The air conditioning system is understood to have had to be repaired regularly and was always “inadequate”. This is the most common experience of museum and archive managers across the UK so it is unsurprising that Aykley Heads was no exception. (This very fact has led to a change in strategy in the sector, embodied in BS EN 16893, aiming to reduce reliance on mechanical ventilation for climate control and to reduce their high levels of annual maintenance and energy costs and their carbon impact.) The DLI museum was further disadvantaged by being primarily constructed in the 1960s, with lower levels of insulation and large single glazed windows.

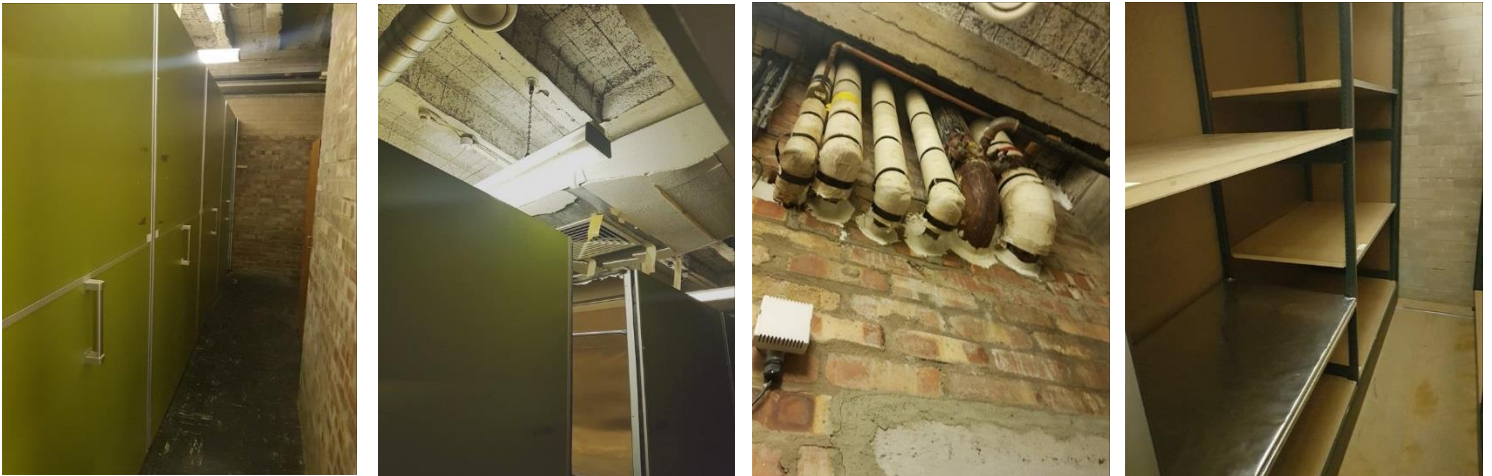


Figures 4. & 5. Old display areas at Aykley Heads, including dismantled medal cases.

3.5 The store areas were also inspected for this report. One of them, formerly used for objects, textiles and some framed items, leading off from the workshop space, is in a dilapidated state. The large format mobile racks are constructed from chipboard and hardboard on a light steel frame. No aspect of the equipment meets the current standard for heritage shelf equipment (ref. BS 4971:2017 section 5.6). Heating pipework that runs through the workshop was routed through the store wall into the store in order to then be directed upward, to avoid a steel joist near the wall on the workshop side (instead of routing it up before the joist) and so would have constantly affected the internal climate. The environment was supposed to be managed using the ventilation systems and the ductwork for this, with degrading joints and insulation, is clearly visible. The walls appear to be single skin brickwork and the door does not fully seal and provides low attack resistance and minimal fire resistance, well below that required by the current building standard (ref. BS EN 16893 chapters 6 and 7). The store room now could not be used as a store without a new, fire, security, air-tight membrane and waterproof construction built inside it. Being on the first floor it would not be the optimum for a low energy store, benefiting from an uninsulated floor slab. No aspect of this room currently meets BS EN 16893 standards and storage of firearms in this room may be prohibited without greater security protection.

3.6 The capacity of this store is insufficient for the object collections, although if more were on display on a rotation elsewhere in the building this issue might be ameliorated. A second store, in better general condition but with no racking, also leads off the workshop. It is small, c. 3m x 5m maximum, and would provide only limited further capacity if fitted with racking. A pier towards one corner reduces workable space for racking. It is constructed in the same way as the first store and similarly would need an internal construction to provide the standards required but this would reduce its capacity as a store even more. There has been a suggestion that it might house the DLI archives but at the moment it is not only too small but is so far away from meeting the standards that without substantial investment it could never achieve Accreditation. The archives were specifically moved out of this building in 1998 for this reason. They have doubled in quantity since. If the DLI museum site were to be used to store collections, the only practical approach would be to construct a new store elsewhere within the envelope of the building.



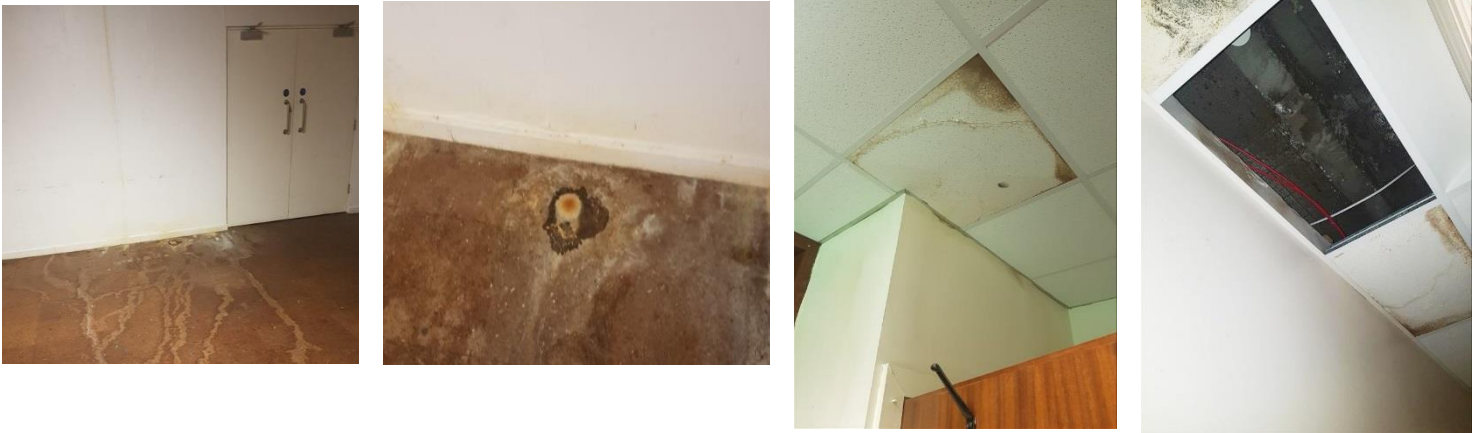


Figures 6., 7., 8. & 9. Views of the objects store, racking, ductwork, wall and pipework.

3.7 Facilities for exhibition and events are substantial, with large exhibition rooms and, although rudimentary, a loading bay. The lift attending the loading bay is seriously inadequate and would now be deemed unacceptably small and narrow for human use by Building Regulations. A reconfiguration of use of space within the building might make it viable for events, performances and short-term exhibitions that do not require support from the Government Indemnity Scheme (which would require standards-compliant security improvements to the structure and the infrastructure and approval of these by the ACE National Security Adviser). The display area and fittings, described above, are degraded and no longer fit for purpose. The medal cases in the gallery on floor 2. were largely dismantled and are no longer useable. But the scale of the spaces suggests they may lend themselves to being repurposed. The main weaknesses of the building are the roof and the position, cut in the hill-side with possibly inadequate water-proofing.



Figures 10., 11., 12. & 13. Examples of biological activity and evidence of the vulnerable position of the building, cut into the hill-side, enhancing the potential for damp penetration at ground level.



Figures 14., 15., 16. & 17. Examples of persistent historic water penetration problems (see 3.6 above).

3.8 The building was apparently plagued by roof leaks from the time it was built; it was re-roofed twice between its construction and closure. In addition, one leak overnight caused by failure of the air conditioning equipment ran through the ventilation ductwork and was so extreme that water poured out of the building when staff opened up the building in the morning. Some leaks were so persistent that they have resulted in deterioration of the internal fittings and even the build-up of calcite deposits (the beginnings of a stalagmite, see image above). The signs of leaks are visible everywhere throughout the building, with stains on the floors, down the walls and in suspended ceiling tiles. These are not recent stains, since closure: they present evidence of the structural weakness of the roof and possibly also of the concrete and steel frame itself. This in turn has led to high moisture content through parts of the building and fungal infections on woodwork for example. The large single glazed windows would have contributed to this in winter when the heating was fully operational, with condensation running down the window panes, rotting the sills and resulting in a build-up of fungal and other biological activity such as moss and lichen *inside* the building (see images above).

3.9 These problems are not insurmountable. With substantial investment the building might be re-usable for cultural events and short term temporary exhibitions, both of art and of historical material, including relating to the history of the DLI. The problems of the leakiness of the concrete envelope need to be investigated and resolved (if indeed they can be resolved) and the internal contamination cleaned up. There are asbestos floor tiles in several areas of the building which may need to be removed. The old displays need to be stripped out and the windows and frames will need to be removed and replaced with modern, double-glazed and secure units. It is possible that the heating pipework will need to be removed, the air conditioning system and infrastructure needs to be stripped out and the old oil-fired boiler is no longer suitable for a low carbon trajectory. All of these things can be done to make it a publicly accessible site, but only at a considerable price. Those 'envelope' works would be essential before beginning to plan for internal structural additions to permit long-term storage and use of priceless heritage collections. The cost of making it an accessible and economic cultural venue, without stored collections, may be in the region of £2-3million depending on the findings of a structural building survey and the level of quality of finishes and facilities. Currently much needs to be stripped out and it may be more cost effective to hollow out the building where it can be, address any structural issues and construct new internal spaces. As long as galleries can be made secure with an internal security partition at ground level, it may even be possible to re-instate the more attractive glazed walls at entrance level.

3.10 To upgrade it further to be a place of deposit for archives and for military history objects may require a further £2.5million or more. It will require a stand-alone store constructed inside the envelope of the building, with a four-hour fire resistant structure, heavily insulated and rendered air tight inside as well as water tight. The store will need to have a security resistance of RC4 minimum to meet BS EN 16893 for general heritage collections, but a level of RC6 is advisable because its location is fairly remote and it may be that this level is needed anyway for firearms storage licensing.<sup>5</sup> Infrastructure and management need upgrading so that detection and response provision prevents or detects attackers *before* they reach the store. If built on what is probably an uninsulated floor at lower ground or ground level, the store structure will benefit from the thermal shielding of the outer structure and the natural cooling effect of a ground-contact slab, avoiding the need for unsustainable cooling or air conditioning systems and thereby helping the council meet its negative carbon emission targets and being compliant with BS EN 16893:2018 (see clause 5.3 and all sub-clauses). The fire detection and response systems for the store would need to be improved over the existing basic point smoke detectors.

3.11 In scale, as an estimate the store might need to be able to hold 100% of the collections even if less than that proportion is in store at any one time, as this allows also for growth as well as flexibility for programme in the galleries (the archive has been growing at approximately 5 linear metres per annum since being moved to DCRO). The store structure and the racking necessary for the collections will cost in the region of £1.5million.

3.12 The display areas that might house original DLI material would need to be more secure and better managed environmentally and structurally than would cultural events spaces. They could be suitable for some forms of art exhibitions, but not of high value work and those where items are loaned under the Government Indemnity Scheme, since these would require the higher level of security, fire protection and environmental qualities needed by a collection like the DLI. Display cases that meet the necessary standards for high value items cost many thousands each, so careful planning would need to be given as to how much original material and how many medals and firearms are on display at any one time, if the costs of suitable quality displays can be met. Improvements over and above the basic cultural events location, allowing for secure display, would be likely to cost a further £1million.

3.13 These construction, storage and display qualities are the same features that have been designed into the new History Centre, so there is also a need to consider the value of duplication. With the County's archives alone running to 5 miles of racking without the DLI archive, and with the existing, largely empty County Hall site deemed only temporarily acceptable by The National Archives, there is no practical or economic basis for an 'either or' scenario involving the old DLI museum and gallery building, so use of the DLI building, whether or not for DLI collections storage, is only viable as an 'extra'. This perhaps reinforces any suggestion that conversion of the DLI museum building to a venue alone, one that does not store collections permanently but has the capacity to provide educational and memorial events and displays periodically and as a place of reflection, is a more viable option and would avoid spending more money on re-construction beyond that minimum, using the History Centre as the collection depository.

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<sup>5</sup> For RC classes see BS EN 1627:2011 *Pedestrian doorsets, windows, curtain walling, grilles and shutters - Burglar resistance - Requirements and classification*, BSI London 2011



# **Former Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum and Durham Art Gallery**

Options Appraisal – Final Report

August 2021

# Contents

1.	Executive Summary .....	3
2.	Introduction .....	4
3.	Review of Local Environment .....	6
4.	Review of Existing Building .....	10
5.	Planning Review .....	13
6.	Review of Market Demand .....	15
7.	Title Review .....	23
8.	Overall Feasibility of Potential Uses .....	24
9.	Conclusions.....	27

## Appendices

Appendix I Detailed Planning Appraisal

**Prepared By: Dale Robinson**

**Status: Final Report**

**Date: August 2021**

**For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited**

# 1. Executive Summary

1.1 Durham County Council is undertaking a review of the decision to close the DLI Museum and Durham Art Gallery (housed in a single building) and as part of this process have commissioned Avison Young, supported by NORR architects, to prepare an independent review of the possible options for the future use of the building.

1.2 Our work has comprised a high level review of a long list of potential options for the future reuse of the building to assess their suitability by having regard to the following factors:

- Suitability of the surrounding site / environment and how they influence and impact the alternative uses / functions for the building.
- Suitability of the existing building for an alternative function / use and how easy it will be to repurpose the existing building, highlighting any major constraints / impediments that may prejudice the conversion of the property for a particular use.
- Planning considerations and potential planning restrictions / constraints that may prevent the conversion of the building for alternative uses.
- Market demand for the potential alternative uses. Any alternative use(s) for the building / site will need to be market driven and supported by clear evidence of market demand.
- Legal /title review to highlight any restrictive covenants / legal impediments that might prevent the repurposing of the building for an alternative use.

1.3 Drawing on this information we have identified that the DLI Museum and Art Gallery is a purpose designed building and as such any new function will require a significant amount of alteration to the façade unless a similar use / function is chosen.

1.4 In addition the building does not maximise, the potential of its surroundings and this is something that could also be addressed if reused/repurposed in the future.

1.5 Based on the findings of our review of the long list of potential options the only overall feasible option, is to reuse the building for the storage and display / exhibition of other Council collections, which are not being transferred to the new history centre, alongside a new and improved ancillary kitchen, café / restaurant.

1.6 This report has been prepared for the sole use of our client, (Durham County Council) based on the scope of work and on the terms and conditions agreed with our client. It may not be used or relied on (in whole or part) by anyone else, or for any other purpose or in any other contexts, without our prior written agreement.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The DLI museum at Aykley Heads was constructed in the late 1960's initially as the County Museum, then it became an arts venue and subsequently it was decided that it would also be the focus for the DLI collections<sup>1</sup> until its closure in 2016.
- 2.2 The decision to close the museum was taken because of the increasing standards associated with the collections care and environment meaning the artifacts could no longer be stored and displayed safely within the existing building.
- 2.3 Currently, DLI-related collections are held in three locations: the Durham County Record Office, where the DLI archives are stored and used; the DLI Research and Study Centre at Sevenhills, Spennymoor, where most of the object collections are stored, as well as other Durham County heritage collections, and Durham University, where the DLI medals collection is stored.
- 2.4 A new purpose built Durham History Centre is currently under development, within the Grade II listed Mount Oswald, to store and display collections, including the combined DLI collections together at one site along with other heritage and archival collections. It is anticipated that this new facility will be open to the public in 2023.

### Scope of Work

- 2.5 The Council are now undertaking a review of the decision to close the museum and as part of this process have commissioned Avison Young, supported by NORR architects, to prepare an independent review of the possible options for the future use of the building.

- 2.6 Our work has comprised a high level review of a long list of potential options for the future reuse of the building to assess their suitability by having regard to the following factors:

- Suitability of the surrounding site / environment and how they influence and impact the alternative uses / functions for the building. Please refer to Section 3. The Council is considering the possibility of converting / dedicating the surrounding grounds as a memorial garden but this will be the subject of a separate options appraisal. This assessment is solely focussed on the reuse of the building and, therefore, will not prejudice the Council's aspirations to create a memorial garden.
- Suitability of the existing building for an alternative function / use and how easy it will be to repurpose the existing building, highlighting any major constraints / impediments that may prejudice the conversion of the property for a particular use. Avison Young and NORR architects inspected the building and the immediate environment with Richard Hill and Keith Nesbitt (DCC) on 18th June. No detailed inspection was undertaken. Please refer to Section 4.
- Planning considerations and potential planning restrictions / constraints that may prevent the conversion of the building for alternative uses. Please refer to Section 5.
- Market demand for the potential alternative uses. Any alternative use(s) for the building / site will need to be market driven and supported by clear evidence of market demand. Please refer to Section 6.
- Legal / title review to highlight any restrictive covenants / legal impediments that might prevent the repurposing of the building for an alternative use. Please refer to Section 7.

<sup>1</sup> The DLI collection includes uniforms, equipment, weapons, silver, photographs, and battlefield relics covering the whole history of the Regiment from its formation in 1758 to the final laying-up of the Colours in 1968 in Durham Cathedral

- 2.7 Drawing on this information we have identified those uses that appear 'feasible' alternatives. Please refer to Section 8.
- 2.8 This report has been prepared for the sole use of our client, (Durham County Council) based on the scope of work and on the terms and conditions agreed with our client. It may not be used or relied on (in whole or part) by anyone else, or for any other purpose or in any other contexts, without our prior written agreement.

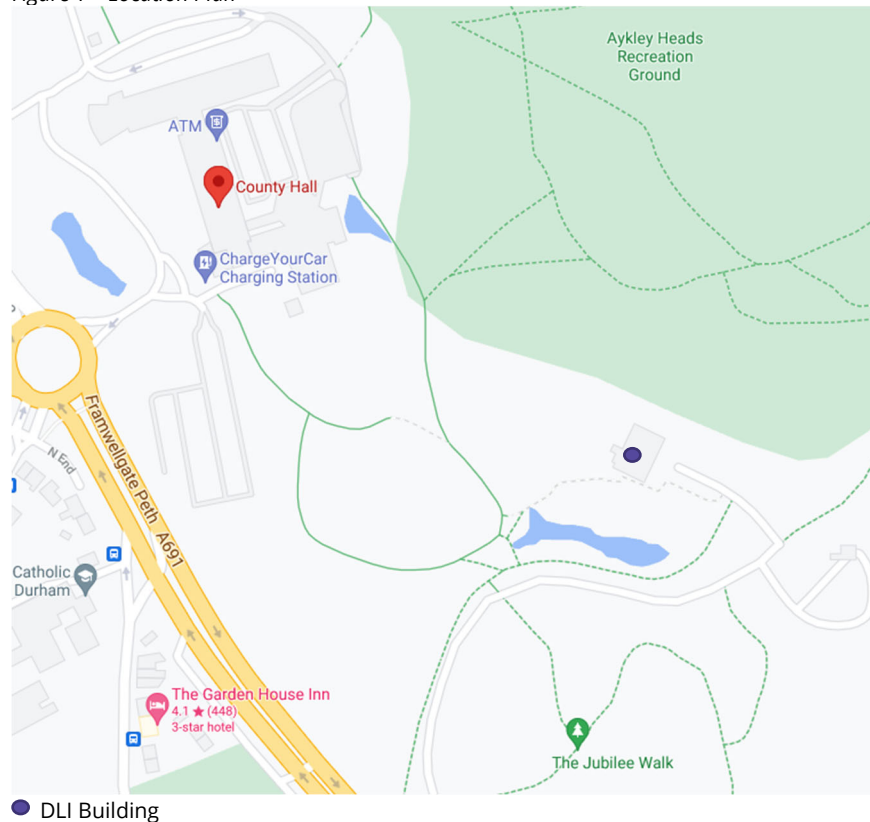
### 3. Review of Local Environment

3.1 Within this section of our report we consider the suitability of the surrounding site / environment and how they influence and impact the alternative uses / functions for the building.

#### Context

3.2 Figure 1 shows the location of the DLI within the context of its wider setting.

Figure 1 – Location Plan

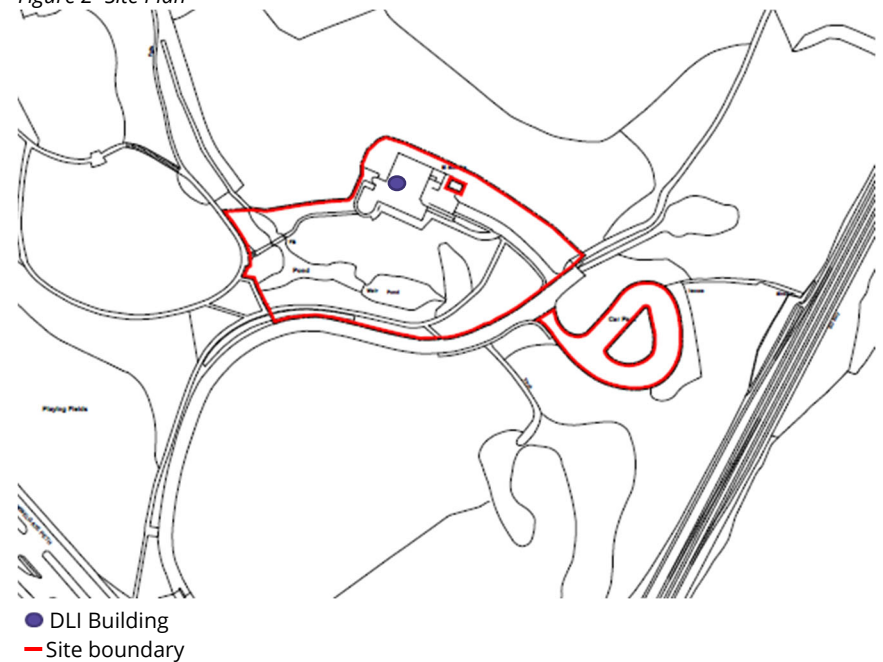


3.3 The site is located in the picturesque area of Aykley Heads, and is situated within a woodland clearing central to the Jubilee Walk and adjacent to the nearby Aykley Heads Recreation Ground and Aykley Wood Nature Reserve.

3.4 The building occupies a scenic setting but one which is detached and slightly remote from other functions, including the County Council Offices (County Hall), which are a short distance to the north west. This is a consideration when reviewing possible function and also when considering suitable uses with regard to town planning and suitability.

3.5 Figure 2 shows the overall demise of the DLI site relative to the building.

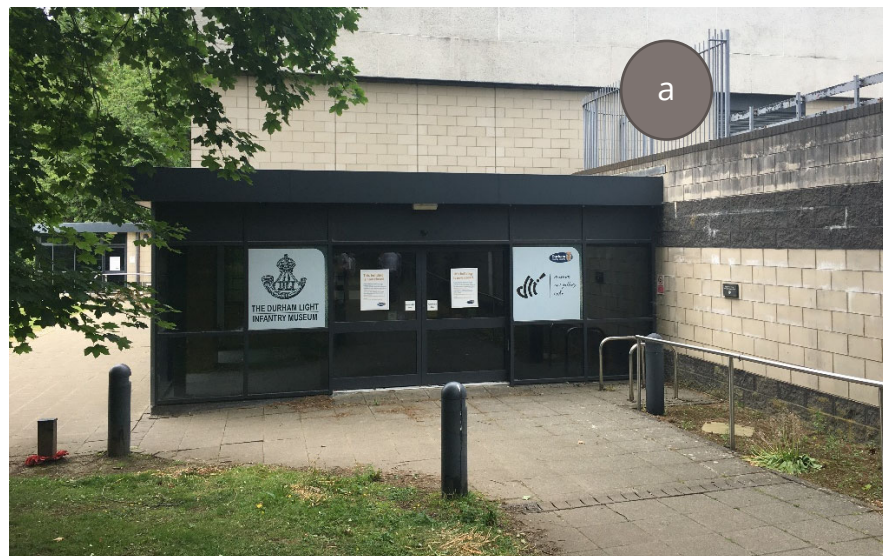
Figure 2- Site Plan



3.6 The building is positioned towards the northern boundary of the site and is split level, cut into the hillside, due to steeply sloping terrain.



- 3.7 The visitor entrance to the property is at lower ground level whilst the delivery entrance and some car parking is located at the upper ground level. This area is accessed by a service road, which connects to the main site access providing links to Framwellgate Peth and the main dedicated carparking for the DLI which is within short walking distance to the east.
  
- 3.8 A point of note is that the wayfinding from the east is unclear due to the extent of planting and visitors could easily mistake the delivery entrance as the main entrance and so legibility here could be improved through landscape treatment, gates or better signage. A gate in this location would have the two fold benefit of clarifying it as not an entrance and also reduce the need for excessive antivandal fencing at the upper level over looking the entrance.
  
- 3.9 The general condition of the external areas is adequate given its lack of recent occupation, but is in need of renewal. The hard landscaped areas are principally concrete flag paving and tarmac that are in poor condition / missing in areas and would need replacing. Retaining walls are showing their age and require investigation.
  
- 3.10 The soft landscaped areas are well kept and show the building off to the best advantage, though the land immediately to the north and west of the site is heavily wooded, which encroaches on the building. This would benefit from cutting back (subject to arboculture advice).
  
- 3.11 There is a perception, despite not being consecrated, that the gardens serve a memorial purpose. The Council is considering the possibility of converting / dedicating the surrounding grounds as a memorial garden but this will be the subject of a separate options appraisal. Any reuse of the building will not prejudice the Councils aspirations to create a memorial garden in the surrounding grounds.



Lower level visitor entrance with anti valndel fencing at the upper level (a)



Path leading from Lower level visitor entrance towards car park





Upper level delivery entrance and accessible parking



Landscaped grounds to the south looking towards the pond



Service road leading to the upper level delivery entrance and footpath to the left leading down to the visitor entrance (a)










Southern elevation of the DLI overlooking the landscaped grounds






### Alternative Uses Based on Environmental Suitability

3.12 Within this context the suitability of alternative uses, based on the local environment, are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 – Alternative Function / Use Based on Suitability of Local Environment

Use	Comments
 Retail	The limited footfall and remoteness of the building will affect its commercial viability for passing trade as it lends itself to being more of a destination than somewhere you happen upon.
 Residential	Its location within a public place and that of a heavily wooded park realistically prevents a residential use principally for the exposure and the security measures that would be required to 'privatise' and safeguard.
 Community	The nearby recreation grounds and walks would make the site a suitable community building be that the arts, leisure or community support.
 Education	The site has a lot to offer across the full spectrum of age groups be that as a public building or private school facility. However, the exposure of the site would require safety measures for safeguarding of younger children.
 Commercial	The site would work well as a venue or leisure facility and the grounds could be utilised to the buildings advantage.
	This site would likely prove too limiting for hotel or office functions.
 Museum	Reusing the building for a museum would return the property to its previous purposely designed use.

