



## **Local Government Act 1972**

**I Hereby Give You Notice** that an **Ordinary Meeting** of the **Durham County Council** will be held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 22 June 2022** at **10.00 am.** to transact the following business:-

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 (Pages 3 - 24)
2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
3. Chair's Announcements
4. Leader's Report
5. Questions from the Public
6. Petitions
7. Report from the Cabinet (Pages 25 - 60)
8. Council Plan 2022-2026 - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 61 - 126)
9. Motions on Notice

### **Councillor M Stead**

Council recognises the assistance provided by the government to help County Durham residents with the cost of living crisis including financial assistance to help with energy costs and the re-introduction of the pensions triple-lock.

Council further recognises the assistance we as a council have given this year by freezing the core council tax.

However, with inflation approaching 10%, we recognise there is more to do, and so council commits to holding a cost of living summit bringing together charities, the council and other bodies

to co-ordinate plans to help residents.

Further, council calls on government to consider additional help for residents and to recognise that as a county covering 1000 square miles, with hundreds of communities, County Durham should have its funding allocation reviewed to take into account its rurality.

This would ensure as a council we are able to continue to protect frontline services for our residents with the additional funding a rural designation provides.

**Councillor A Batey**

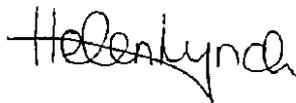
I propose that the allocation of £125,000 awarded to the Council as runners up of the city of culture bid is topped up from the general reserve by £15,000 to a total of £140,000.

This money can then be distributed equally to each of the 14 area action partnerships across our county to ensure that the whole county benefits and is able to celebrate from the City of Culture runners up award.

10. Questions from Members

**And pursuant to the provisions of the above-named act, I Hereby Summon You** to attend the said meeting

Dated this 14th day of June 2022



Helen Lynch  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**To: All Members of the County Council**

## Durham County Council

At the **Annual Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 25 May 2022** at **10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

### **Councillor W Stelling in the Chair**

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, B Bainbridge (Vice-Chair), A Batey, K Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, G Binney, J Blakey, D Boyes, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, J Cosslett, R Crute, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, K Earley, J Elmer, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, D Haney, A Hanson, P Heaviside, T Henderson, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, J Howey, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, A Jackson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, D McKenna, M McKeon, S McMahan, J Miller, B Moist, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, T Smith, M Stead, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, P Taylor, F Tinsley, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Atkinson, I Cochrane, K Hawley, D Howarth and I McLean

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair reported with regret the death of former Durham County Councillor and recently made Alderwoman Geraldine Bleasdale who represented the Seaham Electoral Division from 2008 to 2021. Geraldine was also a former Seaham Member for Easington District Council between 1995 and 2009. Members stood for a moments silence out of respect to Geraldine.

### **1 Election of Chair**

**Moved** by Councillor R Bell, **Seconded** by Councillor Sexton that Councillor B Bainbridge be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

**Moved** by Councillor Tinsley, **Seconded** by Councillor McKeon that Councillor O Gunn be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor Bainbridge be elected to the Office of Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor B Bainbridge subscribed the Statutory Declaration accepting the Office.

Councillor Stelling vacated the Chair.

**Councillor B Bainbridge** in the Chair

In accepting the Office of Chair of the Council Councillor Bainbridge informed Council that it would be an honour and privilege to carry out such a role. Councillor Bainbridge informed the Council that the charities of her choice would be The Great North Children's Hospital Foundation and Haswell and District Mencap.

## **2 Presentation to Retiring Chair**

The Chair paid tribute to the services of Councillor Stelling during his term of office and presented a Past Chairman's Medal to Councillor Stelling incorporating the Council's Coat of Arms as a token of the Council's appreciation of his services during his period of office.

Further tributes to Councillor Stelling's ambassadorial service, the diligent, exceptional, professional and dignified way he had conducted himself during his term of office both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally were given by Councillor Hopgood (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group), Councillor R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Shield (Leader of the Durham Group), Councillor Shuttleworth (Leader of the Durham County Council Independent Group), Councillor Marshall (Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Maddison (Leader of the Spennymoor and Tudhoe Independent Group).

In response, Councillor Stelling thanked both the incoming Chair and all Councillors for the presentation and expressed his appreciation to all who had supported and assisted him during the year and thanked Councillor Bainbridge for her support as Vice-Chair.

### **3 Election of Vice-Chair**

**Moved** by Councillor Shield, **Seconded** by Councillor Wilkes that Councillor J Nicholson be elected Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

**Moved** by Councillor J Miller, **Seconded** by Councillor McKeon that Councillor L Hovvels be elected Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Nicholson be elected to the Office of Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor J Nicholson subscribed the Statutory Declaration accepting the Office.

In accepting the Office of Vice-Chair of the Council Councillor Nicholson informed Council that it would be an honour and privilege to carry out such a role.

### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2022 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **5 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

### **6 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Councillor George Smith, the recently elected Member for the West Auckland Division.

The Chair informed Members that photographs would be taken during the course of the meeting and that the traditional Council photograph would be taken at the end of the meeting.

The Chair reminded all Members of their obligations under the Code of Conduct and asked that all Members address each other in the correct manner during meetings and show respect at all times.

The Chair reminded all Members of the need to complete and return their Declaration of Interests form.

Finally, the Chair thanked Dave Wafer, Head of Transport and Contract Services who was leaving the Council on 27 May 2022 after 37 years' service and Ros Layfield, Democratic Services Manager who was leaving on 21 June 2022 after 39 years' service.

The Chair thanked Dave and Ros for their service to the Council. Thanks to Dave and Ros were given by Councillor Hopgood (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group), Councillor R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Shuttleworth (Leader of the Durham County Council Independent Group), Councillor Shield (Leader of the Durham Group), Councillor Marshall (Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Maddison (Leader of the Spennymoor and Tudhoe Independent Group).

## **7 Leaders Announcement of Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members**

Councillor Hopgood, Leader of the Council, informed Council that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members would remain unchanged from 2021/22.

## **8 Annual Review of the Constitution**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the Constitution, as updated following the annual review, for adoption by the Council.

**Moved** by Councillor Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor R Bell and

### **Resolved:**

That:

- (a) the proposed changes to the Constitution be approved, to take immediate effect;
- (b) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to publish the amended Constitution on the Council's website.

## **9 Appointment of Council Bodies and allocation of seats to Political Groups under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding the appointment of Council Bodies and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups under Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council of the following amendments to Appendix 3 of the report:

- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – the Conservative Group would move from 5 seats to 4 seats and the Durham Group would move from 3 seats to 4 seats;
- Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee - the Conservative Group would move from 4 seats to 5 seats and the Durham Group would move from 3 seats to 2 seats

**Moved** by Councillor Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor R Bell and

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

## 10 Appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the following Committees were moved and seconded:

### **Appeals and Complaints Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor T Duffy be appointed Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor K Shaw be appointed Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor T Duffy be appointed Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor E Mavin be appointed Vice-Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Fletcher be appointed Vice-Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor E Mavin be appointed Vice-Chair of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

### **Audit Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor A Watson be appointed Chair of the Audit Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor T Smith be appointed Chair of the Audit Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor A Watson be appointed Chair of the Audit Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Fenwick be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee.

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor L Fenwick be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee.

### **Chief Officer Appointments Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor A Hopgood be appointed Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Marshall be appointed Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor A Hopgood be appointed Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor R Bell be appointed Vice-Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor R Crute be appointed Vice-Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor R Bell be appointed Vice-Chair of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

**Highways Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor R Ormerod be appointed Chair of the Highways Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Kay be appointed Chair of the Highways Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor R Ormerod be appointed Chair of the Highways Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor G Hutchinson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Highways Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor D Boyes be appointed Vice-Chair of the Highways Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor G Hutchinson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Highways Committee.

**Statutory Licensing Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor D Brown be appointed Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor M Wilson be appointed Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor D Brown be appointed Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Brown be appointed first Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor E Waldock be appointed first Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor L Brown be appointed first Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Blakey be appointed second Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Hampson be appointed second Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Blakey be appointed second Vice-Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

**Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor D Brown be appointed first Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor M Wilson be appointed first Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor D Brown be appointed first Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Brown be appointed second Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Hampson be appointed second Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor L Brown be appointed second Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Blakey be appointed third Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor E Waldock be appointed third Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Blakey be appointed third Chair of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee.

**General Licensing and Registration Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor D Stoker be appointed Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Bihari be appointed Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor D Stoker be appointed Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor C Hunt be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor G Smith be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor C Hunt be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

**General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor D Brown be appointed first Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Bihari be appointed first Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor D Brown be appointed first Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

In response to a point of order raised by Councillor Hopgood, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded Members that they should be in the room in order to cast their vote.

Cllr Sexton raised a further point of order, which also related to the use of voting equipment and Code of Conduct concerns. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reiterated the advice that members needed to be in the room to cast their vote and that Code of Conduct concerns would need to be addressed outside of the meeting.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Brown be appointed second Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor G Smith be appointed second Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor L Brown be appointed second Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Blakey be appointed third Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Bihari be appointed third Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Blakey be appointed third Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee.

**Standards Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Nicholson be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor I Roberts be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Nicholson be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Maddison be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor F Tinsley be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor L Maddison be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.

**County Planning Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor G Richardson be appointed Chair of the County Planning Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor K Shaw be appointed Chair of the County Planning Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor G Richardson be appointed Chair of the County Planning Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor A Bell be appointed Vice-Chair of the County Planning Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor S Wilson be appointed Vice-Chair of the County Planning Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor A Bell be appointed Vice-Chair of the County Planning Committee.

**Area Planning Committee (North)**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor M McGaun be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor S Wilson be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor M McGaun be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor W Stelling be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor G Binney be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor W Stelling be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (North).

**Area Planning Committee (Central and East)**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor D Freeman be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor A Surtees be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor D Freeman be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor L Holmes be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor S Deinali be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor L Holmes be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (Central and East).

### **Area Planning Committee (South and West)**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor G Richardson be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor J Atkinson be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor G Richardson be appointed Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor A Savory be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor M Johnson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

Upon a vote being taken it was:

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor A Savory be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Planning Committee (South and West).

### **Pension Fund Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor M Abley be appointed Chair of the Pension Fund Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor B Kellett be appointed Chair of the Pension Fund Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor M Abley be appointed Chair of the Pension Fund Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor M Stead be appointed Vice-Chair of the Pension Fund Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor J Atkinson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Pension Fund Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor M Stead be appointed Vice-Chair of the pension Fund Committee.

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor M Simmons be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Varty be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor M Simmons be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor M Walton be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor J Miller be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor M Walton be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor C Martin be appointed Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor R Crute be appointed Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor C Martin be appointed Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor C Lines be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor A Batey be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor C Lines be appointed Vice-Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor J Blakey, **Seconded** by Councillor M Walton that Councillor C Hood be appointed Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor O Gunn be appointed Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor C Hood be appointed Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor J Blakey, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Cosslett be appointed Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Varty be appointed Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Cosslett be appointed Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Charlton be appointed Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor D Boyes be appointed Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Charlton be appointed Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor P Heaviside be appointed Vice-Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor J Miller be appointed Vice-Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor P Heaviside be appointed Vice-Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor B Coult be appointed Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor L Hovvels be appointed Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor B Coult be appointed Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor J Elmer be appointed Vice-Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Elmer be appointed Vice-Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor B Moist be appointed Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor R Manchester be appointed Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor B Moist be appointed Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor C Hood, **Seconded** by Councillor P Jopling that Councillor A Jackson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor C Marshall be appointed Vice-Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor A Jackson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Moved** by Councillor J Blakey, **Seconded** by Councillor M Walton that Councillor P Jopling be appointed Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor V Andrews be appointed Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor P Jopling be appointed Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor J Blakey, **Seconded** by Councillor M Walton that Councillor J Howey be appointed Vice-Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Moved** by Councillor M McKeon, **Seconded** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster that Councillor R Charlton-Lainé be appointed Vice-Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor J Howey be appointed Vice-Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **11 Appointments to Joint and Other Bodies 2022/23**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought to agree the appointments process of Members to Joint and Other Bodies (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Leader of the Council **Moved** Recommendations 3 (a) to (d) and (f) to (h), **Seconded** by the Deputy Leader.

The Leader of the Council referred to Recommendation (c) and informed Council it was not proposed to appoint any additional Trustees to the Charter Trust as referred to in Paragraph 4 of Appendix 3.

Referring to recommendation (e) the Leader **Moved** and the Deputy Leader **Seconded** that Councillor A Watson be nominated to serve on the Joint Audit Committee.

**Resolved:**

That:

- (a) the allocation of seats on the County Durham Fire and Rescue Authority as detailed in Appendix 2 be agreed;
- (b) the allocation of seats to the Business Durham Advisory board as set out in paragraph 4(b) to the report be agreed;
- (c) the allocation of seats on the Charter Trust as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed. Appointments were not made to the additional Trustees to the Charter Trust as referred to in Paragraph 4 of the Appendix;
- (d) the allocation of seats on the Police and Crime Panel as detailed in Appendix 4 be agreed;
- (e) Councillor A Watson be appointed for the ensuing year to serve on the Joint Audit Committee to assist the Police, Crime and Victims Commissioner, and Chief Constable, noting the nomination would be subject to approval of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- (f) the positions on the North East Combined Authority, and the North East Combined Authority and North of Tyne Combined Authority Joint Transport Committee be noted, and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s) to make appointments once the specifics of the determination of allocation to political groupings were advised to the council by the NECA secretariat.
- (g) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s), be authorised to make appointments to the other outside bodies to which the Council are invited to nominate, in accordance with the following criteria:-
  - (i) identify those organisations whose purpose is aligned to a specific Cabinet Portfolio, and nominate Members accordingly.
  - (ii) identify local outside bodies from each electoral division and allocate those to local members. If there are more

seats on an outside body than local members then the political balance would be applied. For those local bodies which are strategic in nature representation by a specific Cabinet Portfolio would be appropriate.

If a consensus on the allocation of seats to Members within the electoral division cannot be reached, should the division be represented by Members from different parties and agreement cannot be reached, the party with the largest proportion of seats on the Council would be allocated the seat.

(iii) the bodies which are not local to a particular electoral division, for example, those with a County or Regional remit, appointments be made in accordance with the overall political proportionality of the Council, except in the case of bodies providing services in one particular locality, in such circumstances the membership would be from that locality.

(h) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s), be authorised to make any changes to memberships of the main outside bodies/ joint bodies approved by Council, which may become necessary during the course of 2022/23.

## **12 Statement from the Returning Officer**

The Council noted the Statement of the County Returning Officer which showed the name of the person elected to the West Auckland Electoral Division on 14 April 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

## **13 Dates of Meetings for 2022/23**

### **Resolved:**

That the dates of meetings of the County Council for 2022/23 be as follows:

Wednesday 22 June 2022

Wednesday 20 July 2022

Wednesday 21 September 2022

Wednesday 19 October 2022

Wednesday 7 December 2022

Wednesday 25 January 2023

Wednesday 22 February 2023 (Budget and Council Tax Setting)

Wednesday 29 March 2023

Wednesday 24 May 2023 (Annual)

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## Report from the Cabinet

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### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

All

### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at the meetings held on 16 March, 6 April, 27 April and 18 May 2022 to enable Members to ask related questions by no later than midday 3 working days before the day of the meeting

### **Contents**

#### **16 March 2022**

Item 1 - Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads - Key Decision No. REG/02/22

Item 2 - Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 – Period to 31 December 2021 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(11) Savings

Item 3 - Bus Service Improvement Plan and Concessionary Fares Budget

Item 4 - Public Space Protection Order – Durham City

Item 5 - Review of Community Engagement and Funding Processes

Item 6 - Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads  
[Key Decision No. REG/02/22]

#### **6 April 2022**

Item 7 - Proposal to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site, Key Decision No. CYPS/01/2022

Item 8 - Declaration of an Ecological Emergency, Key Decision No. NCC/03/22

Item 9 - Annual review of Constitution

Item 10 - County Durham Plan: Parking and Accessibility, Developer Contributions and Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Documents

Item 11 - Updated SEND Strategy for County Durham 2022-24

Item 12 - High Needs Block Funding for SEND and Inclusion Support

Item 13 - Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025

Item 14 - Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

Item 15 - North East Screen Industries Partnership

Item 16 - Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle, Key Decision No. NCC/02/22

## **27 April 2022**

Item 17 - Durham County Council Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment [Key Decision: REG/04/22]

Item 18 - Council Plan 2022-2026 - [Key Decision: CORP/R/22/04]

Item 19 - Durham County Council Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment [Key Decision: REG/04/22]

## **18 May 2022**

Item 20 - Annual Enforcement Programme Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Item 21 - Health Protection Assurance Annual Report

# **1. Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads**

## **Key Decision No. REG/02/22**

### **Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Elizabeth Scott and James Rowlandson**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth on the further feasibility studies relating to the refurbishment and reopening of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery (DLIMAG) and grounds. The report set out an approach to bring it back into use as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds.

In June 2021 we agreed to review options to reopen and repurpose the DLIMAG and within this context, also consider the options for housing parts of the collection within the former site. The initial review was considered by Cabinet in September 2021. We identified that the preferred option was to bring the building back into use as an exhibition centre, gallery, and cafe venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds. This would incorporate a dedicated display space for items from the DLI Collection to complement the exhibition plans for the new Durham History Centre. The new History Centre would be the permanent home for the DLI Collection, its storage, care and curation.

Since the decision to review the site in September 2021, an intense period of feasibility studies had been conducted to support decision making in relation to the options to reopen the site and the associated financial requirements.

Engagement with key stakeholders and partners alongside considerations from key council services including planning, highways and equality and diversity, had informed considerations and options for the site. This built upon the stakeholder engagement carried out during July 2021, which was considered as part of the report presented to Cabinet in September 2021.

In October 2021, the Council, in partnership with Durham University and the Culture Durham Partnership, were long listed along with seven other places for the UK City of Culture 2025 competition. A key aspect of the bid was support of the sustainability of cultural assets. Revival of the DLIMAG building as part of the strategic re-development of Aykley Heads, and in line with the county's emerging inclusive economic strategy, provided an opportunity for culture-led levelling up, open to all communities and free at the point of access.

Redevelopment of the site as an exhibition centre would not only enable the delivery of a world-class visual art, alongside displays of our proud history. These would be integral to the broad opportunities at Aykley Heads, but also the wider tourism offer of the country and the region, but a conscious

programme to celebrate culture and heritage and the many positive impacts these can have for residents and visitors.

The feasibility study included the review of five options against a clear brief of objectives to be delivered at the site and for our communities, those options were:

- (a) Option 0 - **Do Minimum** option comprising a refresh and 'clean up' of the existing building within the existing footprint, dedicated display space for the DLI Collection and baseline works to develop a contemplative garden;
- (b) Option 1 – **Minimum Intervention** comprising complete transformation of the existing building, dedicated display space for the DLI Collection and baseline works to develop a contemplative garden, with the demolition of the existing single storey elements (including public toilets) and a small extension to the east of the property;
- (c) Option 2 – **Intermediate Intervention** similar to Option 1 but includes a much larger extension along the full extent of the eastern elevation increasing the net internal area of the building by approximately 47%. The amount of exhibition space, and dedicated display space for the DLI Collection, is increased and there is also an increase in the amount of flexible space for education and events. The café is also larger. Additional space is included for an artist in residence and bookable meeting rooms. Works to the garden are based on a mid-level scope;
- (d) Option 3 – **Maximum Intervention** similar to Option 2 but the extension along the eastern elevation doubles increasing the net internal area of the building by around 96%. This option has the most exhibition space and dedicated display space for the DLI Collection. The space for artists in residence / creative hub is also more than double the space provided in Option 2. In addition to a larger café this option also includes additional space for a new restaurant. Works to the garden are based on the top-level scope;
- e) Option 4 – **Do Maximum** as Option 3 in terms of geometries / space requirements but assumes new build rather than a refurbishment of the existing building.

Options 3 and 4 were the only options to fully meet the critical success factors. Based on the financial, commercial, economic and market analysis to date the report recommended Option 3 as providing the best value for money against the criteria, whilst delivering a cultural and visual art venue that would raise the city and county's profile against the regional and national cultural offer. Construction costings and business plan analysis developed for each option had taken a risk-based approach and maximum expected financial commitments were presented.

## **Decision**

Having regard to the corresponding exempt report we:

- (a) agreed to implement Option 3 as the preferred redevelopment opportunity with a forecast additional MTFP revenue budget requirement, including revenue cost of prudential borrowing required, totalling £1.019 million to be built into MTFP (13) planning;
- (b) agreed that a comprehensive capital and revenue fundraising strategy be developed with immediate effect to seek external funding in order to minimise the prudential borrowing and ongoing revenue commitment of the Council;
- (c) noted the need to further develop all aspects of the preferred option including the preferred delivery model and revenue implications.

