



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 21 September 2022** at **10.00 am** to transact the following business:-

1. Presentation to Honorary Alderman Kevin Thompson
2. To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2022 (Pages 3 - 14)
3. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
4. Chair's Announcements
5. Leader's Report
6. Petitions
7. Report from the Cabinet (Pages 15 - 22)
8. Local Government Boundary Commission Review - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 23 - 88)
9. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021/22 - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 89 - 102)
10. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-22 (Pages 103 - 144)
11. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 145 - 166)

12. Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2021/22 -
Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages
167 - 176)
13. Motions on Notice

This Council expresses its deepest regret and grief at the death of Her Majesty the Queen; conveys its sincere condolences to His Majesty The King and other members of the Royal Family in their bereavement; affirms the great affection and esteem in which Her Majesty was held, and expresses gratitude of her life of exceptional public service.

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

Dated this 12th day of September 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H' and a long, sweeping underline.

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

To: All Members of the County Council

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 20 July 2022** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Bainbridge in the Chair

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, G Binney, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, 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, P Heaviside, 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, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, J Nicholson (Vice-Chair), D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, A Reed, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, A Simpson, T Smith, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Boyes, I Cochrane, A Hanson, K Hawley, T Henderson, D Howarth, M Simmons, C Varty and S Zair

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2022 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Gunn informed Council that she had asked a question on the Leader's report at the meeting held on 22 June and had received a response. Councillor Gunn asked whether such questions were minuted. The Deputy Monitoring Officer replied that although the minutes had been agreed this could be checked and feedback provided to Councillor Gunn. There was no intention to either miss questions asked or answers provided.

2 Declarations of Interest

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

3 Chair's Announcements

The Chair was pleased to announce that Children's Services in County Durham had been rated 'Good' by Ofsted following a recent inspection which covered children's social care services provided by the Council, including safeguarding, children in care, care leavers, fostering and adoption. The inspectors' report praised those in charge of children's services at the Council, rating the impact of leaders as 'Outstanding'.

Since the last meeting the Chair reported she had attended a number of events relating to Armed Forces Day, the Future Business Magnate Awards and the Queen's Baton relay event which was a fantastic occasion for County Durham.

It was brilliant to see the amazing Batonbearers carrying the Baton through the County being cheered on by spectators along the way and fabulous to see the 300 schoolchildren at Durham Racecourse who encouraged the Batonbearers.

4 Leader's Report

Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Council welcomed all Members to the last full council before the summer break.

The Leader hoped Members had been managing to keep cool in the hot weather. Although it looked as though the next few days would be cooler, with the summer ahead the Leader took the opportunity to remind Members of the need to take extra care in the sunshine and to look out for those who were most vulnerable during heatwaves. Members were encouraged to look at the Council's heatwave plan, which was available on the Council's website, to ensure the warmer weather could be safely enjoyed.

The Council's initiative to create a network of electric vehicle charging points across the county had recently been recognised at the MJ Awards, where the Scaling of On Street Charging Initiative won the award for Best EV Charging Project. The Council's eLearning course to tackle littering was highly commended in the Digital Transformation category. The Leader placed on record her thanks to staff involved in these projects.

Members of the Council's Warm and Healthy Homes Team had been crowned National Energy Champions of the Year at the Energy Awards. The

award recognised the team's work to support people affected by higher living costs, who may suffer ill health as a consequence of not being able to pay their energy bills.

Finally, the Council had once again made it onto the list of the country's top 100 employers for apprenticeships. As well as being one of only two local authorities on the list, the Council was now ahead of household names such as BP, Jaguar Landrover and Santander.

The Leader was sure that the Council would join her in congratulating everyone involved in these projects and thanking them for all their hard work.

As already mentioned, this was the last Council meeting before the summer recess and the Leader hoped that all Members would have an enjoyable break. Over the coming weeks, there would be a lot to do across County Durham, including the fantastic Seaham Food Festival at the beginning of August.

Councillor Marshall asked whether the Leader would join him in thanking all the emergency services and Council staff for keeping communities safe in the extreme weather conditions of the past few days. The Leader of the Council confirmed she would as, she was sure, would the whole Chamber.

5 Questions from the Public

A question had been received from Mr Cunningham asking whether the Council's Education Department were aware of contentious interpretations of anti-racism and 'Woke' ideals in teacher training materials which may be proposed for adoption within County Durham's School curriculum.

The questioner was unable to attend the meeting, but the Cabinet Portfolio Holder would respond to the question in writing following the meeting, and the response would be posted on the Council's website.

6 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

7 Report from the Cabinet

The Chair reported there was no report from the Cabinet.

8 County Durham Youth Justice Service, Youth Justice Plan 2022 - 2023

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented the Youth Justice Plan 2022/23 and highlighted some of the key achievements in reducing re-offending during 2021/22 along with areas for improvement which the Service would focus on during the current year (for copy see file of Minutes).

In **Moving** the report, Councillor J Shuttleworth, Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways informed Council that the Plan highlighted a continued high level of performance and improvement during 2021/22. Councillor Shuttleworth welcomed the Service Improvement Plan and confirmation of additional government funding for the Service which had just been announced.

In **Seconding** the report Councillor A Shield, Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion appreciated the value of the report and supported the updated Plan for the year ahead. Councillor Shield acknowledged the Council's partnership approach to supporting both young people and victims.

Councillor O Gunn thanked the Youth Justice Service in County Durham, a Service which often lay outside of the spotlight yet carried a massive amount of work on many levels to improve the lives of young people. Councillor Gunn urged all Members to read the report which detailed many of the programmes the Service provided and the outcomes of these.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 Adoption of Cotherstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan

The Council considered a report of the Interim Head of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to formally 'make' (approve) the Cotherstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Parish Council for Cotherstone had produced a neighbourhood plan which had passed independent examination in 2021. On 7 July 2022 a referendum was held for the Neighbourhood Plan which was overwhelmingly approved by voters. The Council must now make the Plan to formally enable it to become part of the statutory development plan for the Neighbourhood Area.

In **Moving** the report Councillor E Scott, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships commended the residents of Cotherstone for their hard work in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. There had been an overwhelming

positive response in the recent referendum and it was therefore clear that the priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan reflected the priorities of local people.

In **Seconding** the report Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance was pleased that the Plan had been endorsed by an overwhelming majority of residents who voted in the referendum.

Resolved:

- (a) That The Cotherstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan be formally made (adopted) by the Council to become part of the statutory development plan; and
- (b) That the Head of Legal and Demographic Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to affect the adoption of the Cotherstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan including the publicity requirements contained in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

10 Motions on Notice

The Chair informed Council that there were four Motions for consideration, and these would be dealt with in the order in which they were received as detailed on the agenda.

The first Motion was from Councillor M Stead and was carried over from the previous meeting.

Councillor Stead informed Council that his motion asked for the government to recognise that County Durham was a rural county and be funded appropriately. It further asked for help for government to consider more help for residents and for a summit to be called by the council with relevant organisations to work to do all that could be done to help people.

Councillor Stead was pleased to confirm that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council had written to the government laying out each aspect of his motion and asking for reconsideration of the County's rural status and to make sure it considered more help for residents.

Councillor Stead had also received confirmation from Councillor Alan Shield, the Council's Equalities and Social Inclusion Portfolio Holder that the Council would be doing work on a summit.

Given that every aspect of his motion had been agreed and actioned by the Joint Administration Councillor Stead withdrew his Motion.

Moved by Councillor L Holmes, **Seconded** by Councillor K Robson:

This council notes that eating disorders and excess weight are public health concerns for our county and considers that a whole systems approach is required to promote healthy weight by supporting people to reduce excess calorie intake and increase physical activity.

This council will continue to work across the whole system with our communities, families, education settings, employers, and the VCS to address food poverty and to increase access to affordable healthy food, to promote healthy food options and to promote and increase access to physical activity.

The Eatwell Guide is a policy tool used to define government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.

Given the importance of healthy food this Council calls for partners across the whole system to work with government recommendations on healthy eating and adopt the Eatwell Guide as the standard they aim to achieve for their food offer.

An Amendment was **Moved** by Councillor L Hovvels, **Seconded** by Councillor A Surtees

This council notes that eating disorders and excess weight are public health concerns for our county and ~~considers~~ that a whole systems approach is required to *support people who live in food poverty eat a more healthy diet* ~~promote healthy weight by supporting people to reduce excess calorie intake and increase physical activity.~~

This council *acknowledges all the great work and continued support being provided to our families* ~~will continue to work across private, public and VCS sectors the whole system with our communities, families, education settings, employers, and the VCS to address food poverty and to increase access to affordable healthy food,~~ to promote healthy *lifestyles in light of the current food poverty crisis and increasing cost of living crisis which is only set to get worse.* ~~food options and to promote and increase access to physical activity.~~

The Eatwell Guide is a policy tool used to define government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet, *however, in order to increase access to affordable healthy food requires the cause of food poverty to be addressed and whilst we may continue promoting healthy food options access to physical activity there is inescapable evidence that for many people, including families with children, there is a gap between available income and the actual cost of securing a nutritious diet.*

~~Given the importance of healthy food this Council calls for partners across the whole system to work with government recommendations on healthy eating and adopt the Eatwell Guide as the standard they aim to achieve for their food offer and healthy lifestyles for our families and the elevation of the north east of England being identified as the region of highest deprivation in the country where almost half of our children now live in absolute poverty and the choice between heating and eating has become a cruel reality for more families.~~

This Council calls a food poverty emergency for County Durham and

A Calls on the Government to provide more resource/funding for our communities to enable sustainable living for our residents.

B will lobby government to request more funding for our partners to enable them to support further our communities in providing healthy accessible food in line with the Eatwell Guide for our communities.

Councillor P Sexton, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services considered that the Amendment was a fundamental change to the Motion and sought legal advice on the matter. Councillor Sexton informed Council he would be supporting the Motion. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the amendment had been checked prior to being presented to Council and did not negate the original Motion. The rules on debate allowed for words to be added and words to be taken away and the Amendment clearly related to the original Motion.

Councillors K Shaw, F Tinsley, V Andrews, M McKeon, O Gunn, S Wilson, R Charlton-Lainé and J Miller spoke in support of the Amendment.