-  Suitable
-  Suitable but issues to be resolved
-  Unsuitable

## 4. Review of Existing Building

4.1 Within this section of our report we consider the suitability of the existing building for an alternative function / use and how easy it will be to repurpose the existing building, highlighting any major constraints / impediments that may prejudice the conversion of the property for a particular use.

4.2 Avison Young and NORR architects inspected the building with Richard Hill and Keith Nesbitt (DCC) on 18th June. However, no detailed inspection was undertaken.

### Context

4.3 The property is largely of steel frame and concrete construction and has been modified several times since it was built in 1966.

4.4 The façade is a mix of concrete block and panel with limited window openings to the south, east and west aside from the curtain wall glazed entrance, cafeteria and stair core. To the north there is extensive curtain wall glazing at upper level, within the office portion of the building, though the lower floor has none, due to it forming the retaining wall.

4.5 The general condition of the brickwork is good however the panelling looks old and tired with discolouration / staining and joints that require address. Views out to the flat mineral felt roofs from the upper floors imply they are at the end of life and will require replacement.

4.6 The Council has confirmed that the building has been plagued by roof leaks and was re-roofed twice between its construction and closure. The signs of leaks are visible everywhere throughout the building, with stains on the floors, down the walls and in suspended ceiling tiles. These are not recent stains, since closure: they present evidence of the structural weakness of the roof and possibly also of the concrete and

steel frame itself. This in turn has led to high moisture content through parts of the building and fungal infections on woodwork for example.

4.7 Inside the building it is simply planned with three floors of exhibition rooms stacked on top of each other to the front/ south with entrance and cafeteria either side at ground level.

4.8 Utility and back of house areas are reserved to the north/ rear with access to the loading dock on the middle floor and offices benefitting from natural light at upper level. The building is a structural frame this provides greater flexibility than load bearing internal walls. This allows large exhibition spaces to connect as required and a variety of single double volume heights also.

4.9 Floor to structural beam/soffit is also reasonable for many functions, but significantly less than you would expect for new build commercial space. The building is also deep plan which makes natural lighting and ventilation difficult.

4.11 Vertical circulation cores are not opportunely located currently (i.e. on the outer extremities) and this will also impact any future use, so the accessibility of the building will need to be carefully considered to ensure freedom of movement for all users in the future.

4.12 We were advised on our visit that the lifts are end of life and likely to be deemed unacceptably small and narrow for human use by Building Regulations. As a result, they will need replacing.

4.13 We were also advised that of the two oil fired boilers, one is no longer operable, and is being used for spare parts, and the other is almost at end of life. Oil fired boilers are also no longer suitable for a low carbon trajectory. There is an opportunity, therefore, to explore more sustainable alternatives.

- 4.14 The air conditioning system is understood to have had to be repaired regularly and was always deemed “inadequate”.
- 4.15 The rooftop plant couldn’t be accessed due to an unsafe ladder.
- 4.16 The pumps which serve the foul water drainage system to the DLI are situated below ground and are located within the adjacent wood between the museum and County Hall. A feasibility study published in March 2015<sup>2</sup> concluded that the system was ‘well passed’ its life expectancy, leading to regular breakdowns. The Council has confirmed that a new pumping station and foul drainage system, including a new rising main connecting into the existing sewer network<sup>3</sup>, will be required for any future / alternative use.
- 4.17 Asbestos has been identified within several areas of the building, which may need to be removed. Further information is provided in the Asbestos Management Plan (November 2020). This report also acknowledges that it is not known if asbestos is also present within inaccessible parts of the building and recommends that further work/investigation will be required if work is to be carried out in such areas<sup>4</sup>. The report also recommends that any major refurbishment or demolition will require further investigation.
- 4.18 In 1999-2000, the building and the Regimental displays on the lower ground floor underwent a comprehensive HLF-funded refurbishment. The ‘new’ displays had an expected shelf-life of just ten years, but there was no planning or investment for a renewal, after that time, and the displays were unchanged when the building closed in April 2016, some 16 years later.
- 4.19 The display facilities on the lower ground level are now empty, run down and partly dismantled.



Current oil fired boilers



Existing foul water drainage pump

<sup>2</sup> DLI Museum and Arts Centre Replacement of Existing Sewerage Pumps – TS1293358 (March 2015)  
<sup>3</sup> In a worst case scenario this will be the network in the Framwellgate Peth.




<sup>4</sup> Inaccessible areas were identified as ducts without access covers, behind wall panelling, voids above fixed grid ceilings, live electrical equipment and lift shafts.








4.20 The current kitchen/ servery/dining facility is small and very basic, therefore would likely need significant enhancement subject to the potential use.




**Alternative Uses Based on the Suitability of the Building for Conversion**

4.21 Within this context the suitability of alternative uses, based on the adaptability of the building for conversion, are summarised in the table below.

Table 2 – Alternative Function / Use Based on Suitability of the Building for Conversion

Use	Comments
 Retail	Ceiling/ soffit heights would not be advantageous for retail uses, though variety / interconnectivity of space and lack of natural daylight are typical of this use.
 Residential	Multiple occupier residential accommodation would require significant alteration to the external façade and even with this there is limited outlook/views to two sides (due to encroaching woodland) and inopportune locations of vertical circulation. Deep plan could be made to work. Single residency could work but would be vast in size so would seem inappropriate.
 Community	Height, variety, and interconnectivity of spaces lend themselves well to a community building be that the arts, leisure or community support. The extent of additional glazing to the envelope would vary based on the possible use. Potential community uses include art and sculpture exhibition centre and gardens, community groups and combined club house, sports

Use	Comments
	changing and club house, youth centre and possible arts house cinema.
 Education <sup>5</sup>	The building would not be suitable for a full-time school due to the lack of large multi-purpose hall.
	However, it could be made suitable for a pre-school nursery but external space would need to be dedicated and secured.
	Further / higher education satellite building for departmental, vocational or research based learning would also be suitable.
 Commercial <sup>6</sup>	The building would work well as a venue or leisure facility generally.
	The size of building and depth of floor plan would make it challenging for a hotel, but possible with significant adaptation.
	The limited floor to floor height and absence of raised access floor would limit its use as a dedicated office.
 Museum	The building was purposely designed for this use and so could easily be used again for similar uses. Issues for consideration include upgrading the building to ensure compliance with EN 16893:2018 and BS 4971:2017 technical standards

-  Suitable
-  Suitable but issues to be resolved
-  Unsuitable

<sup>5</sup> Extent of additional glazing to the envelope would vary depending on the specific use.

<sup>6</sup> The extent of additional glazing to the envelope would vary, but most commercial uses would require significant alteration.










## 5. Planning Review

- 5.1 Within this section of our report, we provide a summary of the suitability of each use based on planning considerations<sup>7</sup>
- 5.2 We have reviewed the relevant planning history for the site, using the County Council’s online planning portal, and reviewed the relevant planning policies specific to the site.
- 5.2 A copy of our detailed planning appraisal is included at Appendix 1.

### Suitability of Alternative Uses Based on Planning Considerations

Table 3 – Suitability of Uses Based on Planning Considerations

Use	Comments
Retail 	Retail is a main town centre use and would require a retail assessment including sequential assessment to demonstrate no suitable premises available in Durham City Centre. Also, the site is in the Green Belt so any retail use which generates a lot of journeys may not be considered favourably, as there is limited parking.
Residential 	Would need to comply with various housing policies, and not prejudice nearby established housing commitments and allocations. However, likely to achieve planning if demonstrated.
Community 	<u>Art and Sculpture Exhibition Centre and Gardens</u> Likely to be supported as similar to existing use. As a main town centre use, would require retail assessment

Use	Comments
	including sequential assessment in line with Policy 9 of the Local Plan.  <u>Community Groups combined Club House</u> Similar to existing use in planning terms and likely to be supported provided the proposal is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies.
	<u>Sports Changing and Club House, Youth Centre and Art House Cinema</u> There are few planning policies within the Local Plan relating to sport but the provision for outdoor sports is an appropriate use in the Green Belt. A Youth Centre is similar to existing use and likely to be supported provided the proposal is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies. The Arts House Cinema is a main town centre use and would require a sequential assessment to demonstrate no suitable premises available in Durham City Centre.
Education <sup>8</sup> 	Education uses would be acceptable in principle. However, the need for these uses would need to be demonstrated. May be issues with access, parking and public transport.
Commercial <sup>9</sup> 	Commercial uses are likely to require a sequential assessment to demonstrate no suitable premises available in Durham City Centre and/or an impact assessment. There may also be issues with access, parking and public transport.

<sup>7</sup> Including higher, further, school age and pre-school education.




<sup>9</sup> Including uses such as café/restaurant, small hotel, offices, gym and social club.

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Use	Comments
Museum (including café / restaurant)	A museum will be acceptable as within the existing planning permission. Subject to size of café / restaurant , there may be a requirement for a sequential and/or impact assessment. However, this is similar to existing use in planning terms and likely to be supported provided the proposals is compliant with Local Plan policies.

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-  Suitable
-  Suitable but issues to be resolved
-  Unsuitable

## 6. Review of Market Demand

6.1 Any alternative use(s) for the building / site will need to be market driven and supported by clear evidence of market demand. We have undertaken a high level desk top review to identify market trends and known space requirements for Durham. We have not undertaken any soft market testing with local developers and potential occupiers.

6.2 Within the remainder of this section we set out the initial high level demand considerations for the range of potential uses identified.

### Retail

6.3 Although online retail continues to grow in importance for large parts of the retail sector, footfall is still the main way that most retailers make their money. This invariably means that nearly all retailers will seek to prioritise the high street (town and city centres) or larger shopping centres and retail parks. For retail businesses, there are several potential advantages to being located on the high street, including:

- Good footfall is to be expected – and could remain steady all week due to the fact people live and work nearby.
- High streets tend to have good links to public transport, which can lead to increased footfall from people who can't or don't want to drive.
- High streets still bring some prestige – which is why independent shops tend to find more success on the high street.
- If there are any historical landmarks or other attractions, they can help to pull increased numbers of visitors in.

- Many shoppers still prefer the idea of spending the day shopping and having a meal on a high street.

6.4 The limited footfall and remoteness of the DLI building will, therefore, significantly affect its commercial viability for retail uses, which rely on passing trade, as it lends itself to being more of a destination than somewhere you happen upon.

### Residential

6.5 As outlined previously the environment surrounding the building prevents a residential use principally for the exposure and the security measures that would be required to 'privatise' and safeguard. In addition, the adaptability of the building for residential uses would require significant alteration. It is believed the building could be converted to a single residency but this would be vast in size. Therefore, the market demand for converting the property to residential will be limited.

### Community<sup>10</sup>

6.6 The voluntary and community sector is widespread and diverse and there may be community groups, voluntary organisations or charity groups who are interested in the building.

6.7 However, in 2012 the Council commenced a community asset transfer programme, which aimed to create a sustainable network of buildings controlled by local people. Although most transfers have now been completed the Council is still inviting organisations, through the

<sup>10</sup> Potential community uses include, art and sculpture exhibition centre and gardens, community groups and combined club house, sports changing and club house, youth centre, environment centre, social club and possible arts house cinema.

Durham Ask, to submit expressions of interest for taking over Council assets or helping to run the Council's services in the future.

6.8 This provides the opportunity for 'community groups' to have control over local land, facilitates or services. Asset transfer is the legal process that allows this to happen and means the organisation/community group takes over full responsibility for the building including ongoing repairs, maintenance, and daily management. This is normally by way of a long-term lease.

6.9 The building has been vacant since the closure of the DLI in 2015 and within the period between now and then there have been no expressions of interest from 'community groups' for this building. It, therefore, seems unlikely that there will be demand for community uses.

### Education

6.10 As outlined previously the building would not be suitable for a full-time school due to the lack of a large multi-purpose hall. However, it could be made suitable for pre-school nursery or further / higher education satellite building for departmental, vocational or research based learning.

### Pre School Nursery

- 6.11 There are three types of day nursery.
- State funded – attached to a school.
  - Not for profit – a day nursery usually attached to a community centre or religious organisation; and
  - Private – a privately or independently owned day nursery.

### State Funded

6.12 At this point in time we are not aware of any need from the Council for premises to provide more early years / pre-school nursery provision.

### Not for profit

6.13 As outlined previously the Council has already undergone a community asset transfer programme and is currently inviting organisations through the Durham Ask, to submit expressions of interest for taking over Council assets. No expressions of interest from the community /religious or voluntary groups etc. to use this building for a pre-school / nursery have been forthcoming since the building was closed on 2015. It, therefore, seems unlikely that there will be demand for non profit education uses.

### Private

6.14 In terms of the private childcare and early education sector this has historically comprised a large volume of small private and voluntary sector organisations with only a small number of corporates, regional and local groups. A recent report<sup>11</sup> confirms that most providers (57%) are still single site operators with only 9% running groups of twenty sites or more. The report also states that more than one in four single site operators make a loss, in contrast to those organisations that are able to achieve economies of scale, manage risk across a portfolio of sites and concentrate investment in areas of high private demand, who are well placed to deliver a profit/return.

6.15 The report lists the nursery groups with twenty or more settings / nurseries. We have undertaken a high level web based search to ascertain if any of the providers have a requirement for Durham, the results of which confirm that there are no known requirements. However, several providers do state they are looking for further opportunities without being prescriptive on their preferred locations.

<sup>11</sup> Aboutey – Independent research about and for the early years sector by Ceeda (2019)



6.16 Those providers who do have requirements are typically looking for sites or existing buildings between 186sq.m (2,000sq.ft) and 697sq.m (7,500sq.ft). The existing DLI building has a gross internal area of 1,486.39sq.m (16,000sq.ft), meaning it is twice the size of what providers are typically seeking and, therefore, is likely to be unappealing even if there were active requirements in the market.

6.17 Another important consideration which is likely to impact demand is the recent changes to the Use Classes Order. Class D1 (non-residential institution), which creche and nurseries previously fell within, have been abolished and merged into a new 'Class E' along with the previous use classes D2 (assembly and leisure), A1 (shops), A2 (professional services), A3 (restaurants) and B1 (offices). Changes between these uses no longer require planning permission and will lead to increased flexibility between these uses.

6.18 In the past a scarcity of D1 property has driven very strong levels of demand from nurseries, particularly in affluent residential locations. However, nurseries will now be able to occupy a wider range of space, including high street / retail space, offices, and restaurants etc without requiring planning permission. With a large proportion of the retail and the casual dining sector significantly impacted by the pandemic and many commercial occupiers assessing what Covid-19 means for their businesses and operational requirements this will result in vacant offices, retail units and restaurants coming onto the market and thus, a greater number of opportunities for operators to expand into new settings than was previously the case.

6.19 It is our belief that there will be little demand from private nursery /pre-school providers.

### Further and Higher Education

6.20 Further and higher education providers have long term estate strategies, which set out their long term investment plans.

- **New Durham College** has set out its estates and facilities strategy over the period 2021 to 2026. The Estates Strategy recognises that to effectively respond to their curriculum challenges they need to optimise the current portfolio of buildings and land, including their main campus site at Framwellgate Moor, which they own. As part of their strategy the college has an ongoing programme to develop existing and new physical spaces.

- **Durham University** has set out its strategy up to 2027 which includes 23 projects comprising a total capital expenditure of circa £350m. This investment will be in new departmental space, teaching space, residential accommodation and student facilities as well as improving the condition of their existing estate. The Council are also having conversations with the university about how they might collaborate on Aykley Heads and whether they may invest in this site.

6.21 Within this context it seems unlikely that there will be demand from further or higher educational establishments.

### Museum

6.22 Most of the Council's collections are currently stored at Sevenhills at Greenhills Business Park in Spennymoor. However, the Council will be terminating the lease at Sevenhills once the DLI collection and reference library are relocated to the new history centre.

6.23 This means that other storage facilities are required for those collections at Sevenhills, which are not being relocated to the new history centre.

6.24 The Council, subject to the findings of this study, wish to consider the use of the DLI building for the storage and display of other Council collections, restoring its original function. Alongside these uses the

Council may also wish to consider a new and improved café/restaurant offer.

### Commercial Uses

#### Food and Drink (Café and Restaurant)

- 6.25 The UK restaurant and food service industry had undergone a period of growth prior to the pandemic, with revenues showing an increasing trend. However even before the pandemic, restaurants were struggling to survive, as many succumbed to closures in 2018 and 2019. Rising costs, reduced consumer spending, and an over-saturated market from the boom in casual dining brands in the preceding years, are all said to have contributed to insolvencies of independent restaurants, and the closure of several big chain outlets.
- 6.26 Anecdotal evidence suggests that as many as a quarter of UK restaurants and more than 10% of pubs may fail by this September, when furlough ends and VAT relief is tapered. As a result, there is likely to be plethora of 'ready-made premises' likely to come onto the market during the final quarter of 2021 from insolvent businesses at competitive prices. This is an important factor as the DLI will require significant adaption meaning occupiers will favour the ready made premises, as they won't have to wait for conversion works to be completed.
- 6.27 Almost all food and drink operators want to be in areas of high footfall. This is clearly evidenced when looking at the known requirements from food and drink operators for Durham. It should be noted that whilst these requirements are focussed on chain outlets the nature of the food and drink sector generally relies on passing trade / high levels of footfall meaning independent operators will also want to be within areas of high footfall.

#### Food and Drink Requirements – Durham



Restaurant and bar looking for 'ex fitted units' of circa 372sq.m (4,000sq.ft) to 650sq.m (7,000sq.ft) in prominent locations with good visibility on the high street.



Taco Bell are looking for a drive thru (main arterial routes, standalone and retail and leisure parks) and high street opportunities. Drive thru requirements 167sq.m (1,800sq.ft) to 232sq.m (2,500sq.ft) and high street requirements 70sq.m (750sq.ft) to 167sq.m (1,800sq.ft).



Looking for small urban box of circa 93sq.m (1,000sq.ft) in high pedestrian areas with a strong transient population.



Requires 74sq.m (800sq.ft) to 232sq.m (2,500sq.ft) in high street locations in close proximity to lunchtime trade, retail and tourist attractions and 74sq.m (800sq.ft) to 139sq.m (1,500sq.ft) in shopping centres or leisure schemes.



Seeking 74sq.m (800sq.ft) to 186sq.m (2,000sq.ft) in locations with good visibility and high footfall in cultural, educational, and business hubs and districts.



Seeking 149sq.m (1,600sq.ft) to 242sq.m (2,600sq.ft) on retail leisure parks and arterial roads.



Seeking 175sq.m (1,883sq.ft) in high street locations.

6.28 Another important consideration which is likely to impact demand is the recent changes to the Use Classes Order, which sees the previous uses classes D2 (Assembly and leisure), A1 (shops), A2 (professional services), A3 (restaurants) and B1 (offices) merged into a new E class. Changes between these uses no longer require planning permission and will lead to increased flexibility between these uses. This will be particularly appealing for food and drink operators who will now be able to occupy a wider range of space, including vacant high street / retail space without requiring planning permission. The increased supply available to the hospitality sector will invariably drive competition between landlords and mean bigger incentives to tenants.

6.29 In addition to the increasing supply through permitted development rights there is also new / purpose built retail and leisure space opportunities coming onto the market, including One Milburngate where 5,574sq.m (60,000sq.ft) of floorspace is proposed. Longer term there is also 1,136sq.m (12,228sq.ft) of ancillary space, which could be suitable for food and drink uses, proposed as part of the Aykley Heads masterplan proposals.

6.30 Finally the DLI building at circa 1,486sq.m (16,000sq.ft) is too large to be a single standalone café / restaurant.

**Hotel**

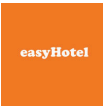

6.31 The size of DLI building and depth of floor plan would make it challenging to convert to a hotel, but possible with significant adaptation.

6.32 There are currently twelve hotels in Durham offering 954 bedrooms (4\* (48%), limited service hotels (39%) and 3\* (13%). There are also hotels currently in construction (Premier Inn at Milburngate and

Travelodge Thinford) which are due to open within 12 months adding a further 172 bedrooms to the market.

6.33 The market gap sits between 4\* and limited service hotels<sup>12</sup>. There is growth in ‘focused service’ upper midscale hotel brands, which include Courtyard by Marriot (CbyM) and Hilton Garden Inn (HGI). We are aware of the following hotel requirements for Durham City.

*Hotel Requirements – Durham*

	<p>Easy Hotel has a requirement for 1,858sq.m (20,000sq.ft) to 2,323sq.m (25,000sq.ft) near a major transport hub.</p>
	<p>Seeking ‘empty’ land plots between 0.49 acres (0.2ha) and 2.47acres (1ha) in landmark city locations near transport hub.</p>

6.34 Most hotel groups now operate ‘asset-light’ strategies and will not invest/ or wish to own the development. This is a key shift in recent years, reducing their capital investment in bricks and mortar in favour of developers/investors financing the scheme in return for having a recognised brand name. The advantage for the major chains is that they can focus all their resources on the marketing and development of their brand portfolios, securing greater revenue streams than if they had their funds tied up in the property.

<sup>12</sup> A limited service hotel refers to budget-friendly hotels that don't have a food and beverage component like an onsite restaurant. These hotels may have typical amenities like a conference room, business centre, gym, pool, and laundry facilities.

- 6.35 The standard hotel bedroom room size is 45sq.m (484sq.ft), which would equate to circa 26 bedrooms in the DLI building<sup>13</sup>, which is substantially less than the Durham average of 80 bedrooms.
- 6.36 For these reasons it is unlikely that the DLI building will be attractive to a leading hotel group.
- 6.37 There may be interest from independent operators for the DLI building but we are not aware of any requirements. It is likely, that the extent of the market competition from the main hotel groups will deter market interest from independent hoteliers. In addition, the cost of conversion, especially in view of the market competition, is also likely to be prohibitive for most independents resulting in limited demand.

### Offices

- 6.38 As outlined previously the site is likely to be too limiting for office uses. Furthermore, the limited floor to ceiling height and absence of raised access floor will limit the market demand for the building as a dedicated office.
- 6.39 Coronavirus also remains a major disrupter and has created profound uncertainty in the office market and has the potential to redefine the use of office space generally.
- 6.40 It's inevitable that we will see a contraction in the volume of space being occupied by businesses. However, some analysts argue that this is simply an acceleration of cost-cutting measures that were already in train pre-pandemic. What is becoming clearer is that the office space that most businesses will wish to return to post pandemic will be of better quality and suited to the needs of the evolving workplace environment.

- 6.41 In the short to medium term the City will be well supplied by high quality offices, as there is up to 21,367sq.m (230,000sq.ft) of new Grade A office space being provided within Milburngate. The first office building, providing up to 5,000sq.m (53,701sq.ft), will be available in 2022.
- 6.42 In the medium to longer term the masterplan proposals for the Aykley Heads site also propose 37,332sq.m (401,851sq.ft) gross of modern Grade A office space.
- 6.43 Within this context there is unlikely to be demand for office space within the DLI building.

### Gym

- 6.44 low-cost gyms such as énergie Fitness and Pure Gym have been driving the recent growth in the health and fitness industry, consistently increasing their market share year-on-year. The 'UK Low Cost Gyms – Market headroom forecasts increased' report produced by PwC UK outlines that the low-cost sector will continue to increase its share of the market as new locations open but also as low-cost gyms claim market share from mid-market operators<sup>14</sup>.
- 6.45 Another trend in the sector is the increasing number of gyms situated in high street locations increasing by over 15% since 2017.
- 6.46 We are currently aware of one known requirement from Snap Fitness for space within Durham. Details of their requirements are set out below, which emphasises the trend for high footfall locations within city centre and high street locations.

<sup>13</sup> Assuming 80% of the gross floor area (i.e. 1,189sq.m / 12,796sq.ft).

<sup>14</sup> Mid-market operators are defined as those gyms that charge upwards of £30 per month for their basic membership.



- Medium to high footfall required.
- Optimal size of between 372sq.m to 743sq.m (4,000sq.ft to 8,000sq.ft), with properties up to 929sq.m (10,000sq.ft) being considered.
- Visibility required for transport links.
- Within proximity to parking.
- City centre, out of town and high street locations considered.
- Preferably located near to supermarkets and other convenience stores.

6.47 Due to the relative isolation of the DLI building it lends itself to being more of a destination. Whilst gyms could be categorised as destinations, we are seeing an increasing trend from gym operators wanting to be located on the high street.






6.48 Gyms are also another use where demand is likely to be impacted by the recent changes to the Use Classes Order. Through these changes' gym operators will now be able to occupy a wider range of space, including vacant high street / retail space coming onto the market because of the pandemic without requiring planning permission. The increased supply available to gym operators will invariably drive competition between landlords and mean bigger incentives to tenants.

6.49 Within this context there is not considered to be a strong market demand for a gym.

### Suitability of Alternative Uses Based on Market Demand




6.50 A summary of the suitability of alternative uses, based on market demand, is summarised in the table below.

Table 4 - Suitability of Alternative Uses Based on Market Demand

Use	Comments
Retail 	The limited footfall and remoteness of the DLI building will severely limit demand for retail uses.
Residential 	The adaptability of the immediate environment and DLI building will severely limit demand for residential uses.
Community 	The building has been vacant since its closure in 2015 and within the period between now and then there have been no expressions of interest from 'community groups', as part of the Council's original asset transfer programme and subsequent Durham Ask, for this building. Demand for community uses, therefore, seems unlikely.
Education 	<u>Pre School / Nursery</u> There no know demand or need for state funded, not for profit or private preschool/nurseries.
	<u>Further / Higher Educational</u> Further and higher education providers have long term estate strategies, which set out their long term investment plans. It is unlikely, therefore, that there will be demand from further or higher educational establishments.

Use	Comments
Commercial	<p><u>Standalone Restaurant / Cafe</u></p> <p>The limited footfall and remoteness of the DLI building will severely limit demand for standalone restaurant and café uses.</p>
	<p><u>Hotel</u></p> <p>There may be interest from independent operators for the DLI building but we are not aware of any requirements. However, we anticipate that the extent of the market competition from the main hotel groups will deter market interest from independent hoteliers. In addition, the cost of conversion, is also likely to be prohibitive for most independents resulting in limited demand.</p>
	<p><u>Offices</u></p> <p>Coronavirus remains a major disrupter and has created profound uncertainty in the office market, and has the potential to redefine the use of office space generally. What is becoming clearer is that the office space that most businesses will wish to return to post pandemic will be of better quality and suited to the needs of the evolving workplace environment. Given the supply of Grade A office space coming forward elsewhere in the City over the short, medium and long term there is unlikely to be demand for refurbished office space within the DLI building.</p>
	<p><u>Gym</u></p> <p>There is an increasing trend from gym operators wanting to be located on the high street, which is likely to be enhanced through changes to the Use Classes Order which will mean gym operators will now be able to occupy a wider range of space,</p>

Use	Comments
	<p>including vacant high street / retail space coming onto the market because of the pandemic, without requiring planning permission. The increased high street supply available to gym operators will invariably drive competition between landlords and mean bigger incentives to tenants.</p>
Museum (including café / restaurant)	<p>The Council are considering the use of the DLI building for the storage and display of other Council collections. We believe there would be demand for a café and restaurant but only alongside a main use for the building that had the ability to generate high levels of footfall.</p>

-  Suitable
-  Suitable but issues to be resolved
-  Unsuitable

## 7. Title Review

7.1 A high level title review, based on land registry titles provided by the Council, has been undertaken to identify any restrictive covenants and or legal impediments that might prevent the redevelopment / conversion of the building for an alternative use.