## **2. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 – Period to 31 December 2021 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Richard Bell**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided updated information relating to:

- (a) the forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2021/22, based on the position to 31 December 2021;
- (b) the forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund position at 31 March 2022, based on the position to 31 December 2021; and
- (c) the forecast use of and contributions to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in 2021/22 and the estimated balances to be held at 31 March 2022.

The report sought approval of the revised capital programme, other budget adjustments, the proposed sums outside of the cash limit in-year and provided an update on progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings in 2021/22.

COVID-19 had a significant and complex financial impact in 2020/21, which had continued into 2021/22, making forecasting the council's outturn position even more challenging than usual. In addition to the general financial uncertainty during 2021/22, the longer-term financial impact of the pandemic beyond this 2022 remained uncertain at the current stage. The risk in this regard would be considered and assessed in MTFP Cabinet reports.

Since COVID-19 outbreak, the council had implemented national support schemes at short notice such as the various Business Rates Grants Support Scheme(s); the Council Tax Hardship Support Schemes; Test and Trace

Payments; Winter Support Payments Scheme; COVID-19 Local Support Scheme; Infection Control Schemes and Contain Outbreak Management Schemes. In addition, the council had also implemented a range of supplier relief schemes and addressed increased demand for support to vulnerable households whilst trying to accommodate new ways of working itself in response to the pandemic.

Based on the position to 31 December it was forecasted that there would be a net in-year surplus on the collection fund for the council of £0.342 million after taking into account Section 31 grant receivable.

Considering the brought forward position from 2020/21 and including the phasing of collection fund deficits over three years there was a total forecast deficit on the collection fund of £1.498 million. The situation would be kept under close review during quarter four, especially in relation to collection rates as the public and businesses recovered from the impact of the pandemic.

The government had provided non ringfenced funding to local authorities in the current year for the additional costs incurred as a result of COVID-19. £15.56 million had been allocated to the council for 2021/22. In addition, the government had also extended the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Guarantee Scheme for three months to 30 June 2021. This scheme required local authorities to bear the first 5% of any qualifying income loss after which the government provided a grant for 75% of subsequent losses. The council submitted a claim for circa £2.6 million from the scheme for 2021/22.

Based on the position to 31 December 2021 service groupings had forecasted a net overspend of £14.217 million before any adjustment for COVID-19 related items. This net overspend position had mainly arisen from additional expenditure and loss of income associated with the COVID-19 outbreak of £22.882 million. It had been offset by COVID-19 related underspends (relating to closure of facilities and disruption to normal service activity because of the pandemic) of £7.224 million – giving a net COVID-19 related position of a £15.658 million overspend. The position was a £0.996 million improvement since quarter two mainly relating to a lower than forecast impact to materials, recycling and income losses not being as high as forecast in leisure centres and car parks. With the net COVID-19 overspend excluded there was a forecasted cash limit underspend of £1.441 million across all service groupings.

The forecast COVID-19 overspending across the various service groupings is fully offset by the circa £18.2 million the council expects to receive from the government to cover the financial impact of the pandemic. At this stage, net COVID-19 costs are £2.5 million below the grant funding the council expects to receive, which is an improved position on that forecast at quarter two when the net impact was forecast to be £0.5 million below the grant funding provided. This reflected a £1 million improvement in net spending and £1

million of additional grant from the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Guarantee Scheme.

Overall it is estimated that the council's 2021/22 budget will be underspent by £5.856 million, representing 1.3% of the net expenditure budget of £461.251 million.

A wide range of assumptions had been made in relation to expenditure and income over the remainder of the financial year, with significant uncertainty regarding the ongoing impact of COVID-19 following the initial lifting restrictions at the beginning of quarter two and the changes implemented in December following the outbreak of the Omicron variant.

A developing budget pressure related to hyper inflationary pressures in the energy markets. The additional costs associated with energy price uplifts could be managed within the general contingency budget but this position would need to be kept under review. A further risk related to pay inflation, where the trade unions had not accepted the employers 1.75% pay offer. Broader inflationary pressures would need to continue to be managed within service cash limits.

A potential range of interventions would be required by the council and ongoing impacts post pandemic had not yet been quantified. The Cash Limit and General Reserves would potentially be required to meet any shortfall that ultimately arose in this regard whilst longer term strategies were implemented.

In terms of service grouping cash limits, the projected cash limit underspend of £1.441 million was around 0.31% of the cash limit budgets.

At quarter one, Children and Young People's Services had forecasted an overspend of £4.754 million whilst Adult and Health Services had forecasted an underspend of £3.886 million. On 15 September 2021 we agreed to a 2021/22 base budget transfer of £4.5 million from Adult and Health Services to Children and Young People's Services which would also be included in the base budget for 2022/23. The updated quarter three forecast of outturn indicated a cash limit underspend of £0.189 million for Adult and Health Services and a cash limit overspend of £2.210 million for Children and Young People's Services. Consideration would need to be given at final outturn as to how to address the deficit cash limit reserve position within Children and Young People's Services. Previously, cash limit overspends in Children and Young People's Services had necessitated a transfer from general reserves.

In terms of sums outside the cash limit, there was a forecasted underspend of £4.415 million. The position would be kept under careful review, especially in relation to additional costs and loss of income linked to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and from any further inflationary pressures.

Total earmarked and cash limit reserves (excluding school reserves) were forecasted to reduce by £38.458 million in 2021/22, from £245.532 million to £207.074 million. The forecast at quarter two indicated that total earmarked and cash limit reserves (excluding school reserves) were forecasted to reduce by £36.559 million in 2021/22, to £208.973 million.

A review of all reserves had enabled the realignment of £14.9 million of cash limit and earmarked reserves enabling the investment of earmarked reserves in council priorities. This included a £10 million transfer into the Members' Initiatives Reserve supporting additional investment and £4.9 million to replenish corporate reserves as factored into MTFP(12) and the 2022/23 budget agreed by Council on 23 February 2022.

The forecast cash limit and general reserves position is a prudent one given the significant financial uncertainties facing local government beyond 2022/23. The MTFP(12) report to Council on 23 February 2022 highlighted ongoing budget concerns for the council with a forecast savings shortfall of £29.987 million over the 2022/23 to 2025/26 period, with the delivery of further savings becoming ever more challenging to achieve.

The projected capital outturn this year is £158.979 million, with the capital budgets having been augmented with reprofiled budget from underspending against the 2020/21 capital programme.

To the end of quarter three, the council has delivered savings totalling £4.805 million, which is 90% of the £5.312 million target for the year.

## **Decision**

We noted

- (a) the council's overall financial position for 2021/22 and the continuing uncertainty associated with the outturn forecast resulting from the continuing impact of COVID-19 as set out in the report;
- (b) the forecast use of earmarked reserves in year;
- (c) the forecast end of year position for the cash limit and general reserves;
- (d) the additional costs and income loss faced as a result of COVID-19 which is offset by additional grant funding provided by government;
- (e) the emerging inflationary pressures which it is forecast can be managed within general contingencies and cash limit reserves;
- (f) the position on the capital programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- (g) the amount of savings delivered to 31 December 2021 against the 2021/22 targets and the total savings that will have been delivered since 2011.

We agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' for approval and the revenue and capital budget adjustments as set out in the report.

### **3. Bus Service Improvement Plan and Concessionary Fares Budget Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought consideration as to whether the County Council should support some of the bus services across County Durham. This was in response to some routes which were no longer commercially viable due to uncertainty of Government support and reduced passenger numbers because of the Covid pandemic. The proposal in the short-term, was to use budget received from Government for the concessionary fares scheme which would otherwise not be required for that purpose.

In October 2021, Cabinet was advised of progress on formulating a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in response to the Government's National Bus Strategy which highlighted our commitment to improving Public Transport. Local authorities were encouraged to submit ambitious bids to what was then heralded as a £ 3 billion investment in bus services.

At that time, it was envisaged that with an increasing return to more normal life, bus patronage would continue to recover closer to pre-pandemic levels. However, the reality of the current position was that passenger numbers remain subdued and that temporary Government support for the industry was set to be withdrawn. The amount of future national funding available was expected to reduce significantly.

Against this backdrop, bus companies across the region had started to plan for the new financial year with no guarantees of financial support from Government either in the short or medium term. As a result, without intervention, expected cuts to bus services across the region of around 10% would impact directly on people accessing employment, education, and other essential services.

If these cuts were to go ahead, they would vary significantly across the County. Some areas may experience a reduction in frequencies, others a loss of evening or weekend services. A minority would see entire services curtailed. By contrast some communities would see no change at all.

There were short term options for Durham to support bus services using savings within the Concessionary Fares budget to allow time for Government interventions to be confirmed and the full state of a post Covid transport system could start to emerge.

## **Decision**

We agreed that the contents of the report be noted together with the potential impacts of the respective funds set to be announced in March. We also agreed that short term support be given to bus services in County Durham by redirecting funding from the Concessionary Fares budget which was forecasted to underspend by £1.934 million during 2022/23.

### **4. Public Space Protection Order – Durham City Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor John Shuttleworth**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an overview of the powers, benefits and risks available under a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The report also sought agreement to a consultation on proposed new behaviours and actions to be included in the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to help control aggressive/anti-social type begging in Durham City.

It had been evidenced that PSPOs were seen as an effective tool in tackling anti-social type behaviour in areas where persistent and ongoing problems had resulted in adverse impact on residents, businesses, and visitors.

Introducing a PSPO for specific activities did not guarantee that problems would be completely eradicated and should only be used along with a range of other intervention methods including education. Consideration should also be given to the resources required to enforce such an order.

Some types of activities could generate negative reputational concerns for both the Local Authority and the local areas where the PSPOs are proposed/in force. There was a PSPO currently in place for the centre of Durham City for the consumption of alcohol outside premises which is due to run until July 2022 and would require a review.

## **Decision**

We agreed that a full consultation exercise be undertaken to gauge the level of public support and to gather evidence on the merits of introducing a new activity to control aggressive begging which could be introduced as a new Public Space Protection order in Durham City.

We also agreed to a consultation exercise which would allow for a full review of the existing PSPO in Durham City which limits the consumption of alcohol.

## **5. Review of Community Engagement and Funding Processes Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an outline of a planned review of the community engagement and funding processes currently provided by Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). The report set out the scope of the review, governance arrangements and proposed timescales for completion.

The Council carries out a number of community engagement functions across its services. One of the key sources of engagement with the public is through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). AAPs have been in operation since 2009 since the establishment of the Unitary County Council.

Since then, the Council's community engagement work had constantly evolved in terms of new work areas, management of budgets and new approaches to engage with the community, including local responses to the COVID pandemic and local resilience support to Storm Arwen and Storm Malik.

There is a need for the Council to ensure it effectively discharges its duty to consult with the public on important local decisions and there is also the opportunity to enhance support provided to local Elected Members in their community champion role.

Over recent years national and local agendas had changed, and innovative ways of engagement needed to continue. It is important that our community engagement mechanisms are fit for the future and continue to meet the corporate needs of the Council, our key partners and deliver outcomes for our communities and Councillors. For example, there is an exciting opportunity to look at how we could potentially enhance more 'area based' delivery across our communities. This review will focus on a series of issues and key questions to ensure that we can respond appropriately.

### **Decision**

We noted the content of the report and agreed:

- a) the principle of undertaking a review of the Council's community engagement functions, including the work of AAPs;
- b) the scope of the review set out in paragraphs 29 – 31 of the report;
- c) the proposed review timescales set out in paragraph 44 of the report;
- d) the review governance arrangements set out in paragraphs 38 – 41 of the report.

## **6. Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads [Key Decision No. REG/02/22]**

**Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Elizabeth Scott and James Rowlandson**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth on the further feasibility studies that have been undertaken following agreement by Cabinet in September 2021 to consider the options for refurbishment and reopening of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery (DLIMAG) and grounds. The report set out an approach to bring it back into use as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds.

### **Decision**

We agreed the recommendations in the report.

## **7. Proposal to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site, Key Decision No. CYPS/01/2022**

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Ted Henderson**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which sought approval to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site, taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient places and to ensure good outcomes for all children and young people in the local area.

Following an Ofsted inspection judgement of 'inadequate', Sunnydale School in Shildon was amalgamated with Greenfield School, Newton Aycliffe. Greenfield School was enlarged from 1 January 2015, becoming Greenfield Community College, and Sunnydale School was closed as a separate school on 31 December 2014.

These schools were 2.2 miles apart and had already been working together in an educational trust prior to reorganisation. At the time of the Ofsted inspection in 2014 there were also significant sustainability issues for Sunnydale school with only 405 pupils attending the school.

Education delivery across a split-site took place until January 2020 whereupon health and safety concerns forced the temporary closure of the Sunnydale site. At this point all pupils were safely accommodated on the Greenfield site, with temporary additional accommodation provided.

The establishment of a single school operating on a split-side model in 2015 did not address the underlying challenges evident before the amalgamation. Pupil numbers had continued to fall as education standards had declined with challenge from both DfE and Ofsted. As a result, the school faced financial challenges compounded by the long-standing site issues.

In addition, the very poor condition of the Sunnydale site particularly, had combined to create a situation that had to be resolved by considering long term options for improved educational provision.

In a report dated 13 October 2021, Cabinet agreed that consultation could commence on a proposal to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and to rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site.

Following the completion of the initial consultation process, the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services approved the issuing of a statutory notice proposing to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and to rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site. The statutory notice was issued on 20 January 2022. During the 4 week statutory representation period, 14 comments were received, 12 in support of the proposal and 2 not in support of the proposal.

## **Decision**

We agreed to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site.

## **8. Declaration of an Ecological Emergency [Key Decision No. NCC/03/22] Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Mark Wilkes and James Rowlandson**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to respond to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) report to Cabinet on the consideration of an ecological emergency and to formally declare an ecological emergency for County Durham.

The considerable work of the ESCOSC in assessing evidence on the state of the environment in County Durham and detailed in the circulated report was acknowledged and much appreciated. The findings showed overwhelming evidence for global and national decline in habitats and species, and whilst local data was understandably less extensive it strongly mirrored the national and global trends.

County Durham had a rich tapestry of habitats. From its upland peatland and moorland, to the Wear and Tees lowlands with semi-natural ancient woodland, meadows and wetlands, to the magnesian limestone plateau with its species rich pasture and Heritage Coast. This represented not only a valuable resource for biodiversity, and a store for carbon, but an incredible asset for recreation and wellbeing. The environment had of course been shaped by farming, industrial heritage and settlements, and as in the past, human influence would hold the key to improvements in the future.

The ESCOSC report rightly recognised the considerable work being undertaken by the Council and partners in several landscape scale initiatives, habitat restoration and creation, including tree planting and the management of nature reserves. The new investments announced as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26 provided further impetus for this work through the appointment of two nature reserve officers, and staff to promote education/awareness, volunteer investment and the addition of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officer.

One of the recommendations from ESCOSC was for the development of an Ecological Emergency Response Plan mirroring, and perhaps in due course merging, with the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP). Should this be accepted, then just like the CERP it would need to consider not only what the Council could do with its landholdings and services, but also crucially how it could combine work with partners to influence and support countywide activity which would benefit habitat and species diversity, including farmers and landowners.

In a climate of tight resources, it was essential that our work at both a Council level and as a countywide influencer was targeted to those areas where the biggest impact could be made. Future work and investment in this area would therefore be built in to established Council processes including the annual MTFP planning cycle where capital and revenue expenditure would be considered alongside the needs of other services projects and programmes. Resources would be allocated to maximise the benefits from those available. Additionally external funding would be sought wherever possible to supplement council budgets.

In response to national concerns of ecosystem decline, Government required, through the Environment Act 2021, “responsible authorities” (of which Durham County Council had been selected and agreed to be) to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). Whilst formal guidance had yet to be produced on its precise form, it was clear that LNRS must culminate in a statement of biodiversity priorities for the strategy area, and a local habitat map, informed by an assessment of opportunities for enhancement or recovery of our habitats and species. It was proposed that the Local Nature Recovery

Strategy, when produced, would be a key high-level guide to influence the priorities in the Council's future action plans.

Further guidance was awaited from Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy but this did not prevent the County Council considering what more it could do in further enhancing biodiversity from its own landholdings. Whilst the Council already had 31 designated Local Nature Reserves and an additional 61 sites identified as important for local wildlife, it was fully recognised that the Council's plans would need to go beyond the managed sites to consider what more could be done through different services (clean and green management of open spaces, planning for instance) and key relationships with education, awareness and volunteering. This work in compiling an initial plan could commence immediately.

The decline in natural habitats, species and diversity which were well illustrated in the ESCOSC report were of concern, not just for the sake of wildlife, but the loss of nature diminishes something that enriched the quality of all our lives. It was therefore proposed that the recommendations from ESCOSC be accepted in full, with work examining what the Council could do commencing immediately, and the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to further inform action plans in due course.

## **Decision**

We agreed to:

- (a) thank ESCOSC for its work detailed in their report in examining evidence relating state of habitats and species across the County, and for its recommendations to Cabinet;
- (b) declare an ecological emergency for County Durham;
- (c) ask for an initial action plan on Council activities in response to this declaration be provided within six months;
- (d) include planning for the ecological emergency in future MTFP planning cycles with a value for money outcome-based focus alongside other projects and programmes;

We also noted that the Council was required to prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which would, once complete, inform future plans that considered opportunities for enhancing biodiversity both by the Council and countywide partners.

## **9. Annual Review of Constitution**

### **Leader of the Council – Councillor Amanda Hopgood**

We considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer which presented the Constitution following the annual review, for adoption by Council.

The Council's Constitution described the four methods by which the Council operated; the Council, the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny and the Committees. It also provided the framework of operation in terms of:

- (a) the rules and procedures to be followed by the Council and committees when conducting their business;
- (b) the decision-making powers of the Council, the Executive, Committees and Officers;
- (c) the financial and contract regulations;
- (d) the rights of the public;
- (e) codes of conduct for councillors and employees;
- (f) members allowances;

The Constitution was reviewed on an annual basis with a fundamental review undertaken periodically. The last review of the Constitution was presented to Cabinet on 24 March 2021 and was presented to Council for adoption on 26 May 2021.

### **Decision**

We approved the delegation of executive powers as set out in the proposed amendments to the officer scheme of delegation at paragraphs 35 - 44 of the report; and recommended that Council agree to the proposed revisions to the Constitution at its meeting on 25 May 2022.

## **10. County Durham Plan: Parking and Accessibility, Developer Contributions and Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Documents**

### **Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth to seek Cabinet's approval to commence consultation on:

- the second draft of the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document;

- the first draft of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document; and
- minor alterations to the Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Document.

All three documents supported the recently adopted County Durham Plan which sought to ensure that County Durham was a successful place to live, work, invest and visit and focussed on supporting and creating vibrant communities.

In order to provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies within the County Durham Plan, Government guidance allowed for the preparation of supplementary planning documents (SPDs). SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan. Three SPDs that are specifically mentioned in the County Durham Plan are the Parking and Accessibility SPD, the Developer Contributions SPD and the Residential Amenity SPD. Other SPDs would be prepared in the future.

## **Decision**

We agreed:

- (i) the second draft of the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 2 of the report) for consultation from 22 April to 3 June 2022. Agreed to delegate to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships the power to make minor modifications and adopt the document following consultation (if significant changes are required then the SPD would need to return to Cabinet for adoption);
- (ii) the first draft of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 4 of the report) for consultation from 22 April to 3 June 2022;
- (iii) the modifications to the Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 5 of the report) for consultation from 22 April to 3 June 2022. Agreed to delegate to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships the power to make minor modifications and adopt the document following consultation (if significant changes are required then the SPD would need to return to Cabinet for adoption); and
- (iv) the modifications to the Highways Design Guide (Appendix 6 of the report) for consultation from 22 April to 3 June 2022. Agreed

to delegate to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships the power to make minor modifications and adopt the document following consultation.

## **11. Updated SEND Strategy for County Durham 2022-24 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Ted Henderson**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which introduced a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy for the County for the period 2022-24.

The current SEND Strategy for County Durham required review and a new strategy had been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement as well as reference to required legislative frameworks, other related County strategies and the public consultation undertaken on the High Needs Block funding.