Councillor R Bell formally objected to the way in which the Amendment had been brought to Council. It was not acceptable to bring an Amendment without sight to the Members which was incapable of being displayed on the screen as one slide and requested a hard copy of future Amendments be tabled in advance. Councillor Bell informed Council he would be supporting the Motion.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised Council that the Amendment would be scrolled through on screen so that Members had sight of it. There was currently no requirement in the Constitution for hard copies of Amendments to be provided although this was something that could be considered by the Constitution Working Group.

Councillor A Jackson informed Council he would be supporting the Motion.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised Council that the 30 minute time limit for debating Motions had elapsed.

A named vote on the Amendment was requested.

For the Amendment

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, C Bihari, G Binney, R Charlton-Lainé, S Deinali, K Earley, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, S Henig, J Higgins, L Hovvels, M Johnson, C Kay, B Kellett, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, B McAloon, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, P Pringle, J Purvis, S Quinn, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Shaw, G Smith, T Smith, A Surtees, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke.

Against the Amendment

Councillors M Abley, B Bainbridge, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, T Duffy, J Elmer, D Freeman, D Haney, P Heaviside, L Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, J Howey, C Hunt, A Jackson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Lines, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, S McDonnell, M McGaun, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, J Quinn, A Reed, K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, A Simpson, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Walton, A Watson and M Wilkes.

Abstention

Councillor G Hutchinson

The Amendment was **Lost**.

A named vote on the Substantive Motion was requested.

A further vote was taken on the Substantive Motion

For

Councillors M Abley, B Bainbridge, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, T Duffy, J Elmer, D Freeman, D Haney, P Heaviside, L Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, J Howey, C Hunt, A Jackson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Lines, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, P Molloy, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, J Quinn, A Reed, K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, A Simpson, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Walton, A Watson and M Wilkes.

Against

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, C Bihari, G Binney, R Charlton-Lainé, S Deinali, K Earley, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, S Henig, J Higgins, L Hovvells, M Johnson, C Kay, B Kellett, R Manchester, C Marshall, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahon, J Miller, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, P Pringle, J Purvis, S Quinn, I Roberts, K Shaw, G Smith, T Smith, A Surtees, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke.

Abstention

Councillors G Hutchinson, L Maddison, S Robinson

The Substantive Motion was **Carried**.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer informed Council that the two remaining Motions would be carried forward to the next Council meeting in September.

11 Questions from Members

There were no questions from Members.

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Extraordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 20 July 2022** at **11.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Bainbridge (Chair) in the Chair

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, G Binney, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, K Earley, J Elmer, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, D Haney, P Heaviside, 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, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, J Nicholson (Vice-Chair), D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, A Reed, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, A Simpson, T Smith, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Boyes, I Cochrane, A Hanson, K Hawley, T Henderson, D Howarth, M Simmons, C Varty, S Wilson and S Zair

1 Declarations of Interest

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

2 Conferment of the Title of Honorary Alderman

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought confirmation of the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderman upon former Councillor Kevin Thompson who qualified for the same in accordance with previously agreed criteria (for copy see file of Minutes).

Moved by Councillor Maddison, **seconded** by Councillor Wilkes.

Resolved:

That the Council confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Kevin Thompson once he had indicated he would be prepared to accept the honorary title:

Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meetings held on 15 June and 13 July 2022 to enable Members to ask related questions by no later than midday 3 working days before the day of the meeting

Contents

15 June 2022

Item 1 - Climate Emergency Response Plan 2022-24, Key Decision No: NCC/01/22

Item 2 - Levelling Up Fund: Round 2, Key Decision No: REG/05/22

Item 3 – Cyber Security Strategy

13 July 2022

Item 1 - Proposal to close Forest of Teesdale Primary School on 31 August 2022, Key Decision: CYPS/03/2022

Item 2 - 2021/22 Final Outturn for the General Fund and Collection Fund

Item 3 - Medium Term Financial Plan(13), 2023/24 – 2026/27 and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Key Decision: CORP/R/22/01

Item 4 - Storm Arwen review

Item 5 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

15 June 2022

1. Climate Emergency Response Plan 2022-24, Key Decision No: NCC/01/22

Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Mark Wilkes

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided the second and final annual update on progress of the Council's first Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP1). The report also presented the subsequent second Climate Emergency Response Plan for the period 2022-24 (CERP2) and sought agreement for its adoption.

We give formal consideration to the introduction of new targets in CERP2, net zero.

- (a) achieve net zero by 2030 by retaining the CERP1 80% actual carbon reduction target for Council emissions by 2030 whilst offsetting or further reducing remaining emissions;
- (b) net zero by 2045 for countywide emissions (improved from 2050).

Decision

We:

- (a) Noted progress against CERP1 projects which had helped to achieving 58% Council reduction in tCO₂e from 2008/9 and countywide a 54% reduction (2019) in tCO₂e from 1990 levels;
- (b) Agreed to the adoption of CERP2 and assist with the delivery of targets as set out in the report;
- (c) Agreed to give formal consideration to the introduction of new targets in CERP2, net zero:
 - (i) achieve net zero by 2030 (against 2008/09 levels) by retaining the CERP1 80% actual carbon reduction target for Council emissions by 2030 whilst offsetting or further reducing remaining emissions;
 - (ii) net zero by 2045 (against 1990 levels) for countywide emissions (improved from 2050).
- (d) Noted that the CERP2 targets would require access to funding from external sources and advances in technology in some areas in order to be fully delivered;
- (e) Noted that any resources required to achieve the climate change targets outside of those costed plans included in the CERP2 action plan would be considered in future MTFP planning cycles with a value for money outcome-based focus alongside other projects and programmes.

2. Levelling Up Fund: Round 2, Key Decision No: REG/05/22 Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Elizabeth Scott and James Rowlandson

In accordance with paragraph 19(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Levelling Up Fund Round 2, Key Decision was exempt from the call-in procedure due to the urgent nature of the decision being made.

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an overview of the guidance and bidding requirements to access Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund.

This report sought approval for the submission of five proposals across County Durham for the following parliamentary constituencies: City of Durham, Easington, North Durham, North West Durham and Sedgefield and outlined each submission for Round 2 identifying a match funding requirement, including £10 million of Council funding to lever an initial £92 million Levelling Up Fund investment towards the five Levelling Up schemes with a total expenditure of £117 million.

Decision

We

- (a) Agreed the draft outline approach for the Levelling Up submission for Round Two and support the five proposals for investment across the City of Durham, Easington, North Durham, North West Durham and Sedgefield parliamentary constituencies;
- (b) Noted the anticipated bid costs estimated of £117.4 million, including £92 million of LUF government grant to be bid for;
- (c) Utilise £5 million of Capital funding approved in February 2022 as part of the MTFP(12) process and if all Levelling Up bids were successful, recognise that a further £5 million would be required in MTFP(13) to meet match funding requirements;
- (d) £11.4 million of match funding required and how this would be funded;
- (e) Noted that earmarked reserves were available to develop submitted bids to ensure that they were delivery ready if funding was awarded. This meets the requirement to commence delivery prior to March 2023;
- (f) Recognised that further design work and costings was to be finalised and this could influence the final LUF request for government grant. The business case development underway would further shape proposals and time scales were very tight and pressured to develop all five proposals in time for the deadline; and

- (g) Delegated authority to the Corporate Director for Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources Investments and Assets and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance to take all such decisions necessary to progress and finalise Levelling Up proposals for Round 2 ready for the submission deadlines on 6 July 2022.

3. Cyber Security Strategy Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Susan McDonnell

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which highlighted the importance and provided an overview of the Councils cyber security arrangements and proposed the adoption of a new corporate cyber security strategy for Durham County Council.

Decision

We noted the contents of the report and agreed the adoption of the Cyber Security Strategy

13 July 2022

1. Proposal to close Forest of Teesdale Primary School on 31 August 2022, Key Decision: CYPS/03/2022 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 Forest of Teesdale Primary School on 31 August 2022, 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.

Decision

We agreed to close Forest of Teesdale Primary School on 31 August 2022.

2 2021/22 Final Outturn for the General Fund and Collection Fund Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Richard Bell

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the final revenue and capital outturn for the General

Fund for 2021/22, the final outturn for the Council's Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Fund for 2021/22, the use of and contributions to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in year and at year end together with the closing position regarding balances held at 31 March 2022 and achievement of Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (11) savings targets in 2021/22.

Decision

We noted:

- (a) the final revenue outturn underspend of £11.425 million which represented 2.48% of the revised net expenditure budget of £461.251 million;
- (b) the net decrease in the Cash Limit Reserves of £4.208 million during 2021/22 (following General Fund funding of CYPS in year Cash limit overspend), with closing Cash Limit Reserves of £11.565 million. These sums would continue to be held as Earmarked Reserves and be available for Service Groupings to manage their budgets effectively;
- (c) the closing General Reserve balance of £25.898 million, which was within the council's general reserves policy of retaining a balance of between 5% and 7.5% of the net budget requirement;
- (d) the closing balance on Earmarked Reserves (excluding Cash Limit and Schools Reserves) was £223.964 million, which included the creation and replenishment of earmarked reserves at year end;
- (e) the closing balance on Schools Reserves of £34.276 million;
- (f) the outturn position for the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates.
- (g) the amount of savings delivered during 2021/22 of the MTFP(11) period. (h) The emerging inflationary pressures that had been managed within contingencies during 2021/22 and the requirement to manage via reserve and service cash limits going forward.

We agreed:

- (a) that the capital budget underspend of £15.911 million be carried forward into 2022/23;
- (b) that service groupings continue to regularly review capital profiles throughout 2022/23, reporting revisions to Cabinet as necessary

3 Medium Term Financial Plan(13), 2023/24 – 2026/27 and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Key Decision CORP/R/22/01

Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Richard Bell

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the development of the 2023/24 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(13)) covering the period 2023/24 to

2026/27. The report also considered a review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the updated MTFP forecasts and the requirement to identify additional savings of £54.7 million for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27, and also noted that this forecast could change significantly based upon outcome of future government funding settlements, the Fair Funding Review and the ongoing impact of the pandemic, demand for services and inflationary pressures upon the council;
- (b) noted that at this stage a forecast £21.9 million of savings were required to balance the 2023/24 budget;
- (c) agreed the high level MTFP(13) and 2023/24 budget setting timetable contained in the report;
- (d) agreed the approach outlined for consultation on the 2023/24 budget and MTFP(13);
- (e) agreed the proposals to build equalities considerations into decision making; and
- (f) agreed that Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme should remain unchanged for 2023/24.