7.2 The main findings from this exercise are summarised below.

### Restrictive Covenants

7.3 There are no known restrictive covenants or legal impediments that would prevent the building being used for an alternative use.

### Leases and Licences

7.4 The car park is currently occupied by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) for Covid-19 mobile testing. A Licence for this is being progressed but is not yet in place. Whilst it is currently unknown how long this site will be needed for this purpose, it's unlikely to prevent the building being used for alternative uses.

7.5 The Aykley Heads land including the land surrounding the DLI museum has been used in the past for various charity fun runs and events. These are only usually for a few days, but do seem to be of an annual recurrence, although they have not been held since the 2020 cancellation of events due to the pandemic. Future events are also unlikely to prevent the building being used for alternative uses.

7.6 There is a substation incorporated within the DLI demise but the Council has been unable to locate the lease for the substation. The Council's Asset Manager has notes showing that this lease is currently missing.

7.7 There are no other known leases or licences affecting the property.

7.8 Prior to progressing any alternative use strategy for the building, a full and detailed title review would need to be undertaken.

### Other Designations











7.9 According to the Council's GIS Layers the site:

- Is within a designated Conservation Area, designated 1968, amended 2016
- Is part of the Green Belt
- Has two mine inspection areas on either side of the entrance to the car park
- Is an Open Space Needs Assessment site (OSNA), due to the typology being "Accessible Natural Green Space". The DLI building and car park are not included, but all land surrounding them within the site boundary is.



## 8. Overall Feasibility of Potential Uses

8.1 Taking into account the range of factors that we have considered in the previous sections we have formed an opinion on the overall feasibility for each of the potential uses and present this in the table below.

Use	Local Environment <sup>15</sup>	Building <sup>16</sup>	Planning <sup>17</sup>	Market Demand <sup>18</sup>	Title <sup>19</sup>	Overall Feasibility of Use
Retail						<p>The limited footfall and remoteness of the building will affect its commercial viability for passing trade as it lends itself to being more of a destination than somewhere you happen upon. This will severely limit demand for retail uses.</p> <p>Retail is also a main town centre use and would require a retail assessment including a sequential assessment to demonstrate that no suitable premises are available in Durham City Centre. Also, the site is in the Green Belt so any retail use which generates a lot of journeys may not be considered favourably, as there is limited parking.</p> <p>The ceiling/ soffit heights would also not be advantageous for retail uses.</p>
Residential						<p>The environment surrounding the building prevents a residential use principally for the exposure and the security measures that would be required to 'privatise' and safeguard. In addition, the adaptability of the building for residential would require significant and costly alteration. It is believed the building could be converted to a single residency but this would be vast in size, for which there would be limited market demand.</p>

<sup>15</sup> Please refer to Table 1 on page 11.

<sup>16</sup> Please refer to Table 2 on page 14.

<sup>17</sup> Please refer to Table 3 on pages 15 to 16.




<sup>18</sup> Please refer to Table 4 on pages 23 to 24.

<sup>19</sup> Please refer to Section 7 on page 25.



Use	Local Environment <sup>15</sup>	Building <sup>16</sup>	Planning <sup>17</sup>	Market Demand <sup>18</sup>	Title <sup>19</sup>	Overall Feasibility of Use
Community - Art and Sculpture Exhibition Centre and Gardens						<p>Community uses are perceived not to be feasible due to their being no proven need / demand.</p> <p>Whilst the building is suitable for a range of community functions/uses the property has been vacant since its closure in 2015 and within the period between now and then there have been no expressions of interest from 'community groups' for this building, arising from the Council's communities' assets transfer and 'Durham Ask'.</p>
Community Groups combined club house						
Community - sports changing and cub house, youth centre and art house cinema						
Education - Primary and Secondary						<p>The building would not be suitable for a full-time school (primary and secondary) due to the lack of large multi-purpose hall.</p> <p>In planning terms education uses would be acceptable in principle. However, the need for these uses would have to be demonstrated. Currently there is no identified need / requirements for all the educational uses.</p>
Education - Early years /nursery						
Education - Further/higher education						
Standalone Restaurant Café						<p>The site and building would work well as a venue for a café or restaurant and the grounds could be utilised to the buildings advantage. However, demand for a standalone restaurant / cafe is unlikely due to the remoteness of the building and limited footfall. In planning terms there will also be a requirement to provide a sequential assessment, to demonstrate no suitable and alternative premises are available in Durham City Centre, and or impact assessment.</p>

Use	Local Environment	Building	Planning	Market Demand	Title
Hotel					
Offices					
Gym					
Museum (including new and improved ancillary café / restaurant)					

-  Suitable
-  Suitable but issues to be resolved
-  Unsuitable

**Overall Feasibility of Use**

The site would likely prove too limiting for hotel functions and the size of building and depth of floor plan would make it challenging for a hotel, but possible with significant adaptation. It is unlikely that the building will be attractive to a leading hotel group and whilst there may be interest from independent operators the likely extent of the market competition (especially from the main hotel groups) will deter market interest from independent hoteliers. In addition, the cost of conversion, especially when viewed alongside the market competition, is also likely to be prohibitive for most independents further compounding the market demand.

This site would likely prove too limiting for office functions and the limited floor to ceiling height and the absence of a raised access floor would limit its use as a dedicated office. In terms of demand most occupiers / businesses will wish to return to better quality workspace post pandemic which is suited to the needs of the evolving workplace environment. In this regard there is a significant supply of Grade A office space coming forward elsewhere in the City over the short, medium, and long term which will be in direct competition with the DLI building for office use. Consequently, there is not thought to be demand for office use.

Repurposing the building for a gym has been deemed unfeasible due to a lack of demand.

The Council are considering the use of the DLI building for the storage and display of other Council collections. The building lends itself to these uses as it was specifically designed for this purpose. This use also ties in with the existing planning permission.

## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Through this work it has been identified that the DLI Museum and Art Gallery is a purpose designed building and as such any new function will require a significant amount of alteration to the façade unless a similar use / function is chosen.
- 9.2 In addition the building does not maximise, the potential of its surroundings and this is something that could also be addressed if reused/repurposed in the future.
- 9.3 Following a high level review of a long list of potential options for the future reuse of the building taking into account a range of factors including the local environment, how easy it would be to adapt the building, planning considerations, market demand and any legal / title restrictions it has been identified that the only overall feasible option, is to reuse the building for the storage and display / exhibition of other Council collections, which are not being transferred to the new history centre, alongside a new and improved ancillary kitchen, café / restaurant.

# Appendix 1 - Planning Appraisal

In the first instance we have reviewed the relevant planning history for the site using the County Council's online planning portal. The applications relevant to the property / site span from 1996 to 2011 and include:

- Full planning permission for the installation of 30 solar PV modules on the roof of the existing building. Permission (4/11/00537/FPA) was granted in September 2011.
- Permission for the resurfacing of footpaths and car parks, changes to car park layout, installation of street lighting and CCTV camera masts. Permission (4/04/01043/CM) was granted in September 2004.
- Full planning permission for the erection and extensions to the foyer and café areas, paved terrace and external alterations and extension to approach road to provide parking for disabled. Permission (4/98/00789/CM) was granted in December 1998.
- Advertisement consent for the erection and display of a banner. Permission (4/96/00234/AC) was granted in May 1996.

In addition to the applications listed above, permission was granted in January 2021 for the following development at the site of County Hall to the north of the site:

*Hybrid planning application comprising detailed planning application for an office block (Class B1) with associated parking and landscaping on land known as Plot C and an outline planning application, with all matters reserved apart from site access, for the demolition of the existing County Hall site and the development of a business park (Class B1) with supporting retail and leisure uses comprising uses within Class A1 (retail), Class A2 (financial and professional services), Class A3 (food and drink), Class D1 (non-residential institutions) and Class D2 (assembly and leisure) with associated landscaping, multi-storey and surface car parking, servicing and relevant infrastructure.*

County Hall is the current offices for Durham County Council until a proposed move to a new modern purpose-built office accommodation at another site. The red line for this proposed development extends beyond the footprint of

the existing building into the car parks and woodland surrounding County Hall but excludes the site of the former DLI museum



Figure 1: Aerial Image of the County Hall Application Site (identified in red) and the DLI Site (identified in yellow)

### **Planning Policy Context – Site Specific Summary**

A review of the relevant planning policies specific to the site has also been undertaken. The site was considered against policies from the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the County Durham Local Plan (2020) as part of this review.

The site is located within the Green Belt. Policy 20 of the County Durham Local Plan states that development proposals within the Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national planning policy. Paragraphs 143-147 of the National Planning Policy Framework relate to proposals affecting the Green Belt. The construction of new buildings should be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless in exceptional circumstances, such as:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
  - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
  - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- a) mineral extraction;
- b) engineering operations;
- c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

- d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.
- e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- f) development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The site is within a designated Safeguarded Area as identified in Policy 28 in the Local Plan. The safeguarding areas relevant to the site are the defined Durham Tees Valley and Newcastle International Aerodrome Safeguarding Areas. The authorities must be consulted on any developments involving wind farms, pylons and tall buildings.

The site is within an area designated as a Coalfield Development High Risk Area through Policy 32 of the Local Plan. Applications in these areas must demonstrate all investigations and risk assessments have been undertaken and the site is suitable for the proposed use.

The site is within an area designated as Area of High Landscape Value through Policy 39 of the Local Plan. Development affecting Areas of High Landscape Value will only be permitted where it conserves, and where appropriate enhances, the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of development in that location clearly outweigh the harm.

The site is surrounded by a number of trees. Policy 40 of the Local Plan states proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of, or damage to, trees of high landscape, amenity or biodiversity value unless the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm.

The site is within the Durham City designated Conservation Area through Policy 44 Historic Environment of the Local Plan. Policy 44 states that development will be expected to sustain the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting. Development proposals should contribute positively to the built and historic environment and should seek opportunities to enhance and, where appropriate, better reveal the

significance and understanding of heritage assets whilst improving access where appropriate.

The site is also within a designated Minerals Safeguarding Area, identified as an area for coal resources and glacial sand and gravel. Planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the sterilisation of mineral resources within a Mineral Safeguarding Area unless it can be demonstrated that the mineral in the location concerned is no longer of any value, provision can be made for the mineral to be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place, or the need for the non-minerals development outweighs the need to safeguard the mineral.

The Policies summarised above relate to the sites location and will apply irrespective of what type of development is brought forward.

This study aims to assess various options for the redevelopment / reuse of the building and the table below aims to identify which policies will apply if the site were to be redeveloped for a range of uses.

## Planning Policy Context – Options Specific

Use Option	Relevant Planning Policies
Community	County Durham Plan 2020
Art and Sculpture Exhibition Centre & Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 7 Visitor Attractions</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Similar to existing use - likely to be supported provided the proposals is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies</b></p> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
Community Groups combined Club House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Similar to existing use - likely to be supported provided the proposals is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies</b></p>
Sports - Changing & Club house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Would be acceptable in principle, provided proposals are compliant with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.</b></p>
Youth Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Would be acceptable in principle, provided proposals are compliant with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.</b></p>
Art House Cinema	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 7 Visitor Attractions</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Similar to existing use - likely to be supported provided the proposals is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies</b></p> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
<b>Education Use</b>	
Higher Education Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>The use would be acceptable in principle. However, a need for education uses would need to be demonstrated.</b></p>
Further Education Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>The use would be acceptable in principle. However, a need for education uses would need to be demonstrated.</b></p>
School Age Education Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>The use would be acceptable in principle. However, a need for education uses would need to be demonstrated.</b></p>
Pre-school Age - Nursery/Kindergarden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>The use would be acceptable in principle. However, a need for education uses would need to be demonstrated.</b></p>
Environment Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>The use would be acceptable in principle. However, a need for education uses would need to be demonstrated.</b></p>

Reopened Museum	
Reopened Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 7 Visitor Attractions</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Acceptable as within the existing planning permission</b></p>
Commercial	
Café / Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
Small Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 2 Employment Land</li> <li>• Policy 3 Aykley Heads</li> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
Gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
Social Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential assessment and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
<b>Residential</b>	
Apartments / Multiple Occupiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 1 Quantity of New Development</li> <li>• Policy 4 Housing Allocations</li> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Housing not usually considered appropriate Green Belt development; proposals would need to comply with various housing policies and not prejudice nearby established housing commitments and allocations. However, residential development could achieve planning permission if demonstrated and compliant with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.</b></p>
Single House Conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 1 Quantity of New Development</li> <li>• Policy 4 Housing Allocations</li> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Housing not usually considered appropriate Green Belt development; proposals would need to comply with various housing policies and not prejudice nearby established housing commitments and allocations. However, residential development could achieve planning permission if demonstrated and compliant with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.</b></p>
<b>Retail</b>	

Retail / Shopping Outlet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>May require a sequential and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>
<b>Partial Use / Hybrid Options</b>	
Café/Restaurant and smaller culture venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 6 Development on Unallocated Sites</li> <li>• Policy 7 Visitor Attractions</li> <li>• Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development (Main Town Centre Use)</li> <li>• Policy 10 Development in the Countryside</li> <li>• Policy 20 Green Belt</li> <li>• Policy 44 Historic Environment (Conservation Area): Durham City</li> </ul> <p>- <b>Similar to existing use - likely to be supported provided the proposals is compliant with relevant Local Plan policies</b></p> <p>- <b>May require a sequential and/or impact assessment in line with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Local Plan</b></p>

# Contact Details

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## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Special Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 28 July 2021 at 1.30 pm**

**Present:**

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

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

**Also in attendance:**

Councillors L Brown, J Rowlandson and M Wilkes (Cabinet)

Councillors J Blakey, P Heaviside, L Holmes, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, D McKenna and P Molloy.

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Lines and M Stead.

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor J Nicholson substitute for Councillor C Lines  
Councillor L Brown substitute for M Stead

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor D McKenna declared an interest as a Trustee of East Durham Veterans Trust and Chairman of the Fusiliers Branch Sunderland.

Councillor K Shaw declared an interest as a Trustee of East Durham Veterans Trust.

### **4 Review of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive**

The Management Board considered a report and presentation of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided

the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with an opportunity to contribute to a review by Cabinet of the options for the future storage, care, and display of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection, archive, museum buildings and grounds (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chair welcomed representatives from stakeholder organisations who were present at the meeting and also members of the public attending.

The Head of Transformation, Planning and Performance explained the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had been tasked by Cabinet to hold an open consultative session of members and key stakeholders to consider recommendations to support Cabinet's review on the options for the future of the DLI collection and archive.

He went on to advise that both the Army Museum Ogilby Trust and the National Army Museum had planned to attend but given the high incidence of COVID-19 in County Durham they reluctantly decided earlier this week not to travel. The Chair of the Board had agreed that due to the circumstances, their joint submission should be included in the papers to be discussed. The submission was circulated to Members the previous day and was read out during the course of the meeting.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth alongside the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism and Durham History Centre Programme Lead provided a detailed presentation which highlighted the two questions which the review would aim to answer through careful assessment:

**Question 1: Can the former DLI building be brought back into use to house the DLI collection?**

**Question 2: What are the options to repurpose the former DLI building/site for an alternative use?**

The presentation further provided an overview of the timeline and history of the previous decisions regarding the DLI museum, collection and archive and the development of the Durham History Centre project, including public consultation.

In summary the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth explained that the review would seek to:

- Explore options for displaying and storing and care of DLI collection in the existing DLI building.
- To undertake an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre



- To assess the impact on the storage, display, and care of other DCC collections and archive
- Provide a high-level options assessment, which would include any suitable alternatives uses for the former DLI building and with regard to the grounds and environment around the site.

Mrs D Inglis, Faithful Durhams was then invited to put forward her representation.

“Thank you Chair for giving us this opportunity to speak. My name is Diane English and I am secretary of Facebook group the Faithful Durhams, a group including other County Durham groups.

Our group was born out of the original group Save the DLI Museum which came about when it was decided to close the museum without public consultation in 2015, finally closing its doors in March 2016. We hold the DLI Regimental history close to our hearts and visited the museum regularly.

We have campaigned in and around Durham asking for public views on the closure and giving out information we had, such as why we were told the museum was closing, which range from financial problems, the museum being too far away from the city centre and that no one visited. We also let them know of some of the tricks along the way played by DCC. One example is the Labour councillor who spoke about vegetables in order to talk out time so that the DLI museum could not be discussed.

The people we spoke to were disgusted, and like us could not understand why the people had not been told about any difficulties or problems that had arisen. They felt let down and that the Trustees of the Collection and DCC should be ashamed of what had gone on and how the closure was conducted, after all almost all of us in County Durham, including some of us in this room had family members who served in the DLI - some even have loved one's ashes laid to rest in the grounds.

On that note ex councillor Neil Foster who was a cabinet member for Arts and Culture stated that a few sods of grass could be pulled up and taken to the Palace Green... how thoughtful of him.

The year leading up to the Museum closure there were 38,000 visitors this does not signify a poor attendance; the Green Howards Museum survives on around 17,000 visitors.

Our views on the move of the collection to the new history centre was that we realised council would not reopen the museum, the collection was split up. We felt we should support the new centre in order to get the collection back together.

Council did say that closing the museum would save £250,000 these figures have been proven to be incorrect, Sevenhills costs £588,000 per year (this building also houses more than DLI collection) as well as expenses paid to the University, including a one off payment of £90,000 plus £50,000 per annum (which is almost £1000 a week) as well as £175,000 on new cabinets, which the museum already had, the removal of the Collection and not forgetting the removal and relocation of the Inkermann stone (which is now beside the public toilets and litter bins) how appropriate.

The closure appears to have cost considerably more than the £250,000. DCC carried out a survey of the Museum in 2015 which found that in order to keep it up to scratch £250,000 was needed to be spent over a five-year period. Via FOI requests we found that 68 people had viewed the medals over a 5-year period. This was probably due to the number of hoops you had to jump through to get to see them.

Also, by FOI request we found that there was still no complete inventory of the Collection, considering this collection is worth millions of pounds we found a cause of concern. Colonel Ramsbotham, Chair of the Trustees at the time of closure did say that this new approach was making the collection a lot more accessible to the public, we found the complete opposite. Colonel Ramsbotham is no longer Chair of the Trustees.

We attended meetings with council officer Steven Howell as well as Trustees and Association members. The first meeting we were told that we could not relay any information to our group, which we could not agree to as we were there as our group's representatives. We were told that the History Centre would be the new home of the Collection and we were glad to hear this, but the next meeting the Collection was down to a couple of cabinets on a rotary basis. This meeting a Colonel swore at me and we were lied to about Museums being out of fashion and that my husband's regimental museum was closing, this was not true.

We supported the idea of the History Centre placing adverts in the local paper asking the public to get behind council consultations, both consultations the DLI came tops, however we were taken on board to keep us quiet. We were banned from the councils Facebook page as we asked too many questions about the Museum. Some strange things have gone on and I feel sure some people in this room will know more about them than us, such as the coincidence of a Trustee Major Lawton being made a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County the day after the museum closed. Colonel Ramsbotham said it was an unfortunate timing.

Major Lawton is not the only Deputy Lieutenant of the county to be a Trustee, also we cannot understand why the DLI Association have never supported

our campaign, we were fighting for their Regimental Museum, again we were told by several of them that they were informed from higher authority to avoid our group... why?

The council have been playing with words about the new History Centre, stating it will be the first time in years that the Collection and Archives are housed together... they may be housed together but there certainly will not be a permanent DLI display. It appears the new history centre will have a lot of virtual or digital displays which is not a museum.

Our groups aim has always been to have the DLI Collection housed and displayed as a whole collection, of course understanding that most museums do not put every item on display. We were told the collection would not be split up and it was. The public told us they wanted to be able to see the collection, wanted their children to be able to view closeup, Wakenshaw's gun, take a seat in the Jeep, be able to walk around looking at uniforms, medals - weapons that grandad had or worn. The main aim, which was pointed out to us very clearly when speaking to people, was that a dedicated DLI museum was wanted, the DLI deserve that. If the archives and the collection were housed together this will be a great asset for historians, family researchers etc, having access to the written history of the DLI, however, keeping the new History Centre as the home for the archives could be an asset to the two buildings as each one could promote the other. We are very proud of our county history be it mining, railways or military but mining has Killhope, railways have Shildon, what does the DLI have?

Should council decide after reviewing all the information to reopen the Art Gallery and Museum we know this would be a massive step to putting things right. This would show the public that what went on regarding the closure was amongst other things a farce, and that perhaps this decision could be looked at a little closer at a later date. We've always been very conscious that the museum is surrounded by Veterans and other ashes which sadly did not seem to mean that much at the time of the closure. This leads us on to the outstanding grounds in the area, where wildlife is in abundance, walking areas are used and pure peace is promoted there. An ideal base to begin a day out and don't forget just over the road is the multi-million Wharton Park. Consider too the fact of ample car parking at museum. A cafe once again could be looked at, as people have said they Sevenhills.

Advertising is a must, as the museum had not been advertised effectively for years prior to its closure, which could have been deliberate. Durham is making its bid for City of Culture in 2023 what is more cultural than a museum and art gallery, especially as at the moment Durham City has no Art Gallery. Finance should also be considered in the reopening of the museum, as stated earlier the expenditure due to the Museum closure is ridiculous, we do appreciate that money cannot be plucked out of thin air to fund this

reopening, however millions of pounds were, by the previous council set aside for cricket clubs, Auckland project and the new council HQ, but hopefully, via grants, careful planning and simply doing the right thing this can be overcome.

Consider the public's opinion which has already been proven to count for a lot, after the historical defeat of Labour in County Durham in May this year. The people made their voices heard via their vote. During both wars and campaigns before and after thousands of DLI men fought and died they deserve to be honoured. What we must ensure is that this is never allowed to happen again, with both the collection or the grounds, and that the collection is put into the hands of people who will listen and who will generally have the DLI Regimental History at heart, the way it was years ago.

Our group, The Faithful Durhams, would like to once again Chair thank you and the new council for finally listening to the people we've spoken to whilst out on the streets. It's been a long time coming for a lot of us, but we would do it again in a heartbeat. Some of the things that I've mentioned may not sit well with some people, however this is the truth as we see it. I will finish now with this story. James Holland a prominent historian who also backed us, told us he was at Pegasus Bridge one Remembrance Day, all the dignitaries, officers etc, were standing around chatting after the service and at the back of the room stood an old DLI soldier, so he went up to this old man introduced himself and asked, "so Sir where did you go during the war", the old man simply smiled and said "son, we were all over".

After reading online the Chair of Trustees' statement, once again we are disgusted. He states that there is little other than fond memories that is of regimental interest at the museum. Well, what about the ashes of the DLI lads. Yes, these lads were probably miners before soldiers, but they put their lives on the line so that we could have a future. As for coming back, living in the community thousands never came back.

On a personal note, can I offer our group sincere condolences to Audrey Willis or should I say Audrey Court whose husband Richie passed away last night. Ritchie was Chair of the Faithful Durhams and ex DLI"

The Chair thanked Mrs Inglis for her statement and asked the Head of Strategy and Transformation to summarise the statements provided in advance by the stakeholders and to read for the benefit of the Board and others present, a late joint statement received from The Army Museums Ogilby Trust.

"The Army Museums Ogilby Trust (AMOT) has been involved with the collection of the Durham Light Infantry since our foundation over 70 years ago. Robert Ogilby our founder endowed the original DLI museum and our

Trust has supported it with regular grants and acquisition funds. In the last few years leading up to the closure of the Aykley Heads site grants exceeded £20k. We have also supported directly the DLI Trustees in their work including funding their governance reforms to a further £10k.

The National Army Museum (NAM) has given advice, training, and a whole range of professional support at no cost to the Local Authority since the early 1970's. It has regularly placed exhibitions from the National Army collection in the former DLI museum site and did so especially over the period of Great War centenaries and Waterloo bicentenary.

Since the closure of the museum at Aykley Heads in 2015/16 we have offered support and partnerships both with Durham County Council and the DLI Trustees. We encouraged both the appropriate conservation and care of the collection and pressed repeatedly for continued public access. We developed and deepened our relationship with Durham County Archives and its DLI holdings. We jointly supported the arrangements on Palace Green and the move to Sevenhills though always insisting these were interim moves.

At every juncture we have worked with Council officers, a committed and experienced curatorial and archive team, and the political leadership of the Council, with no regard to political stripe. This led in time to a Memorandum of Understanding agreed in 2017 which allowed AMOT funding and NAM advice for a superb programme of travelling exhibitions. It also opened the way for funded additional curatorial capacity from AMOT.

Over the last 5 years the DLI collection and archives have received over £100k in direct grants and matched funding. In addition, we provided over £13k of funding to the Durham Hymns project working with the archives and Northern Bands Trust. We raised the profile of the collection and the opportunities arising from having no permanent home. This included a NAM facilitated and AMOT funded study day in London, held at the NAM, for local authorities. Significant keynote contributions were given at this event by Durham CC and West Sussex CC who have a similar issue with a Regimental collection.

The costs of regular travel to Durham from our bases in Salisbury and London respectively and the hidden administrative costs and staff resourcing also need to be noted. I estimate overall with grants and support costs committed to the DLI collection AMOT is committed to the tune of over £170k. The NAM costs at this stage must also be significant.

Public funders have already noted the discussions in Durham and not in a positive light. Certainty is needed or a perception of unreliability will grow.

AMOT still has resources committed to Durham especially in regard to archives. Like other stakeholders we will be patient for the democratic

processes involved but it is safe to say that major changes will take our focus elsewhere. AMOT and NAM work with a network of 144 Regimental and Corps collections and currently are involved in 8 major military museum building projects apart from Durham. This includes major projects in each of the devolved parts of the UK. If our funding is not needed in Durham it will be welcome elsewhere. We will also look to recover our original spend.

AMOT and NAM were delighted when in early 2019 members of Durham CC gave the agreement to the Durham History Centre project. The project has grown and become a well thought through and integrated plan in which stakeholders were regularly consulted, including AMOT and NAM. It has from the outset been a joint effort. In Gillian Kirkbride and her team, the collection has imaginative and creative talents. The project will undoubtedly lead to greater and wider public access built on the inspiring links with the local community that have existed for so long. It also takes into account the trajectory of travel in museums across the world who have raised expectations including more technology, as part of the offer to any prospective audience.

The recently opened National Army Museum of America relies almost exclusively on virtual technology. The marriage of archives and collection on one site is certainly the way ahead and Durham CC and the people of Durham should be very proud of this project.

It is clearly the case some have felt uneasy with the plans and have been loud and persistent in their views though not always constructively. It is also the case that the communications of the Council have left external organisations like ourselves frequently bemused and frustrated at every stage of this story. It has appeared at time that our contributions have not been fully recognised which is sad considering our only interest is the preservation and promotion of the extraordinary stories and history of the DLI and the community from which it was hewn.

We strongly feel the Council should take into account in its review our financial commitment both to date and in the future. It should consider the damage to the profile of Durham if it binned another museum plan. How would this be received by external funders? It should reflect on the duty to care for the collection in the long term as its current home is not suitable for this purpose. It should also consider the museum and archive team gathered around this project. Once a skill set is diffused or even dispersed the loss is often irreparable.

The open sore of the Aykley Heads site is clearly an issue the Council feels it should address but this is for another conversation and with greater thought. AMOT and NAM would offer our thoughts on the possibilities but any suggestion that this should return as a museum we roundly reject. The

present Director of the Imperial War Museum and a former AMOT Trustee is frequently quoted as stating that a museum is not a memorial.