At the heart of the approach to the SEND Strategy was a vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities that are the same as for all children and young people in County Durham - that they are safe and part of their community, have the best start in life, have good physical and mental health, and gain the education, skills, and experiences to prepare them for adulthood.

The Strategy vision, aims and indicators were consistently supported by all stakeholders. The implementation and further development of the Strategy would be supported by the SEND strategic partnership and agreement to this partnership Strategy was being sought through the Health and Wellbeing board on the 11 May 2022.

### **Decision**

We adopted the SEND Strategy 2022-24

## **12. High Needs Block Funding for SEND and Inclusion Support Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillor Ted Henderson and Richard Bell**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided an update on spend and pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which supported Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and inclusion support services for children and young people living in County Durham.

The 2021/22 forecast financial outturn position was outlined, along with the latest five-year financial plan and project updates, which collectively aimed to help ensure HNB spending was maintained within budget and the accumulated deficit in the HNB was recovered between 2020/21-2024/25.

The HNB budget of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provided funding for SEND and Inclusion support services for children and young people in County Durham.

There had been insufficient resources to support children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs in recent years. This was due to a combination of factors which included increased demand for services, increased complexity of additional needs in children and young people and austerity in the public sector. This position was replicated in many other local authorities.

Despite some previous support from the Council's own resources, spending pressures resulted in a growing deficit in County Durham's DSG account between 2015/16 and 2019/20.

Spending on SEND and inclusion needs exceeded HNB grant by £8.6 million, and the cumulative deficit on the HNB reserve stood at £5.7 million at the end of 2019/20 financial year.

Following an increase in the HNB allocation in 2019/20 and continued work on the HNB sustainability programme, expenditure from the HNB grant was overspent by £2.3 million in 2020/21. This raised the cumulative deficit on the HNB DSG to £8.0 million at the end of that financial year.

The Quarter 3 Forecast for 2021/22 had predicted a £1.7 million overspend on the HNB budget and a cumulative deficit of £9.7 million, at the end of 2021/22 financial year.

Although expenditure had continued to exceed HNB grant, this was an improved position compared to recent years when overspends were substantially higher.

The HNB Five Year Financial Plan was set to recover the deficit that had accumulated in the HNB by 2023/24.

Work was underway to ensure that services were provided within budget and change proposals relating to the below areas of focus were delivered, as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020:

- Centrally Managed Services;
- Special Schools;

- Top-Up Funding (TuF);
- Targeted Support Funding (TSF);
- Post 16 Funding;
- Funding support to Partnerships of Schools;
- Joint Commissioning of Paediatric Therapies;
- Joint commissioning of Equipment, Auxiliary Aids and Adaptations;
- Alternative Provision (AP) and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

The report provided an update on progress on the latest work. The latest financial position and updated HNB five-year financial plan was also presented for Cabinet's consideration.

It was proposed that the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board (SIRB) continued to oversee the implementation of the work programme to deliver the proposed changes, the five-year financial plan and any impact from the continuing coronavirus pandemic. This included plans to review the overall programme during 2022/23 linked with the updated County Durham SEND strategy and the national review of SEND, which was due to be published by the Government in the spring 2022.

### **Decision**

We noted the updated assumptions and forecast position for HNB spend in 2021/22 and the progress on the transformation projects and other work outlined in the report.

We agreed:

- (a) to the updated five-year financial plan for 2020/21- 2025/26 which included a deficit recovery plan for previous HNB overspend to be recovered; and
- (b) the five-year plan being regularly reviewed and updated, including allowing for any impacts from the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent recovery period which may be protracted in relation to SEND support needs; and

### **13. Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Richard Bell**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources to adopt the council's updated Apprenticeship Strategy for the period 2022-2025.

The council's apprenticeship strategy and programme were an integral part of the council's approach to address current and future skills needs.

Apprenticeships helped the Council to attract and retain the very best talent

and to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce to deliver high quality services to the Council's communities.

The strategy was aligned to the council plan and specifically linked to the ambition for a thriving economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation, most notably through the strategic objectives to give young people access to good quality education, training, and employment, and to help all people into rewarding work. It was also pivotal to the council ambition to create a workforce for the future.

The strategy was also aligned to the Council's Workforce, Regeneration, Procurement, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Autism strategies together with the council's values and the council's strategic approach to supporting and sustaining care leavers and people with disabilities in employment.

The council introduced its first Apprenticeship Strategy in April 2019 which detailed what the Council wanted to achieve as an employer and the positive action the council would take to increase the number and range of apprenticeships and to support apprentices into sustainable employment with the council as part of the wider Workforce Strategy. The report detailed key achievements made up to 31 March 2022, as part of the strategy.

The Apprenticeship Strategy had been updated to reflect the continued commitment to progressing the apprenticeship programme as part of the Workforce Strategy, which was linked to the strategic workforce planning approach and people strategies.

## **Decision**

We Cabinet approved the adoption of the updated Apprenticeship Strategy 2022–2025.

## **14. Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Alan Shield**

We considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on work to ensure a coherent and co-ordinated strategic approach, both within the council and across the Council's partners to address poverty across County Durham.

The report also sought approval to consult on a revised County Durham Poverty Action Plan which set out a comprehensive response to the impacts of the wide-ranging poverty issues within the county.

In the annual Poverty Issues report to Cabinet on 15 December 2021, information was presented on the progress made by the council and its partners in addressing poverty issues across the county. The report described the work of the council and partners to address and help alleviate the pressures which contributed to vulnerability arising from an individual's inability to meet their personal needs.

The Cabinet report was then presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. Their feedback influenced the strategy refresh approach.

There were a number of critical factors influencing financial insecurity that had been magnified in recent times. This included the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic, rising living costs caused by inflationary pressures (in particular in relation to food, fuel, energy and utility costs), and, the economic uncertainty arising from events in the Ukraine which was compounding the squeeze on household budgets.

There were also lasting impacts of financial insecurity in relation to mental wellbeing and health in general. It was therefore imperative that the council and partners continued to consider key information on demand for financial and other support and ensure that low-income households, particularly those in crisis, were supported as much as possible.

The council co-ordinated its efforts to tackle poverty through the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG). This was a cross-council senior officer group, chaired by the Corporate Director of Resources and attended by the Cabinet member for Equality and Inclusion.

Partnership working was key to tackling the issues arising from poverty and during the pandemic this had been strengthened with the use of additional funding to enable organisations to offer appropriate support when dealing with vulnerable households presenting with financial insecurity.

At the Cabinet meeting in December, it was agreed that the Poverty Strategy and Supporting Action Plan would be refreshed and brought back to Cabinet for consideration.

Work had therefore been undertaken with PASG and across services to consider the overall vision and objectives for the Strategy refresh and the actions which would underpin delivery against the objectives set out in the Strategy.

A draft updated strategy and action plan had been developed as a result of the review process and was presented for consideration. Further consultation was proposed to ensure that partners and other key strategies, such as the emerging Inclusive Economic Strategy were fully aligned. A further report

would then be brought back to Cabinet following consultation, to update the Poverty Strategy and Supporting Action Plan in line with that feedback.

## **Decision**

We noted the contents of the report and that a further report be brought back to Cabinet following that consultation to update the Poverty Strategy and Supporting Action Plan in line with that feedback

We approved the revised Poverty Strategy and Action Plan for wider consultation and engagement with partners and stakeholders.

## **15. North East Screen Industries Partnership Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth that sought approval to contribute to the North East Screen Industries Partnership region-wide development programme, and implementation of the associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BBC.

In early 2021, the BBC published a pan-UK commissioning strategy – ‘The BBC Across the UK’ – and announced its commitment to increase out-of-London production by 10% by 2028 (equivalent to £700m of expenditure). The strategy set out to ensure increased representation of communities throughout the UK across all BBC platforms and increase commissioning spend in the nations and regions.

This reflected one of the public purposes set out in the BBC’s Royal Charter: ***To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom’s nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom.***

As a result of the new strategy, the BBC had sought to increase its presence in the regions, to improve the diversity of its own commissions and to stimulate the growth of a wider screen industries ecology.

A memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was developed between the BBC and NE local authorities and combined authorities. The MoU established the North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) as the delivery vehicle for joint activity, and set out the intention of the BBC to invest up to £25 million in regional programming over a five year period and a target to seek investment from the region of £11.4 million to support the development of a viable screen industries ecology in the region.

The North of Tyne Combined Authority had contracted a broadcast consultant to develop a full business case on behalf of NESIP as a whole and with input from all constituent authorities.

Detailed governance arrangements were undergoing development. Durham's place on the proposed strategic or delivery boards would be defined through the LA7 Chief Executive & Leaders Group. If Durham was successful in its bid for UK City of Culture 2025 it was anticipated that a specific board place would be agreed. Previous UK cities of Culture had all developed formal partnerships with the BBC and other broadcasters.

The activity and development programme undertaken through the MoU would help realise the proposed film and TV strand for City of Culture 2025 and support significant skills development and future employment.

In addition, the anticipated impacts from NESIP would support the growth of creative industries in the region and the county. Research carried out by Durham University for Durham's UK City of Culture bid identified that spill-over and multiplier impacts were more likely in Creative Industries than in other sectors and that there was evidenced potential for growth in the county's creative industries sector.

## **Decision**

We:

- (a) Approved a financial contribution of £158,481 to be made to the North East Combined Authority (NECA), in respect of the development programme to be implemented during the 2022/23 financial year, funded from corporate contingencies in year.
- (b) Authorised the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources the Cabinet Member for Economy and Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Finance to agree the associated Business Case and delivery arrangements relating to the MoU on the terms set out in the report in conjunction with NECA and its constituent local authorities, the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA).
- (c) Authorised the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources, Cabinet Member for Economy and Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Finance, to approve the terms of a Grant Funding Agreement with Northern Film and Media (as the regional screen agency) in respect

of the 2022/2023 financial contribution alongside the equivalent contributions of the constituent local authorities within NECA.

- (d) Noted that any recurring commitment beyond 2022/23 would need to be included in MTFP(13) planning and be subject to a separate report in line with the outcomes of the business case being developed through the North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP).

## **16. Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle, Key Decision No. NCC/02/22 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Mark Wilkes**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to update Members on progress since Cabinet approval was gained on 8 July 2020 to participate in a joint procurement for a residual waste treatment solution, the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility.

### **Decision**

The recommendations in the report were approved.

## **17. Durham County Council Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment [Key Decision: REG/04/22] Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors James Rowlandson and Richard Bell**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth and the Corporate Director of Resources which was the third in a series of reports reviewing the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City. The report considered the options for the location of the Council's Headquarters (HQ) and the functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the Council not occupy The Sands site. The report set out a proposal to dispose of The Sands site, (excluding the surface car park area and new multi storey car park), subject to planning. The Cabinet considered the key business case requirements and value for money, including economic, financial, commercial, management and strategic objectives.

On 16 June 2021, Cabinet agreed to review the options for use of the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters (HQ) at The Sands in Durham City and to set out an approach for reviewing the options for the Council's HQ functions.

The building at The Sands had been completed, however, the common land de-registration process had resulted in additional unforeseen and unbudgeted

costs of circa £2.1 million having been incurred to practical completion. This had resulted in an overall development spend of £51.2 million.

The additional costs could be largely offset should the Council choose not to occupy the building as the planned investment in audio-video/ICT infrastructure and new furniture and fittings, which were included in the original budget sum, could be saved. This reduced the overall additional spend incurred to a forecast £0.6 million, which could be financed from capital contingencies and would require a revised development budget of £49.7 million.

On 29 September 2021, we agreed to a number of recommendations regarding the future of the Council's estates strategy and Council HQ functions. It was agreed that further work would be undertaken on alternative options for office accommodation and committee space for the Council. The protection of the strategic employment development site at Aykley Heads and future demolition of the existing County Hall building was also agreed. The need to meet public interest and value for money considerations underpinned the September 2021 report and these considerations were required to inform any change to the original plans for the Council to occupy The Sands building.

Cabinet agreed that the viable alternative to the Council occupying the new HQ building on The Sands would be for the disposal of that the building or the letting of the building to a single third-party occupier within a reasonable timescale and to conclude the position by Summer 2022. The September 2021 report identified the difficulties in securing interest in a building of this size, noting that another single occupier would likely be the only viable alternative. We noted the high-level risks and issues that would require consideration prior to any final decision not to occupy the building on The Sands and to dispose of it.

The September 2021 report also advised that a third party had expressed an interest in acquiring the building. It was agreed that negotiations with the third party would progress on a subject to contract basis, whilst at the same time, a business case for an alternative accommodation strategy would be prepared. The interest from a specific third party was referenced in the report, but not formally identified at that time due to commercial confidentiality.

The interested third party, Durham University, sought to acquire the building to enable the development of the University business school. The use of the building, readiness of the University and the heads of terms agreed for the purchase price were the key factors in the justification for the disposal to a 'special purchaser' in this case.

Durham University Business School (DUBS) and its strong global reputation would provide an important economic asset to the overall development. The University also had a key role in enabling and supporting an inclusive economy. The University had presented clear evidence of a readiness to move forward with the business school, subject to planning.

It was agreed that any negotiation with the third party must be concluded no later than three months following approval of any viable alternative office accommodation strategy, which was anticipated to be Summer 2022.

It was agreed that if a satisfactory outcome from negotiations with the interested third party could not be reached within the timeframes set out in the report, or if a viable alternative office accommodation strategy was not found, then the Council would occupy the building on The Sands as its new HQ.

The proposed disposal to the University was subject to planning approval of a change of use for the existing site to support the use as a business school (use for education purposes). A planning application led by the University is expected to be considered by the County Planning Committee in July 2022. The report provided Cabinet with the outcome of the negotiations with the University and the business case for disposal, including the broader economic outcomes and the alternative Council office accommodation strategy that could be implemented. The report addressed the public interest and value for money considerations that needed to inform any change in the original plans for the Council to occupy the building on The Sands.

Underpinning the recommendations set out in the report were a range of issues, not only the importance and opportunity to ensure a high performing and consistent approach for publicly accessible, workforce accommodation and space, but also the opportunities to achieve strong economic objectives releasing wider development for the county, a strong commercial outcome for public money and an alternative accommodation plan that meets the Council's needs.

A number of key areas were considered as part of the business case:

- (a) demonstrating a strong financial position from progressing the alternative options;
- (b) a clear economic case that meets the Council's aspirations for levelling up and an inclusive economy;
- (c) the connectivity of the development of the Council's estate with broader regeneration master plans for the county including the Aykley Heads strategic employment site development;
- (d) the need to ensure that climate change is considered in the proposals; and

- (e) ensuring that the development of the estate can reflect the needs of the Council to deliver effective services and workforce wellbeing.

Technical reviews to assess the key aspects of the strategic, economic, financial, commercial and the management case for the proposals were undertaken. This included understanding the costs and comparison of the benefits of the alternative estates strategy, against the original business case for occupying the building on The Sands. Additional work would be required on the detailed development and assurance of the project as it is was implemented. In reviewing the preferred option for the alternative estates strategy, the following options and building scenarios were considered:

**Aykley Heads, Plot C**, offered potential to provide a flexible space in a building that would be available within a relatively short timescale. Consideration would need to be given to the grant funding provided by the LEP to part finance the construction.

Conclusion: To be further considered as part of an alternative accommodation strategy.

**Aykley Heads, Plot D** Development Site offered the potential to provide flexible dual use civic space for the Council and, importantly, conferencing accommodation and facilities for the broader Aykley Heads development, along with office accommodation. The overall size of accommodation could be adjusted to reflect need.

Conclusion: To be further considered as part of an alternative accommodation strategy.

**Durham Salvus House** is currently occupied by Business Durham and a number of small businesses. If this building were to be used to accommodate additional Council staff, businesses would need to be relocated.

Conclusion: Due to the impact and disruption for businesses already located in this site, this option was not considered appropriate for further consideration.

**Spennymoor Education Development Centre** was extensively used by schools and a significant refurbishment and/or extension was not considered to represent the best option for the accommodation requirements set out in the report given the impact on existing users and wider implications on timescales for the development of the wider Aykley Heads site.

Conclusion: It was not considered appropriate for further consideration.

**Meadowfield Annand House** provided limited scope for additional office accommodation of the scale required.

Conclusion: It was not considered appropriate for further consideration.

**Durham Priory House** was currently leased out by the Council. Any Council occupation would require the current lease to be terminated with a resulting risk of the occupant relocating outside of the County Durham area.

Conclusion: It was not considered appropriate for further consideration.

**Tanfield Lea Comeleon** House had limited scope to provide additional office accommodation of the scale required.

Conclusion: It was not considered appropriate for further consideration.

**Stanley Front Street** was a vacant building which significantly detracted from the Town Centre and future investment opportunities. Although refurbishment costs were higher than for other buildings, bringing the building back into use as office accommodation as part of this strategy would bring broader regeneration opportunities and outcomes.

Conclusion: To be further considered as part of an alternative accommodation strategy.

Taking account of the desired objectives, the preferred alternative accommodation strategy consisted of occupation of the building currently under construction at Plot C, Aykley Heads, a new build civic centre incorporating a conferencing facility at Plot D, Aykley Heads and the refurbishment of the former Customer Access Point building at Front Street, Stanley, which were recommended for the following reasons:

- a) considers the estate as part of a broader plan for regeneration;
- b) provided flexibility for the Council's office accommodation;
- c) allowed for increased use of existing assets;
- d) provided the option for civic accommodation to be used as a conference facility for the wider Aykley Heads employment site, which would enhance marketing opportunities for the Aykley Heads site;
- e) overall, the revised estates strategy sought to deliver against a range of objectives to meet a balanced outcome and ensure value for money.

We also considered a separate, private report which included information considered to be exempt under paragraph 3 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## Decision

We:

- (a) noted the work that has been undertaken to review the Council's current main office estate and office accommodation requirements, to reflect the needs of the business and the ways of working post Covid, and the business case underpinning the preferred alternative office accommodation strategy set out in the report;
- (b) noted the options set out in the report to provide an alternative HQ and office accommodation, including the proposal for a new civic site for the authority which provides an opportunity for wider events space at Aykley Heads and will enhance the attractiveness of the site to prospective occupiers;
- (c) agreed the preferred office accommodation option for a new build civic centre at Aykley Heads Plot D, use of the building under construction, Plot C at Aykley Heads for office accommodation and refurbishment and use of the former Stanley Customer Access Point;
- (d) noted the flexibility to review the scope and scale of the new build and refurbishment areas to reflect any changing requirements which could include bringing other buildings into the strategy. Authority for such changes to be made to be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Resources, Investments and Assets and for Finance;
- (e) noted that this strategy will be further developed considering technical delivery, legal issues, consultation and further detailed appraisals commensurate with a development of this type and scale;
- (f) agreed to progress with the disposal of the building on The Sands, to exclude the surface car park area and multi storey car park, to Durham University. The disposal to be subject to planning permission for a change of use to enable the building to be used as the University's business school;
- (g) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Resources, Investments and Assets and for Finance to agree the detailed terms of the disposal;
- (h) agreed that should the University not move forward with the acquisition within timescales set out in the report, that the Council moves into the existing building on The Sands;

- (i) agreed that any surplus funds from the disposal that are not otherwise required for the delivery of the Council's revised estate strategy will be available for MTFP planning purposes and can be considered for a range of investment opportunities including levelling up investment across the wider county;
- (j) agreed that the capital budget for The Sands development is increased by £0.6 million, financed from capital contingencies, on the basis of the building being sold to Durham University, or £2.1 million if retained and occupied.

## **18. Council Plan 2022-2026**

**[Key Decision: CORP/R/22/04]**

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Amanda Hopgood**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented the draft updated Council Plan for the period 2022-2026, prior to it being submitted for consideration and approval by Full Council in June.

The Council Plan was Durham County Council's primary corporate planning document. It detailed Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035, together with the objectives and change agenda. It aimed to provide a readable and accessible summary for members, partners and the public on the Council's priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that to be undertaken over the coming four years to help achieve these priorities.

The Council Plan aligned to both the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how priorities would be resourced and the County Durham Plan, a spatial representation of the ambitions contained within the Council Plan around housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and infrastructure to support it.