4 Storm Arwen review

Portfolio Holder – Councillor John Shuttleworth

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which considered a review of the response to Storm Arwen and an improvement plan for managing future incidents.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the contents of the report and the feedback from the different elements of the review outlined in Appendices 4 to 8;
- (b) noted the comments from the Stronger and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 May 2022 outlined in paragraphs 128 to 131
- (c) approved the improvement plan outlined in Appendix 9
- (d) within this, agreed to support the expansion of community resilience support across the county and the provision of improved training for elected Members and officers on emergency planning
- (e) agreed to share the report with NPg and the LRF to inform their own reviews and multi-agency planning.

5 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott

We considered a report of the Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the approach and progress made so far in the development of an Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and sought approval for the submission of the UKSPF Investment Plan for Durham.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the approach and progress that was being made to develop investment plans for UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the emerging priority areas;
- (b) noted the implications and risks to the Council as EU funding came to an end and give further consideration on how to ensure an effective transition arrangement from EU funding and UKSPF;
- (c) delegated authority to the Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Leader to approve the investment plan's submission to Government before the deadline of 1 August 2022.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Reports – 15 June 2022

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday 15 June 2022, 9.30 am - Durham County Council](#)

Cabinet Agenda and Reports – 13 July 2022

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday 13 July 2022, 9.30 am - Durham County Council](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,
Leader of the Council
13 September 2022

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County Council

21 September 2022

Local Government Boundary Commission
Review



Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Amanda Hoggood, Leader of the Council

Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance

Electoral Division(s) affected:
Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To agree the Council's draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission England (LGBCE) in respect of Council Size.

Executive Summary

- 2 The LGBCE are conducting an Electoral Review of Durham County Council. The Review will consider and determine:
 - The total number of councillors to be elected to the council
 - The boundaries of future electoral divisions
 - The number of councillors representing each division and
 - The name of the electoral divisions
- 3 The principal aim of the review is to deliver electoral equality across the local authority area by ensuring those councillors represent a similar number of electorate.
- 4 The review is conducted in two stages. The first stage considers Council size and the second considers warding patterns. This report sets out a draft submission in respect of Council size and the data and information required by the LGBCE.

Recommendation

5 Council is recommended to:

i) consider and agree the submission on Council Size; and

ii) delegate authority the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Electoral Review Member Working Group to finalise the data and information and proposals on Council size prior to submission to the LGBCE by 4 October 2022.

Background

- 6 The last local government boundary review in County Durham took place following the 2008 elections and was implemented to coincide with the local elections in May 2013.
- 7 Local government boundary reviews are conducted to ensure fair representation at local government elections after any significant changes in the distribution of electors and seek to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.
- 8 Reviews also look at whether the boundaries of divisions (wards) within a local authority area need to be altered, and will aim to create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities.
- 9 In October 2021 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) notified the County Council of their intention to undertake a review of Durham County Council to consider and determine:
 - The total number of councillors to be elected to the council
 - The boundaries of future electoral divisions
 - The number of councillors representing each division; and
 - The name of the electoral division.
- 10 The average electorate per Councillor within County Durham is 3,106. Durham meets the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality as one division has a variance outside +/-30% of the average for the authority. Furthermore, 15 of the 63 (24%) divisions have a variance outside +/-10%. Four divisions have a variance outside +/-20%.
- 11 Any changes made to the electoral arrangements following the review will be implemented to coincide with the local elections in 2025.

Progress to date

- 12 In January 2022, representatives from the LGBCE held preliminary discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Group Leaders, the Chief Executive, and Officers from Legal and Democratic Services to discuss the review process.
- 13 The LGBCE delivered a briefing to all Members on 11 February 2022 which outlined the purpose and process of the review. The LGBCE also prepared a guide for Councillors, which summarises the reasons for the review, the detail of the electoral review process, the stages of the

review, and how to get involved. It also includes a list of the current divisions and variances, and a map showing the electoral imbalances. This document was provided to all Councillors and is attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

- 14 A Member Working Group comprising all Group Leaders and the Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (or their representatives) was established to oversee the preparation of the Council's submissions. The Working Group, which has been meeting monthly is supported by Officers from Democratic Services, Research and Intelligence and Planning.

Stage One: Council Size

- 15 Stage one of the review relates to Council size and will determine the total number of councillors to be elected to the Council in the future.
- 16 The LGBCE considers the following three broad areas when considering Council size:
 - governance arrangements
 - scrutiny functions
 - the representational role of Councillors
- 17 Proposals in respect of Council size need to address these three areas. The aim is to ensure that the Council is not too small that it cannot discharge its statutory functions or too large to function effectively. The LGBCE looks for particularly strong evidence in support of proposals, which put Councils amongst the largest (85+ Councillors) or smallest (35 Councillors) when compared with similar Councils nationwide.
- 18 The LGBCE must construct electoral arrangements that reflect local circumstances so there is no strict mathematical criteria or formula for determining Council size. The Council's submission should demonstrate the characteristics and needs of each local authority. The review presents an opportunity to consider how the Council works now and in the future.
- 19 The LBCGE will refer to the Council's statistically similar neighbours, which allows the LCBCE to identify 'expected ranges' for both the number of Councillors and the Councillor-to-electors ratios. This helps the LGBCE understand who the Council compares with its nearest neighbours and where appropriate query proposals, which appear unexpected when compared with similar authorities. The LGBCE

expects the council to present the case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.

20 The LGBCE expect the Council to challenge its current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. Submissions should focus on future needs of the council and demonstrate that alternatives had been considered and why they have been discounted.

21 The Working Group requested Officers prepare a submission based on the following:

i) 126 Councillors – Councillor : Elector Ratio 3,100

The Working Group considered that it would be preferable to maintain the status quo. A survey of all Councillors showed that all Councillors spend in excess of 16 hours a week on Council business. This was particularly the case for Councillors with special responsibilities. All Councillors who completed the survey reflected that they rarely get any time off as they are frequently contacted/working outside normal office hours. However, the Working Group acknowledged that maintaining the status quo is unlikely to be acceptable to the LGBCE because of the electoral imbalance which has led to the review. Also, the Council is now an outlier in terms of the number of Councillors when compared with other statistically similar Councils.

ii) 85 Councillors – Councillor : Elector Ratio 4,590

The Working Group identified this figure as it is the threshold at which the LGBCE starts to consider whether the Council is too large. The Working Group consider a Council size of 85 to be unrealistic. At this size, the Council would be too small to discharge its statutory duties and would require further delegation to Officers. The Group were concerned that this would create a democratic deficit as well as an administrative burden for the Council.

iii) 98 Councillors – Councillor : Elector Ratio 3,980

The Working Group are recommending a submission based on 98 Councillors. In the absence of being able to maintain the status quo, a Council of this size would be able to deliver its statutory functions without requiring significant additional delegation of functions. It would also enable the Council to maintain its existing scrutiny framework. LGBCE recommendations for Councils of a similar size have been in the region of 100. For example, Buckinghamshire (population of 410,000) proposed 120 Councillors (from 147) but the LGBCE have recommended 98. The Working Group consider 98 to be a realistic

figure for County Durham.

- 22 In recommending a Council size of 98 and the draft submission, the Working Group recognise that individual political groups may have a different view or proposal. However, it is important that the Council agrees a realistic submission, which informs its future rather than have a figure imposed upon it. The LGBCE has advised that political groups and individuals may wish to present their own submissions either alongside or as an alternative to the Council's submission. All submissions will be considered equally, and that decisions will be made based on the strength of evidence and rationale put forward.
- 23 A copy of the Council's submission is attached as Appendix 3. This must be submitted to the LGBCE by 4 October 2022. The LGBCE will confirm its recommendation in respect of Council size in November 2022. This figure will be used to inform the second stage of the review in respect of warding patterns. The figure will not be confirmed until the end of the review process and may be adjusted during the review of warding patterns.

Data and Information Requirements

- 24 In addition to the Council Size document, the Council must submit data and information in respect of electoral forecasting, parish electoral arrangements and forecast electoral property and elector count data as at 2028. The Council must also provide information in relation to polling districts and polling places, community governance reviews and stakeholders.
- 25 The information required is extensive and the majority of it must be provided in a specified format. Copies of the data and information has been made available to the Working Group and left in Group rooms to enable Members to review it. The information has been updated throughout in response to representations from Members.
- 26 Members have raised queries in relation to the forecast of housing development in their areas, particularly where they consider the forecast to be too low. However, the LGBCE provides guidance in respect of information in relation to housing projections. Only housing developments that have started or are projected to start before 2028 and which complete units between 2022 and 2028 should be included in the forecasts. Speculative sites should not be included.

- 27 In accordance with the guidance, Officers have based the forecasts on the following:

Housing trajectory

- shows projected housing growth by year and by site
 - includes all sites with planning permission, both those started on site and those not yet started
 - build out rates per year based on knowledge of the site, past delivery, developers, size of the site
 - Lead in times on sites depending on the stage they are at, e.g. outline applications/full applications which are dictated by planning policy guidance
 - County Durham Plan housing allocations are all included in the trajectory. If planning applications have not yet been submitted or granted, lead in times have been adjusted accordingly.
 - Data is correct as of 1 April 2022 (last full financial year of data) and takes account of past delivery/completion on sites
- 28 To give an example of how this guidance has been applied, Sniperley has a projected development of 1,700 units. However, only 420 are projected to come on-line by 2028. Therefore, the figure to be included in the forecasts is 420.
- 29 Members have also suggested that the position after 1 April 2022 should be provided so that the LGBCE have the most up to date position. However, housing trajectories are updated annually each financial year as this aligns with government returns on housebuilding and delivery. Projections continually change throughout the year as new applications are approved and units are completed. It is therefore more practical to provide projections based on the last full financial year.

Next Steps

- 30 As explained above, the Council must submit its proposals by 4 October 2022. The LGBCE will confirm its recommendation in respect of Council size in November 2022. Between 22 November 2022 and 30 January 2023, the LGBCE will consult on proposed warding patterns.
- 31 Once the Council's proposals have been submitted, the Working Group will begin to consider warding arrangements based on a Council size of 98. The Council has purchased software to assist with this stage of the review. On receipt of the LGBCE's recommendation on Council size, it

is proposed that drop-in sessions are held (likely to be in early December) to enable all Members to participate in the exercise.

Contact: Helen Lynch

Tel: 03000 269 729

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The outcome of the review will come into effect at the local elections in 2025.