The honour due to the DLI lives on in the community and the desire to tell its story afresh and anew to future generations. Durham History Centre project is close to making that commitment a reality and so we warmly commend it to the review process. It is worthy of the DLI and the people of this part of England.

Thank you for allowing our submission and our earlier conversations with the Council leadership. We wish you well in your deliberations, the people of Durham in these difficult times and look forward to our future visits and projects together”.

The Chair then invited questions from the Board and members.

Councillor McKenna added that he had intended to ask for a moment of remembrance at the beginning of the meeting, however noting that this had now passed asked what the future plans were for the grounds at the DLI museum and whether, given the number of ashes of former light infantrymen scattered, if they would be consecrated and blessed.

Councillor Elmer noted that although the statement read out acknowledged that the site was a museum not a memorial, however it actually was, and it was therefore extremely important that the status remained as a place for remembrance and reflection and agreed that dedication of a memorial garden would be incredibly important.

The Corporate Director Regeneration, Economy and Growth in response stated this would be considered as part of the review, noting potential legal implications, however acknowledging that ensuring the honour of County Durham’s military history was important.

Councillor Brown noted it would be extremely important to ensure a bus service was provided to the museum and she hoped the council could explore options for a visual arts space in Durham. She went on to add she hoped the existing DLI building was viable for future use. For instance, Durham has no visual arts exhibition space.

Councillor Moist thanked Mrs Inglis for her representation which he noted was in contrast to that submitted by the Ogilby Trust. He asked whether the Faithful Durhams group would be satisfied with the set up of the History Centre if the DLI collection was on permanent display. He furthermore commented that the impact of a second location for the housing of the collection could have a positive impact.

Councillor Marshall asked for clarification as to whether it was in the council's gift to be able to say where the DLI collection was placed. In response the Durham History Centre Programme Lead advised that the collection belonged to the Trust and DCC looked after this on their behalf. Any decision taken on its relocation would be done in collaboration with the Trustees. Councillor Marshall further asked what course of action would be taken in the event that the council and the Trustees disagreed. It was explained that this would be a legal issue and dealt with in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement.

Councillor Freeman in noting his personal attachment to the DLI, expressed his disappointment that the museum had not stayed open until a decision had been made on the History Centre. Whilst he saw logic in centralising services at the centre, he commented on the importance of retaining a large permanent DLI display. Furthermore, he suggested that a programme of temporary displays at the DLI museum would ensure that an element of the history of the building remained whilst being used for an alternative purpose for example an arts venue which may help to support the council's UK City of Culture Bid.

Councillor Crute asked whether there would be any potential risks to clawback of funding should the move not go ahead. In response the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism advised that the funding was subject to a commitment to display 5 five collections at the History Centre and should the transfer of the DLI collection not go ahead, then it would be subject to discussions with the funder. So, there would be some risk in this course of action.

Councillor Hood commented that the DLI site meant so much to family and friends of DLI veterans and ex and current Armed Forces personnel. Many had chosen this location to scatter ashes of their loved ones and as a place of remembrance should be preserved.

Councillor Jopling commented that in her opinion £250,000 was not a huge amount of money to put the existing DLI building right, given the sums of money wasted since its closure on contracts with Durham University to hold the collection. All in all, she felt that it had been an extremely expensive and avoidable exercise.

Councillor Adam added his thanks to all who had taken part in the discussions noting the emotional importance of the museum to many. He added however that in his opinion the physical artefacts connected to the DLI needed to be brought back to life in a building which was accessible and provided modern facilities for visitors. He suspected the feasibility study of the DLI museum would find it to be too expensive and unsustainable in terms of its future maintenance and its impact upon the environment. He queried



whether it would be realistic to get a full feasibility report completed by September.

In response the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth advised that the September Cabinet report would answer the two main questions outlined during her presentation, with preferred options. There will be a high level assessment and condition survey available and further work would take place once a preferred option was agreed. In terms of the timeframe for members to have detailed scrutiny of the report she advised that this would depend upon the preferred option although she expected it to be a matter of months.

Councillor McKenna remarked that the Regiment is the people and their sacrifice and is not a building. He added the building was not a war memorial.

Councillor Molloy commented that as a veteran himself coming from outside of County Durham he knew of the DLI and its importance to the people of County Durham. He therefore asked whether it would be possible to place a covenant on the land at the DLI museum to preserve it as a memorial area for the future.

In response the Corporate Director Regeneration, Economy and Growth acknowledged the clear importance of the grounds as an area of memoriam and advised that this would clearly need to be answered in the review.

Councillor Surtees commented that in her opinion Question 1 could not be answered without real consultation.

Councillor Howey suggested the grounds of the museum could be a memorial or peace garden for more than just the DLI. She asked whether the new History Centre would allow for a full family experience. In response, the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism advised that the centre would be very family orientated.

Councillor Marshall added at this point that he wanted to thank staff for all their work over many years in relation to this issue. He did however recognise the importance of maintaining a place of commemoration for families and suggested that further work be done in this regard. He went on to refer to government funding cuts which started in 2010 and the impact this had upon council decisions over several years. However, noting that there were issues with the current DLI museum, including building maintenance, the transfer of waste for the building and reduced footfall, all of which highlighted the requirement for arrangements to be reviewed. He added that he still felt that the decision taken by the previous administration to exhibit

the important collection in a different way was the right one and welcomed the plans for a modern and engaging history centre.

Mrs D Inglis, Faithful Durhams stated the people of Durham wanted the museum open and her group represented the public.

Councillor Jackson noted that there was always hesitation when change was planned and further acknowledged the importance of retaining a place of remembrance for families who had scattered loved one's ashes on the site. He asked what percentage of the collection would be on display at the History Centre as he felt that this was key. In response the Durham History Centre Programme Lead advised that the history centre exhibition was still in development and it is not possible at this stage to confirm how many objects and archive will be displayed however, around 65% of the stories currently identified for the exhibition include DLI objects and archive.. For comparison around 550 out of 15000 items had been on permanent display at the DLI museum.

Councillor Jopling commented that scrutiny should not be political but responded to the comments made earlier about the period of austerity and said it was as a direct result of the previous administration's failings.

Councillor Gunn added that the suitability of the new History Centre for children and families was a key consideration of the previous administration. She added whilst it was known that there were very few educational visits from schools to the DLI museum the plans for the new history centre would hopefully engage more young people, she therefore felt that this was a great opportunity.

Further discussion ensued regarding advertising and promotion of the DLI museum and Durham Art Gallery and Councillor Howey noted that the reduction in footfall could have been partly to do with lack of active promotion. In response the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth agreed that promotion of school and family accessibility was key to the future success of the history centre. The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism also agreed that good communications were vital and plans were in place for engagement with key audiences furthermore, the History Centre will also be home to the registrar office for Durham and those who chose to marry there would hold the place in their hearts and would likely return to visit the centre time after time. In addition, there were plans for the History Centre to form part of the Durham Tourist Trail.

Councillor Brown suggested an exhibition at the DLI museum could be complementary to one at the History Centre. The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism confirmed at the time of the museum's closure the History Centre

had not been planned. Although the collection was dispersed it was always imagined that this may change.

Councillor Coult commented that she hoped the review would address future feasibility of the DLI museum and look to bring it back into use as a potential arts / café / storage / multi-purpose area.

The Chair then welcomed members of the public who had submitted questions in advance of the meeting and asked the Head of Strategy and Transformation to read those to the Board. The Chair then provided the response from the service.

**Mr John Armstrong:**

**Question 1:**

As there is a review into the new County Hall why do they not now use the building as the History Centre including the full DLI collection, bus parking and other things that would bring tourists back into the city centre?

**Response:**

The History Centre is a bespoke design and very specialist in its nature. Due to this it would not be suitable to use the new County Hall for the History Centre.

Current plans for the history centre will also include consideration on how it can support the visitor economy, including working closely with university colleagues to develop itineraries that include attractions such as the botanic gardens and the oriental museum which would support our aims for a stronger tourism offer in and around the city. This is particularly important as we develop our plans for City of Culture 2025.

The History Centre is planned to also house our registrars service and so be an appropriate setting to host weddings and other life events. The visual amenity afforded by the St Oswald setting will help ensure that this element of the centres' operations is successful.

**Question 2:**

Referring to a survey held prior to the decision on closing the DLI museum in 2015, why was there not a question included asking if people wanted the collection to be kept together? He further asked at this point why the question as to what the public like would to see here was not asked as he felt this was misleading.

**Response:**

There have been four separate public consultations over three years and one consultation did ask if they supported five collections being brought together.

## **Mr Peter Jackson**

### **Question 1:**

Will the Management Board ask their Cabinet Colleagues to consider the potential for creating a much-needed Durham County Arts and Crafts and Cultural "exhibition gallery and visual arts activities centre"; which would also act as a first-class visitor attraction? (question amended to include 'arts and crafts')

### **Question 2:**

Will the Management Board also instruct the appropriate officers to explore the potential for such a venture to be run as a "Not for Profit Community Enterprise"?

### **Response:**

Durham Art Gallery housed in the DLI museum was a popular facility and accounted for the majority of visitors to the museum building. Cabinet will include consideration of the resulting reduction in the visual arts infrastructure as part of the review of the DLI collection and former DLI museum building. In addition, we will consider our overall arts infrastructure as we develop plans in anticipation of successful shortlisting for City of Culture 2025. Management arrangements would be an integral part of this consideration, and the council would assess a number of operating models to ascertain optimum value for any cultural facility.

In conclusion the Chair advised that he would at this point close the meeting however noted that comments made by the Board would be collated to form part of the report which would be considered by Cabinet in September. He thanked everyone that had contributed to the debate on the review of the DLI collection and archive.

Councillor Crute requested that the Board consider the Cabinet decision in due course and it was agreed that the Board would receive a further report in this regard.

**Cabinet**

**29 September 2021**

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

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

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

**Councillor Amanda Hoggood, Leader of the Council**

**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 one, April to June, 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](#)<sup>1</sup>.
  - (c) A long list of key performance indicators against the themes of the Council Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> approved by full council October 2020

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

### **More and Better Jobs**

- 5 UK gross domestic product (GDP) is currently 8.8% below its pre-pandemic level<sup>2</sup> and there are 553,000 fewer payrolled employees<sup>3</sup> (the hospitality sector, those aged under 25, and those living in London continue to be impacted the most). However, latest figures suggest that the jobs market is showing some signs of recovery with an increase in the number of payrolled employees for the sixth consecutive month and fewer planned redundancies.
- 6 Although we estimate the employment rate across County Durham has remained static - the estimated employment rate for County Durham is 71.7% for May 2021 below both regional and national rates - we are preparing for it to deteriorate, as the support schemes of furlough and income support (for the self-employed) are phased out in the coming months. A recent survey<sup>4</sup> suggests one in five firms could make staff redundant or cut their working hours in response to the change to furlough. Within County Durham, the majority of furloughed employees work in the accommodation and food service sector.
- 7 The impact of COVID-19 on the visitor economy has been significant. Visitor numbers, revenue generated from visits, and jobs supported are all half of pre-COVID levels. However, we are continuing to assist this sector, by attaining almost £2 million in grants to support the return of festivals and events and to develop a five-year programme of activities and exhibitions linked to our new History Centre, having renovated our cultural venues and through bidding for UK City of Culture status for 2025.
- 8 We remain concerned about the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. The economic situation is contributing to financial pressures across the county, with 20,000 children across the county eligible for free school meals (one in four) and many households in or at risk of falling into poverty.
- 9 The number of young people who remain not in employment, education or training continues to be a concern. The number of young people aged 16-17 undertaking an apprenticeship is however higher than the national average. School attendance rates remain close to the national average.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of National Statistics: [GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: January to March 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics: [Labour Market Overview, UK: June 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> by the Chamber of Commerce – surveyed 250 businesses, with 18% saying they were likely to make staff redundant in response to the change to furlough

- 10 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. The County is well placed in the heart of the region to take advantage of growth sectors of warehousing and logistics. Promoting employability may become a greater priority for the council and its partners as the full longer term impacts of the pandemic upon employment levels becomes clearer. The council leads the DurhamWorks programme to support young people into working or learning.

### **Long and Independent Lives**

- 11 Although less affected than other age groups by COVID itself, studies suggest young people have been disproportionately impacted by the social, educational and economic impacts of the pandemic. Increasing numbers of young people are being prescribed anti-depressants, facing longer wait times for psychological support, or needing urgent or emergency crisis care, and those already facing challenges, such as poverty or living with a disability, seem to have been the hardest hit in this regard.
- 12 In addition to the uncertain employment situation, poverty pressures continues to be a major issue and with the Universal Credit £20 per week pandemic uplift due to be withdrawn in October, we expect the situation to deteriorate. Increases in basic living costs continue to hit those with little disposable income hard, and we remain concerned that although about 20,000 pupils registered at schools are eligible for free school meals (27%, up from 24% last year), a quarter of them are not claiming them.
- 13 We are continuing to support people to live longer healthy lives. Focused activity across mental and physical well-being, physical activity for children, smoking quitters (particularly pregnant women and new mothers) and breastfeeding is continuing to make a difference to the lives of our residents. The number of teenage conceptions continued to fall during the quarter.
- 14 Throughout 2020/21, we continued to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families and we remain on track to achieve 'significant and sustained outcomes' for around 6,000 families as part of our stronger families programme. This work has continued into quarter one this year.
- 15 As a positive picture emerges from our health services, with high vaccination rates in our care homes and across our communities, we are now able to consider the longer-term health consequences of COVID-19. We are concerned that many residents are suffering long-

lasting symptoms of COVID-19 (Long-COVID) and many more have suffered impacts on their mental wellbeing, gained weight and become more inactive.

## **Connected Communities**

- 16 Reduced overall crime rates continued throughout quarter one, more noticeably across theft-related offences, which fell by a quarter, and may reflect people spending more time at home, with fewer opportunities for theft in public spaces and the closure of non-essential retail and the night-time economy.
- 17 However, we remain concerned about domestic abuse. Statutory referrals related to domestic abuse (parent/carer) was at a rate of one in five in the 12 months to May 2021, this increased to one in four during June 2021, which coincided with the start of the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament.
- 18 Anti-social behaviour has also increased, mainly litter related incidents, but also driven by more residents spending more time at home (thereby witnessing and reporting events, as well as driving increases in areas such as noise) and the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions.
- 19 Environmental cleanliness is showing a slight deterioration against last year in the categories of litter and detritus (based on a sample survey), and the number of reported fly-tips has started to return to pre-COVID levels, having decreased during the height of the pandemic.
- 20 One consequence of the pandemic has been the generation of additional tonnages of household waste due to people spending more time in their homes. An additional 12,000 tonnes of household waste was collected in 2020/21, however, contamination of kerbside recycling bins remains high.
- 21 We are concerned about the lifting of the eviction ban as lockdown continues to ease. More households are living in temporary accommodation, and for longer, due to a shortage of suitable properties, a consequence of action taken to house rough sleepers during the pandemic. We are sourcing additional properties to help alleviate these problems.
- 22 The complexity of referrals to children's social care continues to increase and COVID-19 is continuing to prevent the closure of some cases, due to being unable to complete actions identified in children's plans, for example, parental attendance at domestic abuse perpetrator courses as these courses are not running at present.
- 23 During quarter one, free public wi-fi has been installed in some of our town centres (with further roll-out planned later in the year), we have



also initiated phase one of our plans to improve the county's housing stock and tackle wider environmental issues.

## **An Excellent Council**

- 24 As steps two and three of the government's COVID-19 roadmap were achieved in quarter one, we have been able to lift some restrictions. However, work-related control measures in relation to hands, face and space remain in place, and greater emphasis placed on fresh air and ventilation of indoor spaces. The delay in achieving step four of the roadmap, primarily due to the emergence of a new delta variant of the virus, means working at home arrangements remained in place across quarter one.
- 25 As a consequence of the restrictions put in place throughout the pandemic (e.g., working from home, handwashing, social distancing and ventilation) both health and safety and days lost to sickness absence have remained low.
- 26 Our latest sickness rate is the second lowest level since 2010/11, with circa 80% employees recording less than 5 days sickness and almost 70% recording no sickness. Throughout the quarter, we continued to promote support mechanisms to increase the emotional resilience of our staff and protect their mental health.
- 27 Most services have now reopened in line with the government's roadmap to recovery. However, the redeployment of our Customer Access Point (CAP) staff to support other critical services, and the ongoing impact of self-isolation on service delivery has meant we have needed to delay the re-opening of our CAPs.
- 28 However, we are continuing to provide support via alternative channels and are continuing to expand our online alternatives to face to face contact which are encouraging more customers to liaise with us digitally.
- 29 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 £21 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 £7.771 million – a net overspend of £14.522 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.

## **The impact of COVID-19**

- 30 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.

- 31 However, roll-out of the UK's vaccination programme, which has reduced both hospital admissions and deaths, has allowed the government to implement plans for a [gradual and phased route out of lockdown](#).
- 32 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.
- 33 The COVID-19 surveillance dashboard can be accessed [here](#).

### **Risk Management**

- 34 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**

- 35 That Cabinet considers the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one 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.

### **Author**

Andy Palmer

Tel: 03000 268551

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **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.



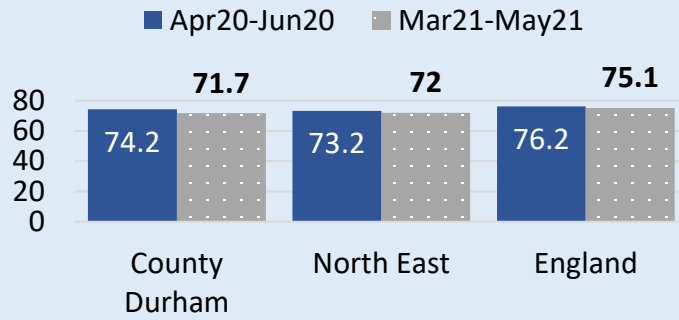
# Durham County Council Performance Management Report

## Quarter One, 2021/22

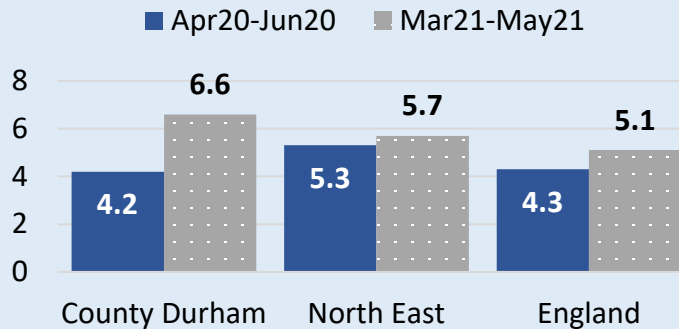


# MORE AND BETTER JOBS

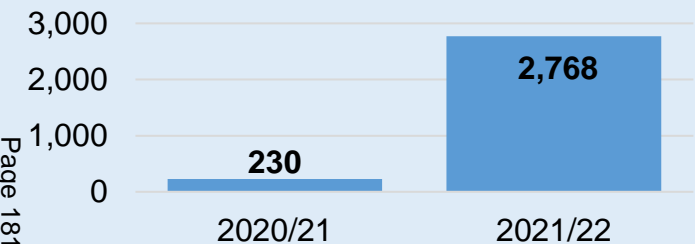
## Experimental Employment Rate



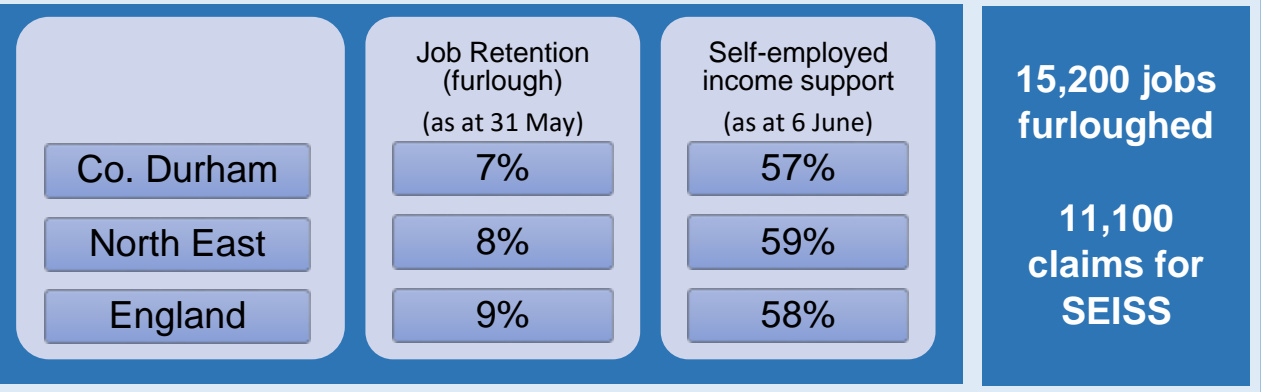
## Experimental Unemployment Rate



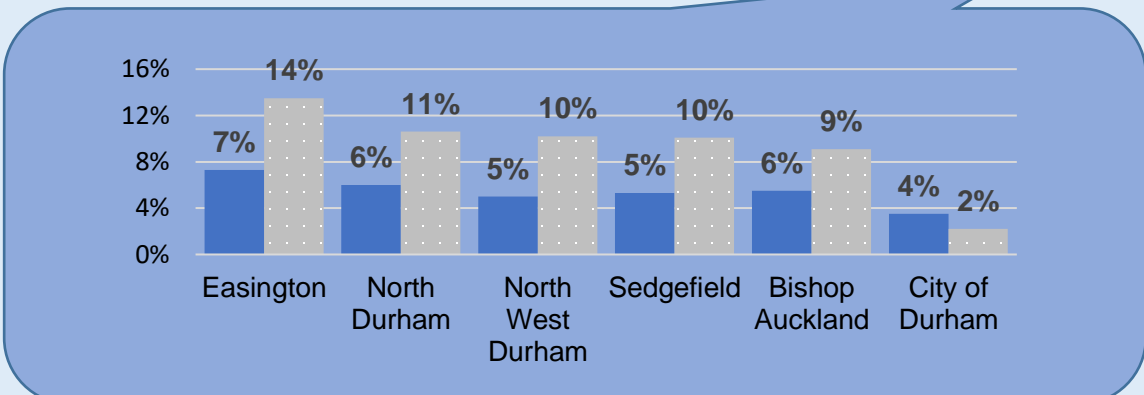
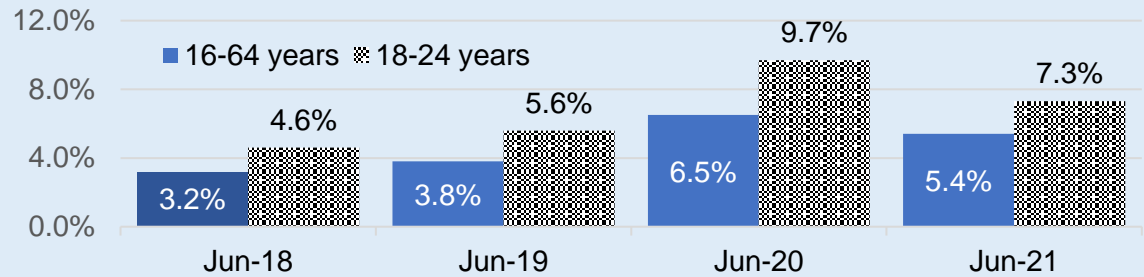
## Jobs created/safeguarded by Business Durham



## Support Schemes



## Claimant Count (as at June 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 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has delayed release of the Annual Population Survey (APS) data to March 2021 which includes the official employment rate. In lieu of this, an experimental estimate using Labour Force Survey (LFS) employment data has been used. Using this data, the estimated employment rate for County Durham is 71.7% for May 2021, this is below both regional and national LFS rates but does not yet show a significant COVID-19 effect due to the support provided by the furlough and income support schemes.
- 4 HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) data shows that around 15,200 employments in County Durham (7%) were furloughed under the government's Job Retention scheme. This is in line with both regional (8%) and England (8%) rates and a decrease from the most recent peak of 13% in January 2021 when there were 29,400 employments furloughed. Throughout the pandemic the trend for the proportion of employments furloughed in County Durham has closely mirrored the regional and national picture, being consistently slightly below the regional and national averages.
- 5 The most recent data available on the breakdown of furloughed employments by sector shows the majority of County Durham's furloughed employees work in the accommodation and food service sector, which has been particularly impacted by the pandemic restrictions; and the retail and manufacturing sectors which not only have also been impacted by the pandemic restrictions but are two of the largest employment sectors in County Durham.

- 6 The furlough scheme is currently being phased out. The table below shows the level of government contribution available in the coming months, the required employer contribution and the maximum amount the employee receives per month.

	<b>To June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
Government contribution for hours not worked	80% up to £2,500 per month	70% up to £2,187.50 per month	60% up to £1,875 per month	60% up to £1,875 per month
Employer contribution wages for hours not worked	None	10% up to £312.50	20% up to £625	20% up to £625
For hours not worked the employee receives	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month

- 7 The furlough scheme will end on 30 September 2021. A national survey carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce has highlighted that retraining is essential as one in five firms consider redundancies post-furlough. Recent HMRC data show that older workers are far more likely to remain furloughed than younger ones, raising concerns about what plans are in place to re-skill those left without jobs once the scheme winds down, and whilst a continuing skills shortage exists across the UK labour market.
- 8 Following a significant rise in people claiming employment benefits between March and May 2020, the claimant count continued to remain relatively static throughout 2020/21 until the first notable drop in May 2021 and now stands at 5.4% (June 2021). County Durham remains below the regional and national rate but is still significantly higher than the pre-COVID position.
- 9 The impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy in 2020 has been significant. Visitor numbers fell by 43.4% compared to 2019, impacting on both 'day' and 'staying' visitor numbers. Consequently, the amount generated by the visitor economy also fell, decreasing by 48.3%. The number of jobs supported (both direct and indirect) by the visitor economy dropped by 44%.
- 10 Across the county the greatest impact was seen in Durham City in relation to staying visitor expenditure, with the least impacted area being the Durham Coast in relation to day visitors to this area. As over 50% of visitors to County Durham are day visitors from the North East, the impact of the pandemic has not been as sizeable as other areas of the country which are more reliant on overnight stays and overseas travel.

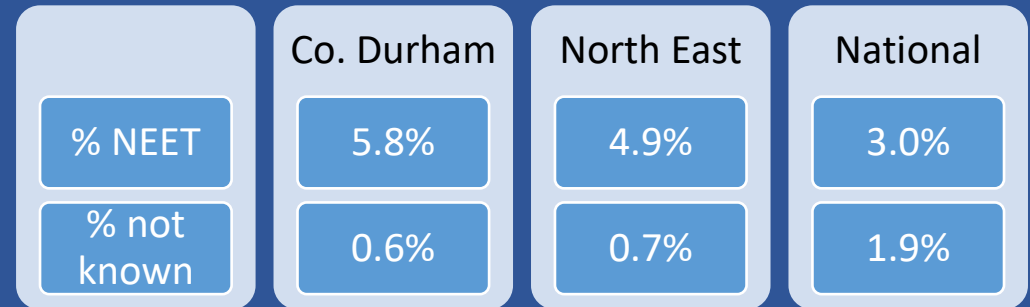
## MORE AND BETTER JOBS

Page 184

### Business Durham Activity

	Apr-Jun 2021	Compared to last year	
inward investments secured: • Maze Rattan • MAP Group	<b>2</b>	+1	↑
Businesses engaged	<b>474</b>	64	↑
floor space occupied	<b>87%</b>	+2pp	
GVA from jobs created or safeguarded (million)	<b>£81.2</b>	+£74	↑

### 16-17 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (Apr-Jun 2021)



additional information on businesses is available via [Durham Insight](#)

### Visitor Economy

	2020	Compared to last year	
Visitors to County Durham (millions)	11.39	- 43%	↓
Jobs supported by visitor economy (FTEs)	6,794	- 44%	↓
£ generated by visitor economy (£'millions)	£506.75	- 48%	↓



- 11 The most recent COVID impact survey by Visit County Durham shows a more positive picture with most businesses being able to open as restrictions are lifted, the majority reporting they had lots of enquiries and bookings and 18% predicting their occupancy between June and August will be higher than pre-COVID levels. However, there were still concerns about further national lockdowns or further restrictions and the majority reported that customers were booking less than a month in advance.