The current Council Plan was approved by County Council in November 2020, and covered a period of four years. It had been refreshed to reflect the political changes in the Council in May 2021, set an additional objective relating to the environment and climate change and had been updated to reflect new initiatives such as the development of the inclusive economic strategy, the bid for City of Culture and the decisions taken on the review of the former DLI museum. It reflected the outcome of the review of the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City and the revised proposals for the location of the council's Headquarters (HQ) functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county.

The Council Plan reflected the ambitious nature of the Council and how it would build back better following the pandemic. The plan is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning arrangements which are

being undertaken to deliver on priorities. Historically, the Council Plan had been updated every three to four years. In future, it is proposed that the plan be refreshed annually to ensure full integration of corporate and financial planning.

### **Decision**

We considered and agreed the content of the draft Council Plan 2022- 2026 and that the updated Council Plan be considered by Full Council in June. We delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader to make any further minor amendments and updates to the document as necessary prior to consideration by Full Council.

### **19. Durham County Council Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment [Key Decision: REG/04/22] Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors James Rowlandson and Richard Bell**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth and the Corporate Director of Resources which reviewed the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City. The report considered the options for the location of the Council's Headquarters (HQ) and the functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the Council not occupy The Sands site. The report set out a proposal to dispose of The Sands site, (excluding the surface car park area and new multi storey car park), subject to planning. We considered the key business case requirements and value for money, including economic, financial, commercial, management and strategic objectives. The report supplemented item 2 on the agenda.

### **Decision**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

### **20. Annual Enforcement Programme Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor John Shuttleworth**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which reviewed enforcement activities under the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, and the Licensing Act 2003 for the period April 2021 to March 2022. The report also sought approval of a new enforcement programme for 2022/23.

The County Council had a statutory responsibility for enforcement of age restricted products, namely tobacco, nicotine inhaling products, spray paint containers, alcohol, videos and DVDs, cigarette lighter refills, fireworks and the proxy sale of tobacco products and supply of nicotine inhaling products to under 18s. The Authority had also elected to enforce the age-restricted sales of solvents and glue, knives, access to gaming establishments and access to sunbed premises.

For many years the Authority had taken a proactive approach to tackling the harms and criminality associated with the illegal supply and misuse of alcohol and tobacco within County Durham. Together with partners including the Police Licensed Economy Team and the County Durham Tobacco Alliance, the Council continued to conduct high visibility enforcement campaigns to tackle health inequalities and links with organised crime associated with such products. The protection of children was also a high priority. This formed part of a holistic approach the County Council had adopted to tackle the harms caused by alcohol and tobacco, as well as tackling the wider determinants of health.

Over the last two years, Covid had impacted on service activities and staffing resource, with members of the service being involved in the regulation of businesses impacted by the Covid restrictions. As a result, the timing of the annual plan had been disrupted and activity had been significantly limited compared to previous years. Considerations around the health and wellbeing of staff and, most importantly, any young volunteers used in test purchase exercises had put this work on hold in terms of the ability to conduct test purchases in a Covid secure way. This was in line with the health and safety risk assessments around work activities. Covid business restrictions and social distancing had limited activities and the approach to businesses. As a result, Covid had curtailed areas of the enforcement work relating to illicit tobacco and age restricted products.

With the emergence from the pandemic, there were plans to relaunch this important area of work, to protect young people and residents of County Durham and safeguard their health and wellbeing. This report provided details of enforcement activity during 2021/22 in relation to age restricted products and tackling supplies of illicit tobacco. It also provided information in relation to complaints, test purchase and seizure activity for the period and the outcomes of enforcement action. The proposed enforcement programme for 2022/23 was also provided.

## **Decision**

We noted the enforcement activity undertaken during 2021/22 and approved the proposed enforcement programme for 2022/23.

## **21. Health Protection Assurance Annual Report Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Paul Sexton**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which provided members of Cabinet with an update on health protection assurance arrangements in County Durham and health protection activities over the course of the year. The Health Protection Assurance and Development Group (HPADG) meets quarterly and seeks assurance on five main strands of health protection activity, in addition to data and communications which are threaded throughout:

- (a) Screening programmes;
- (b) Immunisation programmes;
- (c) Outbreaks and communicable diseases;
- (d) Strategic regulation interventions;
- (e) Preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies.

The report provided information on key achievements overseen by HPADG in the last year including the following:

Programme delivery:

- (a) Improvement in flu vaccination uptake amongst eligible groups and effective delivery of the extended Durham County Council flu vaccination to all staff, with sustained increased uptake;
- (b) The Progression of work with cervical screening services to ensure that staff shortages and previously restricted access to training has improved;
- (c) Sustained delivery of national immunisations programmes;
- (d) Sustained delivery of the Antenatal and Newborn Screening programme;
- (e) Development of the avian flu and seasonal flu (care home settings) anti-viral prescribing pathways.

Collaborative system working:

- (a) Continued excellent working relationships with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) during a time of significant change and COVID-19 enabling response to several non-covid outbreaks and incidents;
- (b) Development of Health Protection Assurance Board (HPAB) Transition Plan capturing the learning from covid including in relation to engagement of communities (vaccine inequality), use of data, real time dashboards and national and local intelligence;

- (c) Establishment of a protecting health team within public health to embed the learning from COVID-19 lead both proactive and reactive health protection responsibilities, working closely with system partners;
- (d) Completion of collaborative review, Public Health and NHS England (NHSE), to identify variation in second dose measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccinations by GP practice and address key issues contributing to this variation and undertake catch-up programme.

Areas impacted by COVID-19 and requiring further development:

- (a) All screening programmes have been impacted by the pandemic other than Antenatal and Newborn screening;
- (b) The restoration of affected screening programmes was started prior to the second wave and will have been affected by successive waves;

Development areas include:

Programme delivery

- Understanding reasons for underperformance for the newborn and infant physical examination and ensure remedial measures are put in place;
- Improving uptake of certain vaccinations including shingles and pneumococcal;
- Ensuring equitable coverage and uptake of screening and immunisations programmes, seeking to identify, understand and address within Durham inequalities;
- Ongoing work with schools and providers to ensure improved rates of vaccination amongst adolescents, learning lessons from the COVID-19 vaccination campaign to ensure equity of access and to work with NHSE and local school provider, Harrogate and District Foundation Trust (HDFT), to gain assurance of actions and catch-up programmes in place to address reduced uptake due to disrupted programme delivery.

Collaborative system working

- Development of a sexual health strategy for County Durham;
- Ensuring health protection and public health related; emergency preparedness is assured during organisational change;

- Working with County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) and key stakeholders to support high quality infection prevention and control measures.

## **Decision**

We noted:

- (a) the content of the report;
- (b) that the performance in County Durham for all childhood immunisation programmes exceeds both national standards and national averages;
- (c) that the report provides broad assurance that effective processes are in place for each of the key strands of health protection activity;

We requested a further report be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet which provides further assurance in respect to flu and COVID-19 vaccination, the ongoing work with CDDFT in relation to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).

We also supported the development and delivery of the transition plan to 'Living with Covid' capturing the learning from Covid and the review of health protection governance arrangements aligning the robust Covid assurance arrangements with wider health protection governance.

**County Council**

**22 June 2022**

**Council Plan 2022-2026**

**Key Decision CORP/R/22/04**



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## **Report of the Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

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

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To approve the Council Plan, covering the period 2022-2026.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 The Council Plan is our primary corporate planning document. It details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035, together with our own objectives and change agenda. It aims to provide a readable and accessible summary for members, partners and the public on our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that we will undertake over the forthcoming four years to help achieve these priorities.
- 3 The Council Plan aligns to both the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced and the County Durham Plan which is a spatial representation of our ambitions contained within the Council Plan around housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and infrastructure to support it.
- 4 The current Council Plan was approved in by County Council in November 2020, covering a period of four years. It has been refreshed to reflect the political changes in the Council in May 2021, sets an additional objective relating to the environment and climate change and has been updated to reflect new initiatives such as the development of the inclusive economic strategy, the declaration of an ecological emergency by Cabinet and the decisions taken on the

review of the former DLI museum. It reflects the outcome of the review of the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City and the revised proposals for the location of the council's Headquarters (HQ) functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the council not occupy The Sands site.

- 5 The Council Plan reflects the ambitious nature of the Council and how we will build back better following the pandemic as demonstrated by the success of our business parks and the increasing employment rate.
- 6 Historically, the Council has been updated every three to four years. In future, it is proposed that the Council Plan is refreshed annually to ensure full integration of corporate and financial planning. The process to refresh this Plan will therefore begin in September.
- 7 The Council Plan is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning arrangements providing more detailed information on the actions, major projects and improvements, which are being undertaken to deliver on our priorities. The detail within these delivery plans has not been replicated within the Council Plan.
- 8 In terms of practicality, some of the programmes of work being undertaken by the council contribute to more than one objective. In these situations, the action is listed under one objective in terms of best fit rather than replicate the same action multiple times throughout the plan. Those actions and plans that are still subject to negotiation or future planning decisions are not included in the plan so as not to prejudge future decisions.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 9 Council is recommended to approve the Council Plan 2022 - 2026 attached at Appendix 2;

## Background

- 10 The Vision for County Durham 2035 was developed together with partner organisations and the public and sets out what we would like the county to look like in 15 years' time. It was approved by Council and launched by the County Durham Partnership in 2019.
- 11 The Vision for County Durham is structured around three ambitions, namely:
- (i) More and better jobs
  - (ii) People live long and independent lives
  - (iii) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 12 Each of the three ambitions contains a number of objectives.
- 13 The tenet of these ambitions and each of the objectives are adopted within the current Council Plan and supplemented by a number of other council-specific objectives to capture corporate initiatives and what is important to Durham County Council.
- 14 The refreshed Council Plan 2022 – 2026 has been structured around five objectives, capturing the three ambitions in the Vision for County Durham:
- (i) **Our economy** – capturing the **more and better jobs** ambition from the Vision together with immediate priorities of economic recovery following the pandemic and mitigating the impacts of and harnessing the opportunities of Brexit. This ambition builds on the recent progress we have made in boosting our local economy, building on recent successes such as:
    - being shortlisted down to the final four locations for UK City of Culture 2025;
    - 95% occupancy levels at council managed employment sites with full occupancy at Jade Business Park and NETPark;
    - The employment rate in County Durham now surpassing the pre-COVID-19 pandemic rate; and
    - Visitors starting to return to the county with an estimated 140,000 visitors attending the most ambitious edition of

Lumiere yet in November 2021, which extended across County Durham as well as in Durham City for first time.

- (ii) **Our people** – capturing the **long and independent lives** ambition from the vision and supplementing it with the immediate priority of supporting people post-pandemic and supporting vulnerable people. This ambition builds on the support that we have provided to people throughout the pandemic and the lessons learned from this. We aim to further support the health and wellbeing of our residents through our ambitious leisure transformation programme.
- (iii) **Our communities** – capturing the **connected communities** ambition from the vision and supplementing it with a specific objective around post-pandemic recovery of communities. We want to ensure that resources are targeted at those communities that need it most and will be carrying out a comprehensive community development review. We also recognise our responsibilities towards those in need of humanitarian support and will ensure that County Durham is doing its fair share in helping those fleeing conflict from areas such as Ukraine,
- (iv) **Our environment** – capturing the council’s priorities around the climate emergency and our zero carbon ambitions for the county and the council together with our role in waste, pollution and the natural environment. This ambition makes it easier for the reader to check out our agenda for the environment and our plans to take forward:
  - Our climate emergency action plan;
  - The development of an action plan to address the ecological emergency that Cabinet declared on 6 April 2022;
  - Our plans for managing waste disposal in future and for reducing waste and increasing re-use and recycling; and
  - Our actions around enhancing the natural environment
- (v) **Our council** – capturing corporate ambitions in respect of effective resource management, creating a workforce for the future, modernising our use of data and technology to guide efficient resource allocation and providing excellent customer service.

- 15 The document sets out under each ambition, what our priority is, what our achievements have been, what the issues are to address, what the council's contribution is in these areas, what our future approach will be, what major projects we will be undertaking and what are the key performance indicators and targets for each objective.
- 16 The government has recently published a plan to remove all coronavirus restrictions as the virus enters its endemic phase and society learns to live with COVID. This change in approach is reflected in this plan.
- 17 As a public authority, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Durham County Council is required to publish equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. These are also incorporated into the plan.
- 18 Historically, the Council Plan has been updated every three to four years. In future, it is proposed that the plan is refreshed annually to ensure full integration of corporate and financial planning.
- 19 The Council Plan is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning arrangements providing more detailed information on the actions, major projects and improvements, which are being undertaken to deliver on our priorities. The detail within these delivery plans has not been replicated within the Council Plan.
- 20 In terms of practicality, some of the programmes of work being undertaken by the council contribute to more than one objective. In these situations, the action is listed under one objective in terms of best fit rather than replicate the same action multiple times throughout the plan. Those actions and plans that are still subject to negotiation or future planning decisions are not included in the plan so as not to prejudge future decisions.

## **Conclusion**

- 21 The Council Plan 2022 – 2026 contained in Appendix 2 sets out our priorities for the forthcoming four years.
- 22 It is the primary document within our policy framework and requires approval by Council.

## **Background papers**

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>
- Council Plan 2020 to 2023 (current plan)  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2366/Council-Plan>

- Consideration of draft Council Plan 2022-2026 at Cabinet, 27 April 2022 (agenda, decisions and minutes)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=14652&Ver=4>

**Author(s)**

Andy Palmer

Tel: 03000 268551

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Constitution of the Council sets out the policy framework of the Council which includes the Council Plan and performance management framework. The Council Plan includes the council's quality objectives which we are required to set by law (Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011)

### **Finance**

The Council Plan aligns to the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, which sets out how our priorities will be resourced. Any financial implications arising from the implementation of actions contained in the Council Plan are factored into the budget setting and MTFP planning processes.

### **Consultation**

The Council Plan sets out the Council's contribution to delivering the aims and objectives set out the County Vision, which was developed following an extensive three phase consultation where over 30,000 responses were considered, and which helped shape the final vision.

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

In line with the Equality Act 2010, Durham County Council is required to set out equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. The Council Plan sets out our equality objectives to identify and tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

### **Climate Change**

A specific objective relating to "Our Environment" has been incorporated into the Council Plan to elevate and highlight this important agenda and the work of the council in this area.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Crime and disorder features as part of the proposed Council Plan.

### **Staffing**

None.

**Accommodation**

None.

**Risk**

Risk management is an intrinsic part of the council's performance reporting arrangements.

**Procurement**

None.

**Durham County Council  
Council Plan  
2022/23 to 2025/26 [Refresh]**



## Foreword

Durham County Council is ambitious. Following the local elections in May 2021, councillors from different political groups came together to form a joint administration to lead the council for the benefit of the people of County Durham.

The County Council has a significant role to play in improving the lives of everyone who visits, lives or works in the county. As one of the largest unitary councils in the country, with gross expenditure of more than £1 billion each year, the council is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of public services to residents across all aspects of people's lives.

More so than ever, the council needs to listen to residents and businesses and this plan sets out an approach which is inclusive, community orientated and ambitious for County Durham. We are resetting our strategic priorities to provide an inclusive economy and a greater focus on our environment. We have reviewed the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City and developed revised proposals for the location of the council's Headquarters (HQ) functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the council not occupy The Sands site.

Whilst unavoidable financial pressures continue, we are investing immediately in frontline services such as highways, footpaths and flood prevention. We are actively reviewing several programmes of work to make sure that we still have the right balance between achieving things that matter to local people whilst ensuring we provide value for money. We are focusing on making the council more efficient, keeping council tax rises low to support families through the current cost-of-living pressures and maintaining a package of additional support to financially vulnerable and disadvantaged households.

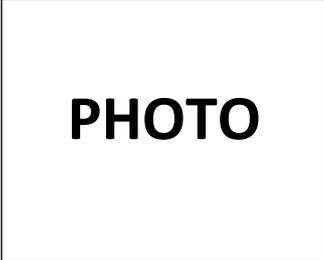
We are rightly proud of our county, our heritage, our people and our culture. We would like to showcase this and place our county on the national and international stage. We did submit a bid for the county to become UK City of Culture in 2025. We were shortlisted to the final four and whilst we did not take the title, we remain committed to delivering a pioneering cultural programme with a lasting legacy. We have taken the decision to re-open and repurpose the former Durham Light Infantry Museum building in Durham City, providing new facilities to increase our cultural offer further.

We know that our county has both opportunities and issues that need to be addressed. Many of the issues facing our residents cannot be solved by the council alone, so we work in partnership with others across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. In 2019, the council and partners agreed a vision for County Durham for 2035 following extensive consultation with our residents. This is to help create more and better jobs, help people live long and independent lives and support communities to be well connected and supportive of each other. This Plan seeks to deliver and build on these ambitions and more.

We want to support our communities as the county emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and we recognise our role, both as a large organisation and as a

community leader, in tackling the climate emergency and addressing ecological decline. We will build on the success of securing our first constituency Levelling Up bid by developing robust bids for the other five constituency areas across county Durham. We will maintain sound management of our resources delivering on these ambitions, maximising the talents of our people and using technology to provide the best services with the resources available.

This plan sets out how the council is contributing to achieving the people’s vision and to ensure that our resources are used in a transparent and effective way, by setting out our priorities to support our economy, our environment and our communities, and further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the council for everyone’s benefit.

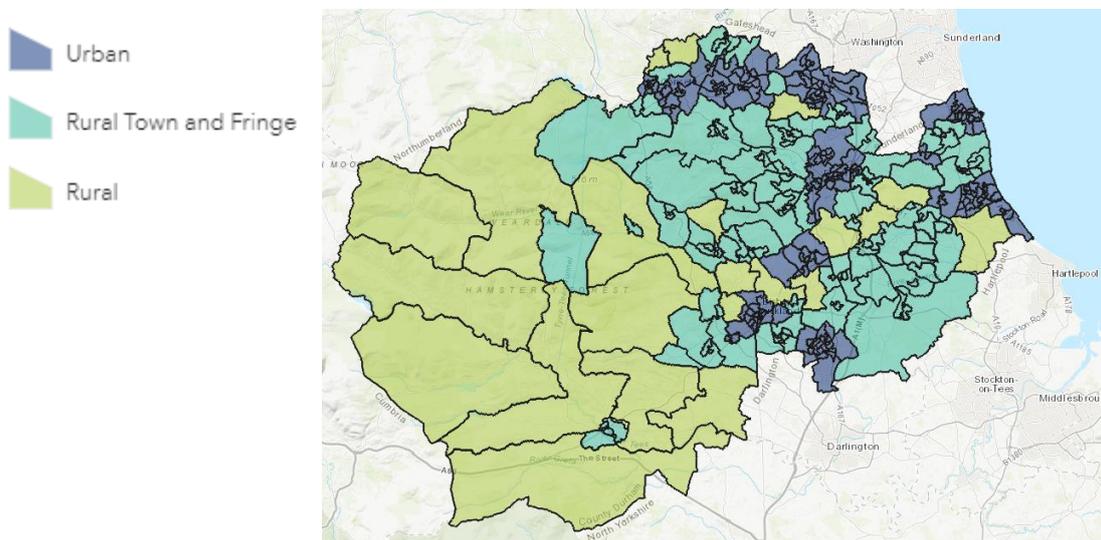


**PHOTO**

Leader of the Council  
and Chief Executive

## Population and Area<sup>1</sup>

County Durham covers an area of 222,606 hectares (2011) and has an estimated population of circa 533,000. The county is largely rural, with around 57% of its area classified as rural in nature and a further 32% classified as rural town and fringe.