Finance

Additional tools have been purchased to assist with the second part of the review in looking at divisional / warding arrangements. These build on the election management system to provide mapping with the forecasted electorate to assist the council in proposing re-configured boundaries that meet the criteria set by the LGBCE on elector equality.

Consultation

The Member Working Group has been consulted throughout the preparation of the draft Council size submission and data and information gathering. Members of the Group have in turn consulted with their groups. Data and Information has also been available in Group rooms. An all Member survey was completed by 45 out of 126 Councillors.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None specific within this report.

Climate Change

None specific within this report.

Human Rights

None specific within this report.

Crime and Disorder

None specific within this report.

Staffing

Significant Officer time is required to support the review and collate the information required by the LGBCE

Accommodation

None specific within this report.

Risk

None specific within this report.

Procurement

None specific within this report.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Electoral Review of Durham

A Guide for Councillors

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A Message from the Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Professor Colin Mellors OBE

This briefing tells you all you need to know about the electoral review of your council. It tells you what an electoral review is, why we are conducting it and how you can influence the outcome.

The electoral review is an opportunity for you to shape your council for the future. On council size, the review will help you decide how you will represent communities in the future and ensure that your governance arrangements reflect your long-term ambitions. When we come to consider boundaries, we will aim to build electoral wards that reflect communities and lock in electoral fairness for future elections.

The outcome of the review is not pre-determined. The Commission will only take decisions after giving careful consideration to the evidence provided by you, your council and local communities throughout the process.

Your local knowledge will be valuable in helping us come to our conclusions. The best electoral reviews are those where councillors engage with the process. The Commission will take decisions on the strength of evidence provided during the review after we have assessed all submissions against our statutory criteria. It doesn't matter whether the evidence comes from the council, council groups or individual councillors, we have an open mind about which proposals we will put forward as formal recommendations.

The electoral arrangements of your council will change. Our experience of electoral reviews clearly shows that changing boundaries in one part of your area will inevitably have an impact on other areas. Most wards are likely to experience a change to one or more of their boundaries, name or number of councillors representing them. We will look to you to influence the nature of those changes.

We will make it as easy as possible for you to influence the process. In addition to our preliminary dealings with the council, we will hold at least two phases of public consultation before we finalise the recommendations of the review. We encourage you to engage with your communities about the review, so we can get the broadest possible spread of evidence.

I hope you find this briefing helpful.

Professor Colin Mellors OBE

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body established by Parliament in April 2010. We are not part of government and are accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee.

Our organisation consists of the Chair of the Commission and five Commissioners who are supported by approximately 20 members of staff.

What is an Electoral Review?

An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. These are:

- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size.
- The names, number and boundaries of wards.
- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward.

The review is likely to have implications for the whole local authority not just areas with high levels of electoral inequality.

Why Durham?

Electoral reviews look at whether the boundaries of wards or divisions within a local authority need to be altered. We might conduct these reviews either to ensure fairer representation at local government elections after any significant changes in the distribution of electors, or the request of a local authority for other reasons.

Durham meets the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality as one division has a variance outside +/-30% from the average for the authority. Furthermore, 15 of the 63 (24%) divisions have a variance outside +/-10%. Four divisions have a variance outside +/-20%.

The Commission will seek to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

A full table of current wards and their variances can be found in Appendix 1. A map showing the distribution of any electoral imbalances across the authority can be found in Appendix 2.

Electoral Review Process

The electoral review will have two distinct parts;

- **Council size:** before we re-draw ward boundaries, the Commission will come to a view on the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in future. We will come to a conclusion on council size after hearing the council's (and/or councillors') views during the preliminary phase.
- **Ward boundaries:** we will re-draw ward boundaries so that they meet our statutory criteria. You will have an opportunity to put forward your ideas in two phases of public consultation.

You, and the communities you represent, can influence the review. Please refer to the timetable in Appendix 3 to find out when you can have your say.

Part One: Council Size

The first part of the review will determine the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in the future. We call this 'council size'. We will not consider ward boundaries until we have completed this phase.

By the end of the preliminary stage of the review, we expect the council and/or its political groups, to present the Commission with a case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.

The Commission will make its judgment on council size by considering three broad areas:

- We will look at the **governance arrangements** of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
- The Commission will look at the council's **scrutiny functions** relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
- We will also consider the **representational role of councillors in the local community** and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

If you plan to submit to us on council size (whether it's for an increase, reduction or maintaining current arrangements), you should make sure you address these areas and that your view is backed up by evidence.

Governance Arrangements

The Commission aims to ensure that councils have the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the council effectively now and in the future.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about the cabinet and/or committee responsibilities, the number of committees and their workload, delegation to officials, other bodies and plans for the future.

Scrutiny Functions

Every local authority has mechanisms to scrutinise the executive functions of the council and other local bodies. They also have significant discretion over the kind (and extent) of activities involved in that process. In considering council size, the Commission will want to satisfy itself that these responsibilities can be administered conveniently and effectively.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about the number of councillors your authority needs to hold the decision-makers to account and ensure that the council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations (e.g. other public-sector bodies, partnerships, and trusts).

Representational Role of Councillors

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to representation and members will represent and provide leadership to their communities in different ways. However, we are interested in hearing about the extent to which members routinely engage with communities and how this affects workload and responsibilities.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about how councillors interact with their communities, their caseloads and the kind of support they need effectively to represent local people and groups.

Part Two: Warding Patterns

We will carry out two phases of public consultation when we will invite you to present your proposals for new ward boundaries.

The first round of consultation will ask for proposals on new ward boundaries. We will use responses to that consultation to draw up draft recommendations for new boundaries across your area. We will hold the second round of consultation on those proposals during which time you will be able to comment on them and propose alternatives.

The Commission will draw up new electoral arrangements that provide the best balance of our statutory criteria. The criteria include three main elements:

- *Delivering electoral equality for local voters.* This means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
- *Interests and identities of local communities.* This means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- *Effective and convenient local government.* This means ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements, including both the council size decision

and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

You should ensure that any proposal you make to the Commission, during either phase of consultation, takes into account the statutory criteria. The most persuasive cases are those that are also supported by evidence. Over the next five pages, you will find further explanations about the types of evidence the Commission usually receives under each of the criteria. This might help you build your submission.

Delivering Electoral Equality for Local Voters

The Commission aims to deliver a pattern of wards where each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.

We base decisions on the number of electors in a ward and not the total population. The Commission's obligation, set out in the law, is to deliver electoral equality where councillors represent a similar number of electors. This could not be achieved if we considered population statistics rather than electoral register totals.

Once the Commission has taken a view on council size, it gives us, and anyone interested in submitting proposals to the review, a clear idea of the target for achieving electoral equality for future patterns of wards.

Although we strive for perfect electoral equality for all wards, we recognise that this is unlikely to be exactly achieved. If you propose a boundary that would lead to an electoral variance for the ward (see exhibit 1), the Commission will need to see evidence that such electoral inequality is justified on the grounds of the Commission's other statutory criteria. The higher the level of electoral variance you are proposing for a ward, the more persuasive your evidence will need to be.

The Commission has an obligation, set out in the law, to consider electorate forecasts five years after the completion of the review. The purpose of the forecasts is to try and ensure that the review delivers electoral equality for voters in the longer term. We will work with council officers to draw up realistic forecasts for your authority. Further guidance on how we calculate projected electorates are available on our website at: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>

Table 1, below, shows how the Commission calculates and presents electoral variances in its reports. You can read the full report here: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/east-sussex/eastbourne>.

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Devonshire	3	8,623	2,874	6%	9,006	3,002	5%
2 Hampden Park	3	7,422	2,474	-8%	7,872	2,624	-8%
3 Langney	3	7,817	2,606	-4%	8,197	2,732	-4%
4 Meads	3	8,094	2,698	0%	8,566	2,855	0%
5 Old Town	3	8,339	2,780	3%	8,793	2,931	3%
6 Ratton	3	7,392	2,464	-9%	7,747	2,582	-9%
7 Sovereign	3	9,135	3,045	13%	9,517	3,172	11%
8 St Anthony's	3	8,106	2,702	0%	8,715	2,905	2%
9 Upperton	3	8,018	2,673	-1%	8,420	2,807	-1%
Totals	27	72,946	-	-	76,832	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,702	-	-	2,846	-

Table 1: Final Recommendations for Eastbourne Borough Council (2016)

Interests and Identities of Local Communities

Unlike electoral equality, it isn't possible to measure levels of community identity, so we will be looking for evidence on a range of issues to support your reasoning. The best evidence for community identity is normally a combination of factual information such as the existence of communication links, facilities and organisations along with an explanation of how local people use those facilities.

Below are some issues that we often use to assess community interests and identity. You may wish to use some of these examples to tell us why you are putting forward your view:

- *Transport links.* Are there good communication links within the proposed ward? Is there any form of public transport? If you are proposing that two areas (e.g. streets, estates or parishes) should be included in the same ward together, how easily can you travel between them?
- *Shared interests.* Are there particular issues that affect your community that aren't necessarily relevant to neighbouring areas that might help us determine where a ward boundary should be drawn? For example, many local authorities contain areas that have urban, suburban and rural characteristics. Each of those areas may have different needs and interests though they could be located next to each other. One area might be more affected by urban issues such as the local economy while an adjacent area might be more concerned with local transport matters. We would like to hear evidence about what those issues are and how they mean boundaries should combine or separate the areas in question.
- *Community groups.* Is there a residents' group or any other local organisation that represents the area? What area does that group cover? What kind of activities do they undertake and are there any joint-working relationships between organisations that could indicate shared community interests between different geographical areas?
- *Facilities.* Where do local people in your area go for shopping, medical services, leisure facilities etc? The location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community as do some service arrangements such as NHS commissioning groups. We would like to hear evidence from local people about how they interact with those facilities so that we can understand the shape of local communities and the movement and behaviours of their residents.
- *Identifiable boundaries.* Natural features such as rivers can often provide strong and recognisable boundaries. Similarly, constructions such as major roads, railway lines or commercial developments can also form well known and effective barriers between communities.
- *Parishes.* In areas where parishes exist, the parish boundaries often represent the extent of a community. The Commission often uses parishes as the building blocks of wards. Parishes that share a secretariat or other arrangements often fit together well in the same ward.

These are issues you may wish to consider when proposing a pattern of wards or if you are commenting on the Commission's proposals. It is not – and is not intended to be – an exhaustive list of matters the Commission will consider when concluding wards and their boundaries. Similarly, the Commission attaches no specific weighting to any of the issues above when making decisions. This guide simply intends to provide some prompts for you to be able to have your say.