## **Council Services**

### **A strong competitive economy and premier place to do business**

- 12 The £220m UK Community Renewal Fund<sup>5</sup> was launched by the government as part of the budget statement 2021. The programme will:
- provide funding to test innovative ideas and pilot activity;
  - invest in skills;
  - help people into employment;
  - support local businesses to grow and develop;
  - help local communities become more resilient and sustainable.
- 13 The government identified 100 places to be prioritised for funding according to a new Index of Economic Resilience, although there is no guarantee of receiving funding, County Durham is one of the 100 priority areas. Following a call for applications, four bids have been selected for submission based on projects which most strongly fit the government's criteria. Announcements on successful bids are expected late July onwards, with all project activity needing to be delivered by March 2022.
- 14 The £5 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.
- 15 Grants are being used to enable businesses to purchase new equipment, develop new products, adapt their operational models and expand into new markets. Businesses whose applications were not accepted, either because they did not meet key eligibility criteria or their recovery plans required further development, have been signposted to other support programmes.

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<sup>5</sup> the aim being 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.

- 16 In its first two years of operation the County Durham Growth Fund<sup>6</sup> has awarded £5.53 million in grants to 36 companies. To date:
- £3.06m has been paid out;
  - 184 jobs have been created;
  - with a further 375 jobs projected before the end of the project.
- 17 In addition to the £5.53 million, the County Durham Growth Fund levered a further £8.66 million in private sector investment.
- 18 The ‘Size and Health of the UK Space Industry’ report (June 2021) revealed the number of people employed in the space sector in the north east is more than 1,000 (up 12%). The report also highlighted that the number of space organisations in the region is up 50% from 34 to 51 with income from the north east’s space sector totalling £88 million. The North East Centre of Excellence in Satellite Applications, based at North East Technology Park (NETPark) in Sedgefield, has played an important role in the growth of the region’s space sector. Led by Business Durham, the North East Satellite Applications Centre of Excellence has engaged with over 670 organisations, establishing links between 277 businesses and universities, and helped companies secure £9.2m worth of funding.
- 19 During the quarter, 305 businesses were intensively assisted which reflects the increasing number of businesses that have been taking up support through Business Durham's various programmes.
- 20 Durham Ambitious Business Start-ups (DABS) programme has assisted 71 pre-start entrepreneurs and 48 newly registered businesses during the quarter and three companies have been awarded a £5,000 jobs grant from the programme to take on a new member of staff.

### **Helping all people into rewarding work**

- 21 COVID-19 restrictions continue to impact delivery of our employability programmes. Face to face contact with participants has not recommenced and referrals from Job Centres and delivery partners has been varied. However, participants progressing into employment has increased slightly and levels are on par with pre-COVID levels, through our support for people setting up as self-employed, moving into job sectors experiencing high demand or to assist employers to replace furloughed workers who have moved to other jobs.

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<sup>6</sup> established Apr-19, the fund is £8.9 million capital scheme providing grants to small and medium enterprises in County Durham to accelerate their growth, enable them to purchase new equipment, increase their capacity, improve efficiency, or expand into new markets.

- 22 Although a large proportion of our clients have limited digital skills which prevent them from completing online courses, there has been a number of clients completing education or training courses through our delivery partners on the LINKCD employability programme.
- 23 Delivery of the LINKCD programme has been severely hit by the pandemic and this is set to continue until referrals increase and face to face meetings can resume. We have recently applied for additional funding to extend LINKCD project until December 2023 to increase capacity and re-profile the programme outputs. Community led local development (CLLD) projects (north and south) have received additional funding to extend the projects to December 2022, and although both projects are on track progressions into employment are slightly behind schedule. However, the position is expected to improve with easing of lockdown restrictions and extra capacity working on the programme from January 2021.

### **A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county**

- 24 We have been awarded £724,000 of Culture Recovery Fund Grant by Arts Council England, which will support the return of festivals and events that were impacted by the pandemic.
- 25 In preparation for Lumiere 2021, the creative commissioning scheme BRILLIANT was launched in January. Following a record number of applications being received, six winners have been commissioned to create a new piece of light art for the event. This was the first time the competition was opened up to people outside of the north east and received 272 applications, an increase of over 250% on 2019. A fifth of applicants identified as having a disability or being from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups supporting the scheme's mission to broaden the diversity of those working in the medium of light art.
- 26 During the quarter, the decision was taken to postpone the Durham BRASS event which was due to take place from 14 to 18 July. The festival had been planned with COVID safety measures in mind, with a largely outdoor programme and social distancing arrangements, however due to uncertainty regarding national announcements on restrictions and the publication of safety guidance on large scale events, we have decided to postpone the event until 2022.
- 27 The council has secured a £1.2 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a five-year programme of countywide activities and temporary exhibitions linked to the county's new History Centre. The funding will also support an innovative digital offer:
- including a new dedicated History Centre website;

- an online platform for people to search the collections, comment on heritage items and share their own stories;
  - and the digitisation and cataloguing of thousands of photographs, objects, maps and other historic documents.
- 28 This will allow people all over the world to connect with the county's historic collections and archives in unique ways. The History Centre is expected to attract up to 70,000 visitors a year, but the engagement programme will extend the centre's reach further still with more than 40% of the activities planned to take place offsite in schools and community venues
- 29 With the lifting of restrictions, we have been able to open a number of our cultural venues which have seen extensive renovation work carried out over the last year:
- Empire Theatre, Consett - £823,000 refurbishment of the auditorium, toilets, and front of house area, as well as a new stage and technical equipment;
  - Gala Theatre, Durham - £600,000 refurbishment, fitted with new flooring and seating in the auditorium, as well as a new-look box office, display screens, signage and furniture;
  - Bishop Auckland Town Hall - opened in May with a touring exhibition, 'Gladiators: A Cemetery of Secrets', following its major refurbishment in 2020. The renovated town hall offers a newly refurbished contemporary gallery space, a brand-new café and menu using high-quality, locally sourced produce and a fully digitised cinema.
  - Durham Town Hall - partially re-opened to visitors to enable the ongoing structural repair and restoration programme.
- 30 Killhope Museum re-opened to visitors in May with a planned programme of outdoor events and guided tours, alongside the exhibitions, play park, gift shop and new café. The waterwheel and jigger house however remain closed following delays in essential maintenance due to the pandemic. Binchester Roman Fort re-opened on 1 July, although there will be no organised events this year, visitors are once again able to see the two restored Roman baths and one of the most well preserved Roman heating systems in the country.
- 31 On 19 July, we submitted an expression of interest for UK City of Culture status for 2025 on behalf of Culture Durham, a partnership including Beamish Museum, Durham Cathedral and Durham University.
- 32 Durham hopes to secure the title for both the city and the county, following the announcement that, for the first time, groups of towns are able to work together to submit joint bids. Schemes will include the opening of a new dedicated history centre, a programme of events around the display of the Lindisfarne Gospels in the north east and a celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 of the first

passenger railway. Following the deadline for bids, a panel will draw up a shortlist of six locations, with successful applicants being announced in September; they will then have until January 2022 to submit their full bids with the winner revealed in May 2022.

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

- 33 There have been three Section 8 inspections by Ofsted to Durham schools during the quarter one reporting period. These are monitoring visits to confirm that schools remain good or outstanding and that safeguarding is effective. Whilst Ofsted were not grading these visits, all schools received the judgement that 'leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances'. The focus for further action for these schools is continued well-being support for children and young people as they returned to school.
- 34 The role of local authorities in dealing with safeguarding complaints regarding schools has changed in recent years. Complainants should follow 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 11 qualifying safeguarding complaints made to Ofsted relating to Durham schools during quarter one. This compares to two in the same period last year, and eight during quarter one 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 one 2020 and therefore their social interaction with staff and peers was somewhat limited.
- 35 At the commencement of the summer term, 93.6% of pupils were in attendance at state-funded schools in County Durham. Rates were the same nationally. There were 94.6% in primary, 90% in secondary and 90.1% in special schools. For vulnerable groups, these rates were 87.6% for those children with a social worker, compared to 85.1% nationally and 90.2% for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compared to 88.8% nationally.
- 36 Attendance rates decreased locally and nationally as the quarter progressed around the same time as there were increases in infection rates associated with the new COVID-19 variant and consequently school bubble closures.
- 37 During quarter one, local elective home education (EHE) numbers were subject to ongoing fluctuation. During the 2020/21 academic year despite the increases in numbers of EHE nationally and locally, 163 pupils were supported to return to school and year 11 pupils became non-compulsory school age as of 25 June which has resulted in a local overall decrease in local EHE figures. Overall numbers continued to remain low at any point in the quarter fluctuating between

0.6% and 0.7% of the school age population. Staff 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.

- 38 During the summer term, 663 personal education plan (PEP) meetings have taken place with current reports being quality assured by the virtual school team to ensure children looked after are receiving high quality education and their bespoke needs are being met.
- 39 Our behaviour and inclusion panels continue to address high rates of exclusion through early identification and a proactive approach to pupil support. Throughout quarter one, 20 pupils at risk of exclusion were supported by the primary panel (none were permanently excluded) and the secondary panel supported 256 pupils (there were 29 permanently excluded pupils). No pupils from special schools were permanently excluded. 29 reports have been produced relating to permanent exclusions, the reports are shared with governing bodies and parents as part of the exclusion procedures.
- 40 Thirty-one secondary managed moves have been arranged to support students at risk of permanent exclusions and one primary managed move. There have been 364 primary in-year transfers with 233 Durham to Durham schools, 121 out of county to Durham schools and 10 EHE returning to school. There were 123 secondary in-year transfers, 26 in total with 53 Durham to Durham schools, 60 out of county to Durham schools, one Independent Durham Schools to Durham and nine EHE returning to school.
- 41 In terms of secondary best advice transfer meetings there were 14 held in total (one out of county to Durham, 13 Durham to Durham schools). Ten students transferred following the meeting with four remaining at their home school. A total of 512 year six students identified as requiring enhanced transition support have been shared with transition leads for every secondary school in County Durham.
- 42 The early years panel considered 98 requests for early years SEND support, an increase of 40 (145%) on the previous year and 28 requests to initiate statutory assessment with 21 (75%) agreed in comparison to 53 with 24 (45%) agreed in the previous year. In addition, the team provided information to 85 infant and primary schools to support transition and enable pre-emptive funding requests where appropriate.
- 43 Across County Durham, the proportion of young people (aged 16-24) Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is 5.8%, which equates to 621 young people from a cohort of 10,691. This represents a period where young people are completing academic programmes and moving to a summer transitional period, as they secure places in learning (and await their start) for the forthcoming

academic year. [DurhamWorks](#) is identifying young people for support and moving them to a NEET destination in order to be able to register them on the programme. This is to allow us to offer support at the earliest possible opportunity but can result in an increase of NEET and lower participation rates at an earlier point in the year. The whereabouts of 2% of the national cohort is not known compared to 0.6% across County Durham and 0.7% in the North East.

- 44 Whilst some face to face contact with young people has returned in County Durham, the intensive face to face re-engagement programmes offered prior to COVID have been unavailable to our NEET young people during Apr to June. This has therefore directly increased the number, and proportion, currently identified as NEET. We have seen this impact particularly on our priority groups and most vulnerable who require this type of supportive post-16 provision
- 45 Across County Durham, 5.5% of young people aged 16-17 are undertaking an apprenticeship, significantly higher than the 4.1% national average. However, the overall proportion in apprenticeships has reduced due to COVID-19 with more of those aged 16-17 year continuing in full time education or training as opposed to employment.

## **Long and Independent Lives**

- 46 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.

# LONG AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

ge 192

## Think Family

**5,462 families** turned around  
(2015 - Jun 21)

following intervention...

**2,166** workless families progressed to work

**2,585** families reported reduced mental health issues

**983** families reported reduced substance misuse

**4,748** families achieved significant & sustained outcomes  
(2015 - Jun 21)

## Healthy Start Vouchers

(Jun 2021)

Co. Durham

North East

England

**% take up**

65%

66%

58%

## Adult Social Care

**175.0**

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

**87%**

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

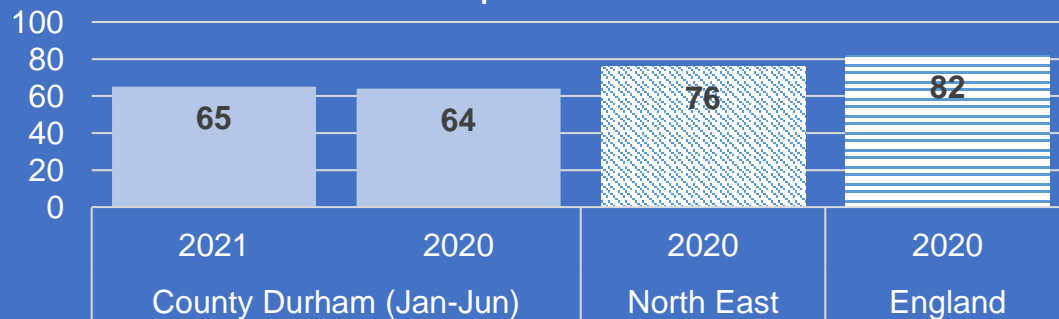
**87%**

of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months  
(2020/21)

**95%**

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

## % EHCP completed within 20 week time period



worse than last year

better than last year

similar to last year

Not comparable



## National, Regional and Local Picture

- 47 A briefing summarising the [impact of COVID-19 on young people](#)<sup>7</sup> concludes that young people have been less affected than other age groups by COVID-19 itself, but have been disproportionately impacted by the social, educational and economic impacts of the pandemic.
- 48 It also highlights that young people already facing challenges in their lives (such as living in poverty, living with a disability or in challenging family situations) seem likely to have been hardest hit. There is particular concern about the ‘slow burn’ impacts of educational and employment constraints, and the role the pandemic is playing in widening health inequalities.
- 49 An article on the [impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people](#)<sup>8</sup> suggests that increasing numbers of young people were prescribed anti-depressants during the pandemic, while facing ever longer waits for psychological support. The article states that NHS data, analysed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (published in April 2021), show that 80,226 more children and young people were referred to mental health services between April and December 2020, an increase of 28% on 2019.
- 50 In addition, the analysis revealed that the number of children and young people needing urgent or emergency crisis care had increased by 18%, compared with 2019.
- 51 The article also highlighted that in the five years ending April 2020, there was a 26% increase in the number of 0-17 year olds in England who were prescribed anti-depressants. The trend appeared to accelerate further during the pandemic, particularly during the national lockdown periods.
- 52 During quarter one, permanent admissions to residential and nursing care are almost twice the number seen in the same period last year. However, it should be noted that that admissions 12 months ago were significantly lower due to the pandemic. The latest data for permanent admissions are only slightly less than two years ago (pre-COVID), suggesting that public confidence in care homes is returning.
- 53 Latest data for the percentage of older people remaining at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement services are the highest (86.7%) for almost two years and significantly higher than the figure from the same period last year (82.6%). This percentage has continued to rise during the pandemic.

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<sup>7</sup> written by Ann Hagell and published by Association for Young People's Health in February 2021

<sup>8</sup> published by The Pharmaceutical Journal in June 2021

- 54 Recently published data from the Active Lives survey (November 2019 to November 2020) clearly reflect the 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 'inactivity' increased over that period, which unfortunately has an impact on the gradual gains made over the last five years. With regard to 'active' participation (150+ minutes a week), we remain relatively static (at 60.6%) compared to the previous 12 months and just below the national average (61.4%).

## **Council Services**

- 55 The breastfeeding action plan has been reviewed, with a refreshed multi-agency action plan being developed, linking into the regional work being undertaken by the Local Maternity System (LMS). Key actions in the plan include:
- developing a suite of videos which can be shared via social media to raise awareness of the support available for those choosing to breastfeed;
  - exploring the potential to develop a targeted mass marketing campaign focused on changing societal attitudes and beliefs to breastfeeding, which is jointly funded by key partners;
  - developing a joint communication plan with key partners to deliver significant messages via social media platforms in line with the agreed 'call to action';
  - reviewing the scope of the Infant Feeding Team, taking into account national and regional best practice as part of standard commissioning processes;
  - working with the Pioneering Care Partnership to make the Breastfeeding Friendly County Durham accreditation scheme part of the silver level Better Health at Work Award;
  - conducting focus groups in targeted areas of the county to obtain insights from mothers and families on barriers and experiences of feeding choices in County Durham;
  - a deep dive by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust to explore the specific details behind feeding decisions - the outcome will be used to identify barriers and opportunities, to improve service delivery.
- 56 The council continues to support the Active 30 campaign including help with resource development, communications, and increasing physical activity in schools and communities. By June 2021, 76 schools had pledged to work with the programme.
- 57 As part of the Schools and Education Settings Health and Wellbeing Framework, a quality framework for schools has been co-developed with partners from children services and schools to provide a clear understanding of the health and well-being needs of children and young people in County Durham. The quality

framework for schools is aligned to the early years and settings framework, with local branding developed. A peer review tool will provide evidence for improved outcomes and measures of success. A soft launch took place in March and a full launch will take place in summer 2021.

- 58 To support the national Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme, a new County Durham [website](#) (created to promote physical activity within our local communities) has been updated for the summer holidays. This aims to ensure that physical activity quality standards are embedded, with a planned timetable of resources to support activities.
- 59 In our Early Help service, development work is underway with partners to look at how we capture the volume of assistance provided. A new signs of safety assessment is being developed for partners to use and submit centrally. A further piece of work will follow to look at the quality of early help with a view to establishing a shared quality assurance framework.
- 60 Our early help provision, such as the Young Adult Support Café (YASC), continues to operate online alongside existing online support (such as Rollercoaster and Kooth). Thirty six YASC sessions were delivered during quarter four with 20 young people attending in total.
- 61 This quarter saw the return of face to face YASC sessions. The east project launched face to face at The Art Café in east Durham Trust on a Wednesday evening. Young people have attended the project supported by a One Point family worker. Due to an increase in positive COVID cases and staff having to isolate, the south project delayed returning to Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) in Newton Aycliffe until June however as a result two new young people have started to access the project. As part of the transition to face to face the south group met for a socially distanced walk. The south group continues to meet weekly face to face on a Monday. The north group at Waddington Street is currently scheduled to return face to face during the next quarter, with a provisional date set for 7 September.
- 62 Now that face to face sessions are returning the promotion of YASC offer has continued to be a priority to ensure young people that could benefit from informal peer support are aware of the service. Efforts have been made to re-engage with young people that were not comfortable meeting virtually during the pandemic.
- 63 Investing in Children continues to provide opportunities to meet young people one to one either virtually or socially distanced to support them to access the projects.
- 64 Young people accessing YASC have been continuing to work with Investing in Children and Rollercoaster family support to engage in the United Voice agenda, supporting discussions in relation to service development for both the prevention

admissions work and the Emily's Gifts projects. A young person and a parent/carer attended the launch of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership to present the priorities of United Voice in relation to involving young people and families in meaningful engagement and true co-production of services.

65 One young person from YASC co-chaired the relaunch of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Network as part of the activities for Mental Health Awareness Week.

66 In the lead up to Mental Health Awareness Week young people worked on creating a series of social media campaigns to encourage conversations about mental health linked to the Five Ways to Well-being. These campaigns were shared via Investing in Children and Stamp It Out social media as well and circulated through local networks including the emotional well-being locality forums.

67 Throughout the summer young people will be able to access training opportunities:

- ASDAN accredited peer mentoring training which is a full day session (two dates to choose from);
- A three hour virtual session on Zoom (two dates to choose from) for any individual with mental health lived experience supporting people challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

68 Feedback from the Children and Young People's Transformation Partnership (LTP) identified difficulties for professionals, adults and families when navigating the support services available in County Durham to support mental health and emotional well-being.

69 Following this feedback, the council has developed guides for adults and children and young people known as 'rainbow resources'. The interactive guides promote and signpost the services available across County Durham to support mental health and emotional well-being.

70 The rainbow guides were widely promoted and cascaded to internal and external partners and were positively received. Feedback from partners and service users was excellent. Several iterations of these resources have been produced and utilised to support the COVID-19 response and recovery agenda.

71 Funding was secured in early 2020 to introduce a public health practitioner to develop a project in the Children and Young People's service to improve the response to the emotional well-being and mental health of our children and young people. The project was based around a number of thematic areas:

- joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) self-assessment;
- implementing the Thrive model (re-writing practice toolkits and resources);
- upskilling and training children's social care staff (training offer).

72 Working with the Jigsaw Project, additional training has been undertaken to enhance the bereavement offer, with online materials developed and shared on our website and with partners to aid parents and carers to support children and young people who have experienced loss during the pandemic.

73 County Durham is currently within the top 5% of local authorities for take-up of the Healthy Start voucher, with 65% of those eligible, claiming the voucher. Through the Healthy Weight Alliance, a Healthy Start Task and Finish Group has been set up to promote and raise awareness with families and partners. This aims to increase the uptake of families accessing the Healthy Start vouchers and to increase the uptake of fruit and vegetables. In addition to previous work of the group (for example, delivery of bitesize training sessions to over 500 staff), as part of the communications plan currently County Durham specific resources being developed in line with the national Healthy Start campaign.

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

74 As expected due to the protections offered while Universal Credit is being rolled out, latest data show an increase in pupils eligible for free school meals. More than 27% of County Durham pupils are known to be eligible (January 2021), similar to the North East levels, but higher than national. Around 15,500 of the 20,000 eligible pupils are claiming them, meaning almost 5,000 children are eligible for but not claiming them.

### **Promoting positive behaviours**

75 Tobacco control continues to be a priority for action, with links to poverty, second-hand smoke / smoke free housing, mental health and tobacco dependency in pregnancy proposed as priorities during 2021/22.

76 The most recent quarterly data (2019) highlight a continuing trend of reduction in teenage conceptions, with County Durham (18.7) below the North East average (19.3) but still greater than England (14.1). Over the last twelve months, work to reduce under-18 conceptions has included the following innovative practice:

- online access to C Card<sup>9</sup>;
- increased access to online testing / sexual health advice and guidance;
- delivery of sexual health / C Card packs to young people who are at risk;

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<sup>9</sup> The C Card scheme is aimed at young people between 13-24 years old who can register to get a range of free condoms, femidoms, lube, dams, information and advice. The aim of the service is to promote reproductive and sexual health and help young people to access local services.

- remote delivery to young people (and parents) of programmes which support them in remaining sexually healthy.

77 The COVID Awareness Team supported staff from the Cabinet Office at a roadshow at the Arnison Centre to pass out key messages and speak to local people about testing, vaccinations and general COVID-19 information. The Awareness Team are also supporting the COVID vaccine bus around the county.

### **Better integration of health and social care services**

78 The new 'County Durham Care Partnership Executive' arrangements to further integrate health and social care services came into place in April 2021. This will stand County Durham in good stead for the proposals outlined in the Health and Social Care white paper relating to integrated care systems coming into force. The County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group will cease to exist on 1 April 2022. Health and Well-being Boards will continue to have a leadership role at the place-based level in these new arrangements to represent the views/plans of County Durham.

79 During the pandemic, data for the indicator outlining the percentage of service users receiving an assessment or review in the previous 12 months increased, which demonstrates that frontline social care teams were able to improve the timeliness of care package reviews for clients. However, latest data, is similar to that saw pre-COVID.

### **Physical environment that will contribute to good health**

80 Discussions with key stakeholders are ongoing regarding Play Streets.<sup>10</sup> Public Health presented the initiative to the Community Action Team (CAT) working in South Moor for a 12 week period, to consider piloting it in this area, as partners and the community are already engaged. As a result, community meetings will take place on 23 and 27 August, with support from CAT partners.

81 A draft strategic framework and strategy has been developed for the Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC). The committee has agreed to the formation of a task and finish group to engage key stakeholders, map the local system, assets and gaps in provision, establish priority areas of intervention and agree areas for collaboration, to develop a whole systems action plan to increase levels of physical activity across the life course in County Durham. The updated Physical Activity Strategic Framework will be published in September 2021.

82 In March 2021, the government announced funding to help people living with excess weight and obesity to lose weight and maintain healthier lifestyles.

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<sup>10</sup> a scheme which enables streets to be closed to through traffic for 2-3 hours, creating a safe space for children and families to play.

Durham County Council received £545,000 to be spent during 2021/22, for the commissioning of tier 2 weight management services, which are multi-component programmes addressing dietary intake, physical activity, and behaviour change. Following focused discussion with key public health stakeholders and partners, it was agreed to target a very specific population group linked to perioperative care<sup>11</sup> and 'The Well-Being for the Time Being programme'. Discussions are ongoing with a potential provider, for the service to start in September 2021.

- 83 The Self Harm Task and Finish group has worked with key stakeholders to identify current provision in relation to self-harm and to identify barriers in the identification and support offered to children and young people and families across the mental health system. A number of workshops were conducted, which found gaps in relation to professionals' confidence and an understanding of the scale of the issue in County Durham. In response, the Practitioners Toolkit was updated to reflect current guidance, the guidance for schools was updated and rolled out, and training was conducted via the Emotional Well-being Locality Forums to increase practitioner confidence.
- 84 Throughout the pandemic, due to people spending more time in their homes, we have been collecting increased tonnages of waste. During 2020/21 243,493 tonnes of waste was collected from households an increase of 5.3% on the previous year or just over 12,000 tonnes.
- 85 Contamination of kerbside recycling bins remains high. Data for 2020/21 shows a 6.5pp increase on the three-year average. Tonnages of glass sent for recycling continues to surpass the three-year average with the latest data for January to March 2021 showing a 27% increase and for 2020/21 a 32% increase.
- 86 For 2020/21 the HWRC's landfill diversion rate was 78% against the three-year average of 89%. However, improvements to the diversion rate can be seen in the most recent data for January to March 2021 which is 83%, the three-year average for the period is 88%.
- 87 The Small Electrical Recycling Project has been launched providing free drop-off points for small electrical and battery-operated items, there are currently 29 collection points across the County.

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<sup>11</sup> Perioperative care, also referred to as perioperative medicine, is the practice of patient-centered, multidisciplinary and integrated medical care of patients from the moment of contemplation of surgery until full recovery.

## **Tackling the stigma of poor mental health and building resilient communities**

- 88 The council, in conjunction with the County Durham Time to Change Hub, promoted Mental Health Awareness Week during May 2021. The theme was 'Nature', which provided an opportunity to promote the mental health and well-being benefits of being out and about, taking advantage of various locations across the county. The campaign centred around the 'Five Ways to Well-being' and focused on a separate topic each day.