Land type	Area of county	population	Population density per hectare
Rural	57%	7%	0.3
Rural Town and Fringe <sup>2</sup>	32%	37%	2.7
Urban	11%	56%	12.1

Durham is a large and diverse county with a highly dispersed settlement pattern which creates specific issues. The county has over 300 recognised settlements, 21 of which have a population of 5,000 or more. This presents a challenge for the provision of transport and public services. A large proportion of the county, particularly to the west of the A68 is rural and has some of the sparsest population densities in the country. It is important to people that rural communities remain sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics that make them distinctive. The particular challenges of rural communities are referenced throughout this Council Plan and rural proofing will be a major consideration in any policies that we develop.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2011 Rural and Urban Classification (RUC) for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2017 Population Estimates

<sup>2</sup> Landscape interface between town and country / transition between urban and rural where urban and rural use clashes

## Council Services



**19,000** adults supported by social care



**148** allotment sites



**5 miles** of records held in strong rooms



**46** cemeteries and **98** closed church yards



**2** crematorium joint committees



**3,800** children supported by social care



Corporate parent to **912** children



**15** leisure centres



**8** swimming pools



**757,000** sq ft commercial space managed



**266** schools



**11,274** children with special educational needs



**5,000** food businesses inspected



**15** sq. mi. of litter picking per week



**8** major events organised



**3,793km** of highways



**12,500** contacts to Housing Solutions p.a.



**39** libraries



**57,000** Council Tax Reduction claimants



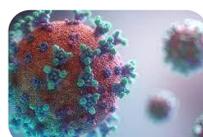
**9** parks and **6** Green Flag Awards



**82,000** street lights



**£2.5m** public transport subsidy grant



Over **10,000** people supported by our community hub



**2,200** miles of public rights of way



Around **250,000** bins emptied every week

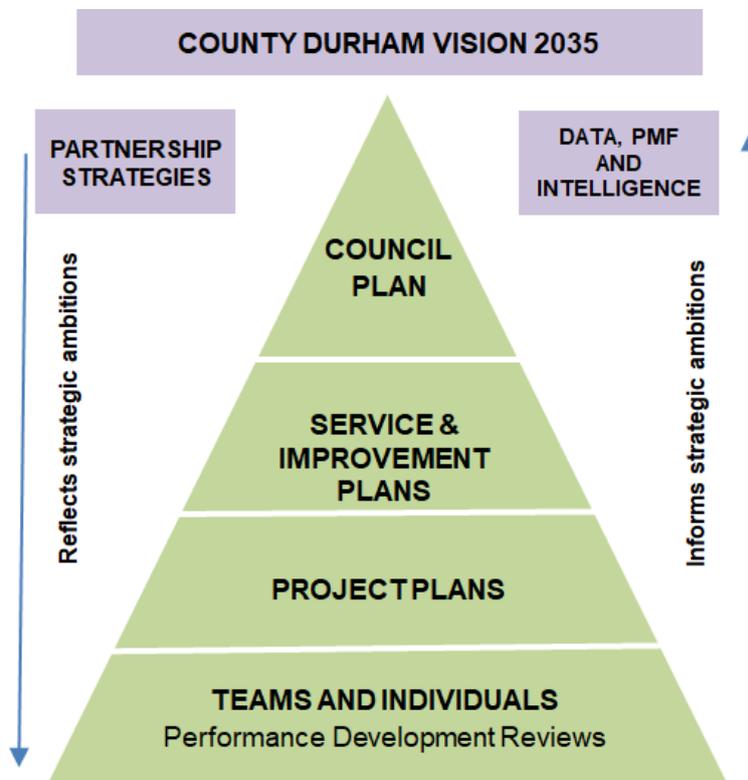
adult social care | allotments | archives | bereavement services | children's social care | commissioning  
 community safety | consumer protection | culture and tourism | early years | economic development  
 education | emergency planning | environmental health | environmental cleanliness | events | highways  
 housing | homelessness | leisure services | libraries | local tax collection | parks | passenger transport  
 picnic areas | planning applications | public health | registrars | rights of way | road safety | safeguarding |  
 town centre regeneration | transport planning | traveller liaison | waste collection and disposal | welfare  
 rights | winter maintenance | youth services

## Our Planning Framework

Our planning framework runs a ‘golden thread’ through the organisation from high-level strategic plans, through service plans and ultimately to teams and individuals. It focuses our resources onto the things that matter to us and is supported by our performance management framework, through which we measure our progress.

- **County Durham Vision:** developed with partners and residents, sets out the shared long-term ambitions for the county.
- **Council Plan:** our key corporate planning document which sets out our direction for the medium-term. It shows how we will take forward the vision and sets out how we will make the council more efficient and fit for the future.
- **Service Plans** set out priorities for service groupings for the next three years and outline the key programmes we will undertake to deliver high-quality services, in line with available resources, which meet the needs and expectations of our service users and local communities.
- **Individuals’ contribution** to delivering the corporate and service objectives.

All strategies and plans are monitored in line with our performance management framework.



## What we want to achieve: Themes, Priorities and Objectives

### OUR ECONOMY

Durham has a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation

- Delivery of a range of employment sites across the county
- A strong, competitive economy where County Durham is a premier place in the North-East to live and do business
- A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county
- Young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment
- Helping all people into rewarding work
- Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county
- Work with others to mitigate impacts and harness any opportunities of exiting the European Union
- Assist businesses to restart and grow the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic
- We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people\*

### OUR ENVIRONMENT

Durham has taken action to tackle the climate emergency, reduce the impact of pollution and waste on our county and protect, restore and sustain our natural environment

- Create a physical environment that will contribute to good health
- Work with others to achieve a carbon neutral county
- Reduce the impact of waste and pollution on our environment
- Protect, restore and sustain our natural environment for the benefit of future generations

### OUR PEOPLE

Durham is a place where people will enjoy fulfilling, long and independent lives

- Children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing
- Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- All children and young people will have a safe childhood
- Promotion of positive behaviours
- Better integration of health and social care services
- Tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities
- 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

\* These are Durham County Council's equality objectives. Further information can be found on our [website](#).

- Support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- Protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death, including the local public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic

## OUR COMMUNITIES

Durham is a great county in which to live, with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other

- Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock
- Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe
- People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities
- Communities will be able to come together and support each other
- Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents
- Our rural communities will be sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics which make them distinctive
- Provide additional support to community groups adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Ensure that there is no unwarranted variation in opportunity and outcomes between our communities
- We will build inclusive communities\*

## OUR COUNCIL

Durham County Council has a reputation for listening to its residents, being well-managed and getting things done

- Our resources will be managed effectively
- Create a workforce for the future
- Design our services with service users
- Use data and technology more effectively
- We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture\*

\* These are Durham County Council's equality objectives. Further information can be found on our [website](#).

## Our Vision

In October 2019, public, private and voluntary sector bodies which make up the County Durham Partnership jointly agreed a [Vision for County Durham 2035](#). This vision was based on a strategic assessment of need using our intelligence platform [Durham Insight](#) and was developed following extensive consultation with the public. Residents, businesses and specific interest groups such as children and young people and people with a disability, were asked what they would like to see in a new vision for the county and their views were incorporated into our final vision. The vision document which was agreed sets out our strategic direction and what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years and is written around three broad ambitions for the people of County Durham:

- **More and better jobs**
- **People live long and independent lives**
- **Connected communities**

These three themes were developed following extensive public consultation, with almost 30,000 pieces of consultation evidence having been fed into the development of the vision. As well as being of key importance to local people's long-term priorities, they remain key strategic ambitions in our response to the COVID-19 crisis, where key impacts relate to employment, health and wellbeing, and communities. This document sets out the contributions that Durham County Council will make to help achieve those ambitions.

For the purposes of our planning, we have supplemented this countywide vision with priorities around our environment and our council.

**Our Economy:** We want to build an inclusive economy by creating **more and better jobs**, ensuring no one is left behind by supporting businesses emerging from the pandemic back to stability and help to rebuild our economy. We are developing a pipeline of projects and investment plans; our roadmap to help stimulate inclusive economic recovery right across the county. We will create and nurture the major employment sites across the county, cementing our position as a premier place in the region to do business and building on the success of Jade Business Park, NetPark, Integra61, Milburngate and Forrest Park amongst others, with exciting opportunities for the development of Aykley Heads and the redevelopment of Front Street Stanley now in the pipeline. Employability support programmes will be developed to help people back into jobs or to start their own business. We will ensure that children and young people receive a high-quality education and training to equip them with the skills they need to access opportunities of today and the future. We will support our tourism and hospitality sector to recover as a great visitor destination with a cultural offer which will help stimulate the local economy. This will include our new Durham History Centre, which will open to the public in 2024, the reopening and re-purposing of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery as a cultural venue and exhibition space, building on the success of Lumiere 2021 with an exciting festival and innovative cultural programme with a lasting legacy.

**Our Environment:** The climate emergency is one of the most important issues facing humankind today. Whilst it is a global issue, there is a lot that can be done locally to respond to this challenge. Durham County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Our target as an organisation is to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2030 through offsetting and further reducing emissions and contribute towards and work with others to achieve our aim of a carbon neutral county by 2045. On 6 April 2022, Cabinet declared an ecological emergency and agreed to progress the development of an action plan to address the ecological decline wherever possible.

Everyone is justifiably proud of our beautiful countryside and coast. A large part of the county is of significant landscape value including the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (also a designated UNESCO Global Geopark) and the Durham Heritage Coast. Some parts of our county support unique combinations of plant and animal species. Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are critical to our population. They play an important role in providing food, energy, shelter and medicines, sustaining water and soil quality, preventing floods and regulating the climate. Our natural environment also contributes significantly to our wellbeing and quality of life.

**Our People:** We want our residents to **live long and independent lives** and remain in good health for many years to come. We want to protect and improve the health of our residents, tackling leading causes of illness and early death, including the detection, prevention and response to infectious diseases. We want to tackle some of the inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including mental health challenges. We have a strong track record of health and social care integration in Durham. We want to build on the financial and practical support we have provided to the care sector during the pandemic by ensuring we have a high-quality care market that is sustainable in the future. The council has also set out an ambitious multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues to support health and wellbeing outcomes of the wider population and is developing a new physical activity strategy which aims to improve the physical health of our residents.

**Our Communities:** We want our **communities to be well connected and supportive of each other**. As town and village centres reopen, we will help them to be vibrant and accessible places which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will support the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly those who are isolated or adversely affected financially. At the start of the pandemic, the council established community hubs to fast-track applications for food and other essential services to residents who had to remain in their own home and who had no support. We want to build on what we have learned during this time through an approach to supporting communities called County Durham Together, which will support our ongoing approach to wellbeing through working with communities, involving them in decisions that affect them, and building resilience and cohesion. This involves bringing a range of public sector and voluntary organisations together with communities to identify ambitions, and to develop and deliver plans as a partnership. We have a strong focus on tackling poverty, with significant investment and policy

interventions in place to support people who are financially vulnerable. Through our Poverty Action Steering Group and the work of the Advice in County Durham Partnership, we have developed a robust strategy and action plan to ensure there is support to those in crisis but that we also focus on the routes out of poverty.

**Our Council:** We want to be regarded as an excellent council, with effective governance arrangements and which has a good grip on its performance and finances. We want a workforce fit for the future and to make best use of the latest technology to provide an effective service for our residents. We recognise that we could make better use of data to better serve our residents and we plan to embark on a corporate programme to become a more analytical and data-driven organisation. We also want to be known as a council which listens to the views of our residents and service users and takes them into account in our decision-making.

### Our Approach

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of the council’s vision and core values. We recognise that inequality affects different people and communities in different ways. We are committed to creating and sustaining a modern and supportive working environment for our employees and tackling the inequalities, prejudice and discrimination affecting the diverse communities which we serve.

We also want to work with communities to support their development and give them a greater degree of control over the factors and decisions which affect their lives. We acknowledge that communities have differing needs and we also recognise that they also have differing strengths and potential. One size does not fit all. We will therefore target our support towards the most in need and help to build capacity and resilience. We will work better together with other organisations to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact, and with service users and interested parties such as parents and carers to develop and shape services and initiatives. We are committed to doing things with communities rather than to them and we want to make sure that everything we do is supported by evidence and informed by conversations with our residents. This is known as our Approach to Wellbeing.





## Our Financial Plan

The council is committed to strong financial governance and getting value for money, whilst ensuring that any council tax increases are justified and affordable. The first [annual budget and medium-term plan](#) for the council post the Elections in May 2021 seeks to balance the need for both short-term and long-term investment in frontline services, with the need for financial prudence and reasonable council tax increases.

In 2022/23, the council will receive additional core funding of £16.9 million from the Comprehensive Spending Review and the provisional Local Government Settlement. This will be vital in ensuring that significant ongoing budget pressures can be financed – which total approximately £45 million in 2022/23. Examples include the National Living Wage 6.6% uplift, energy costs which are forecast to increase in 2022 by over 40% and from the continuing pressures from higher demand in social care services, plus waste disposal and home to school transport budget pressures. The council's low tax base and consequential low tax raising capacity continues to constrain and place pressure on our budgets.

The government has published details of spending power 'per dwelling' for all local authorities, which shows that County Durham is now £156 (c7%) less than the England average. If Durham's Core Spending Power was brought up to the England authority average of £2,155 per dwelling, the council would annually receive additional government grant of £39 million.

Frontline services were fully protected in 2022/23 and the Council agreed to not increase the base Council Tax in 2022/23. Previously agreed savings of £1.227 million together with new additional corporate savings of £1.2 million were agreed for 2022/23, which provided £2.447 million of efficiencies to support the 2022/23 budget without the need to use any reserves to balance the budget.

Despite a very challenging financial period and the significant base budget pressures faced by the council, and largely because of the more favourable grant settlement the council received in 2022/23, the 2022/23 budget included some very positive outcomes for the people of County Durham, including:

- significant earmarked reserve investment of £10 million Durham City heritage assets, rural and urban footways, public rights of way and country parks;
- continued support to protect working age households in receipt of low incomes through the continuation of the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme, where they will continue to be entitled to up to 100% relief against their council tax payments and where those left with a bill will receive up to £150 of additional support next year;
- ongoing work with health partners to ensure that health and social care funds are maximised for the benefit of vulnerable people through the services we provide;
- significant investment in capital expenditure, including investment in school provision, in our town centres and infrastructure, new transport schemes and maintenance of our highways and pavements. In total, additional capital

investment of £119.9 million was agreed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, with the Council committed to a Capital Programme in excess of £600 million over the next three years – the most ambitious and significant level of investment the Council has ever agreed.

A key risk for the Council in 2022/23 and potentially beyond is the cost of living crisis. Rising fuel and energy costs are driving consumer price inflation, which is impacting on residents' household budgets, particularly those on lower incomes. This is affecting demand for council services in a number of ways. Pay and price inflation is also a material consideration for council finances. The 2022/23 budget includes significant additional budget uplifts in our energy budgets and prudent assumptions in terms of other inflationary pressures, but inflation, particularly energy inflation is increasing.

Another issue is the ongoing and potential long-term impact of COVID. There is no new COVID grant funding available in 2022/23 and whilst we have had to adjust our waste disposal budgets and include growth in that area in the 2022/23 budget, we simply do not know at this stage if and when income in places like leisure centres will return to pre-pandemic levels.

### **Monitoring**

We will continue to monitor council performance against a comprehensive set of performance indicators to Cabinet and scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis. The plan will be subject to an annual review process.

## **Context: COVID-19 – Response, Restoration / Reset, Recovery**

The council's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic is around response, restoration, reset and recovery. As a national emergency was declared in March 2020, a rapid response was required to support businesses and communities through the immediate crisis and communicated public health messages to the people of County Durham.

The principles by which we have managed our response, restoration, reset and recovery approach were:

1. Close surveillance and management of the COVID-19 pandemic in County Durham;
2. Being responsive to where we are in our journey to recovery;
3. Taking a dynamic response to control the virus and to support businesses and communities;
4. Working in partnership with other statutory agencies on our Local Resilience Forum to coordinate our efforts.

As lockdown measures were relaxed following rollout of the vaccination programme, there was an increase in the infection rate. Together with partners, we developed a COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan which set out how local outbreaks of the virus were identified and managed jointly by the council and the UK Health Security Agency's North-East Health Protection Team.

As the country has moved out of lockdown, the council has followed government guidelines and restored council services which were previously restricted or suspended, whilst at the same time reset some services to new smarter working adopted through the pandemic where possible and appropriate. Service restoration and the reopening of buildings has followed specific government guidance, a thorough assessment of risk and the introduction of necessary control measures to help protect the public and our employees. Innovative approaches to service provision which have either been developed in response to or enhanced because of the pandemic, such as online services, have been retained where they have transformed our offer and culture and reduced our environmental impact.

The pandemic has impacted on businesses. We have been closely monitoring the economic picture in the county and coordinating local, regional and national interventions to best support the business sector. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on our rural, urban and more deprived areas has been a core part of the council's recovery work and has informed the council's Poverty Action Plan and how related council services have responded. We will reshape our services to vulnerable groups such as older people and those suffering from poor mental health and those who are feeling lonely and isolated.

## Priority: Our Economy

We will continue our economic renaissance and ensure that people can enjoy a thriving economy with **more and better jobs** and reduced levels of poverty and deprivation. We will build on our existing portfolio of businesses and will support the use of low carbon technologies and renewable energy. We will work with all schools, businesses and academies to ensure that the highest educational standards are in place to support a broad and balanced 21st century curriculum.

Our county has some of the most beautiful countryside and coastal landscapes in Britain, a fascinating history, a wealth of attractions and a regular events programme. We have made great strides to improve our tourist economy. Our aim is to have County Durham widely recognised as a leading centre for culture and the arts, with a range of experiences which match and exceed the best offered in the country.

Several of our villages were developed around collieries and homes which were built to house the population boom at the peak of coal production. Some of these communities have suffered a decline following the demise of these industries. We want to work with communities to address the underlying causes of deprivation and poverty.

### Achievements

- Outstanding success in attracting countywide private and public investment in enterprise and tourism.
- £25 million invested on the Jade Enterprise Zone and junction.
- £178 million invested by Citrus on Integra 61 warehousing facility at Bowburn, including facilitating internet giant, Amazon and £5 million junction works.
- £271 million invested in one of Europe's leading technology parks at NETPark, Sedgefield delivered by Business Durham, with a £50m Phase 2 business plan agreed.
- £14 million invested at Forrest Park in Aycliffe preparing for further investment of over £140 million.
- £90 million spent in Barnard Castle by Glaxo Smith Kline on a new manufacturing facility.
- Almost £1.5 billion in Durham City, £750 million by the University and over £240 million on the Riverside and other projects.
- The first two phases of the development of the Aykley Heads strategic employment site have the potential to create 4,000 jobs with an estimated 1,800 jobs being supported in the construction of the park.
- £100 million invested through Project Genesis in Consett.
- £17 million spent at Beamish Museum on the 1950s town, upland farm and Georgian coaching inn.



- Lumiere, the biggest light festival in Europe, extended across County Durham as well as in Durham City for the first time this year, attracted an estimated 140,000 visitors.
- County Durham was one of only four locations that were shortlisted to be UK City of Culture 2025.
- Succeeded in securing the first constituency Levelling Up bid for the Bishop Auckland Constituency
- Successful food festivals held at Bishop Auckland and Seaham.
- Our Post 16 outcomes have improved steadily over time with average grades at A level and Advanced General, above national averages from 2018.
- As of February 2022, 94.9% of 16-17-year-olds within County Durham are participating in education, employment or training, including 13.2% in employment.

### Issues to address

- The employment rate has been maintained at 71.5% (September 2021) following a post-lockdown recovery but is below the national average.
- The lockdown has adversely affected both local businesses and residents financially.
- Businesses and individuals have relied on support arrangements put in place to limit financial impact, but these are only for the short-term and will be phased out.
- The ability of businesses to respond quickly to changes in demand may be limited in the short-term.
- 82,800 unique jobs were furloughed at some stage in the county representing over 40% of all employments. There is uncertainty around whether the ending of the scheme will lead to further unemployment.
- A weaker global economy will reduce export demand and disrupt international supply chains.
- Income levels are low in County Durham. The county is the 42<sup>nd</sup> most income-deprived out of 151 local authorities nationally. Gross disposable household income per head of population in County Durham is just over 75% of the national average.
- The gap between the employment rate for people with a disability compared with those who are not disabled stands at 34 percentage points (September 2021) which is one of the highest differences in the country.
- GCSE results as measured through the average attainment 8 score for the county are below the national average.
- As of October 2020, only 69% of secondary schools in County Durham are rated as good or outstanding.
- 1 in 4 of our school children are on free school meals as of January 2020, which is an indicator of the level of child poverty within the county.

- According to the latest figures (2018), an estimated 9.8% of households are in fuel poverty. This is defined as where the householder, after paying fuel costs, would be left with a disposable income which is below the poverty line.
- Day visitors to our county spend an average of £22.07 in the local economy per day, whilst overnight visitors will spend an average of £190.27 per trip. Only 8% of visitors will stop overnight within the county.
- Uncertainties around the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union remain.
  - Whilst key stage 4 league tables have not been produced since 2019, we know that COVID will have had a significant impact upon increasing the gap in achievement between our most disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Whilst the proportion of children attending good or better secondary or special schools is improving, our schools continue to require a network of support to accelerate progress.
- Indicators of child poverty have increased as a result of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Reducing the cost of the school day will become a greater priority in supporting full attendance strategies.