There are also several things the Commission does not consider to be strong evidence when it takes decisions. For example, an area's history and tradition may be the basis of a sense of community identity. However, communities change over time and perceptions can vary between individuals as to the nature of those ties. The Commission would need to hear how and why those traditional arrangements reflect communities now.

In addition, whilst social and economic data (e.g. from the census or other statistical sources) can tell you a lot about individuals living in an area, it doesn't necessarily explain the nature of communities and is often a poor guide to their interests and identities. The Commission considers that this kind of evidence can provide useful background information for an area, but we will treat it with caution when proposing new wards.

Effective and Convenient Local Government

We also consider whether a ward pattern would help deliver effective and convenient local government to people. If you are providing evidence to the Commission, there are several issues you might want to consider so that our recommendations can help us meet this obligation.

- *Ward size.* We will look at the geographic size of the ward and try to ensure that it is not so large that it would be difficult for a councillor to represent. Similarly, in urban areas, a ward might be so small in an area that its councillor might not be able to contribute effectively to the wider business of the council.
- *Ward names.* Councils and their communities are usually able to suggest appropriate names for wards that reflect community identities and mean something to local people. In determining names for wards, we aim to avoid confusing local electors and ensure that names are distinct and easily identifiable, for example, our preference is for short names rather than those which attempt to describe an area exhaustively.
- *Internal access.* Recommendations for ward boundaries will normally provide for people to move between all parts of the ward without having to venture outside of the ward. This normally means vehicular access by road. However, there may be occasions when parts of a community are linked not by vehicular routes but by footpaths, footways, pedestrianised streets etc. These will be more likely to be acceptable in densely populated residential areas of towns or cities.

- *Barriers.* Transport links such as roads and railway lines can unite communities or serve to divide them. For example, a parade of shops can act as the focal point for an area, but the main road can also signify the ward boundary between communities. The Commission will aim to reflect these differences in its recommendations.
- *'Doughnut' wards.* We occasionally receive proposals for a pattern of wards that propose an 'inner' ward and an 'outer' ward for a settlement. We will not normally recommend this kind of pattern because the communication links between the north and south of the outer ward are usually poor and we also often find that people in the northern part of the outer ward share higher levels of community identity with residents in the north of the inner ward than with residents in the south of the outer ward. Where we need to divide a settlement or an estate to achieve electoral equality, we will usually seek an alternative to this pattern.
- *Detached wards.* The Commission is sometimes presented with proposals to include two geographically separate areas in the same ward. We will not usually accept a proposal of this kind, except in extraordinary geographical circumstances such as for offshore islands, as it is unlikely to meet our criteria for promoting community identity and interests or delivering effective and convenient local government.
- *Number of councillors for each ward.* There is no limit, in law, to the number of councillors that can be elected to represent a ward. However, as a matter of policy, the Commission will not accept a proposal for more than three councillors to represent a ward as we do not think such an arrangement would promote effective and convenient local government or local accountability.
- *Electoral Cycles.* For councils that hold whole-council elections every four years, the Commission can propose any pattern of wards that it believes best meets its statutory criteria. This is usually a mixture of single-, two- and three-councillor wards.

Councils that elect by whole-council election are able formally to request a single-member ward review. Such a request must be made to the Commission before the start of the first round of consultation opens. In a single-member ward review, the Commission will have a presumption in favour of a uniform pattern of single-member wards for the whole local authority.

Consultation: How to 'Have your say'

An electoral review is a consultative process. You, and your community, can influence the outcome. We have an open mind about adopting proposals from groups or individuals that are supported by evidence and complement the statutory criteria.

In addition to the preliminary phase of the review, when we gather information about the council and assess your views on council size, we will hold at least two phases of public consultation.

We encourage councillors to take part in each phase of consultation, as individuals or as groups, and we hope that elected members can also encourage communities to take part in the consultation.

We are only able to consider evidence that is made to us in writing as all decisions are taken by formal meetings of the whole Commission. The best evidence includes the reasons why you agree with our proposals or why you disagree with them. If you do not think our proposals are right for your area, we would welcome alternative suggestions for boundaries that meet our criteria.

There are several ways in which you can keep up to date with the progress of the review and have your say:

- *Website*. You can keep track of the electoral review for your area through our website at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/>. We set up a dedicated web page for each review where you will find details of its timetable, our reports, maps, proposals and guidance. You can comment on our proposals directly through our website or by emailing: reviews@lgbce.org.uk. And you can write to us at the address shown on the contacts page. We also publish all the submissions we receive so you can see what kind of evidence we relied on to make our decisions.
- *Interactive consultation portal*. The portal allows you to view and interact with our maps as well as comment on our proposals directly. By logging on to <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/> you will be able to view our proposals down to street level, draw your pattern of wards or annotate the maps to tell us about the nature of the community interests and identities in your area. Below, you can see what the site looks like and how you might be able to put forward your views. Log on to <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/> to find out how you can interact with our mapping.

Select a Consultation to start

By local authority:

Select Consultation

OR

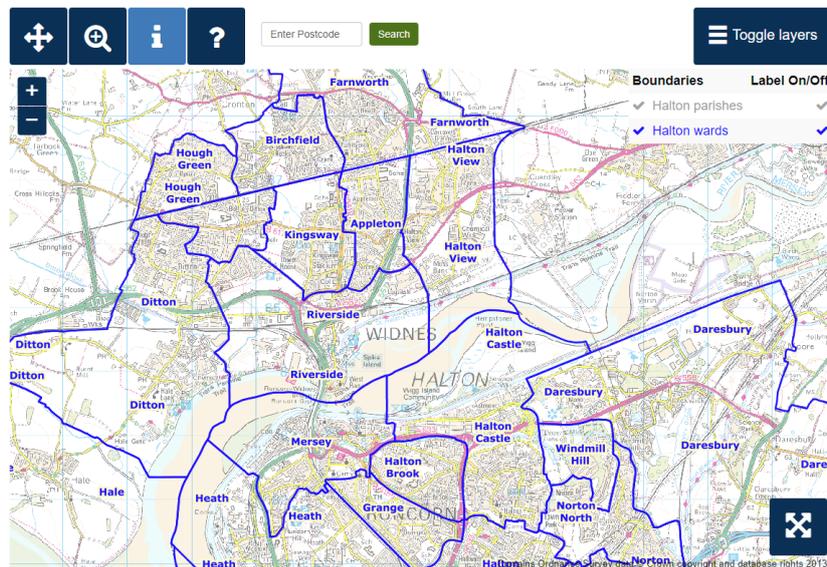
By postcode:

Search

Only local authorities under review or recently reviewed are listed above.

Welcome to our consultation area

- Find out if we are consulting in your area
- Explore our proposals
- Draw your boundaries
- Have your say



- **Parishes and/or resident groups.** If your area has parish councils, we will offer to hold a briefing meeting locally at the start of an electoral review with representatives of the parishes. Alternatively, we will consider offering a briefing meeting for residents' associations at the start of a review to brief them on the process.
- **Members of Parliament.** The Commission offers to brief all local MPs at each phase of consultation and will keep them updated on the progress of the review.
- **Lead commissioner.** One of our commissioners will be appointed as lead commissioner for the review and will represent the Commission in meetings with the council though all decisions are taken by the Commission collectively. The lead commissioner and key staff will also conduct at least one tour of the local authority area to assess the issues 'on the ground' and areas of contention as we draw up recommendations.

- *Publicity.* We will issue a press release at every stage of an electoral review to local press and media to encourage engagement in the process by local people. We will also ask the council to publicise the review. We will produce posters at each stage to be displayed in council offices, libraries and by local organisations and we will ensure that we produce hard copies of all our reports and maps for display in council buildings and libraries for those who do not have internet access. Follow us on Twitter @LGBCE.
- *Community groups.* At the start of a review, we will ask your local authority for information and contact details for local community groups and organisations that might be interested in the review and who might also wish to contribute to it. We will write to all those groups with information about the review at each stage and invite evidence from them. We will also ensure that we make contact with local organisations that represent minority groups that might otherwise have been excluded from the consultation process. We will provide translations and accessible versions of our material on request.

Making effective representations

Council Size

When you put forward a council size, we will assess your number (or range of numbers) against your 15 'nearest neighbour' authorities as set out by CIPFA. Refer to Appendix 4 to see how your authority compares to its 'nearest neighbours'.

If your proposal means that your council size would be well above or below the average of your statistical neighbours, you need to ensure your case for that council size is particularly strong. In some cases, your current council size could put you outside the range of your neighbours, so we would need a strong case to retain the status quo.

If you want to make sure your case on council size is as strong as possible, you should:

- Make sure you address your governance arrangements, scrutiny functions and the representational role of councillors.
- Support your case with evidence e.g. of councillor workload, the volume of decisions and councillor representation in the community.
- Ensure that you have taken into account future trends and that the council size you suggest will still be right in future years.
- Find out more about council size in our technical guidance: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>

Boundaries

A persuasive representation regarding the warding arrangements for a local authority will usually;

- *Be submitted at the right time.* If you have a view on division boundaries, don't just wait until we have published draft recommendations. Submit the first consultation to ensure we can build your proposal at the earliest possible stage.
- *Take account of our statutory criteria.* The Commission will judge all submissions, and make recommendations, based on those criteria.
- *Consider the consequences of the proposal across the wider area.* Most proposals will have a knock-on effect elsewhere in the borough.
- *Be based on evidence.* Tell us why your view should be accepted and how your suggestion meets the criteria.
- *Suggest an alternative.* If you are objecting to a proposal, tell us where we should draw the boundaries.

Finally, the Commission welcomes submissions that support its recommendations as much as those that propose alternatives. People who oppose our draft recommendations will likely get in touch with the Commission to put forward their alternative proposals. So, if you support our recommendations, you should make sure you tell us so that we can balance the evidence.

Recent Reviews

The Commission's rolling programme of reviews means that many other local authorities have been through the process in recent years. You may find their experiences useful for several reasons:

- Read their council size submissions to find out what arguments they put to the Commission and the evidence they provided.
- Find out how councils put their ward patterns together and which proposals the Commission found persuasive.
- Look at the submissions we received from groups and individuals during consultation.

Our website includes dedicated web pages for all previous electoral reviews and you can read all the evidence we received as well as our draft and final recommendations reports.