## **Connected Communities**

- 89 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**

- 90 Parliament has debated a petition calling for more water safety content as part of the curriculum and swimming lessons. The petition calls on the government to "review and enhance curriculum content on water safety, so schools are required to ensure that all children know about and know how to deal with issues such as cold water shock and rip currents". Through representation on the Local Government Association (LGA) the council has previously pushed for water safety to be taught in schools and also led the Safe Durham Partnership's Dying to be Cool<sup>12</sup> campaign.

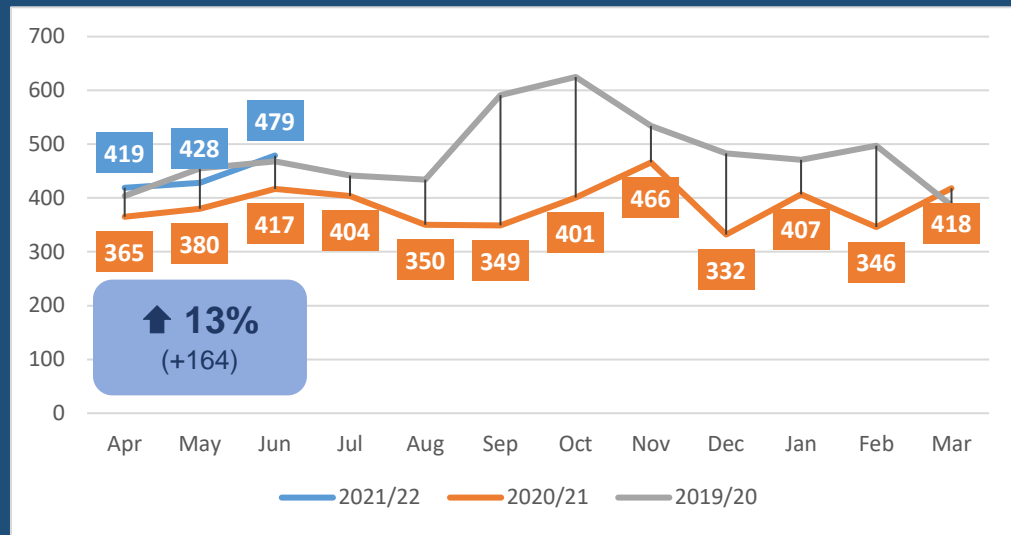
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<sup>12</sup> Which/ aim to raise more awareness in 10-16 year olds of cold water shock and the risks of going into water without acclimatising first.

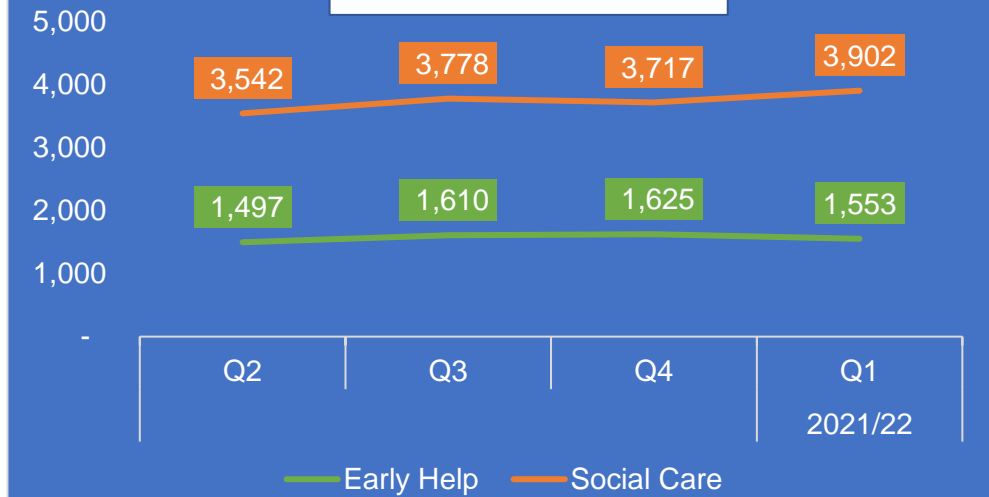


# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

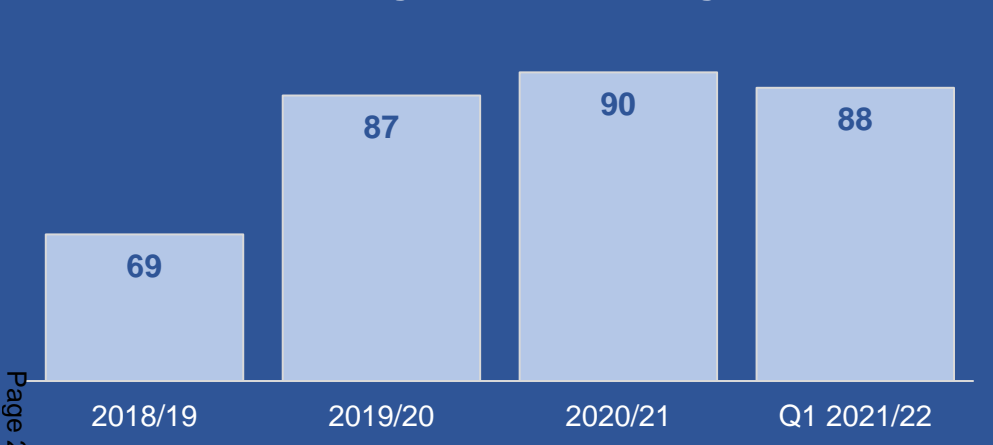
## Referrals



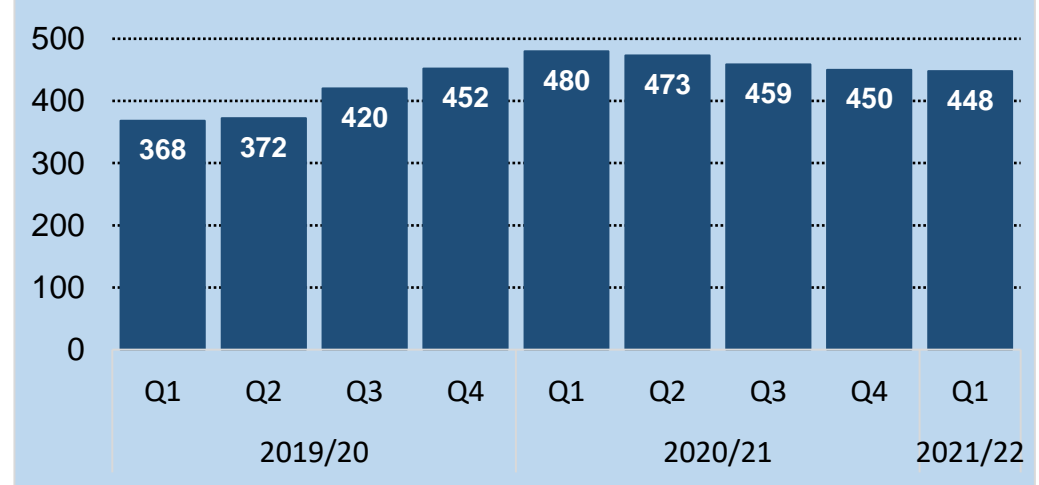
## No. of open cases



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



## No. of children subject to a child protection plan



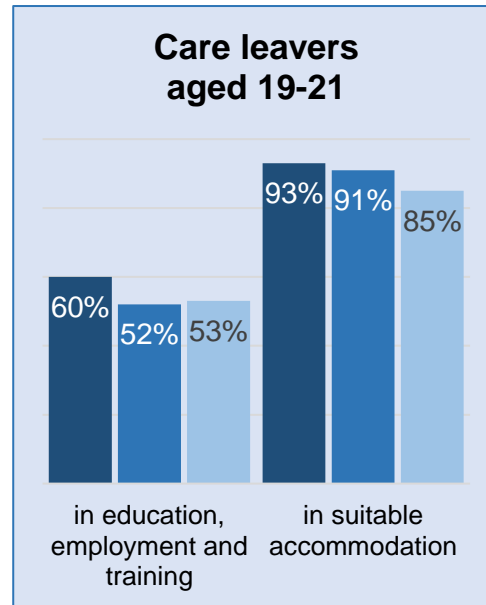
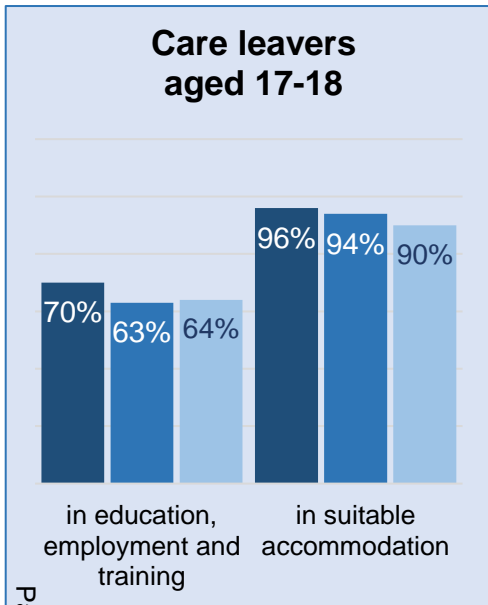
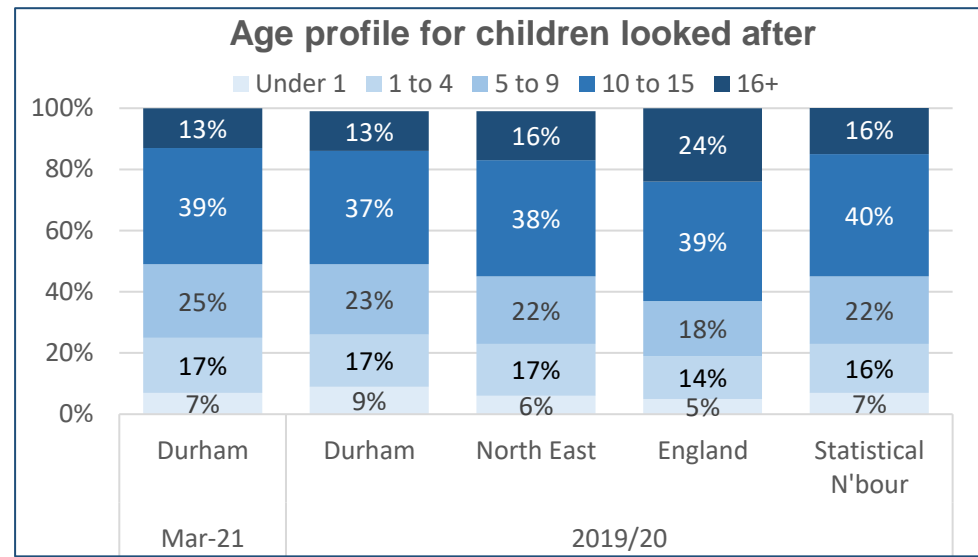
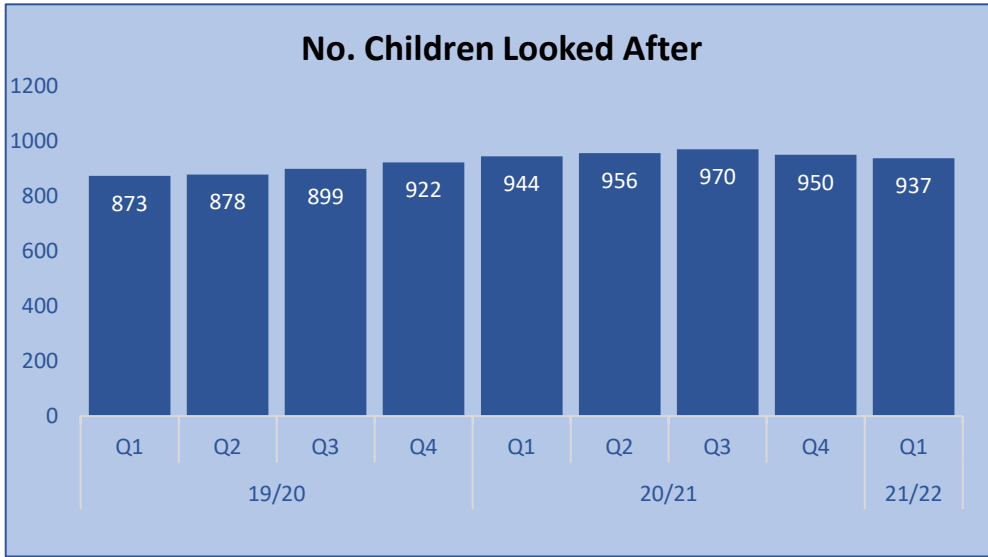
- 91 Throughout 2020/21, there was a 6% decrease in recorded crime compared to the previous year, equating to more than 2,700 fewer crimes. Although, reductions were across most crime categories, the decrease was more noticeable across theft-related offences, including vehicle crime, which has reduced by more than 10%.
- 92 During the 12 months ending June 2021, reported fly-tipping incidents increased by 10%. However, incidents are now starting to return to pre-COVID levels, during quarter one, the number of incidents was 24% less than the same period last year.

## **Council Services**

### **All children and young people will enjoy a safe childhood**

- 93 Ofsted has recently concluded a short focused visit of children's social care in Durham County Council. We await formal feedback from this visit, however initial feedback from the inspectors was positive in many areas and we received excellent feedback on our social workers and how well they know their children. Inspectors focused on:
- quality of matching, placement and decision-making for children in care;
  - the experiences and progress of disabled children in care;
  - the experiences and progress of children living in unregulated and/or unregistered provision;
  - child sexual/criminal exploitation;
  - missing from home, care or education;
  - risks associated with gangs, radicalisation, trafficking and modern slavery.
- 94 Numbers of children's social care referrals returned to pre-COVID levels during quarter one, a 13% increase on the same period during 2020. This increase, alongside COVID and complexity of cases has led to an increase in children and young people who are open to statutory social care teams.
- 95 This has impacted on the caseloads of social workers and some social workers 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.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES



### Where our children in care live

In-house foster care	43%	Independent living (incl. supported lodgings)	3%
Independent fostering agency	17%	Placed for adoption	4%
Friends and family	13%	In-house residential (incl. children's homes)	3%
Placed with parents	9%	NHS/ Health Trust	<0.5%
External residential (incl. children's homes and res school)	6%	Secure (incl. YOI and prison)	<0.5%

- 96 Statutory referrals related to domestic abuse (parent/carer) was at a rate of one in five in the 12 months to May 2021, this increased to one in four during June 2021. Several factors are likely to have impacted this increase including easing of COVID restriction/s and re-opening of pubs and bars leading to an increase in the use of alcohol; as well as the start of the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament.
- 97 The re-referral rate has continued to reduce, 19% (down from 26% last year), and this is now lower than England and North East.
- 98 The timelessness of key areas of work, such as assessments and initial child protection conferences have been maintained or improved. Social workers continue to visit children and their families in line with required timescales.
- 99 High numbers of CLA nationally, and also regionally, have led to placement and budget pressures. Since the first lockdown, our in-house foster care capacity has reduced, primarily due to some foster carers de-registering or taking a break due to the pandemic. New recruitment campaigns are active.
- 100 We are progressing with our Residential Care and Fostering Transformation Programmes, having opened one small children's home this year and planning to reconfigure / develop homes for children and young people with complex needs through to 2023.
- 101 Aycliffe Secure Children's Home has retained its 'outstanding' status following a recent Ofsted inspection in April. Inspectors found that the actions of the home contributed to "significantly improved" outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people, its child-focused staff "go the extra mile", and children are involved in their own care, adding that the young people feel safe at the home. More information can be found [here](#).
- 102 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. As at January 2021, the national programme has achieved more than 400,000 successful family outcomes and continues to deliver significant and sustained outcomes with families despite the difficult circumstances in 2020 and 2021.
- 103 Across County Durham, since the programme commenced in 2015, we have supported 5,462 vulnerable families in achieving sustained positive outcomes. We exceeded our target of 730 in 2020/21 and are confident we will exceed our 2021/22 target of turning around 761 families having already reached 372 families (49% of target).
- 104 All local authorities are required to make arrangements to identify children missing from education in their area. A protocol involving the council, police and NHS is triggered when children are deleted from school registers. This is to

ensure children moving between areas are tracked in appropriate cases. In quarter one, 116 students were referred. The local authority is therefore aware of the individual circumstances of all cases of CME and is monitoring carefully.

- 105 More than 100 safeguarding leads in schools across County Durham have completed the updated Prevent train the trainer accreditation, and can now provide awareness raising to school staff on how to spot signs of vulnerability to being radicalised and how to report through the appropriate pathways. Two Prevent awareness sessions were held with school governors which will ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Prevent and to ensure their schools are meeting their safeguarding duties. Training has also been carried out for East Durham Trust, Social Care Direct.
- 106 County Durham has volunteered to take part in MHCLG commissioned research. The previous evaluation of the then 'Troubled Families' Programme provided robust evidence the programme delivers positive impacts for families. This research project will build on these findings and seeks to explore how this positive impact is generated in different local authorities. The project will also explore how services have adapted delivery with COVID-19 restrictions.

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

- 107 In June we secured £33.2 million government funding for Bishop Auckland as part of the Stronger Towns Fund. The funding will be allocated to a number of regeneration projects across the town which will help to attract an additional one and half million visitors to the town each year and substantially boost the county's visitor economy by £240 million, creating almost 4,000 jobs.
- 108 It will also attract almost £200 million of private sector investment into the town, including seven new significant all year-round visitor attractions and 225 special events, and a potential £100 million of additional investment.
- 109 A new road connection into Auckland Castle is central to the plans as it will allow a range of new visitor attractions to come forward across the site and provide a catalyst for increased visitor numbers. Investment in new infrastructure will accommodate high visitor numbers without impacting on the town's use and help support job creation and the recruitment of local people into new opportunities.
- 110 The grant is set to provide a further stimulus for development and investment across Bishop Auckland, following a £19.9 million award from the Future High Streets Fund in December to support the town's high street and recovery from the effects of the pandemic. Combined, the investments will help transform Bishop Auckland, creating new opportunities for the retail and hospitality sectors and helping to increase footfall through improved accessibility.

- 111 Free public wi-fi was introduced and went live in Chester-le-Street, Barnard Castle and Seaham town centres in June 2021. Work continues to implement the scheme in Durham City with plans for Crook, Spennymoor and Consett later in the year.
- 112 The scheme has been introduced to encourage people to spend more time in our town centres which will, in turn, boost the local economy. The project will also provide another way for businesses to connect with customers, with new local apps being developed to promote special offers and encourage people to explore the towns. As well as the economic benefits free wi-fi can bring to town centres, the project will provide valuable information through the anonymous footfall data the system collects. This can be used to identify trends and monitor the impact of changes to the high street, which can then be used to shape future regeneration projects.
- 113 Both water safety forums, responsible for managing water safety in the city centre and countywide, met during quarter one 2021/22. The multi-agency groups reviewed risk assessments and planned controls for open water across the county, with a particular focus on Durham City centre.
- 114 The City Safety Group reviewed its action plan and reiterated its commitment to interventions that reduce risks associated with open water. These interventions include proactive assessment of new developments within the city centre and implementing control measures prior to student induction week.
- 115 In advance of the summer holiday period, the countywide Open Water Safety Group reviewed its risk assessments for higher risk locations across the county. The group also started work to increase awareness of the risks linked to open water – with particular focus on the council’s dying to be cool campaign.
- 116 All partners worked together to promote national drowning prevention week (12 to 19 June) and increase community awareness.

### **Communities will come together to support each other**

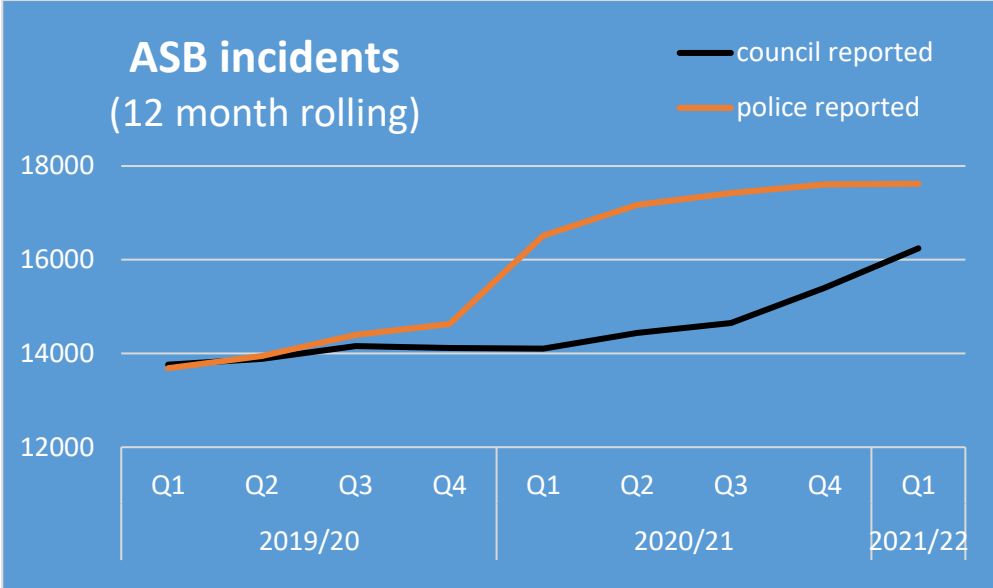
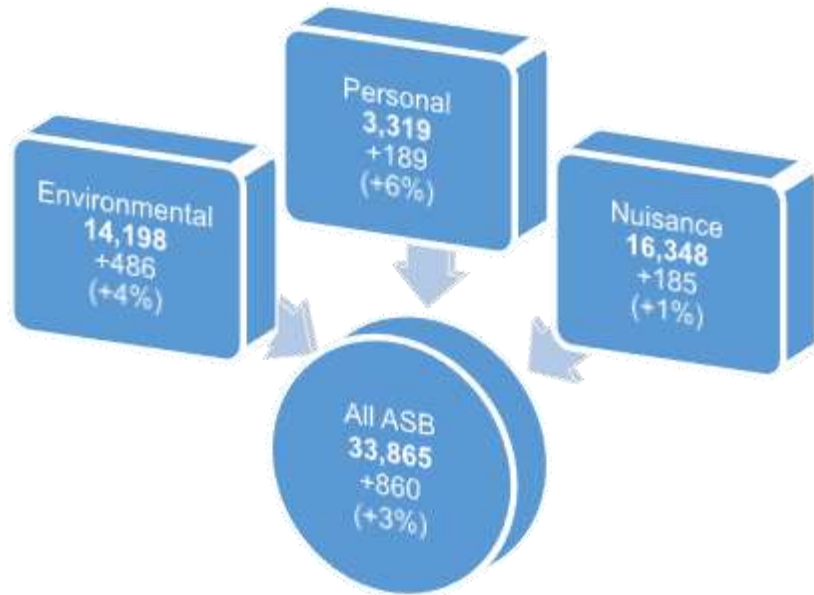
- 117 The issue of nuisance motorcycles and quad bikes was highlighted by the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a particular gap, which has now been included within the anti-social behaviour work area. Actions will include developing a partnership action plan to tackling nuisance motorcycles and quad bikes which will include actions from a range of partners including the Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, Neighbourhood Initiatives team, Highways and Crimestoppers.
- 118 Over the last 12 months there has been an increase of approximately 14% in the number of ASB incidents reported to the council, equating to over 2,000 additional

incidents. Most of this increase has been within nuisance, mainly noise incidents and enviro-crime, mainly litter incidents. Over 1,000 FPNs/Community Protection Notices have been issued by the neighbourhood wardens for environmental offences over the last 12 months.