## Council Contribution

To grow the economy, the council tries to create the conditions which will help the private and public sector invest in County Durham; allocating land, improving infrastructure and working with partners to attract investment and jobs.

We have committed to £49.6 million to progress the development of the third phase extension of NETPark (The North-East Technology Park) Business Park in Sedgfield and are currently procuring the developer, which could generate up to 1,250 skilled jobs and be worth up to £625 million to the County Durham economy.

To support delivery of Jade Business Park, we are continuing with the infrastructure improvements required to the A182 junction with the A19. This will improve capacity and cater for the increased predicted demand associated with the 600,000 square feet of business premises.

Through Business Durham we work with businesses to promote enterprise, foster the environment for new businesses to start up, and enable businesses in the county to develop and grow. Through the creation and delivery of high-profile innovation programmes, we help businesses develop new products, services and processes, win more investment and more contracts and employ more people.

The government's education white paper "Strong schools with Great Teachers for your Child" published on 28 March 2022 places a great emphasis on the Council being able to support the future direction of school organisation and the importance of 'Strong Trusts' to drive better outcomes. It clearly shows a shift from Local Authority responsibilities around school improvement and a move to a strategic role relating to vulnerable children and children missing from education. Alongside the considerable work that could be attached to new opportunities within the creation of Multi-Academy Trusts, the council will have additional duties around pupil place planning and attendance. Additionally, the SEND Green Paper ("right support, right place, right time") will require additional work with school leaders across the system to integrate more children with SEND into mainstream settings.

We have a substantial and varied property portfolio across County Durham, providing space for over 300 businesses employing 1,600 people, including offices, factories, the Durham Dales Centre and the region's only science park, NETPark.

To increase employment, we offer help and support to develop skills, get people into work or start their own business through such initiatives as Durham Employment and Skills, Employability Durham, Durham Enable and Durham Works. Employability Durham provides a range of schemes to those aged 25 and over who are unemployed and during 2020/21, supported 321 people into employment and 34 into education and training. Durham Works is a dedicated programme for young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training. During 2020/21, Durham Works supported 708 young people into education, employment or training. The council is itself a major employer committed to a comprehensive apprentice programme, open and fair recruitment and being a good employer. To improve our employment programmes for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities, we have recently employed three mental health employment support workers who will offer specialist support to those whose conditions may be a barrier to obtaining good jobs.

Our destination management organisation, Visit County Durham, works closely with VisitEngland, a wide range of public and private sector partners and tourism businesses to grow the county's visitor economy. Through Visit County Durham, we coordinate the promotion of the county nationally and internationally and influence or directly deliver activities which relate to visitors and the visitor economy, including marketing, information services, product development, visitor experience, business engagement and workforce development. Our Visitor Information Network is delivered through working with partners such as attractions, visitor centres and cafes to provide information, literature, kiosks and touchscreens - and in the most recent survey received a 93% customer satisfaction rating.

As part of the Culture Durham Partnership, we entered a bid to be UK City of Culture 2025. We were shortlisted to the final four and whilst we did not take the title, we remain committed to delivering a pioneering cultural programme with a lasting legacy. This will deliver social and economic benefits to the whole of County Durham and the wider region; allowing us to engage even more people

in arts and culture, attract additional visitors and help us to secure additional investment. As part of our contribution to the cultural offer within County Durham, we run an annual programme of festivals and events including Bishop Auckland and Seaham Food Festivals, Durham Brass and Durham Book Festival, alongside a varied offer of exhibitions and entertainment through our town halls and theatres.

To support businesses throughout the pandemic, the council has paid £203 million in covid-related business grants to date. This includes almost £100 million of Restart Grant which was paid to 4,271 businesses, more than £51 million of Local Restrictions Support Grant to 4,210 businesses, £17 million of Additional Restriction Grant, and nearly £5 million of Local Authority Discretionary Grant to 1,071 businesses.

## Approach

The national restrictions introduced as part of the COVID-19 pandemic led to temporary business closures and employees being furloughed. Priorities for the council were to protect businesses and jobs and to alleviate financial hardship suffered by our residents. The council introduced a range of measures to support local businesses throughout the crisis and ease the pressure on residents suffering financial hardship.

We developed a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan to help support businesses being released from lockdown, manage the transition to stabilisation and to rebuild and grow our economy. We have developed a pipeline of projects which will serve as a roadmap to recovery and deliver investment plans to help rebuild our economy.

We recognise that there may be job losses and that these are anticipated to affect older people and the lower paid, which disproportionately affects some groups more than others. We will monitor changes in employment throughout the county and develop and deliver employability support programmes to help those who have lost their jobs back into employment.

Increasing employment in the county has a significant multiplier effect in terms of its contribution to a range of other quality of life issues, such as improving mental and physical health and reducing crime. We are working to support employers and voluntary and community organisations to address health issues in the workplace through a range of initiatives. Our ambition is to create more jobs for our residents. Wage levels in the county lag behind the national average and the gap is widening. We need to address this by attracting high-quality jobs to the area. We want to create the ideal environment for businesses to thrive in the county, through ensuring that our workforce and our young people entering the jobs market are equipped with the necessary skills to access the jobs of today and the future. The pipeline of investment projects in the county has never been so high and we want to build on this

by further developing our strategic employment sites and supporting key employment sectors. We will continue to deliver a range of programmes to help people, who are finding it difficult to access the jobs market, into rewarding work including reskilling our labour force. Our plans will support rural growth whilst preserving the quality of what makes these areas distinctive. Our county has a rich historic and cultural heritage, some enviable world-class attractions and beautiful countryside. We want to continue to develop the visitor economy for County Durham. The historic collapse of heavy industry and the impact that this has had on residents and communities is apparent when we look at some of our communities, which have some of the worst indicators of deprivation in the country. We want to address the gaps in inequality across our county and make sure that no one is left behind and that the benefits of a resurgent economy can be enjoyed by all residents.

## Major Projects

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- 2022
- **Complete the review of the** plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City and developed revised proposals for the location of the council's Headquarters (HQ) functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the council not occupy The Sands site
  - **Facilitate development of Aykley Heads as a prestigious strategic employment site through the demolition of County Hall.**
  - **Assure the delivery of the Milburngate redevelopment project in Durham**  
*includes a 92-bed hotel, 153 luxury apartments, a boutique cinema, 60,000 square feet of leisure space and 53,000 square feet of premium office space*
  - Align our Inclusion Strategy with the findings of the SEND Green Paper (*Right Support, Right Place, Right Time*)
  - Develop our response to the Education White Paper *Strong schools with great teachers for your child*, including the development of an Education Strategy
  - Focus on closing the gap in employment opportunities for those with a long-term health condition or disability, through the development of supported employment and the rollout of a pilot with learning disability day services to support people into volunteering and employment
  - Increase the number of businesses in the county achieving the North East Better Health at Work Award
  - Increase the number of organisations involved in career development related to mental health

- Improve access to high-quality and impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance in schools and further education settings to ensure that young people are clear about progression pathways, including apprenticeship opportunities
- Through commissioned services, write into every contract that providers will commit to improving the health and wellbeing of their workforce, either through 'Thriving at Work' standards or by achieving the Better Health at Work Award
- Increase income levels for the most vulnerable, through greater awareness of and access to benefit eligibility
- Undertake the 'big econ-versation' to seek views from residents, business people and other stakeholders so people can have their say on economic issues and develop an Inclusive Economic Strategy for County Durham which integrates with national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies

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- 2023
- **Develop key locations for business**  
*including Aykley Heads, Forrest Park, Jade Enterprise Zone*
  - **Continue to explore and pursue options for devolution for County Durham**
  - **Refurbish and reopen the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery and grounds as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds**
  - Develop and deliver pipeline of major transport infrastructure projects to support employment sites
  - Deliver sites within Business Durham remit and enhance Business Durham Property Portfolio  
*including NETPark Phase 3, Merchant Park, Jade Business Park and South Church Enterprise Park*
  - Support business to achieve growth through the County Durham Growth Fund, Finance Durham, Business Durham key account management programme and enterprise and start-up offers
  - Develop the 'Better Business for All' initiative to help reduce the burden of regulation on local businesses, including support following the exit of the UK from the European Union and COVID-19
  - Assess and address the economic implications of the pandemic and provide assistance to business needs, to restart and grow the economy in County Durham
  - Support the delivery of a new visitor offer across County Durham
  - Review the County Durham Tourism Management Plan
  - Review the programme of events and festivals and prepare for lottery submissions for 2022-2026

- To strengthen school provision across the county by the creation of appropriate professional support networks for all schools. These will bring together the best practice and pedagogy from all of our schools regardless of ownership or designation.
- Work with schools and trusts to increase the quality of teaching and professional development so that we have fewer issues around recruitment and retention in core curriculum areas.
- To review and support school reorganisation where it is necessary to maintain and strengthen the quality of education, breadth of curriculum and financial sustainability necessary to preserve school places.
- Support our schools and settings to provide targeted support for every child who needs it to complement great teaching and a strong curriculum.
- Support more young people with vulnerable characteristics into employment, including young people who are looked after, care leavers, young people who have SEND and young people supervised by the Youth Justice Service
- Support care leavers to achieve good education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships
- Continuously review school organisation and the education estate across the county and develop options to help strengthen school provision, especially in areas where unsustainable financial issues are being experienced
- Deliver a range of initiatives to alleviate fuel poverty

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2024 ▪ Deliver employability programmes which help people access and sustain regular employment

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2026 ▪ **Bring together the history and heritage of the county into the Durham History Centre**

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## Key Performance Indicators

- £8.2 million of new contracts secured (£8 million)
- Eight Inward Investments secured
- 95% of Business Durham floor space is occupied (85%)
- Increase employment land approved and delivered by 300 hectares by 2035 (against 2016 baseline)
- Narrow the gap between the number of private sector business and private sector employments per 10,000 head of population within County Durham and England and aim to bring them in line with the national average by 2035
- Increase the % of County Durham residents who can access employment sites by public transport (against 2021 baseline)

- Increase the level of GVA per filled job in line with national levels by 2035
- Increase the employment rate for 16-64-year-olds in line with national levels by 2035
- Increase the proportion of residents with higher level skills in line with national levels by 2035
- Increase the number of organisations involved in the Better Health at Work Award (to improve health and wellbeing interventions at work)
- Increase the proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels
- Increase percentage of 16–17-year-olds in an apprenticeship
- Increase the overall disability employment rate / close the gap
- Attract 11.96 million visitors to the county in 2021 (5% increase on 2020)
- Increase the proportion of visitor attractions which are served by public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Percentage uptake of Free Early Education Entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Reduce the number of heritage assets ‘at risk’ that are categorised as ‘Priority A and/or in ‘very bad condition’ (against 2021 baseline)
- Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at key stage 2 in line with 2030 ambitions
- Improve the average grade of achievement of all of our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (In line with 2030 ambitions)
- Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and mathematics which will improve their access to further education and high-quality jobs with training.

## Priority: Our Environment

One of the biggest issues facing the planet is the climate emergency. Scientific evidence shows that we are experiencing unsustainable increasing temperatures from greenhouse gases caused by human activity, through the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, intensive livestock farming and other industrial practices. Whilst this is a global issue, there is a lot that can be done locally. Durham County Council has declared a climate emergency and is looking to reduce carbon emissions from its own operations and change some of its land practices such as peat restoration and tree planting.



The council wants to provide the right conditions to make cycling and walking for short journeys, or as part of a longer journey, the right choice. This will not only reduce carbon emissions but also has added health benefits for our residents. Levels of pollutants are low in the county but there are some hot spots where government standards are exceeded at certain times, and we have a plan to reduce these.

We have some beautiful countryside in County Durham boasting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a UNESCO designated Geopark, a heritage coast and many Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are many benefits to valuing nature, and we need to conserve and sustain this for future generations and not allow our biodiversity to deteriorate.

Durham is a large and diverse county with a very dispersed settlement pattern which creates specific issues. A large proportion of the county, particularly to the west of the A68, is rural and has some of the sparsest population densities in the country. It is important that rural communities remain sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics which make them distinctive. The particular challenges of rural communities are referenced throughout this Council Plan and rural proofing will be a major consideration in any policies we develop.

## Achievements

- Over 60% of our domestic waste was going to landfill in 2008. This has been reduced to 5% following the introduction of new waste collection and disposal arrangements.
- Tonnage of carbon emissions from council operations has been reduced by 58% since 2008-09.
- Carbon emissions across the county have reduced by 54% from the 1990 baseline.
- The council has worked to eliminate single use plastics from all its operations, encouraging over 300 individuals and organisations to sign up to our plastics pledge and work to eradicate unnecessary plastics from their business.

## Issues to address

- Durham County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Our targets are achieve net zero as an organisation by 2030 (from a 2008/09 baseline) through offsetting and further reductions in emissions and to contribute towards and work with others to achieve a carbon neutral county by 2045.
- The council is committed to exploring more sustainable transport choices and has lobbied MPs and the government for the reopening of the Leamside line to help realise environmental, social and economic benefits in County Durham and the wider region.
- Countywide contracts in place for waste disposal services are coming to an end.
- Air Quality Management Areas where national standards for levels of pollutants have been declared in parts of Durham City and Chester-le-Street, each with an action plan to improve air quality.
- The Environment Act 2021 will give the council more powers and responsibilities regarding air quality, nature conservation, waste and use of resources.
- The council is committed to examining the decline of habitats and species has declared an ecological emergency in County Durham.
- We want to encourage and enable greater participation in cycling and walking across all demographic groups.
- The government's Waste and Resources Strategy may have implications for the council such as the introduction of a separate food waste collection, free garden waste collection services, standardising domestic collection services across the country and introducing recycling targets.
- We will continue to work with our partners, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency to carry out work to reduce the risk of flooding and its impacts on residents and businesses.
- The tonnage of domestic household waste collected has increased significantly during the pandemic, which is affecting the proportion of waste recycled and being diverted to landfill and increased contamination issues in our recycling collections.
- The percentage of waste going to landfill has increased during the pandemic from less than 5% to nearly 10%.

## Council Contribution

In 2020/21, 3% of the overall carbon emissions of County Durham, equating to 44,913 tonnes of carbon, originated from the council's operations: 46% from heating, 32% from electricity and 22% from transport. We continue to examine carbon emissions arising from our operational infrastructure, fleet, land use and behaviours and consider the climate emergency in all our decisions to further reduce our environmental impact.

The council owns approximately 10% of the county's total woodland - 1,800 hectares across 170 sites, of which over 300 hectares is ancient woodland which has existed since 1600. We are also the accountable body for the management of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area covering almost 2,000 square kilometres and containing 40% of the UK's upland hay meadows, 30% of upland heath and 27% of blanket bog. Appropriate management of these sites will not only improve their carbon performance and their role in tackling climate change, but it will also increase their amenity value, benefit wildlife conservation and other ecosystem services.

Responsible for the collection, disposal, and treatment of all municipal solid waste within its area, the council has a major role to play in tackling waste. Our in-house teams carry out regular and reliable collection services to around 250,000 households and 3,200 businesses, as well as providing 12 fixed and one mobile Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

In addition to the scheduled services during 2020/21, we completed 28,000 bulky household waste collections, regular clinical waste collections from 653 residents and cleared up 6,560 fly-tips. Our work amassed 243,492 tonnes of domestic waste, 8,057 tonnes of trade waste and 1,743 tonnes of fly-tipped waste. 92% was diverted from landfill - most was converted to energy but 37% was re-used, recycled or composted. Although COVID-19 forced the temporary closure of our HWRCs, there was significant demand when they re-opened in May 2020, with 48,516 tonnes of waste collected during the remainder of 2020/21, 67% of which was re-used, recycled or composted.

## Approach

The council declared a climate emergency for County Durham in 2019 and has developed two fully costed action plans, one for the council's carbon reduction target and another for the countywide target. The council is investing in renewable energy such as a solar farm at Tanfield Lea to provide power for our data centre and we are exploring the potential for mine-water heat at the Louisa Centre in Stanley. New council buildings are being built to high energy efficiency standards, with charging points for electric vehicles. Existing buildings are being retrofitted with more efficient heating systems, better insulation and low energy LED lighting.

We have been upgrading our streetlights with new LED light fittings. We are replacing all our pool cars with electric vehicles and have plans for the electrification of our service fleet. We have a substantial programme of tree planting planned. We also continue to provide support to businesses with their carbon footprint through the Business Energy Efficiency Project and have set up a community investment fund to assist community groups in reducing their carbon impact. COVID-19 has accelerated the introduction of smarter working and things like online meetings, video conferencing and transacting business remotely have reduced the need for officer travel. We also have a programme to install more vehicle charging points in locations across the county.

We have developed a strategic cycling and walking delivery plan and continue to invest in improvements to our cycling and walking infrastructure, to make it easier for residents to cycle and walk for everyday journeys and also improve their health and wellbeing.

The county boasts some beautiful countryside. The North Pennine uplands and the Durham Coast and associated Magnesian Limestone grasslands, in particular, support rare and threatened species and both have been the subject of considerable conservation effort. We have declared an ecological emergency and will be developing an action plan to help tackle this decline.

As we approach the contract end date for our waste disposal services, we are looking at a multi-authority waste treatment procurement. We will also need to consider the impact of new duties under the Environment Act 2021, the national resources and waste strategy and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on our domestic waste collection service.

## Major Projects

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|------|--|
| 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manage the council's tree and woodland resource</li> <li>▪ Develop policies and plans to tackle the ecological emergency within County Durham</li> <li>▪ Review the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan and the Councils Carbon Reduction Targets / ambitions</li> <li>▪ Develop a countywide offer around physical activity and good nutrition, specifically targeting vulnerable communities</li> <li>▪ Implement the local Air Quality Action Plan and improve air quality within Durham City to meet the standards set within the National Air Quality Strategy</li> <li>▪ Review our local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Surface Water Management Plan and deliver flood prevention schemes</li> </ul> |
|------|--|
- 
- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Implement our Climate Emergency Response Plan</b></li> <li>▪ Delivery of transport infrastructure projects to encourage more sustainable transport choices</li> </ul> |
|------|---|

- Implement the Investors in Environment Standard
- Respond to the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England 2018 proposals and prepare for future policy and legislation changes

- 
- 2025
- Development and delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
  - Development of the Nature Recovery Network Strategy for County Durham in partnership with the Environment and Climate Change Partnership Ecological Emergency workstream
- 2026
- Support and deliver Local Nature and Landscape Partnership programmes including Land of Oak and Iron Legacy; Seascapes; Durham Woodland Revival; Brightwater; North East Community Forest; Heritage Coast and Planting new trees and woodland
- 

### Key Performance Indicators

- Increase the proportion of waste diverted from landfill to at least 95%
- County Durham to become carbon neutral
- Raise cycling and walking levels in County Durham in line with national levels by 2035
- Work towards Durham City Air Quality Management Area NO<sub>2</sub> levels being below the government threshold of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>
- Plant a minimum of 140,000 trees by 2024

## Priority: Our People

Good health is central to people's happiness and has a significant impact on demand for services. Health is determined by several factors including the community we live in, access to a good natural and built environment, high-quality education and jobs and our network of friends and family. Both life expectancy and the number of years a person remains in good health are lower in County Durham than in other parts of the country. The proportion of people with long-term limiting conditions is also higher than national levels. An ageing society will create different demands for products and services, including new care technologies and housing models. Central to our plans is to provide a more joined-up service for health and social care. We also want to do everything we can with partner organisations to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our residents and prevent mental illness and suicide. We want all people to lead independent and fulfilling lives and continue to contribute to society. Within a changing education climate, it is essential that the council maintains a strong collaborative partnership with its schools and settings to enhance the learning opportunities for all children.