Contacts

The key contacts for this electoral review of Durham are:

Review Officer	Jonathan Ashby
Email	Jonathan.ashby@lgbce.org.uk
Telephone	0330 500 1274
Review Manager	Richard Buck
Email	Richard.buck@lgbce.org.uk
Telephone	0330 500 1271

If you want to send in a submission on the review:

Email	reviews@lgbce.org.uk
Consultation Portal	consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Switchboard: 0330 500 1525

Website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LGBCE

Twitter: @LGBCE

Appendix 1: Electoral Data Summary

No.	Division Name	No. Cllrs	Electorate 2020	Variance 2020 (%)
1	Annfield Plain	2	5,928	-5
2	Aycliffe East	2	6,375	3
3	Aycliffe North & Middridge	3	8,400	-10
4	Aycliffe West	2	5,356	-14
5	Barnard Castle East	2	6,915	11
6	Barnard Castle West	2	6,610	6
7	Belmont	3	10,066	8
8	Benfieldside	2	6,484	4
9	Bishop Auckland Town	2	6,004	-3
10	Bishop Middleham & Cornforth	1	2,885	-7
11	Blackhalls	2	6,190	0
12	Brandon	2	7,675	23
13	Burnopfield & Dipton	2	6,266	1
14	Chester-le-Street East	1	2,935	-6
15	Chester-le-Street North	1	3,038	-2
16	Chester-le-Street South	2	5,953	-4
17	Chester-le-Street West Central	2	5,788	-7
18	Chilton	1	3,474	12
19	Consett North	2	5,928	-5
20	Consett South	1	3,763	21
21	Coundon	1	3,161	2
22	Coxhoe	3	9,899	6
23	Craghead & South Moor	2	5,794	-7
24	Crook	3	9,240	-1
25	Dawdon	2	6,197	0
26	Deerness	3	9,472	2
27	Delves Lane	2	6,263	1
28	Deneside	2	5,369	-14
29	Durham South	1	2,136	-31
30	Easington	2	5,657	-9
31	Elvet & Gilesgate	2	4,702	-24
32	Esh & Witton Gilbert	2	6,349	2
33	Evenwood	2	6,433	3
34	Ferryhill	3	8,155	-13
35	Framwellgate & Newton Hall	3	10,362	11
36	Horden	2	5,381	-13
37	Lanchester	2	6,086	-2
38	Leadgate & Medomsley	2	6,815	10
39	Lumley	2	5,728	-8
40	Murton	2	5,751	-8
41	Neville's Cross	2	7,130	15
42	North Lodge	1	3,076	-1
43	Passfield	1	3,369	8

44	Pelton	3	10,205	9
45	Peterlee East	2	5,380	-13
46	Peterlee West	2	6,083	-2
47	Sacriston	2	5,668	-9
48	Seaham	2	5,351	-14
49	Sedgefield	2	6,405	3
50	Sherburn	2	6,680	7
51	Shildon & Dene Valley	3	9,680	4
52	Shotton & South Hetton	2	6,815	10
53	Spennymoor	3	8,820	-5
54	Stanley	2	6,228	0
55	Tanfield	2	6,494	4
56	Tow Law	1	3,419	10
57	Trimdon & Thornley	3	9,727	4
58	Tudhoe	2	7,077	14
59	Weardale	2	6,530	5
60	West Auckland	2	6,579	6
61	Willington & Hunwick	2	6,847	10
62	Wingate	1	3,142	1
63	Woodhouse Close	2	6,042	-3

*Data based on December 2020 electoral registers.

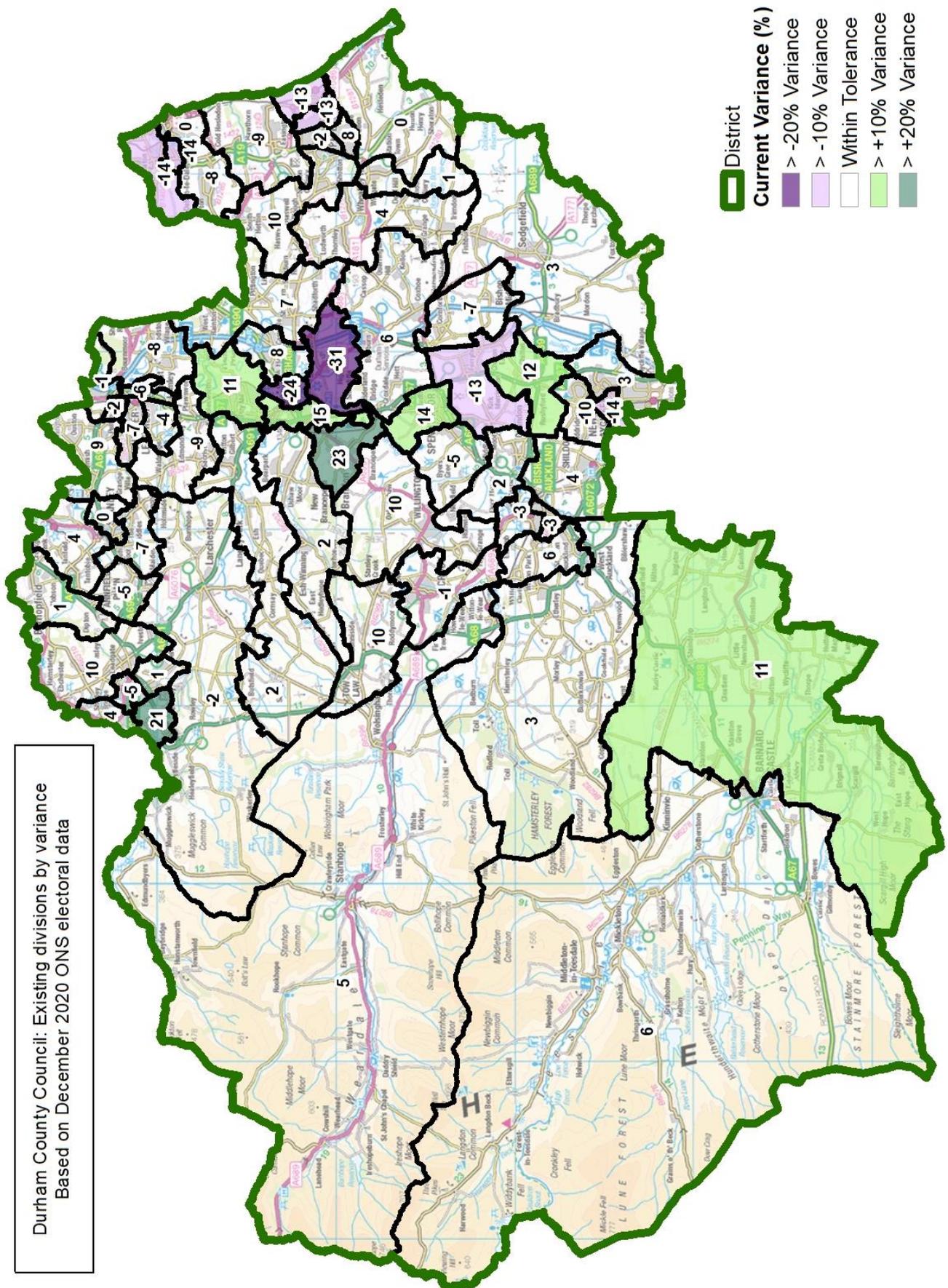
Data Summary

No. Cllrs	No. Electors	Cllr: Elector Ratio
63	391,730	3,109

	No. Wards
One-Councillor Divisions	11
Two-Councillor Divisions	41
Three-Councillor Divisions	11
Total No. Divisions	64

Electoral Imbalance	No. Wards	% Wards
> ±10%	15	24%
> ±20%	4	6%
> ±30%	1	2%

Appendix 2: Map of Electoral Variances



Appendix 3: Electoral Review Timetable

Preliminary Period

Briefings	Attendees		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Initial Meeting	Council Leader Chief Executive	Chair Chief Executive	26 October 2021
Officer Briefing	Council Officers involved in review	Review Manager Review Officer	TBC
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	
Parish/Town Council & Local Groups Briefing	Not required	Review Manager Review Officer	TBC

Council Size

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Develop council size proposal	Council Political Groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission.	Now until 4 October 2022
Submission of council size proposals	Council Political Groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt of submissions.	4 October 2022
Commission Meeting: Council Size	Not required	Commission	15 November 2022

Division Patterns

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Consultation on division patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	22 November 2022 to 30 January 2023
Commission Meeting: Draft Recommendations	Not required	Commission	11 April 2023