- 119 Following significant increases during the first half of 2020, police reported alcohol related ASB has significantly fallen to below pre-COVID levels most noticeable between November and December. However, since then, these incidents have increased month on month with quarter one being higher than the last two years.
- 120 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. Over 6,000 incidents have been triaged in the last 12 months.
- 121 Following concerns raised by local residents, a bus-gate has been installed on a section of road near the primary school in Coxhoe aimed at improving road safety. It will be monitored with an approved camera to help enforce the restrictions, there is a £60 fine (discounted to £30 if paid within 14 days) for non-compliance.
- 122 To help deter fly-tipping, during the last quarter, our neighbourhood wardens carried out 636 further investigations, deployed cameras at eight locations with 22 incidents caught on camera, undertook 12 stop and search operations, issued 11 producers, instigated six prosecutions and issued 28 Fixed Penalty Notices.
- 123 Our Find and Fix programme, which focuses on issues raised by residents, communities and elected members, has been running for over six months now and has completed more than 240 tasks across the county. Work has included clearing drainage channels on public walkways, removing graffiti, planting trees, clearing and renovating public art installations, scraping and edging paths and installing new street furniture such as bins and benches.
- 124 Our Community Action Team recently focused on reviewing three previously targeted areas at Crook, Eldon and Ferryhill Station, rubbish accumulations, dog fouling and fly-tipping were the main concerns. Whilst improvements had been made since previous visits more cases were logged for attention. The team will move on to South Moor in July.
- 125 The latest environmental cleanliness surveys, undertaken between April and July 2021, show a slight deterioration against the average for last year in the litter and detritus categories with 5.96% and 12.14%, respectively. However there has been an improvement in the dog fouling results to 0.79%.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

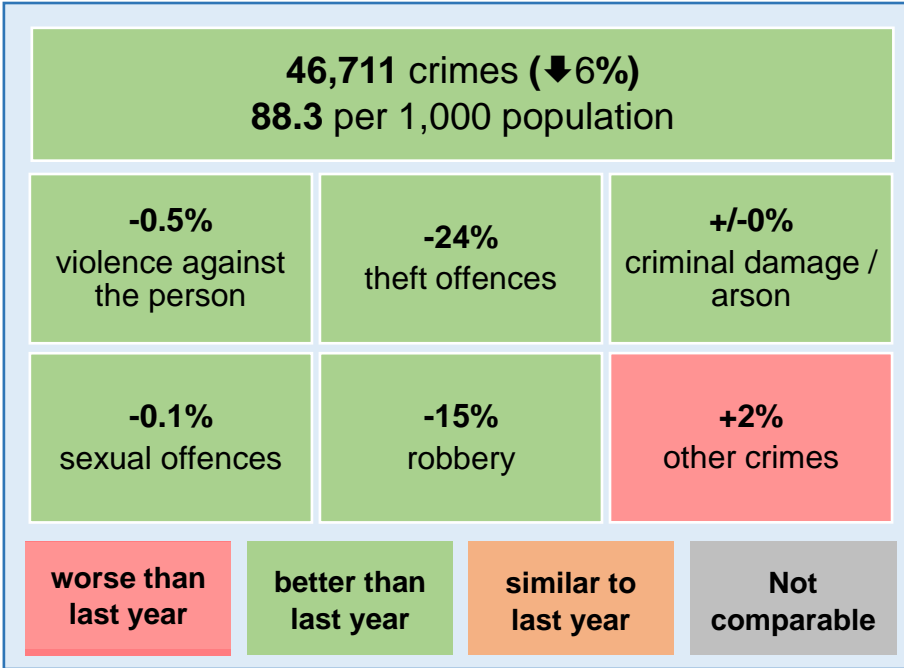
Police and council reported ASB



		12 months ending		Change	
		Jun 20	Jun 21		
Deliberate primary fires <sup>1</sup>	all	455	454	-1	0%
	relating to road vehicles	319 (70%)	272 (60%)	-47	-15%
Deliberate secondary fires <sup>2</sup>	all	2,085	1,836	-249	-12%
	relating to rubbish	1,188 (57%)	1,047 (57%)	-141	-12%

<sup>1</sup> more serious fires that harm people or damage property

<sup>2</sup> generally small outdoors fires





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

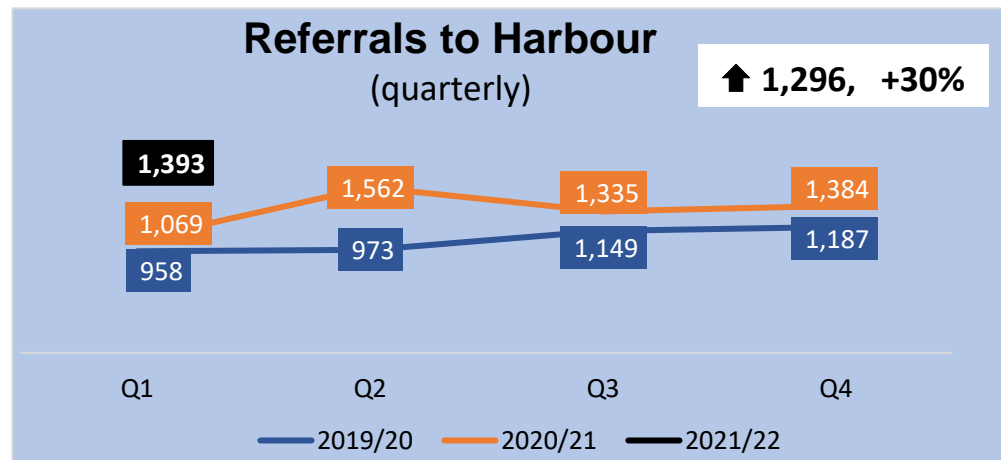
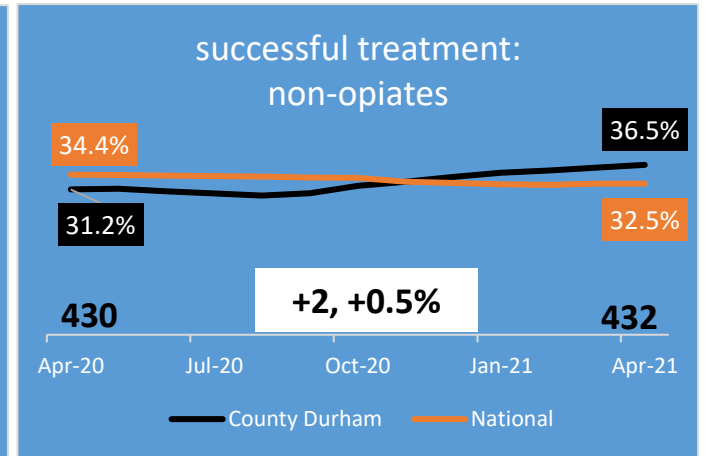
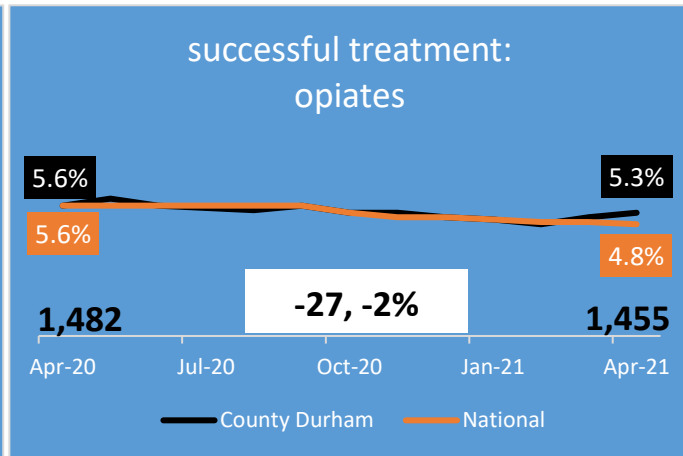
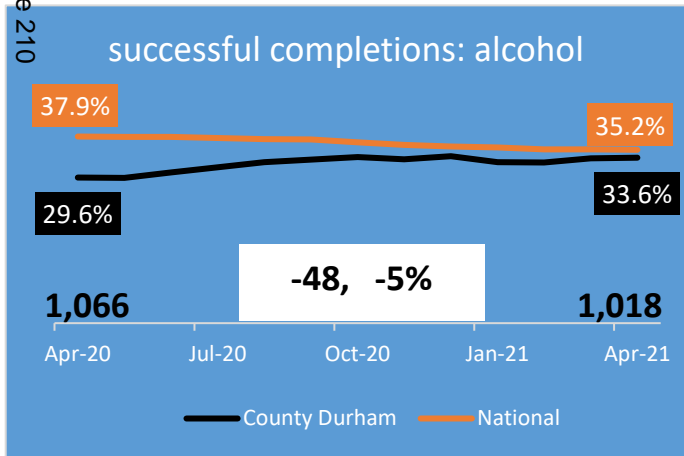
- 126 Although COVID-19 restrictions initially reduced the number of net homes completed, build rates have now returned to pre-COVID levels.
- 127 Work has commenced on the first phase of Targeted Delivery Plans (TDP) as part of our Housing Strategy to improve the county's housing stock and wider residential environmental issues. The first phase will focus on New Kyo; Coundon Grange; Blackhall Colliery South; Thickey; Deneside East; and Stanley Hall West, with the work being undertaken reflecting the issues that are relevant to each area, including addressing long term empty homes. TDPs will be expanded to other communities across the county in future phases of the scheme.
- 128 We have been named local authority of the year at the Northern Housing Awards recognising our work to deliver more housing and investment in local services for communities as part of the County Durham Housing Strategy. Our initiative, Project Beta, which works with high risk offenders for up to six months prior to their release from prison to ensure housing and support is secured also received 'high commended' recognition at the awards.

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

- 129 Following a rise in quarter four, less households contacted Housing Solutions this quarter, with key areas of the service such as housing officers, private landlords teams and key workers all seeing a slight drop. However, the number of contacts remain higher than the previous 12 months, with an increase of 275 contacts.
- 130 The eviction ban was lifted on 31 May, landlords now only have to give four months' notice instead of six months. However, this effectively means that clients are still not classed as threatened with homelessness when a notice is served. If a tenant is engaging in significant anti-social behaviour or owes four months' rent or more, the notice period is now four weeks. We continue to work with both landlords and tenants to provide advice and early intervention through the Stop Before You Serve Scheme.
- 131 The number of verified rough sleepers has increased significantly due to the lifting of lockdown restrictions and being asked to leave by family/friends or relationship breakdown. However, the service has seen more local lettings agency properties become available allowing more of our vulnerable clients who are not eligible for Durham Key Options and other social housing tenancies due their complex needs move into temporary accommodation.

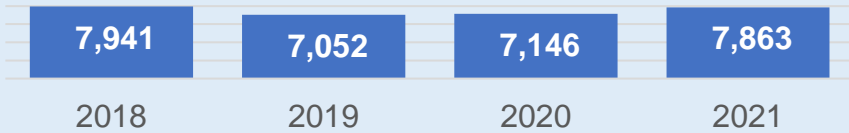
# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

June 2021

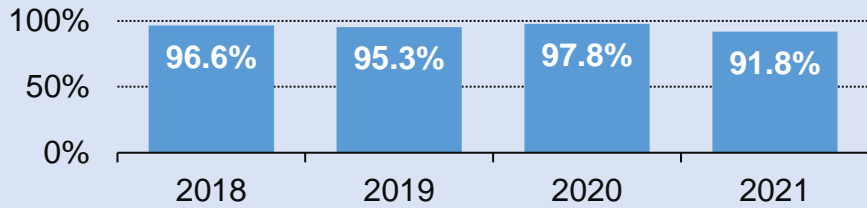


# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

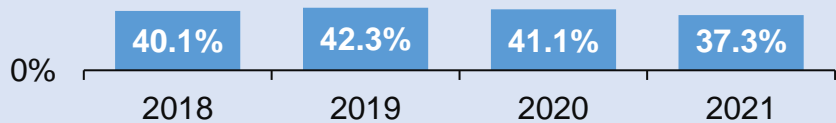
## reported fly-tipping incidents (12 months ending 30 June)



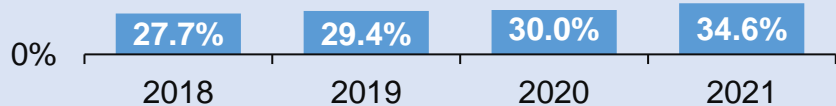
## municipal waste<sup>2</sup> diverted from landfill<sup>4</sup>



## household waste re-used, recycled or composted<sup>4</sup>



## household waste collected from the kerbside which is contaminated<sup>4</sup>



## Road traffic collisions

- Killed
- Seriously injured
- Slightly injured

## All casualties Jul 20-Jun 21 (Jul 19-Jun 20)

16  
(18)

175  
(168)

499  
(565)

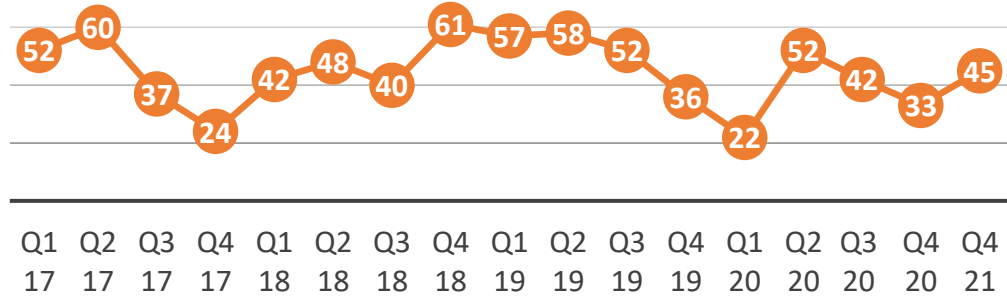
## Children Jul 20-Jun 21 (Jul 19-Jun 20)

1  
(0)

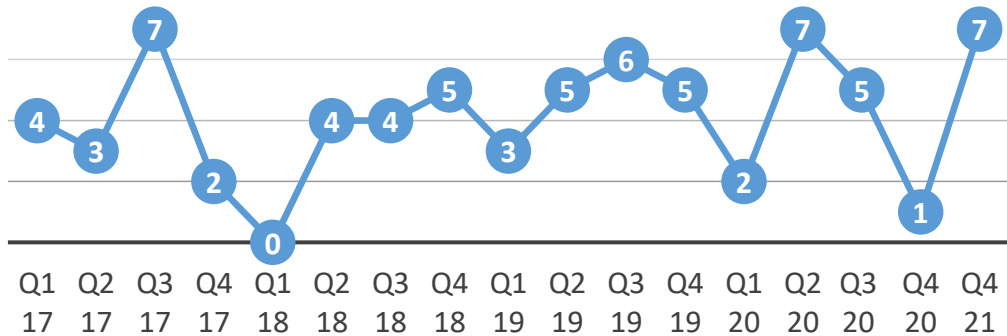
20  
(21)

71  
(42)

## Serious Injuries



## Fatalities



- 132 As part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative 14 funding bid (RSI14), County Durham was awarded £460,000 of the £1.17M bid awarded to the north east region in May 2021. RSI14 runs from July 2021 to March 2022.
- 133 Some of the funding has been used to recruit an additional Tenancy Sustainment Officer and Navigator to assist with the increase in rough sleepers.
- 134 We are also reviewing our rough sleeper action plan alongside MHCLG which will pull together targets for 2021/22. As well as existing and new staffing, RSI14 funds has allowed Somewhere Safe to Stay scheme to be extended from six to nine beds; three beds each are provided at Jigsaw, Shaid and YMCA. The team are focusing on moving those left in temporary accommodation from Everybody In into longer term provision. In addition to this, County Durham Letting Agency received funding to purchase 45 properties in 2021/22 and a further eight properties in 2022/23 to provide accommodation for rough sleepers, both temporary via eight crash pads (for two month stays) and the rest for up to two years. County Durham Letting Agency has applied for funding to lease and repair 20 properties in both 2021/22 and 20 properties in 2022/23.
- 135 Due to the relaxation of government guidelines, we are no longer required to accommodate clients through the Everyone In scheme, which has seen a decrease in the number of new households placed in temporary accommodation during quarter one. However, the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation has increased by six days to twenty nine days due to difficulties in securing settled accommodation in both social and private sectors for households with complex needs, e.g., mental health, convictions.
- 136 It is anticipated that the number of days in temporary accommodation will reduce next quarter as more accommodation becomes available via the North Eastern project (to provide accommodation for single people in priority need as part of Changing Lives initiative) and County Durham Lettings Agency to accommodation those households where additional support needs have been identified to help them move on from temporary accommodation. Proactive work continues across the service to ensure we work with all clients to discharge our homeless duty.
- 137 The number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention has decreased this quarter due to the challenging way the team has had to work. However, the latter part of the quarter saw an increase in the number of properties brought back into use due to the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions and this trend should continue going forward as further restrictions are removed.

## Housing advice and support

properties improved, adapted or brought back into use

938

up 300%

households accessing Housing Solutions

3,014

up 8%

households helped to move to alternative accommodation

236

up 14%

**411**

households helped to stay in their homes

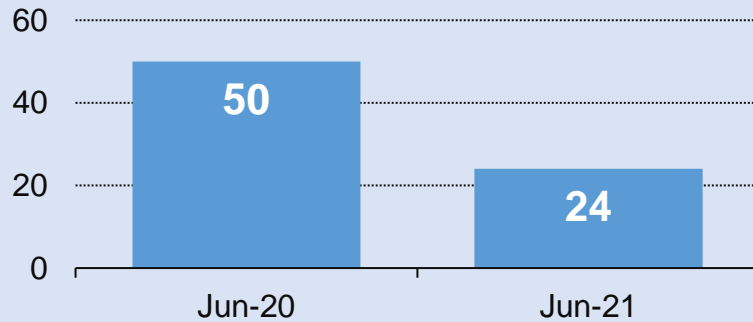
↑ **26% on last year**

**52**

'new' households placed in temporary accommodation

↓ **39% on last year**

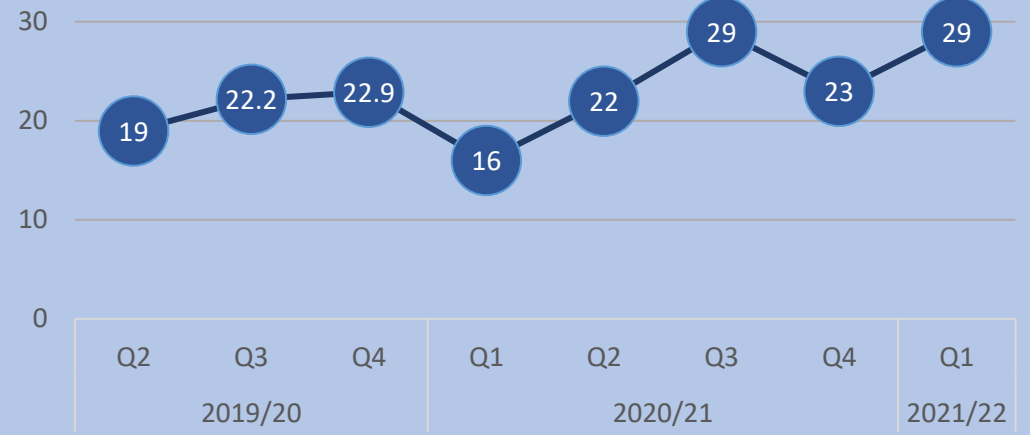
### properties brought back into use as a result of LA intervention



Impacted by COVID:

- essential visits only
- Staffing levels

### average time household spends in temporary accommodation (days)



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

- 138 Improving connectivity for rural communities, reducing transport times and expanding economic and cultural opportunities are the focus of three schemes, forming the Bishop Auckland constituency submission for a £20 million contribution in the first round of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The submission, supported by Cabinet on 16 June, was considered good value for money and the most advance in its readiness. Included in the proposals are schemes to reopen Whorlton Bridge to vehicles and pedestrians, re-routing the A68 to bypass Toft Hill, and further development at the Locomotion site in Shildon including a new walking and cycling route along the old railway line to link Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Bishop Auckland. The timing of further rounds of LUF has yet to be announced but is expected within the next 12 months. Projects across the county for culture, regeneration and transport will be put forward.
- 139 New Elvet Bridge in Durham City which was fully closed in July last year to allow essential repairs to be carried out to make the bridge structurally sound, will reopen to all traffic and pedestrians at the end of October 2021. Major progress has been made and the central span of the bridge has now been lowered back into position, allowing the project to move into the final phases. The major repairs are critical to the safety of the bridge, which carries an average of 17,000 vehicles a day each year.
- 140 To help support the economic recovery from COVID-19 free parking after 2.00 pm is to continue in all council car parks. The scheme will be reviewed every three months. In line with the Government's roadmap to recovery, the free parking COVID-19 permit scheme for NHS staff, health and social care workers and NHS volunteers (critical care workers) ended on 21 June 2021.

## **An Excellent Council**

- 141 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**

- 142 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 £21 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 £7.771 million – a net overspend of £14.522 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.
- 143 Most services have now reopened in line with the government’s roadmap to recovery. However, the redeployment of our Customer Access Point (CAP) staff to support other critical services, and the ongoing impact of self-isolation on service delivery has meant we have needed to delay the re-opening of our CAPs.
- 144 ‘In person’ council meetings were re-introduced in May, more than a year after moving them online, using venues that support social distancing and can be made COVID secure.
- 145 We are moving forward with an £8.1 million project to create a solar farm at our Morrison Busty depot, in Annfield Plain. The solar farm will power the whole depot, including electric vehicle charge points for our fleet. The project is part of a wider refurbishment to improve energy efficiency including new cladding, windows and doors and LED lights. Works have commenced on site and are due for completion in summer 2022.
- 146 An additional 200 electric charging points are to be provided in car parks and on street locations across the county to provide residents with fast charging (22kwh) facilities. We are also testing rapid charging points. All installations are expected to be completed by October 2021.
- 147 Delivery of the Climate Change Emergency Plan continues with a number of projects underway. Works include additional solar PV installations, heating and lighting replacements, and the planning of an additional solar farm and wind turbine.
- 148 We continue to work with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP). Grant offers this quarter were for installations such as LED lighting and heating systems with an estimated total of 117.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e saved this quarter.

## **We will create a workforce for the future**

- 149 During quarter one, steps two and three of the government’s COVID-19 roadmap were achieved. Therefore, although we could lift some restrictions, work-related

control measures in relation to hands, face and space remain in place, and greater emphasis placed on fresh air and ventilation of indoor spaces.

- 150 The delay in achieving step four of the roadmap, primarily due to the emergence of a new delta variant of the virus, means working at home arrangements remain in place.
- 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-established<sup>13</sup>, others developed in response to COVID-19<sup>14</sup>.
- 152 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.
- 153 With the exception of year-end 2020/21 (which was 0.07 days per FTE lower than the 12 months ending 30 June), our sickness rate is at its lowest level since 2010/11. Reductions in days lost have been noted across nearly all sickness types, most notably stress (both work and non-work related), flu, stomach upsets, chest infections and musculo-skeletal problems.
- 154 We are now planning a gradual and phased return to our workplaces, in line with the government's roadmap. We appreciate that some employees have struggled with home working, whilst others have found it to be a positive experience with reduced travel, greater productivity, and an improved work-life balance. Therefore, we intend to permanently change working arrangements, in line with the principles of our transformation programme, by adopting a hybrid model which will empower our office-based employees to split their working hours between offices and home in the most appropriate manner.
- 155 Although we suspended our Performance Development Review (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), we plan to reinstate the process, starting October 2021. In the meantime, managers continue 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 need them.
- 156 During quarter one, we started planning for our employee engagement survey, which is a requirement of the Better Health at Work maintaining excellence

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<sup>13</sup> e.g., [employee well-being guide](#), [Employee Assistance Programme](#), 'mental health awareness for managers' training

<sup>14</sup> 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)



award. The survey would repeat our 2020 survey and provide further insights into employee health and well-being, as well as support an organisational action plan.

- 157 Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to both workforce development, and addressing current and future skills needs. Around 2.5% of our workforce is currently enrolled in the programme<sup>15</sup>, and the £6.8 million<sup>16</sup> invested to date has allowed almost 900 employees to participate.
- 158 We have started our 2021 campaign to recruit to 68 apprentices - successful candidates will start their new jobs in September.
- 159 In addition to our apprenticeship recruitment campaign, we are also recruiting to the 88 job placements<sup>17</sup> identified as part of the government's kickstart scheme for young people (aged 16-24) claiming Universal Credit.

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<sup>15</sup> Made up of 204 apprentices and 185 employees upskilling – as at 31 March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>17</sup> 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

**1,045** apprenticeships started since 2017

started

completed

in progress

new posts

507

201

306

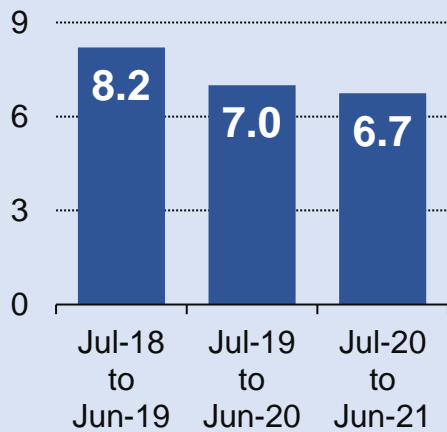
existing staff  
upskilling

537

241

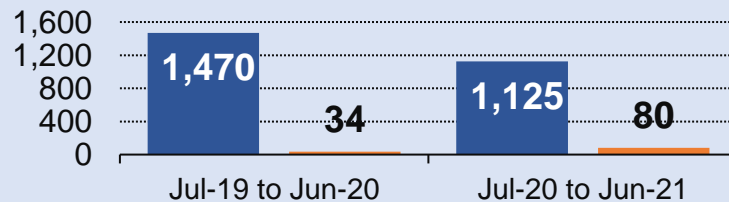
296

### Staff Turnover (excl. school staff)



### work related accidents/incidents

■ all ■ reportable



**121** routine  
physiotherapy  
sessions

**217**  
Mental Health  
First Aiders

**94**  
Time to Change  
Champions

**67**  
Health  
advocates

## Health & Wellbeing support

### Paid Absence

63,511 days sick

747 days bereavement leave

433 days compassionate leave

### Employee Assistance Programme

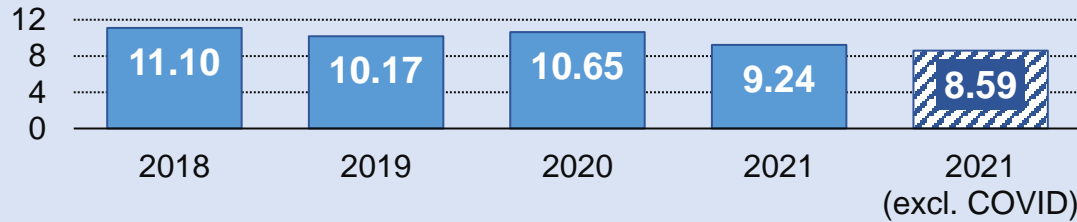
658 calls

54% mental health concerns, 15%  
work, 14% relationships, 9% life event

607 counselling calls &  
430 counselling sessions

# AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL

## sick days per FTE (12 months ending 30 June)



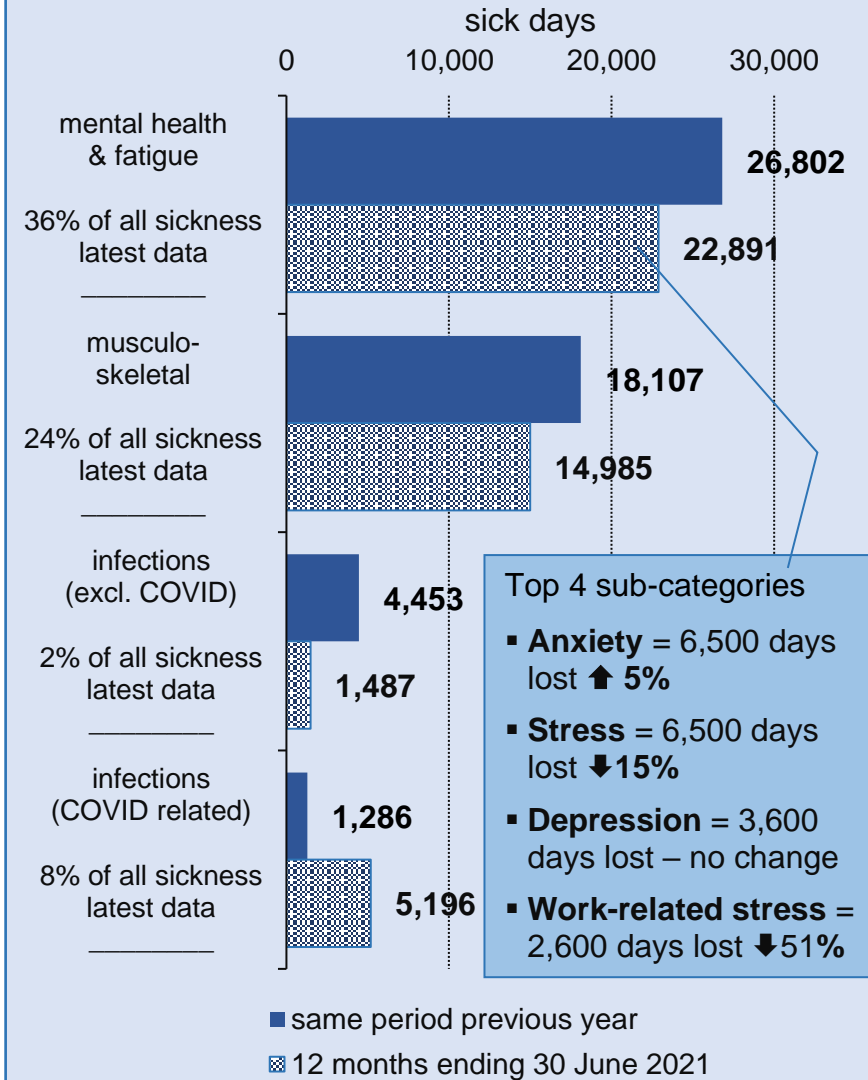
**63,511 days lost to sickness ( ↓15%)**  
**9.24 days per FTE ( ↓1.4 days)**

<b>13%</b> short-term (5 days or less)	<b>14%</b> medium-term (6 to 19 days)	<b>73%*</b> long term (20 days or more)
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<b>69%</b> staff with no sickness	<b>13%</b> staff with 1 to 5 days sickness	<b>18%</b> staff with more than 5 days sickness
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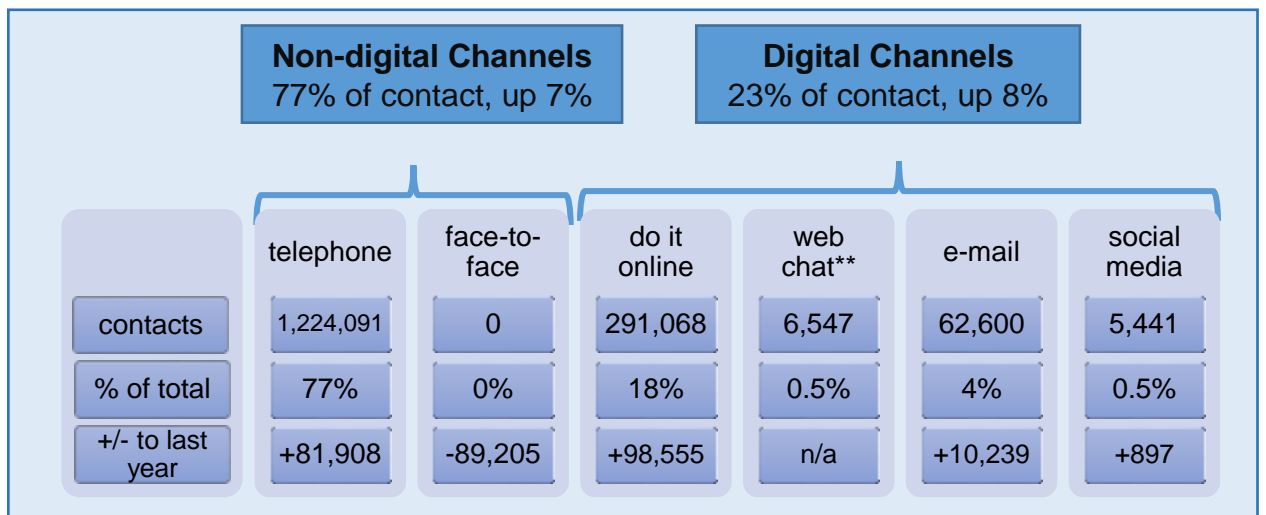
worse than last year	better than last year	similar to last year	Not comparable
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## 3 reasons for 70% of sickness



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

- 160 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.
- 161 Throughout the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, we received almost 1.6 million contacts through our customer services team. This contact, through both non-digital and digital channels is summarised in the infographic below.