## Achievements

- Teenage pregnancies have halved over the last 10 years.
- We have helped 3,000 people to access support for drug and alcohol issues and are now above the national average for those successfully completing treatment.
- Effective discharge planning and joint working between health and social care services means that County Durham is one of the best performing areas in the country regarding delayed transfers of care from hospital.
- We have excellent levels of satisfaction from clients in receipt of adult social care services compared to national figures.
- We have developed a public health driven planning policy to address the proliferation in hot food takeaways that is contributing towards levels of obesity in children and adults.
- To date (Dec 2021), since 2015 we have achieved significant and sustained outcomes with 5,851 families through our Stronger Families Programme.
- Durham County Council was highly commended in the Municipal Journal Digital Transformation Award for 2021, which recognised the introduction of the Health Call Digital Care Home system, allowing care workers to digitally share the results of their resident observations, such as blood pressure and heart rates, with health professionals.
- 100% of our maintained nursery education providers are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- Durham County Council won the Local Government Chronicle Children's Services Award for 2021 for our Supporting Solutions Service, which works with children on the edge of care to enable them to stay with their families and avoid entering the care system.

- Strong adoption performance
- Positive feedback from Ofsted focused visit on the quality of services for children in care
- Strong local offer for our care leavers which was confirmed by young people responding to a national benchmarking exercise. We have also opened the new care leavers hub.
- The council has developed County Durham Care Academy for both its existing and potential workforce offering a range

### Issues to address

- The impact of the pandemic is a factor that has led to male life expectancy falling by seven months and female life expectancy by six months.
- Smoking prevalence has increased from 15% to 17%.
- Sustainability of a diverse care sector.
- The risk of a new variant of COVID-19 or an outbreak of another infectious disease, which will have major health impacts on vulnerable people and possibly result in the introduction of health restrictions.
- Life expectancy at birth is 1.6 years lower for males and 1.9 years for females in County Durham compared with the average for England.
- Healthy life expectancy, the number of years a person lives in good health, is around five years lower than national figures and there is a 10-year difference in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities in County Durham.

of courses from entry level right through to senior leadership and management qualifications.

- Established a Local Tracing Partnership, County Durham Together Hub and an Outbreak Management Team to protect our residents, provide community support and reduce COVID-19 transmission.
  - Won the CYP Now award for Youth Justice Services
- A quarter of the population in the county will be aged 65+ by 2032.
  - One in four children are overweight in reception year, rising to over one in three at Year 6 and to two in three in adulthood. These figures are above national levels.
  - Levels of women who are still smoking in pregnancy in County Durham is significantly higher than the national average.
  - Breastfeeding prevalence rates amongst new mothers remain nearly 19 percentage points behind national figures.
  - Increased responsibilities, changing needs and reducing government funding are placing greater pressure on our ability to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
  - Mental health is a priority. Indicators are high for hospital admissions for self-harm, suicide rates and patients registered with depression.

- We need to diversify the range of older persons' housing provision to meet growing demand from an ageing population and free up larger family accommodation.
- The numbers of children requiring the support of a social worker due to complex needs, which have increased during COVID-19.
- Ensuring sufficient local placement choice for our Children in Care.
- The increasing numbers and complexity of children with SEND requiring wider support.
- An increase in the complexity of care and court of protection referrals.

## Council Contribution

The council has made significant investments to help vulnerable households impacted by the pandemic, including £62 million through our Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) which supports more than 56,000 residents (37% of whom are pensioners), £14 million through LCTRS top up payments, £1.2 million through Discretionary Housing Payments which off-set shortfalls in housing rental costs, £1 million through our Welfare Assistance Scheme which helps people in crisis with daily living expenses and £170,000 exempting care leavers under 25 from paying council tax.

Annual grants have been set up for the Durham Foodbank (£50,000) and the East Durham Trust (£2,700) and other initiatives which off-set food poverty in 2020/21 included 295 hampers for the most vulnerable families, 273 food vouchers worth £80 for care leavers, 600 food vouchers worth £80 for kinship carers, and more than 101,100 vouchers, worth £20 per child per week and covering school holiday periods, for more than 21,000 0–19-year-olds.

Our welfare teams supported 59,053 residents claiming Council Tax Reduction (CTR) and/or Housing Benefit (HB). During 2020/21, we processed almost 2,500 new HB claims and 17,200 new CTR claims in an average time of 16.9 and 19.7 days respectively. In addition, over the same period, we processed almost 217,000 changes of circumstance in an average time of 4.7 days. We also processed more than 3,000 Discretionary Housing Payments (averaging £669 each), more than 6,000 Daily Living Expenses grants (averaging £91) and Settlement Grants (averaging £493) totalling over £1.5 million.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the collection of council tax during 2020/21. However, by September 2021, we had collected £10.5 million more than in the same period the previous year. Following a year of inhibited recovery action, statutory collection was reinstated on a gradual and cautious basis and, whilst there are still some legal and enforcement limitations in place, flexible and supportive options continue to be offered to our residents and businesses.

The council is continuing to encourage all residents to make healthy lifestyle choices. We own 148 allotment sites across the county which 3,500 people use to grow their own food, reaping the associated benefits to their physical and mental health. Our 15 leisure centres offer a range of facilities which promote physical activity, and across these centres, we have 16,084 gym members, 4,044 aqualearn members and 1,359 swim-only members. Across our communities, we continue to offer free walking, running and cycling activities. From April 2021 to December 2021, there were 5,417 attendances for our Walk Durham wellbeing walks programme, and 163 people joined one of our Run Durham 'get into running' courses. We also provide a wide range of inclusive and accessible community-based wellbeing activities and, from July to December 2021, we delivered 191 sessions with 922 attendances. We are also continuing to work with schools through the Active 30 Durham programme, with 108 signed up.

The council also supports service users and carers across a range of services, helping people with their mental health and wellbeing, physical disability, sensory impairment and learning disabilities. At any one time, the council supports around 18,000 adults and 3,900 children through its social care functions and there are around 950 children in care and 450 children on a child protection plan. The council also supports a further 1,500 in early help services, as well as over 14,000 children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities

In 2020/21, Adult and Health Services received 25,330 requests for social care support, 3,940 safeguarding incidents were reported, services were provided to 5,070 carers and 12,200 people received long-term care services, while 1,400 people received short-term rehabilitation services.

## Approach

A critical issue for the lifetime of this plan is to address the underlying factors that contribute to the issues outlined above, and to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects it has had on our communities and residents. We want to develop our County Durham Together Partnership, to promote and enable easier access to preventative services available in local communities, which brings together a range of public sector and voluntary agencies together with communities to identify ambitions, and to develop and deliver plans together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to challenges regarding sustainability within the care home sector. We also need to review the approach to care home commissioning, taking into account changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of ensuring a sustainable and high-quality care market.

The county has a legacy of heavy industry and suffers from poor health across a range of measures. We intend to tackle this inequality through a number of programmes across the life course. We aim to support mothers to address tobacco dependency in pregnancy and increase breastfeeding initiation for new-born babies. We will implement a range of measures to tackle oral health inequality in children across the county and improve health protection by increasing take-up of vaccinations in adults and children. We have a range of measures to support children with special educational needs and disabilities to achieve the best possible outcomes.

We will promote positive behaviours through becoming a smoke-free county and reducing dependency on, and deaths caused by, drug and alcohol addiction. We want to improve the mental health of young and old alike and tackle the stigma of mental health. We will provide a more integrated health and social care model and both specialist housing and assistive technologies for older and disabled people, to allow people to live more independent lives into their old age.

## Major Projects

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- 2022
- Reduce unintentional injuries in the 0-19 population, through the County Durham Prevention of Unintentional Injuries Framework
  - Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy and the High Needs Block Sustainability Plan 2022-23.
  - Further embedding of Signs of Safety as the practice model for children's social care services.
  - Implementation of the Councils Sufficiency Strategy over the next 4-5 years.
  - Significant investment in the children's social care workforce to support a highly skilled and stable workforce
  - Development of a Collaborative Care Model with colleagues from mental health trust including the development of a new integrated rapid response service to support young people with complex mental health needs
  - Enhancing joint working across Social Care, Education services and schools to support increased attendance at school with a focus on those children who are most vulnerable
  - Developmental work to support improved integration of health and social care services for children and young people
  - Work with a range of partners to increase physical activity by promoting Active 30 in schools
  - Deliver Making Every Contact Count training to staff, enabling every contact to be a health contact

- Further develop the Trusted Assessor model to facilitate smooth transfers of care between primary and social care and improve service users' and carers' experiences of these services
- Complete a sector-led improvement peer review on drug-related deaths, to inform service delivery
- Support providers through the changing, complex health and social care system to ensure that they are equipped to deliver the volume and standards of care required
- Change our social care model and ensure that people have access to robust advice and information, to enable them to live healthy and independent lives in their community and to prevent delaying the need for formal service provision
- Develop the Personal Assistants market for direct payment users

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2023

- **Review the approach to care home commissioning, taking into account changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of ensuring a sustainable and high-quality care market**
- **Work in partnership with external providers to develop and shape the market, to ensure that the most appropriate, local and value for money placements are available which meet the needs of our children and young people who are looked after**
- Develop a sexual health strategy for County Durham, to ensure equitable access to services and focus on good contraceptive health
- Improve health protection for children and young people and reduce inequality by increasing immunisation levels (for example, flu vaccine uptake)
- Introduce a healthy schools programme and health standards into early years and schools
- Consider a range of population approaches to improve children's oral health
- Improve mental health support for children and young people through the implementation of the Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Local Transformation Plan
- Support women to achieve a smoke-free pregnancy through whole system change and tackling tobacco dependency in pregnancy as an addiction, not a lifestyle choice
- Increase the percentage of women who initiate breastfeeding and continue at 6-8 weeks, through the County Durham 'Call to Action', to change the culture of breastfeeding in the county

- Increase speech, language and communication skills in the early years, to ensure that children are ready to learn at two and ready for school at five, by improving access to local speech enrichment services across each locality, according to identified need
- To support the ambition to reduce smoking in County Durham to 5% by 2025, ensure that the redesigned Stop Smoking Service is effectively reaching people in our local communities
- Encourage people to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink, through targeted campaigns for council staff and our local communities and by promoting and supporting Dry January and National Alcohol Awareness Week
- Implement an Integrated Strategic Commissioning Function for the county, to ensure more effective management of resources, joint contract monitoring and improved quality of service provision
- Deliver homes to meet the needs of older people within our communities and support people to live independently for as long as possible
- Work with partners and providers to reduce the incidence of falls and fractures in older people, through training and assistive / digital technologies
- Provide equipment to support reablement, progression and sustainable outcomes, including community equipment and provision in care homes
- Identify gaps across the county regarding communities yet to become dementia-friendly and provide support to help them achieve dementia-friendly status
- Engage with stakeholders to develop, test and deliver future provider / partner / service user portals for better information-sharing and to streamline processes
- Deliver our Children's Social Care Improvement Plan, to ensure that we provide good and outstanding social care services to children, young people and their families who need social care support
- Continue to recruit, develop and support a skilled, experienced and confident social care workforce
- Continue to promote the role and responsibility of the council as a corporate parent, ensuring that we are committed and ambitious for all of our children in care and care leavers
- Continue to implement Councils Sufficiency Strategy and plans to increase foster carer and children's homes capacity.
- Development of a contextualised safeguarding framework to reduce the risk of harm for Durham's young people

- Development of strategies to support children to remain safely at home with their families and prevent them coming into the care of the Council
  - Target our resources on those young people committing the most offences
  - Put victims, especially young victims, and restorative justice at the heart of everything we do
    - Deliver initiatives that support rough sleepers, ex-offenders and other vulnerable people into accommodation
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## Key Performance Indicators

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a Good Level of Development
- Percentage of our children and young people attending an Ofsted judged 'Good or Better' school
- Number of Children Looked After per 10,000 population
- Number of Children in Need per 10,000 Population
- Percentage of Children Looked After placed within 20 miles of their homes address
- 15% of mothers smoking at time of delivery (14.7%).
- Number of Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes
  - Create a smoke-free environment, with over 95% of residents not smoking (national target by 2025) and with the aim that pregnant women and mothers will not smoke
  - Reduce the gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and the national average
  - Increase the percentage of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight to over 90% and those aged 10-11 to 79% by 2025
  - 10,000 more adults undertake 150 minute of at least moderate intensity physical activity per week (against 2015 baseline)
  - 15,000 less adults are inactive (undertake less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week) (against 2015 baseline)
  - Number of Children and Young People with an Education, Health and Care Plan
  - Improve healthy life expectancy and reduce the gap within County Durham and between County Durham and England
  - Improved mental health and wellbeing evidenced by improved self-reported wellbeing scores and reduced suicide rates
  - Number of admissions under the Mental Health Act

- Increase satisfaction rates with people's experience of care
- Percentage of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services / percentage hospital discharges receiving reablement
- Increased healthy life expectancy at 65
- Deliver at least 600 homes suitable for older persons by 2035
- Increase the number of homes approved, which meet accessible and adaptable standards, by 5,613 by 2035
- Increase the average age whereby people are able to remain living independently in their own home
- Increase the percentage of people aged 65+ with aids and assistive technologies in their homes

## Priority: Our Communities

Our residents are rightly proud of their county. We want to have caring and welcoming communities, where everyone is valued and can help and support each other. We want a county which gives everyone the opportunity to realise their potential.

People want a range and choice of housing which is accessible, well-designed and meets their future needs. Our high streets and town centres retain an important place in our society, but they need to adapt to ensure that they remain vibrant, safe and attractive social hubs people want to use.

People also expect local travel to be convenient, with good quality direct links between centres of population, to employment locations such as business parks and leisure opportunities. Communities therefore need to be connected by appropriate transport and technological infrastructures.

## Achievements

- The council leads on Digital Durham, a £35 million initiative to transform broadband speeds for residents and business across the North-East – and has already provided access to fibre broadband to over 105,000 properties.
- Significant investment in increasing workforce capacity, both at a managerial and social worker level, and effective workforce planning has led to reduced caseloads, sustained low levels of staff vacancy and turnover rates, better quality and timeliness in children’s social care.
- Investment in a new IT system has transformed children’s social care performance information, and management oversight has improved compliance in most areas of performance.
- A new adult social care system has recently been implemented.
- Since 2016, the council in collaboration with a range of partner organisations, has played its part in the UK’s commitment to support some of the world’s most vulnerable refugees and has been recognised nationally as best practice for its resettlement programme.
- Roll out of programmes and training to support increased awareness of mental health issues by staff and schools.
- A local lettings agency has been established to help secure suitable housing for homeless people and people who find it difficult to access the housing market.
- Durham County Council is one of only two local authorities in the country to achieve the maximum under the



Department for Transport's incentive fund in recognition of its efficiency rating and has managed to prioritise and increase investment in its highways.

- Each year, the council invests £3.7 million on town centre regeneration. This can include purchasing derelict buildings and land and environmental improvements.
- Over the last 10 years, our Area Action Partnerships have completed over 7,000 community projects, benefiting over 30,000 people and helping to secure over £100 million funding.

### Issues to address

- There has been increased demand for services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations, just as the sector loses a significant proportion of its revenue.
- County Durham follows the national trend in seeing large increases in demand for and complexity of children's social care
- Low house prices have resulted in a high proportion of privately rented accommodation in the county and a need for greater regulation to ensure more consistent standards.
- The national issue of high street decline, with the growth of online shopping and major retailers closing stores, has affected our town centres.
- Internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales have risen nationally, from 2.5% in December 2006 to 26.3% in October 2021, posing increasing competition to high street shops and leading to major changes in our high streets and town centres.
- The highly dispersed settlement pattern in County Durham with over 300 recognised settlements, 21 of which have a population of 5,000 or more, presents a challenge for the provision of transport and public services, particularly in rural areas.
- The county has good north-south transport links with the A1(M) and East Coast Mainline but east-west links are seen as an opportunity for development.

## Council Contribution

The council is investing heavily in our town centres. New masterplans are being developed, free public wi-fi is being rolled out and new leisure facilities are to be built. We are also undertaking actions and campaigns which focus on environmental improvements, better quality housing, road safety and water safety.

Not only are we building new high-quality accessible homes to meet needs, but we are also maintaining or improving standards across existing housing stock. During 2021, we completed more than 1,328 new homes of which 466 were affordable, as well as improving, adapting or bringing back into use 2,064 properties, 171 of which were empty. Our new selective licensing scheme gives us powers to regulate landlords and managing agents of private rented properties in areas which suffer from low housing demand and/or high levels of anti-social behaviour and/or deprivation. The scheme will cover 29,000 properties, which equates to around 42% of the private rental stock.

During the pandemic, we set up the County Durham Together Community Hub. The hub contacted more than 4,000 residents identified as Extremely Vulnerable to COVID-19, responded to almost 21,000 requests for advice or support, contacted almost 7,500 positive COVID-19 cases (Local Tracing Partnership) and supported a further 500 identified by the national Test and Trace team as needing to self-isolate. It provided wrap-around COVID-19 support to almost 10,000 residents, in collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and local statutory organisations, and emergency food parcels or a personal shopping service to more than 3,000 vulnerable residents.

The council allocated £250,000 to set up 10 food hubs with The Bread and Butter Thing, a charity which aims to make life more affordable for people on low income by redistributing surplus food. Five of the hubs are operational, with each supporting around 50 families, and work to open the remaining five hubs is underway. We also provided Fun and Food, free holiday activities with healthy snacks for children and young people through schools, leisure centres, family centres and voluntary and community sector groups.

The council has also allocated £1.4 million to provide one-off funding to Area Action Partnerships, to provide additional community-based support as communities recover from the pandemic.

## Approach

We want people in our communities to feel connected to, and supportive of, each other. We want to build on the indomitable spirit of our people and ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities are supported. Whether this be children in need of support, victims of crime, people with a disability or different communities of identity.

The council will continue to plan and train for emergency situations, operating in partnership with blue light services and other agencies to minimise the impact on communities.

We are developing plans to further integrate health, social and welfare support in a preventative way to help our local communities. This means looking more closely at individuals' and community needs and working with communities using our established 'Approach to Wellbeing' to see where we can improve people's wellbeing and reduce inequalities in our county.

We are undertaking a programme to improve social care services provided to children and young people and a range of initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour in our communities, in partnership with the police and others.

Some communities have been blighted by poor housing management practice, so we have plans to raise housing standards in the private rented housing sector and help improve these communities. We want to provide a range of new housing to meet the needs and aspirations of our residents. The design of new development in rural areas will be sympathetic to the environment and reflect local distinctiveness. We aim to deliver more affordable housing. We expect all homes to be connected digitally and for speed and capacity to keep pace with the latest developments. This is the aim of our Digital Durham programme. These issues are particularly acute in our rural areas.

High streets have seen some decline nationally and County Durham is no exception to this. We have developed a programme to regenerate our towns and villages and improve their use, making them a more attractive proposition to visit and spend time in. This includes a range of approaches, varying from introduction of free Wi-Fi, changing the mix of retail, leisure and residential use, making our centres more attractive and tackling community safety concerns. Residents and visitors need to be able to travel around our county and get to and from our towns and villages. We have therefore developed a pipeline of infrastructure projects and transport plans to improve accessibility.

## Major Projects

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|------|---|
| 2022 | <p><b>Develop the County Durham Together Community Hub to increase access to preventative services available in local communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Raise standards across the private rented sector through continuous engagement with landlords, extension of the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme for responsible landlords and implementation of the Selective Licensing Scheme</b></li> </ul> |
|------|---|

- **Build community resilience to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic by developing local priority projects linked to Area Action Partnership funding streams for COVID-19 recovery, welfare reform, social isolation, holiday activities with healthy food, regeneration of towns and villages and emerging neighbourhood issues**
- The development of the care academy for children's residential services to support the recruitment and retention of staff in our children's homes.
- Implementation of work programme to support individuals and families who have experienced domestic abuse
- Investment and implementation of a new SEND Electronic Casework system to enhance service delivery and outcomes for children and young people.
- Development of a County Durham Connectivity Strategy to support delivery of the North-East Strategic Transport Plan
- Deliver the Chapter Homes Business Plan
- Undertake a series of reviews in relation to the Home to School Transport service to ensure appropriate and efficient provision
- Establish wrap around support team for Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge in County Durham

- 
- 2023
- **Deliver a programme of regeneration within town centres and wider towns and villages**  
*by encouraging new town centre business, establishing a network of town centre Wi-Fi systems, facilitating the reoccupation / re-use or clearance of vacant and vulnerable property*
  - Work with communities most affected by long-term empty properties to bring empty properties back into use wherever possible
  - Construction of new bus station in Durham City
  - Deliver the Housing Strategy
  - Develop and implement a strategy to support and sustain the Voluntary and Community Sector in County Durham, enabling resilience of our wider communities
  - Extend the wellbeing approach across the council and within commissioned services
  - Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme
  - Deliver community housing schemes through the town and village centres programme
  - Develop and deliver pipeline of major transport infrastructure projects to improve connectivity across the county.