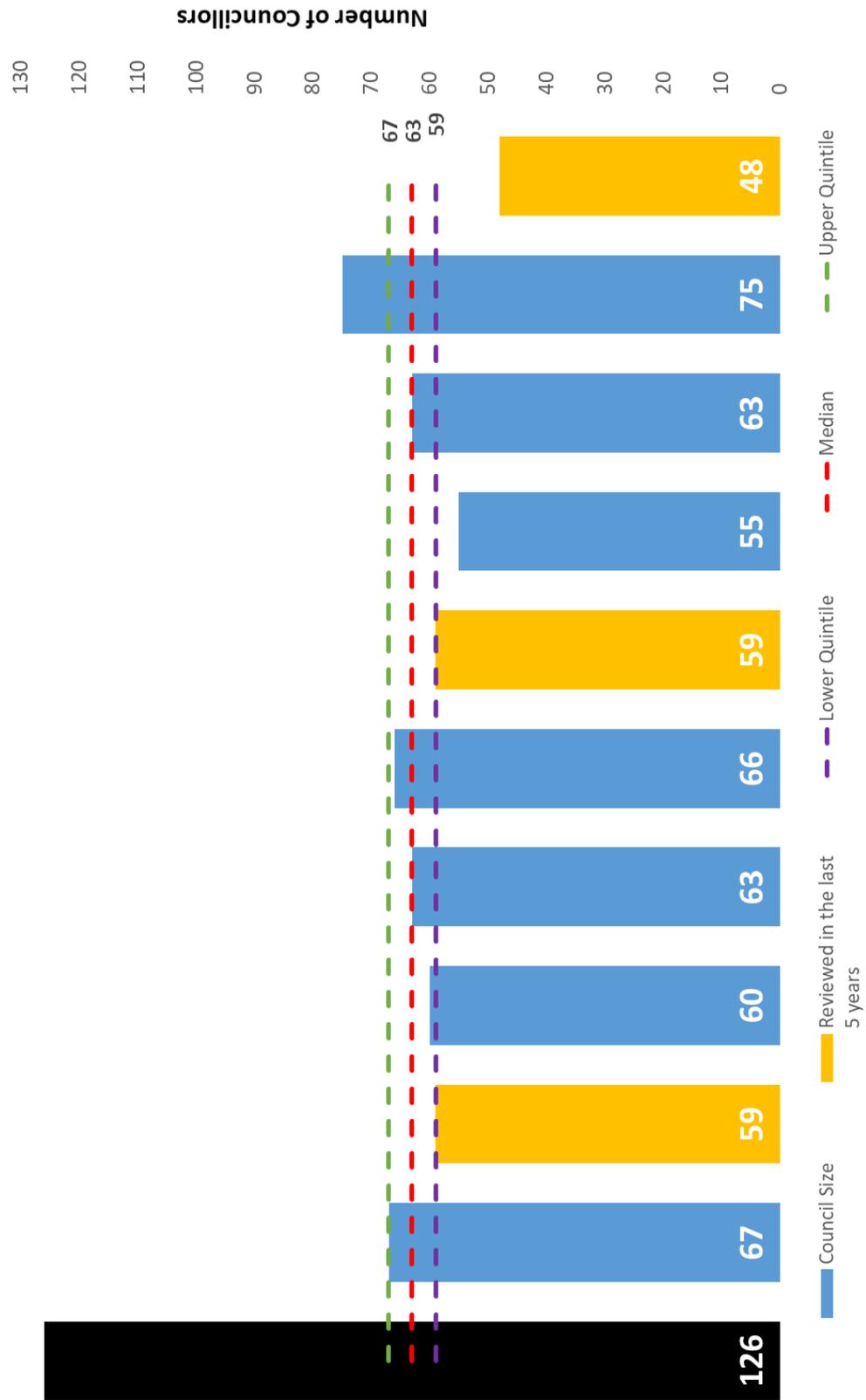
Consultation on Draft Recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	25 April 2023 to 03 July 2023
Commission Meeting: Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	12 September 2023
Final Recommendations published	Not required	Publish final recommendations	26 September 2023

Order

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Winter 2023
Order made	Not required	Commission	Early 2024
Implementation	Council	Not required	May 2025

Appendix 4: Council Size Expected Range

2021 CIPFA Group and Councillor Counts



Appendix 5: Frequently Asked Questions

What characterises a good electoral review?

The best electoral reviews are those where the council and councillors have engaged with the process at an early stage.

On council size, authorities that have thought seriously about how they want to manage the business of the council and represent local people for the long term, usually put forward strong submissions.

Where local authorities and/or members have put together a ward pattern that meets our statutory criteria and where the proposals are supported by evidence, we tend to be able to draw up recommendations that are largely built on consensus.

Councils that have been able to gain input from local groups and individuals on their proposals usually put forward a strong submission especially where it is supported by evidence.

What don't you consider in an electoral review?

Polling districts, school catchment areas, addresses and postcodes are not matters the Commission will take into account when drawing new ward boundaries. Although some existing wards may have strong boundaries and reflect local communities, we start with a clean sheet of paper when drawing up recommendations.

We take no account of parliamentary constituency boundaries (see below for more details).

Similarly, we do not take into account possible political implications of our recommendations.

Why can't you consider boundaries at the same time as the number of councillors?

The Commission will make a judgment on council size before we consider ward boundaries. This means that everybody who wishes to take part in the consultation will know the optimum number of electors per councillor which we need to achieve to deliver electoral equality in our pattern of wards. If you do not know the total number of councillors who will be elected to the council, it makes it very difficult to come up with a proposal for a ward pattern that will deliver this crucial statutory criterion.

On some occasions, the Commission will alter its view on council size in its draft or final recommendations by one councillor if that number provides for a scheme of wards which better reflects our statutory criteria.

How much will the review cost?

The Commission does not charge local authorities to undertake an electoral review and our funding is agreed by the Speaker's Committee in the House of Commons.

Every review is different, and some are more resource intensive than others. For example, a county will require more resources than a small district in terms of the quantity of maps, time spent drawing up recommendations and consultation materials.

Like most other public-sector organisations, the Commission is under an obligation to reduce costs. Since 2010, the Commission has reduced its budget by around 30% in real terms and will make further savings in the coming years.

My ward has the right number of electors already. Will it change?

Changes to wards are usually extensive in every review we conduct. For example, if we propose to change council size in a significant way, it is unlikely that your ward will then contain the optimum councillor: elector ratio. In addition, the knock-on effects of changing boundaries in one part of the local authority can have an impact elsewhere which usually leads to substantial changes.

If you wish to retain an existing boundary, you should tell us why such an arrangement complements the statutory criteria.

Will you look at the external boundaries of the council?

No. The electoral review will only consider internal ward boundaries. External boundaries can only be changed through a different type of review called a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR).

More details on PABRs can be found on our website at:
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>

Will parliamentary constituency boundaries be affected?

Reviews of constituency boundaries are the responsibility of the Boundary Commission for England which is a separate body and operates under different legislation. You can find out more about their work on their website at:
boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/.

The Commission has no obligation to consider constituency boundaries as we draw up recommendations. As such, there is a possibility that new wards could cross constituency boundaries.

Will parishes be affected?

We have no powers to alter the external boundaries of local parishes. However, if our recommendations propose to divide parishes between wards, we will alter the electoral arrangements of that parish to create parish wards. We can also make changes to the years in which parish council elections take place so that they do so in the same years as borough elections in their associated wards.

More information about possible implications for parishes are set out in our technical guidance: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>

Can the council veto your recommendations?

No. We will work consultatively with you throughout the review and seek to build consensus. However, the final recommendations of the review are those of the Commission. After we publish our final recommendations, we will lay a draft order – the legal document that seeks to implement the recommendations – in both Houses of Parliament. It is up to Parliament to approve or reject that draft order before it is implemented.

Will you hold public meetings and/or meet with political groups during the process?

We will always brief a meeting of the full council in the early stages of the review. We will also offer a briefing meeting with local parishes and/or residents groups.

During the rest of the review, we will not usually offer to meet any groups or individuals. We try to ensure that everyone has an equal chance of influencing the Commission during consultation and, as such, we do not want to be seen to favour any group by holding meetings to which other interested parties do not have access.

Why don't you consider the population of wards and not just the electorate?

The Commission has a statutory obligation under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 'to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council'. This means that we can only consider the number of local government electors when we draw up boundaries which will deliver electoral equality.

In what forms do you accept submissions?

The Commission only accepts submissions which are made in writing by hard copy, email or through our website. The Commission takes decisions collectively and will consider every submission received before coming to a conclusion.

You can also use our consultation portal to draw your own boundaries and submit them directly to the Commission. You are strongly advised to include an explanation of why the boundaries you are putting forward are appropriate and complement our statutory criteria.

Submissions to the Commission are rarely persuasive if they are not supported by an explanation of how the proposal meets the Commission's statutory criteria. As such, petitions which simply object to a proposal do not usually constitute strong evidence on which the Commission can base alternative recommendations. In the same way, resolutions of council which do not provide for alternative arrangements that are supported by a rationale will not normally prove to be persuasive.

To what extent do you change your recommendations during the process and as a result of consultation?

Since the establishment of the Commission as a stand-alone body in April 2010, the Commission has made amendments to its draft recommendations in most cases as

a result of submission received during consultation. We consider every submission and believe the electoral review process is strongest where local authorities have engaged in it.

How will you involve local people in the review?

We will engage with local press and media at every stage of consultation through press releases and social media. We also publish all relevant information on our website, including every submission we receive. Our online consultation portal allows users of the site to draw their own boundaries and engage in the process in a detailed way.

If your area has parishes, we will engage directly with them through a briefing meeting and via correspondence to alert them to each phase of consultation. Similarly, we have asked the council for their help in identifying local resident's groups and organisations, so we can write to them with advice and guidance on the review.

We have also asked the council to help us publicise the review by using its own communication channels with residents and local groups and we will provide posters to display in council buildings. We hope elected members can also use their networks to engage communities in the process.

Durham County Council

Council Size Submission

Durham County Council

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How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

This submission was developed by a cross-party Electoral Review Member Working Group.

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The last review of the Council's internal governance arrangements was implemented in 2009, when County Durham's seven district councils merged to form a single unitary authority. The re-organisation to form a new single purpose authority was significant and improved the effectiveness of local government across the County as it provided economies of scale and enhanced focus and efficiency across all aspects of Council services. Since re-organisation, no governance or capacity issues have been raised.

National policy in respect of Devolution may impact upon the Council with a change in governance required if the Council is to benefit from a devolution deal. The nature of change will depend upon the type of any devolution deal. Similarly, any changes regionally in respect of Devolution may impact on the Council's role within the North East Combined Authority (NECA).

The outcome of the Government's White Paper of Fire Reform is also likely to have an impact on the Council's arrangements for the Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority and Police and Crime Panel.

At a local level, the Council is currently reviewing the way in which it engages with the community and other stakeholders, which may impact on the operation/composition of the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs).

The Council's proposals in respect of size are intended to make the Council more efficient but still able to deliver its statutory functions.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead? This has not been addressed

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Durham County Council’s response – Local Authority Profile

County Durham is a large and diverse area; a place of distinctive character, predominantly rural, and with a strong sense of its own identity. Situated in North East England, the county covers an area of approximately 862 square miles (around a third of which is accessible green space). It is home to over half a million people it is, in terms of population size, the largest local authority in the North East and the seventh largest single tier local authority in England. There are 21 settlements in County Durham with an estimated population of over 5,000 people including Durham City, Chester-le-Street, Newton Aycliffe, Consett and Peterlee.

County Durham varies in character from remote and sparsely populated areas in the west to former coalfield communities in the centre and east, where villages tend to accommodate thousands rather than hundreds. The county stretches from the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the west to the North Sea Heritage Coast in the east and shares a border with seven other local authorities: Sunderland, Gateshead, Northumberland, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Darlington, Stockton-on- Tees and Hartlepool. Around 93% of the population lives east of the A68 road in approximately 40% of the county by area.

Boasting one of the first sites in the UK to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Durham Cathedral and Castle), the county has 12 miles of Heritage Coast recognised internationally for its rare plants and wildlife, over 150 miles of accessible former railway paths, a top ranking university, 260 ancient monuments, almost 100 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), nationally-recognised museums at Beamish, Bowes and Locomotion and is home to Durham Cricket and Lumiere, the UK’s largest light festival.