**Non-Digital Channels**

- 162 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 in the main a result of our ongoing initiative to increase and enhance the volume and quality of data we hold and report on through the transfer of non-ACD lines to our ACD system.
- 163 Broadly speaking, telephone calls we receive are either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).
- 164 Historically, only calls received via our ACD system have been included in our telephone statistics. However, as part of our initiative to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, we are transferring non-ACD lines into the ACD system. This change supports the development of a holistic view of telephony demand and performance across the council and allows us to monitor and identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.

165 Indeed, call volumes decreased by a fifth during quarter one (6,758 fewer calls) compared to the same period last year – mainly because of covid-related enquiries dropping from 6,557 to 998 contacts (5,559 fewer).

### Digital Channels

166 Although the telephone remains popular overall, we continue to see more customers choosing to interact with us via our digital channels.

167 During quarter one, 22,000 more residents signed up for an online account - taking the number of residents who can engage with us through this method to 225,000. This equates to 142,000 unique properties – almost 60% of households across the county.

168 If we look at the contact channels chosen by customers who want to log a service request within our CRM system, we can see a clear shift from telephone to online.

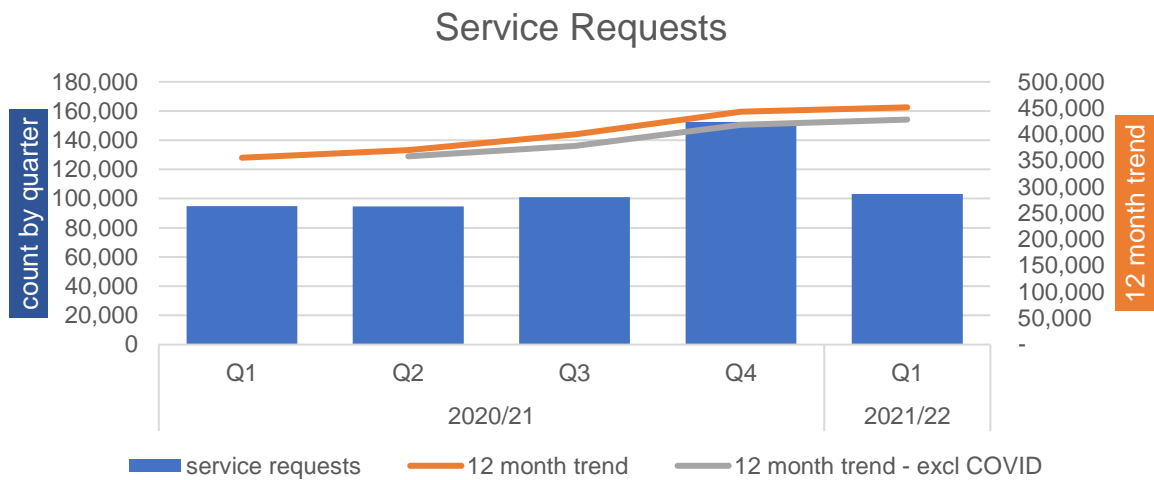
		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 30 June	
		2020	2021
Non digital	Telephone	34%	28%
	Face-to-face	2%	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Digital	Do it online portal	57%	65%
	Other digital	7%	7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>72%</b>

169 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.

170 Our webchat service, launched in May 2020, is now available across more than 30 web pages, and whilst there has been a quarter-on-quarter decrease in webchat interactions, this correlates with a reduction in customers accessing COVID-19 specific support and advice.

171 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.

- 172 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received (+27%, +96,000 over the 12 months ending 30 June 2021).



- 173 This increase reflects the impact of the pandemic across many areas of the organisation with 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.
- 174 To support the monitoring of delivery timescales of service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM), we have applied a service level agreement (SLA) measure within the system where possible.
- 175 We do not apply SLAs if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. We also did not apply SLAs 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.
- 176 75% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 June were assessed against a SLA. And, of these, the SLA was met in 59% of cases – slightly lower than the 60% recorded for the same period last year. However, it should be noted that over the same period, service requests increased by 27%.
- 177 Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System is configured to automatically send customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 178 We initially applied this survey to 25 service request types in October 2017. Today, it is available across an additional 92 service request types, giving more

customers the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to both their experience of contacting us and their satisfaction with service delivery.

31 October 2017	30 June 2020	30 June 21
25	105	117

179 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 e-mail 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.

180 As can be seen in the table below, our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low – albeit improved over the last two years, as we have linked the survey to more service requests and captured more customer e-mail addresses.

Service requests linked to our customer satisfaction survey		
Number	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021
SR types	105	117
SRs received	289,498	348,595
Surveys emailed to customer	214,049 (74%)	273,148 (78%)
Responses to survey	8,163 (3.8%)	14,817 (5.4%)
Response as a % of service requests	2.8%	4.2%

181 Whilst the satisfaction survey is linked to 117 service request types, 90% of survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June related to 21 service request types, with two thirds relating to one of seven service request types (missed collection, complaints, fly-tipping, join the garden waste scheme, road or footpath, street lighting, tree or hedge removal/pruning).

459 Whilst increased response percentages were seen over 12 of the 21 service request types there was also significant variance in response rates ranging from 19% to 0.5%. This can be linked to both the volume of requests we receive for these types of request and the nature of the requests and we continue to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback. Having analysed all survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June

2021 against our nine key measures (see infographic) we can see that overall: one improved, four remained the same and three reduced (compared to the same period last year):

- 460 Further analysis has been completed to support an understanding of satisfaction with service delivery based on service request type. Our council tax account, council tax change of payment method, early help referral and birth death and marriage certificate requests attracted the highest levels of satisfaction. With new bin replacement/repair, dog and litter bins and service level complaints recording the lowest levels of satisfaction.
- 461 Analysis has identified that reasons for increased levels of dissatisfaction are mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making and taking too long to complete tasks and respond. These areas will be the focus of a more detailed review over coming months.
- 462 We continue to develop the quality of our customer satisfaction data to inform our first point of contact offer. We are in the process of updating the survey to reflect our recently refreshed Customer Charter and Standards which now align with recent changes to our customer service offer and operating model and better reflects how we will work with our customers across all contact channels.
- 463 We are also carrying out detailed analysis on our data to better understand our customers' experiences and put actions in place to improve their experiences. Over the next three to six months, we will focus on deep dives of our satisfaction data (and link back to service provision) and customer suggestions. We will include our findings in the quarter two, customer feedback report.
- 464 Despite the pandemic, we are continuing with developments that enhance the customer experience.
- 465 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 .
- 466 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.

467 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.

468 Over the last six months, we extensively tested a new softphone-based telephony platform within the corporate contact centre. This platform gives users access to contact centre features from their laptop allowing them to work from any location with an adequate internet connection.

469 During quarter one, this solution was deployed beyond corporate customer service and into our Care Connect out of hours service, Durham Music Service, County Durham Offending Service, Social Care Direct administration team, and Environmental Health and Consumer Protection administration team with the remaining contact centres due to be standardised by quarter three.

470 Also during quarter one, we reviewed our Customer Access Point operating model in readiness for reinstating face to face interactions. The revised model has an additional focus on digital inclusion through access to devices and assisted self-service support.

471 Upon reinstatement, all face-to-face interactions will be 'appointment only', freeing up time for officers to provide fully supported self-serve sessions with those customers who need it.

472 These changes are now included in our revised Customer Service Charter and Standards and reflect our customer service ethos and the changing needs and expectations of our customers. We are also in the process of updating our customer satisfaction survey and will provide an update in the next report.

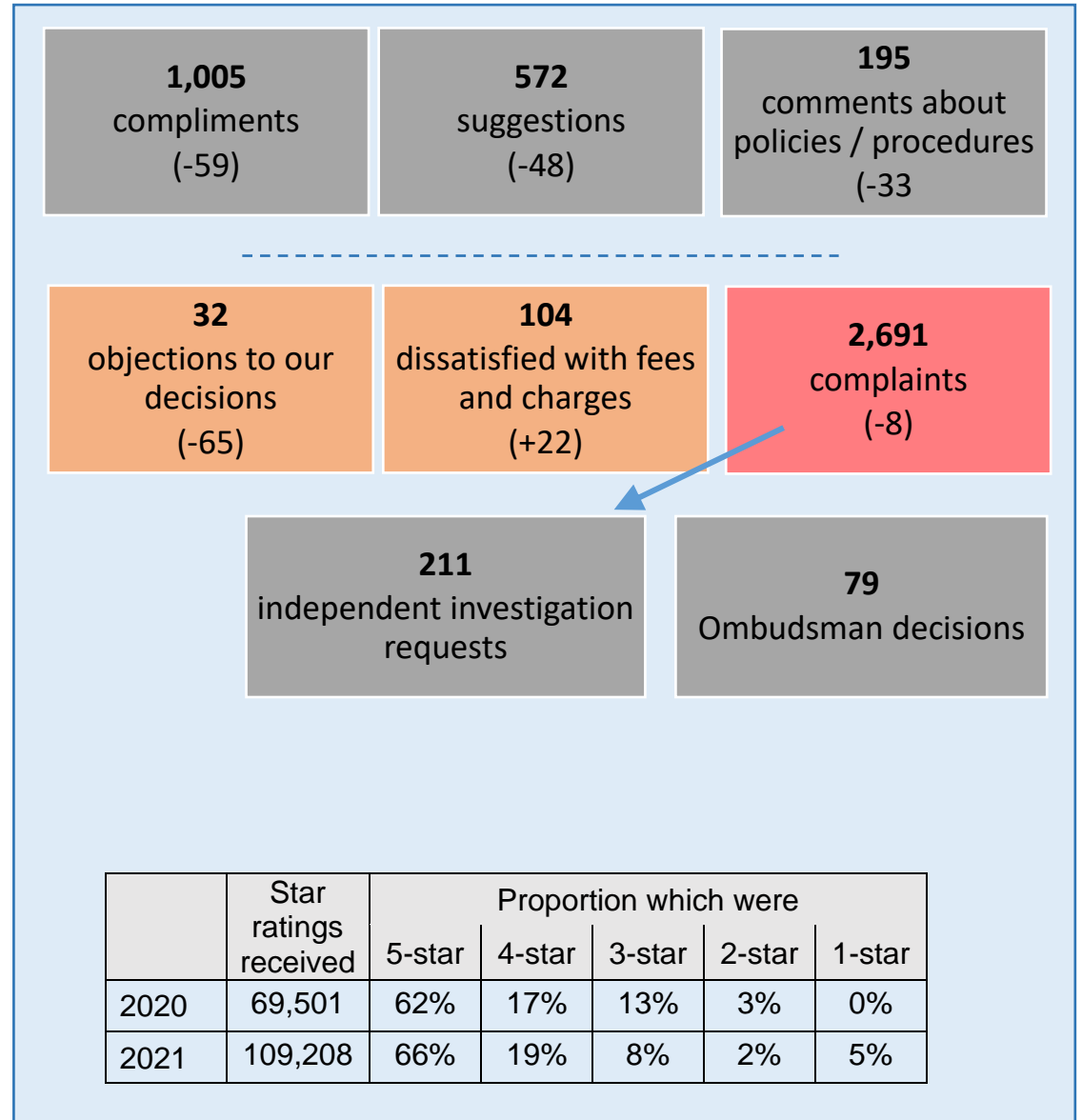
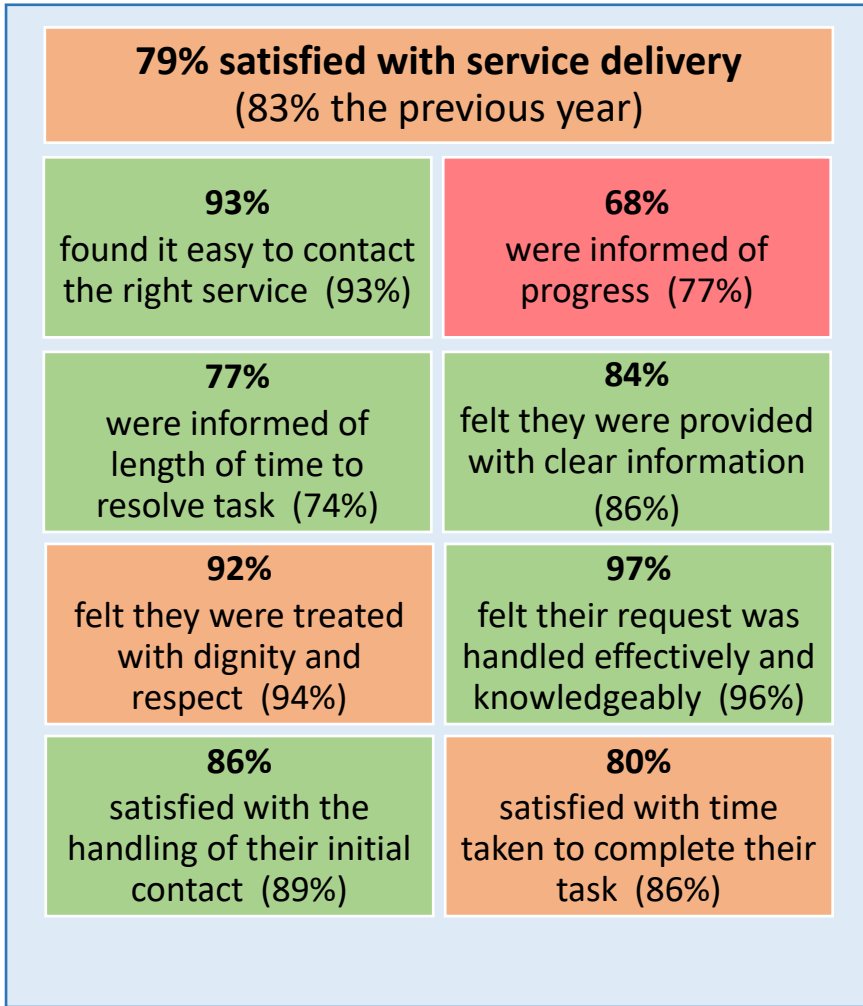
473 Throughout the quarter we continued to migrate telephone lines to our Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system<sup>18</sup>. Migrating these lines enables us to see an enhanced view of demand and performance statistics for all telephony contact, and thereby allows us to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience.

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<sup>18</sup> Broadly speaking, we receive telephone calls either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents in line with 'first-in-first-answered' criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).

- 474 42% of services have now been fully migrated to the ACD technology – with County Durham Offender Service, Wolsingham Leisure Centre, Durham Music Services, Care Connect out of hours, Blue Badge administration and Environmental Health and Consumer Protection customer support teams migrating in quarter one.
- 475 Since October 2020, we have been working to streamline the management of incoming priority correspondence and remove duplication from our processes. The new process will provide a single point of contact, achieve a consistent approach in handling of correspondence, capture and store all data in one system and realise efficiencies.
- 476 All incoming enquiries are now managed centrally within our Business Services corporate support team, using a single point of contact email address (with the exception COVID-19 enquiries which are handled separately by the Chief Executive’s office). The team is working to a response deadline of 10 working days from receipt of enquiry (the Resources service grouping is the exception – with a response deadline of four working days).
- 477 Following improvements to our process for dealing with priority correspondence, we are now reviewing other channels of incoming correspondence with a view to further project scoping in order to determine future requirements.
- 478 We are also continuing to work with services and our customers to act on their feedback, understand their changing expectations and identify new ways for them to contact, request services and report issues.
- 479 The following CRM improvements were delivered during quarter one following customer feedback: improved anti-social behaviour information which ensures customers correctly report incidents to the most appropriate service; improvements to the pest control appointment reminders process, ensuring that reminders are timely and at appropriate times of the day
- 480 In addition, the following new online forms and processes were delivered: Deaf or Hearing impairment - application for registration; Grant for new school shoes and coats; Covid-19 Lateral Flow Tests; Environment Awards; Bishop Auckland and Seaham Food Festival Trader application; Temporary Road Closure; Street Name and Numbering.

# AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL



	Star ratings received	Proportion which were				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
2020	69,501	62%	17%	13%	3%	0%
2021	109,208	66%	19%	8%	2%	5%



## Key Performance Indicators – Data Tables

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](mailto: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](mailto: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	71.4	2020	73 (red)	72.2 (amber)	75.7 (red)	71.5 (amber)			No
2	Per capita household disposable income (£)	16,542	2018	Tracker	15,875 (green)	21,609 (red)	16,995 (red)			No
3	Gross jobs created / safeguarded as a result of Business Durham activity	2,768	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	280 (green)					Yes
4	% of 16 to 17 year olds in an apprenticeship	5.5	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	6.8 (red)	4.1 (green)	6.0 (amber)	5.8 (amber)		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 (£)	16,763	2018	Tracker	16,388 (green)	29,356 (red)	20,554 (red)			No
6	No. of registered businesses in County Durham	14,105	Mar 2020	Tracker	13,795 (green)					No
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	81,251,872	Apr-Jun 2021	7,000,000 (green)	8,219,120 (green)					Yes
9	No. of Inward Investments secured	2	Apr-Jun 2021	1 (green)	3 (red)					Yes
10	% of Business Durham business floor space that is occupied	87.2	Apr-Jun 2021	85	92.0 (red)					Yes

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

Page 230

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)					Yes
12	No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	6,794	2020	Tracker	12,133 (red)					Yes
13	Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	506.75	2020	Tracker	980.72 (red)					Yes

## 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)			Yes
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 Durham 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 Jun 2021	Tracker	89 (green)	87 (green)	91 (red)			Yes
22	Ofsted % of secondary schools judged good or better	64	as at 30 Jun 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)		Yes

\*\*not reporting for 2019/20

## 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)			Yes
25	Under-18 conception rate per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 17	26.4	2018	Tracker	23.7 (red)	16.7 (red)	24.9 (red)	25.0 (red)		No
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

Page 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
232 31	% of Education Health and Care Plans completed in the statutory 20 week time period (excl. exceptions)	65	Jan-Jun 2021	Tracker	64 (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)	49% <sup>19</sup> [372/761]	Apr-Jun 2021	190 (green)						Yes
33	% of children aged 0-2 years in the top 30% IMD registered with a Family Centre and having sustained contact	87.8	2020/21	80 (green)	89.6 (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)		Yes
35	Four week smoking quitters per 100,000 smoking population	1,789 [1,335]	Apr-Dec 2020	Tracker	2,356 [1,540] (red)	1,140 (green)	1,507 (green)	1,944 (red)		Yes
36	Male life expectancy at birth (years)	78.3	2017-19	Tracker	78.2 (green)	79.8 (amber)	78.0 (green)	78.3 (green)		No
37	Female life expectancy at birth (years)	81.8	2017-19	Tracker	81.5 (green)	83.4 (red)	81.8 (green)	82.0 (amber)		No
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

<sup>19</sup> 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
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)		Yes
41	Suicide rate (deaths from suicide and injury of undetermined intent) per 100,000 population	13.4	2017-19	Tracker	12.8 (red)	10.1 (red)	11.6 (red)	12.3 (red)		No
42	Prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth (%)	30.2	Jan-Mar 2021	31.8 (amber)	25.9 (green)	48.2 (red)	36.0 (red)	34 (red)	Q3 2019/20	No
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	60.6%	Nov 2019-Nov 2020	Tracker	59.9% (amber)	61.4% (amber)	60% (amber)			Yes
46	Participation in Sport and Physical Activity: inactive	30.1%	Nov 2019-Nov 2020	Tracker	28% (red)	27.1% (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	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	N/a	97.0 (red)					Yes
48	% of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services	86.7	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	N/a	82.6 (green)	82.0 (green)	83.5 (green)	80.3* (green)	2019/20	Yes
49	% of individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process	95.1	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	Tracker	94.5 (green)	92.2 (green)	85.4 (green)	92.1* (green)	2019/20	Yes

Page 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
234 50	% of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months	86.7	2020/21	Tracker	93.2 (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
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	94 [1,145 / 1,217]	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	94 (green)					Yes
56	% of statutory children in need referrals occurring within 12 months of a previous referral	19 [256]	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	23 [274] (green)	23 (green)	22 (green)	20 (green)	2019/20	Yes
57	% of single assessments completed within 45 working days	86 [1,019]	Apr-Jun 21	Tracker	85.5 [1098] (green)	84 (green)	89 (amber)	87 (amber)	2019/20	Yes
58	Rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 population aged under 18	44.3 [448]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	47.7 [480]	43	70	58	as at 31 Mar 20	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
59	Rate of children in need per 10,000 population (Cases open to Children's Social Care)	386 [3,902]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	357.6 [3,596]	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	153 [1,553]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	161 [1,625]					Yes
61	% of strategy meetings initiated which led to an initial child protection conference being held within 15 working days	88 [196 of 222]	2020/21 [prov.]	75 (green)	89 [508] (green)	78 (green)	83 (green)	82 (green)	2019/20	Yes
62	% of Social Workers with fewer than 20 cases	49	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	58 (red)					Yes
63	% of Statutory Case File Audits which are given a scaling score of 6 or above	94.9 [37 of 39]	Oct-Dec 2020	80 (green)	85.7 (green)					No

### 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	92.7 [937]	as at Mar 2021	Tracker	93.8 [944]	67	108	99	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
65	% of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care)	17	2020/21 [prov.]	Tracker	16 (green)	12 (green)	12 (green)	18 (amber)	2019/20	No
66	% of CLA who are fostered incl. friends and family, independent fostering agency, In-house foster care	73 [685]	as at 29 Jun 2021	Tracker	76 [716]	72	74	73	2019/20	Yes
67	% of external residential placements	6 [53]	as at 29 Jun 2021	Tracker	4 [34]					Yes
68	% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more who had a dental check	48	Jun 2021	Tracker	74 (red)	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	90	Jun 2021	Tracker	90 (green)	90 (green)	92 (red)	93 (red)	2019/20	Yes

Page 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
236 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	Yes
71	Average Attainment 8 score of Children Looked After	20.5	2019/20	Tracker	25.6 (red)	21.4 (red)	21.7 (green)	22.4 (red)		No
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	Jun 2021	Tracker	78 (red)	64 (green)	63 (green)	65 (green)	2019/20	Yes
74	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training	60	Jun 2021	Tracker	60 (green)	53 (green)	52 (green)	53 (green)	2019/20	Yes
75	% of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96	Jun 2021	Tracker	95 (green)	90 (green)	94 (green)	100 (red)	2019/20	Yes
76	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	93	Jun 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)	176	2019/20	Tracker	262 (green)	220 (green)	303 (green)	231 (green)		No
78	Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	88.1	2020/21	Tracker	93.3 (green)	77.0 (red)				Yes
79	Rate of theft offences per 1,000 population	18.7	2020/21	Tracker	24.5 (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 (%)	51.9	2017/18	Tracker	41.4 (red)	38.4 (red)	41.8 (red)			No

## 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	17,621	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	16,511 (red)					Yes
84	No. council reported incidents of anti-social behaviour	16,244	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	14,101 (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	33.6	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	29.6 (green)	35.2 (amber)	31.2 (green)			Yes
86	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - opiates	5.3	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	5.6 (amber)	4.8 (green)	3.9 (green)			Yes
87	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - non-opiates	36.5	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	29.6 (green)	32.5 (green)	27.3 (green)			Yes
88	% of anti-social behaviour incidents that are alcohol related	15.7	2020/21	Tracker	18.7 (green)					Yes
89	% of violent crime that is alcohol related	32.1	2020/21	Tracker	31.1 (amber)					No
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 238

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**					Yes

\*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	164 15 149	2020/21	Tracker	222 (green) 19 146					No
94	No. of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities - No. of seriously injured	17 1 16	2020/21	Tracker	31 (green) 0 31					No

## 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					Yes
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					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
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					Yes
98	Number of fly-tipping incidents	7,863	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	7,146 (red)					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 <sub>2</sub> emissions in County Durham (carbon neutral by 2050)	55.2	2018	Tracker	54 (green)					No
100	% reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from local authority operations compared to the 2008/09 baseline, 70% by 2025	51	2019/20	Tracker	47 (green)					No

### 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	91.8	2020/21	95 (red)	97.8 (red)	91.5 (green)	94.4 (red)		2019/20	Yes
102	% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	37.3	2020/21	Tracker	41.1 (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	938	Apr-June 2021	Tracker	236 (green)					Yes



Page 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
240 104	Number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention	24	Apr-Jun 2021	50 (red)	59 (red)					Yes
105	Number of net homes completed	471	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	101 (green)					Yes
106	Number of affordable homes delivered	466	2020/21	300 (green)	628 (red)					Yes
107	Number of households accessing the Housing Solutions Service	3,014	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	2,793 (green)					Yes
108	Number of households helped to stay in their home	411	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	325 (green)					Yes
109	Number of households helped to move to alternative accommodation	236	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	207 (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)	9.24	Jul 20 – Jun 21	11.20 (green)	10.65 (green)	9.2** (red)			2017/18	Yes
119	% posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	69.48	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	57.9 (green)					Yes
120	% of sickness absence which is short term	12.93	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	7.76					Yes
121	% of sickness absence which is medium term	14.04	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	13.76					Yes
122	% of sickness absence which is long term	73.02	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	78.48					Yes
123	% of employees having five days or less sickness per 12 month period	82.22	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	79.83 (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	27.7	Apr-Jun 2021	Not Set	27.7 (green)					Yes
125	% of business rates collected in-year	27.6	Apr-Jun 2021	Not Set	33.8 (red)					Yes

## How good are our services to customers and the public?

Page 242

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	77	Apr-Jun 2021	90 (red)	75 (green)					Yes
127	Customer contacts: telephone*	1,224,091	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	1,142,183					Yes
128	Customer contacts: face to face**	n/a	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	89,205					Yes
129	Customer contacts: web forms	291,068	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	192,513					Yes
130	Customer contacts: emails	62,600	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	52,361					Yes
131	Customer contacts: social media	5,441	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	4,562					Yes
132	% of calls answered	94	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	94*					Yes
133	% of calls answered within 3 minutes	90	Jul 20 - Jun 21	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 since March 2021

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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