- Through the Community Action Team we will deliver in collaboration with partners a programme of area based initiatives to improve local environments and community safety
- Deliver a range of targeted interventions to improve housing and living standards
- Develop and deliver in partnership with other agencies a model to prevent and manage anti-social behaviour across the county
- Establish a multi-agency task force to deliver a local problem-solving approach within our most deprived areas and, through integrated working and community engagement, restore cultural norms and build cohesive communities
- Delivery of transport infrastructure projects to improve rural transport links across the County

- 
- 2024
- **Review and transform leisure facilities in line with the needs of our residents**
  - Manage and deliver the Housing Infrastructure Fund Newton Aycliffe Housing Growth Programme
  - Develop, submit and deliver Levelling Up 'Bids' across the County
  - Maximise opportunities for North East One Public Estate Partnership to realise estates savings and delivery of shared objectives
  - Maximise the delivery of affordable homes, both by securing developer contributions as part of new housing development and through close partnership with registered providers and Homes England

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- 2025
- **Review and transform library services in line with the needs of our residents**

- 
- 2026
- **Deliver the Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone, Future High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund**
  - **Deliver the Council Homes Programme**
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### Key Performance Indicators

- 171 empty properties brought back into use due to local authority intervention (200).
- 1,328 net homes completed .
- 466 affordable homes delivered .

- Percentage of Harbour clients feeling (a) more confident in themselves (b) their quality of life has improved, on case closure
- Percentage of children and young people completing an intervention with Harbour and reporting feeling safer
- Bring 200 empty homes back into use per year
- Increase occupancy rate of all town centres to above national levels by 2035
- Return the number of fly-tipping incidents to at least pre-COVID levels by 2035
- Maintain the percentage of land at below 12%, which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness in relation to detritus; in relation to litter to below 6%; in relation to dog fouling to below 1%
- Increase the percentage of households (within a 5 mile or 15 mile radius) which can access key service locations using public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Maintain levels of satisfaction with bus operators at a minimum of 92%
- Maintain a downward trend in the amount of Highways Maintenance Backlog
- Aim to increase levels of public satisfaction with highways maintenance above the national average.
- Maintain the percentage of respondents above March 2020 levels, who agree that police and local authorities are dealing with ASB and crime issues in the local area
- Increase net delivery of new housing by 19,620 units by 2035
- Increase net delivery of affordable homes to contribute to meeting identified need of 12,540 by 2035
- Increase the % of County Durham residents who can access employment sites by public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Achieve 100% licensing of private rented sector properties covered by the Selective Licensing Scheme by 2027
- Reduce ASB rates within the Selective Licensing Scheme areas by 10% (against the 2021 baseline)

## Priority: Our Council

There have been unprecedented reductions in public spending in recent years. Technology has also been developing at pace and residents have come to expect that our services will be provided digitally and on a 24/7 basis. This required us to rethink the way in which many of our services are delivered. There is a history of good partnership working in County Durham. In a time when resources are scarce, it is even more important that organisations work more collaboratively and that our efforts are focused on the right things. Working more seamlessly across organisational boundaries and delivering services differently, which are designed with residents, is at the heart of our ambitions. We need to equip ourselves with the skills to be able to achieve this and develop a workforce for the future. Delivering existing services in different ways and developing new services for the benefit of our residents is both challenging and exciting and something that we need to excel at in order to become recognised as an excellent council, which is well-managed and listens to its residents.



Digital Durham



## Achievements

- Durham County Council has delivered £250 million annual savings since 2011.
- Over 100 council services are available digitally and more than half of residents access our services this way.
- The council has had 1,113 apprenticeship starts since 2017. We have 292 people employed in apprenticeship posts and 213 existing staff are accessing the apprenticeship levy to increase their skills.
- The council holds the 'Maintaining Excellence' status in the Better Health at Work Award, which recognises the efforts of employers regionally in helping to address health issues of its workforce. 79 organisations are now signed up to the award programme, reaching over 40,000 employees.
- The council has 217 trained mental health first aiders and 82 Time To Change (mental health) champions.
- The council has been awarded the Disability Confident Leader status by the Department for Work and Pensions, in recognition of its commitment to be a good employer of people with a disability and support local businesses to become Disability Confident.
- Durham County Council was highly commended in two national awards by the Municipal Journal in 2021, one being for its digital transformation and one for its senior leadership team.
- We have continued to work with the County Durham Together Community Hub to proactively support residents and businesses, including 70,000 people identified as potentially vulnerable.

## Issues to address

- Continuing impact of COVID-19 on the council's budget and uncertainties surrounding the UK withdrawal from the European Union.
- Changes to the delivery model for some frontline council services during COVID and to prioritise essential services. This includes the introduction or expansion of online service delivery.
- Learning from our experiences as we transition to living with COVID, we have set up a Protecting Health Team to address health protection skills and competencies across the workforce and provide expert advice and leadership in the management of communicable diseases.
- Forecast increases of 20% in energy prices and a 1.25% increase in employer's national insurance contributions are an additional budgetary pressure.
- Uncertainty of funding beyond 2022/23 due to the Fair Funding Review, the lack of clarity around New Homes Bonus and Public Health Grant which hinders medium-term financial planning.
- Superfast broadband and the national rollout of 5G networks will enable greater digital connectivity for our residents and offer opportunities for new digital services.
- Workforce instability is increasing across the council, with local and national skills shortages increasing competition within the jobs market.
- The council has an ageing workforce. 43% of its staff are over the age of 50, which has an impact on sickness absence rates and requires effective workforce planning.
- One quarter of staff (27%) rate their mental wellbeing as five or lower (with one being the lowest and 10 the highest). During the pandemic, 24% of staff felt that their health and wellbeing was not supported.
- Society is experiencing a technological revolution where progress is accelerating and innovations can be identified and rapidly deployed, making it difficult to keep pace and ensure that the skills of our staff are up to date.
- The council together with its partners, should seek to maximise the value of every pound spent and seek to deliver social value outcomes. Social, economic and environmental outcomes should be delivered for the local community by adopting a strategic approach during its commissioning, procurement, development and planning projects.
- The council needs to recognise that the data we hold are an asset and manage them more efficiently to better understand service users, generating benefits such as predicting and managing demand, providing the services residents want and supporting better decision-making.

## Council Contribution

The council employs 7,823 people to deliver a wide range of services. However, to remain relevant and meet the needs of its residents and communities, it needs to continually adapt, investing in both technology and the skills of its workforce.

Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to both workforce development and addressing current and future skills needs. Around 3.3% of our workforce is currently enrolled in the programme, and the £7.6 million invested to date has allowed more than 1,100 employees to participate. In addition, 82 new apprentices joined our workforce in 2021.

We provide a range of contact channels and have invested heavily in new digital technology in recent years. Although almost 80% of the 1.7 million contacts received through our reported channels each year is by telephone, more customers are interacting with us digitally. This shift is particularly noticeable across service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management system - 73% are now logged digitally compared to 62% in 2020 – and almost 235,000 residents across 157,000 unique properties now have an online account. Our new webchat service, available across more than 30 web pages, is now used by more than 600 customers each month.

Feedback continues to be important to us and we have increased the number of service request types which automatically e-mail satisfaction surveys to customers on closure – this feature is now available across 117 service request types, compared to 25 in October 2017. We are working to increase response rates, as 24 service requests receive 90% of the responses.

The pandemic impacted on our service delivery, ways of working and employees. However, throughout the pandemic, our sickness rate steadily declined, reaching its lowest level since 2010/11 at year-end 2020/21. If we adjust our sickness rate to account for days lost due to COVID-19, then our rate remains comparatively low at just over nine days per full time equivalent (FTE).

We continue to promote support mechanisms to increase emotional resilience and protect the mental health of our staff, some long-established, others developed in response to COVID-19, and have recently developed additional support in the key areas of financial awareness, fertility, bereavement and the menopause. In relation to menopause awareness, eight sessions and 160 training places were arranged and made available for employees for this year.

The council is collaborating with local partners, to deliver social value outcomes within County Durham by the strategic use of procurement its own spending power through the County Durham Pound project. The objective of this project is to maximise the

value of every pound spent in the county to help money remain in the local economy, recirculating, creating employment opportunities and stronger more sustainable communities within the County.

## Approach

The current COVID-19 national crisis has required the council to adapt working practices to continue to deliver services safely. We have had to close a number of our buildings such as leisure centres, theatres and libraries. Our ICT infrastructure is allowing many of our employees to work remotely. Many of our staff who cannot work in their substantive role have also been redeployed in priority areas. Several services have now moved online. In the immediate aftermath of lockdown, the council temporarily postponed the delivery of certain services while we ensured that the correct safeguards were in place to protect the public and our employees and ensure that our priority services were not affected. The pandemic has had a significant financial impact in terms of additional expenditure incurred and loss of income. However, there have been some unintended benefits such as reductions in carbon emissions. The council will look to build on this and use technology to reduce our impact on the environment.

The council has faced significant cuts to its funding over the last 10 years. Uncertainties with future local government funding make financial planning extremely difficult. We still await both the government's Comprehensive Spending Review and Fair Funding Review which will determine our future funding. This means that we have been unable to plan for the long-term, with most of our financial planning being limited to only one year of certainty. Key actions for us will be to assess the implications of these reviews when they are published and to amend our Medium-Term Financial Plan accordingly.

We want our workforce to be fit for any future challenges and so we need to ensure that our future plans recognise and address any risks such as skills shortages, ageing workforce, recruitment difficulties and changes in service user behaviour and demand. The health and welfare of our workforce is important, and we have a range of actions we plan to implement to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of employees and ensure that we have an inclusive staff culture.

Expectations of our residents are changing. People expect to be able to transact business with the council on a 24/7 basis and would like self-serve online. Our services should be co-designed with service users and we plan to improve our engagement mechanisms, particularly with children and young people. Managers need access to real-time data to support good decision-making and we have a programme to develop our business intelligence capability and provide better analysis to help understand our performance and facilitate better planning and service delivery. Some of our services are delivered in partnership with other agencies and we have plans to further join up our delivery to offer a more seamless approach for the benefit of our residents.

Further detail of the programmes we plan to implement to be an excellent council are provided in our delivery plan.

## Major Projects

- 
- 2022
- **Implement a new performance management framework for Adult and Health Services, to enable more timely analysis of data, improved business intelligence and real-time presentation of data**
  - Achieve Better Health at Work Award 'Continuing Excellence' status for the council
  - Develop a strategy for employee health and wellbeing
  - Work towards the sharing of information about a person's assessments, treatment and care through the Great North Care Record, to ensure that staff, patients and service users can make informed decisions about services
  - Further develop specific engagement mechanisms with children and young people to understand the voice of the child in service provision, including development of a Youth Council
  - Plan and deliver effective communications to build trust, support and keep stakeholders informed and promote safety messages
  - Work with NHS partners to roll out Health Call in care homes, to improve the transfer of information to health professionals
  - Further develop the performance management framework for children and young people's services linked to the new case recording system, to improve managers' grip on all areas of performance
  - Develop a zero-carbon council depot at the Morrison Busty site at Annfield Plain
  - Conduct a full staff health and wellbeing survey (the Working Well Survey)
- 
- 2023
- **Review the implications of the government's Fair Funding Review**
  - **Re-procure our waste contracts**
  - **Extend the mental health workforce development programme across the council, to increase awareness and support available for staff**
  - **Develop a digital skills programme and invest in smarter working**

- **Increase self-service of performance data by developing business intelligence dashboards**
  - Review the assistive technologies offer for adult care and develop a new Assistive Technology Strategy
  - Continue to deliver the digital transformation programme at a service level
  - Maximise the use of existing technology and trial new technologies to improve efficiency
  - Expand automation and self-service to employees
  - Undertake a corporate peer challenge with the Local Government Association to help us identify strengths and areas for improvement within the council
  - Demonstrate both long-term commitment and practice around workplace health and wellbeing by achieving Ambassador Status in the Better Health at Work Award
- 

### Key Performance Indicators

- 10.1 days / shifts lost to sickness absence across all services excluding schools (11.2)
- 83% Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days (90%)
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions by 80% by 2030
- Collection rates
- MTFP targets achieved
- Audit opinion
- Percentage of workforce learning new skills / re-training (apprentice levy)
- Average age of employees in key employment groups
- Employee turnover
- Applicants per vacant post in key employment groups
- Percentage of transactions which are self-serve
- Survey response rates (satisfaction with service)
- Number of customers engaged (adult /children)
- Percentage of managers supported by automated BI dashboards



## Glossary of Terms

5G	Fifth generation or latest iteration of telecommunications networks which is designed to greatly increase the speed and responsiveness of wireless networks
Attainment 8 score	A measure of the average attainment of pupils in up to eight qualifications at KS4
Better Health at Work Award	An award recognising the efforts of employers in the North-East and Cumbria in addressing health issues within the workplace
Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone	A regeneration area in Bishop Auckland's conservation area which has been agreed by Historic England and has been created to improve the town's historic centre and bring it back to be a vibrant market town for both locals and visitors
Brexit	The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union
Channel shift	The degree to which residents are moving to dealing with the council through digital means from more traditional methods, such as face-to-face and telephone
Council Tax Hardship Fund	A reduction of £300 on your Council Tax bill awarded to people who have been significantly financially impacted by COVID-19
County Durham Together	A virtual hub developed to help support people to stay in their own home and protect them from contracting the coronavirus by putting them in touch with people who can support with access to food and essential supplies, medicines, financial help and social interaction for those experiencing loneliness and isolation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019, the respiratory disease caused by the new strain of the coronavirus

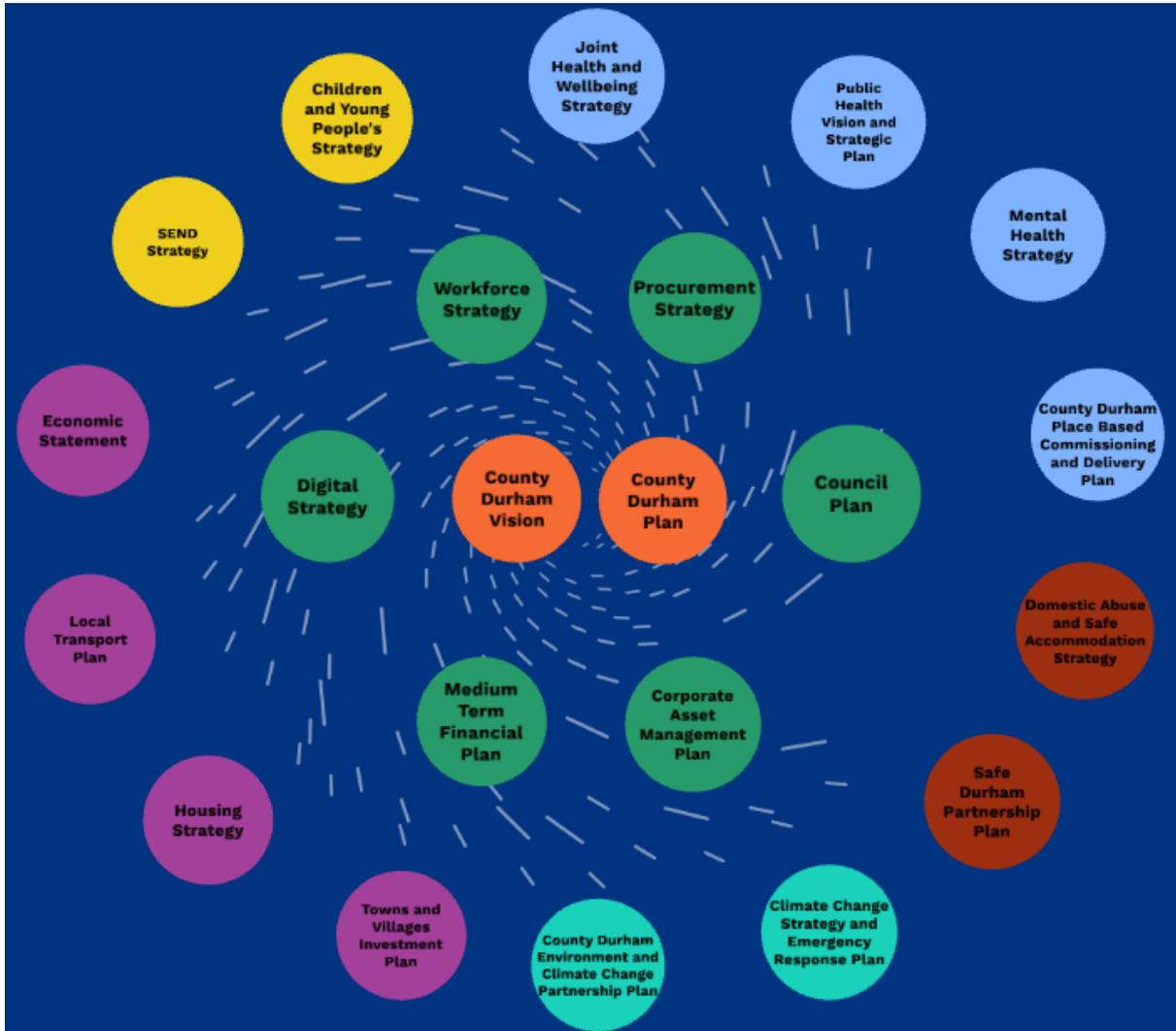
Deprivation indices	Widely used datasets used to classify the relative deprivation of an area. The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) measures relative deprivation for small areas or neighbourhoods and ranks every area from the most deprived to the least deprived in England
Disability Confident	A government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. Level 3 or highest level of the Disability Confident scheme which recognises the commitment towards disabled staff and acting as a champion for Disability Confident within local and business communities
Education and health care plan	A legal document which describes a child or young person's special educational needs, the support they need and the outcomes they would like to achieve
Furlough	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme operated by HMRC. All UK employers were able to access support to continue paying part of their employee's salary for those employees who would otherwise be laid off during the COVID-19 crisis
GCSEs	General Certificate of Secondary Education
Great North Care Record	An initiative to allow healthcare practitioners (from emergency departments, mental health, 111 services, ambulance and out of hours services) to access information from a patient's GP record
Hate crime	A range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity
Healthy life expectancy	The proportion of life spent in good health or free from a limiting illness or disability
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
Homes England	A non-departmental public body which funds new affordable housing in England

Levelling up	A government policy which aims to reduce, mainly economic, imbalances between geographical areas and social groups in the United Kingdom.
MTFP	Medium-Term Financial Plan. This is a three-year plan which sets out the council's funding outlook, spending priorities and planned efficiencies over the medium-term
Ofsted	The Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. The organisation responsible for inspecting services providing education and skills for learners of all ages and inspection and regulation of services which care for children and young people
Ofsted rating	The rating scale Ofsted uses in its inspections of education providers, such as schools and children's social care providers (for example, the council). There are four grades: 1. Outstanding; 2. Good; 3. Requires Improvement; 4. Inadequate
R number	The reproduction number is the average number of secondary infections produced by a single infected person. An R number of 1 means that on average, every person who is infected will infect one other person, meaning that the number of infections is stable. If R is greater than 1, the epidemic is growing. If R is less than 1, the epidemic is shrinking.
Reablement	Services for people with poor physical or mental health to help them accommodate their illness by learning or re-learning the skills necessary for daily living
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 is the strain of coronavirus which causes COVID-19, the respiratory illness responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic
SATs	Standard Assessment Test
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
Signs of Safety	A strength-based and safety-focused approach to child protection casework originally developed in Australia and now adopted and used by local authorities in many other countries, including the UK

Trusted assessor model	Trusted Assessors is a national initiative designed to reduce delays when people are ready for discharge from hospital.
Welfare Assistance Scheme	Short-term support for people in crisis. There are two types: daily living expenses for up to seven days when your circumstances change unexpectedly; and settlement grants to help you stay at home or move back into housing
Wi-Fi	A wireless network allowing computers, tablets, smartphones and other devices to connect to the Internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within an area
Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) Initiative	A programme for helping teenagers explore how to protect their own mental health and support those around them. YAM presents promising results – groups which have completed the programme show significantly reduced levels of moderate to extreme depression, and reductions in suicide attempts and ideation

## Durham County Council Strategic Planning Framework

The following diagram sets out the key strategic plans for Durham County Council.



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