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The county has a large and increasingly ageing population and has higher levels of deprivation than the national average. The county is in the top 40% most deprived upper-tier local authorities in England, ranking as the 48th most deprived of 151 upper tier local authorities in England.

Nearly half of our population live in the 30% most deprived areas nationally. For children this rises to 54% (IMD2019). and the County also experiences significant health inequalities including lower life expectancy and healthy life expectancy (with large inequality in both measures between the most and least deprived), and poorer health outcomes than the national average. Other significant challenges include the impacts of COVID and Brexit, climate change, the reduction of public funds, the rising cost of living and increasing levels of poverty, a relatively static employment rate, relatively low levels of labour market participation, graduate retention, and an ageing population. As a rural area, the county's economy lacks scale and diversity and needs to grow the business services sector.

Our 65+ population is projected to increase by 34% by 2043, with our 85+ population projected to double to nearly double by 2043, rising by 92%. Our student population is increasing in Durham City and the immediate surrounding areas as Durham University expands its footprint in the city. This is putting additional pressures on services and inadvertently skewing local national statistics, for example the percentage of the 18-24 population claiming out of work benefits (claimant count) is artificially lowered due to the high number of students in the area.

[Durham Insight](#) is our publicly available shared intelligence, research and knowledge platform for County Durham, informing strategic planning across the council and partnerships. The site contains a variety of data and intelligence including in-depth topic sections, interactive content and infographics, maps and story maps. Durham Insight provides data and analysis for a number of themes including Economy and Employment, Children and Young People, Deprivation and Poverty, Health and Wellbeing, Population, Crime and Community Safety, Housing and the Environment. It also reports at different geographic levels within the boundary of County Durham to help inform strategic decision making and support the work of Durham County Council and its partners in these areas. This is also available to the public and can be used by local communities to support projects they are involved with. These geographical areas can generally be broken down into three main categories:

- Statistical: Lower and Middle Super Output Areas
- Administrative: Electoral Wards
- Council service provision structures:
 - Area Action Partnerships,
 - Local Plan Monitoring Areas,
 - Family First Areas and
 - One Point Think Family Areas

In some cases, these boundaries can also cover other service categories.

For further information on these geographical areas please visit: <https://www.durhaminsight.info/geography-descriptions/> and reviewed

<p>533,149</p> <p>Total estimated population (2020) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>262,253 (49.2%)</p> <p>Male estimated population (2020) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>270,896 (50.8%)</p> <p>Female estimated population (2020) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>
<p>561,423</p> <p>Total projected population (2043) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>277,074</p> <p>Male projected population (2043) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>284,349</p> <p>Female projected population (2043) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>
<p>76.8</p> <p>Male life expectancy at birth (2020) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>8.3</p> <p>Male life expectancy at 65 (2017 - 19) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>56.1</p> <p>Male Disability Free life expectancy at Birth (2017 - 19) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>
<p>80.1</p> <p>Female life expectancy at birth (2020) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>9.0</p> <p>Female life expectancy at 65 (2017 - 19) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>	<p>57.2</p> <p>Female Disability Free life expectancy at Birth (2017 - 19) ⓘ</p> <p>Source: ONS*</p>

Table 1. Summary of key indicators for County Durham. Source: Durham Insight.

Summary of population growth in County Durham

- In 2020, the total population of County Durham was 533,000 which was an increase of 3.9% (20,200) from 2011 and was lower than the 6.5% increase in population during the same period in England. County Durham now has the second largest population compared to the other 12 unitary authorities in the North East region.

Source: ONS 2020 Population projections for local authorities

Table 2. Change in population 2011-2020, North East Local Authorities.

2020 Rank (on % change)	Population			% Change
	Authority	2011	2020	
1	Newcastle upon Tyne	279,092	306,824	9.9
2	County Durham	512,994	533,149	3.9
3	North Tyneside	201,206	208,871	3.8
4	Stockton-on-Tees	191,824	197,419	2.9
5	Northumberland	316,278	323,820	2.4
6	Middlesbrough	138,368	141,285	2.1
7	South Tyneside	148,164	151,133	2.0
8	Hartlepool	92,088	93,836	1.9
9	Darlington	105,584	107,402	1.7
10	Redcar & Cleveland	135,164	137,228	1.5
11	Sunderland	275,330	277,846	0.9
12	Gateshead	200,349	201,950	0.8
	North East	2,596,441	2,680,763	3.2
	England	53,107,169	56,550,138	6.5

Source: ONS Population Estimates

- The rate of growth for the 18+ population is similar to the overall County Durham figures, with 4.4% growth between 2011 and 2020. This is lower than growth reported in England of 6.4% between 2011 and 2020.
- The population size of the wards within the county vary from ? Is this right?, which is the largest at 16,000 people, to the smallest Durham South, with 2,200 people.
- Although the County Durham population increased during 2011 and 2020, at a ward level these population changes ranged from a 2.9% reduction in Bishop Middleham and Cornforth, to a 5.4% increase in Elvet and Gilesgate. The wards with the biggest population growth correspond to the areas with either major new housing developments or large student populations.

Source ONS Ward-level population estimates

- In 2020 County Durham had an old age dependency ratio of 33.8 (65+ year olds) per 100 working age (16-64 year olds). This compares with an old age dependency ratio in England of 29.7 (65+ year olds) per 100 working age (16-64 year old) population.

Source: ONS Old age dependency ratio

- Of the 533,000 people in County Durham, 19.1% (102,000) are children aged under 18 years old, 59.9% (319,600) are adults aged 18 to 64 and 20.9% (113,600) are aged 65 and over. 2.4% (12,600) of the resident population are 85 and over.

Source: ONS Population Estimates

For more in-depth content relating to population data, including estimates and projections see the Population theme on Durham Insight: www.durhaminsight.info/population

Summary of deprivation in County Durham

- There are almost 14,000 businesses based in County Durham, an increase of almost 20% over the last 10 years.

- 72.1% of people of working age in County Durham are in employment. This is higher than regionally (71.8%), but lower than nationally (76.4%).
- ONS estimate that around one third of people in employment work in key worker occupations (33.1%/76,000 people, Jan 2019 to Dec 2019).
- 39 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in County Durham (12% of 324 LSOAs) are ranked in the top 10 percent most deprived areas in England. These 39 LSOAs cover an area representing 10.8% of the county's population.
- 158 LSOAs (48.8% of our 324 LSOAs) are within the top 30% most deprived nationally. 47.3% of the county's population live in these areas.
- Trends overall indicate a reversal of the previous continuation of the steady improvements in relative deprivation in previous indices. However, this masks opposite trends for specific aspects of deprivation: the health domain and housing have demonstrated improvement in relative deprivation.

For more in-depth and interactive content relating to deprivation and poverty in County Durham, see the Deprivation and Poverty theme on Durham Insight, including our Poverty dashboard and interactive Poverty summary map covering child poverty, Free School Meal eligibility, Index of Deprivation, Universal Credit Claimants, Claimant counts and Fuel Poverty for sub-county areas (LSOA, Ward, Action Area Partnership (AAP), Family First Area (FFA) and Local Plan Monitoring Area (LPMA)).

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.**

Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
Governance Model	Analysis	Durham County Council is made up of 63 electoral divisions. The current council size is 126 councillors.

The Council operates with a Leader and Cabinet form of governance and a well-established Overview and Scrutiny arrangement. There are no plans to change this model.

Cabinet is made up of the Leader of the Council together with at least two, but not more than nine councillors appointed by the Leader. One of these councillors is designated as the Deputy Leader by the Leader.

The executive functions are all council functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the council, by law, or under the council's constitution, together with some local choice functions. Key Decisions and ordinary decisions are taken collectively by the executive. The Cabinet meets monthly to make decisions to implement the Council's policies and budget. As well as formal meetings of the Cabinet, there are a number of briefing meetings, which are used to brief the Cabinet on key issues for them to formulate policy and provide strategic direction. These briefings inform decisions to be taken by Cabinet and where appropriate, recommended to Council.

The executive agrees annually its scheme of delegation. Officers can take decisions, often in consultation with Members. This is set out in more detail under the appropriate section on delegated powers.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and its thematic committees monitor Cabinet decisions and can call-in a decision of the Cabinet which has been made but not implemented. Scrutiny also has a role in relation to policy development.

Full Council, with all 126 Members, is a forum for open debate, and is responsible for a number of specific functions. Its rules and procedures for how the council operates and how it makes decisions, are contained in the Constitution. The Council agrees each year its committee structure and terms of reference.

Although some committees are non-statutory they are critical to the efficient organisation of council business. Some advisory, and operational matters may also be carried out by working groups, and boards.

As well as attending meetings of committees of which they are members, Members also need to attend committees where they are substitute members. Substitutions are arranged in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>There are currently ten portfolios, which cover the breadth of Council Services and support the strategic direction of the Council. Portfolios are determined by the Leader and confirmed at each Annual Council. Currently, Portfolio Holders do not have delegated powers.</p> <p>The Leader may appoint and remove at their discretion up to 10 councillors to be executive support members, to support and assist the executive as a whole or individual members of the executive. These members cannot substitute for, or exercise any executive function delegated to the executive member. As a member of the decision-making executive, an executive councillor is responsible for making decisions on a wide range of issues which affect and shape quality of life in the county. Their role is essentially a full-time role and represents a significant time commitment. The roles and responsibilities of the Executive are set out in Article 6 of the Constitution of the Council. www.durham.gov.uk/constitution</p> <p>The Cabinet held 14 meetings from May 2021 to May 2022 and considered 90 reports. Of those 14 meetings:</p> <p>6 meetings lasted between 1.5 to 2.5 hours; 4 meetings lasted between 1 to 1.5 hours; and 4 meetings were under an hour</p>
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council agrees annually its committee structure and their terms of reference. The Executive retains responsibility for major decisions. Having taken a decision, the executive may delegate authority to relevant Officers to take the necessary steps to implement that decision. The Executive also agrees the officer scheme of delegation in Part 3 of the Constitution on an annual basis. www.durham.gov.uk/constitution</p> <p>A considerable amount of decisions are made in conjunction with the officer scheme:</p>

	<p>Jan – Dec 2019 – 1,722 officer decisions Jan – Dec 2020 – 1,619 officer decisions Jan – Dec 2021 – 1,889 officer decisions</p> <p>In exercising delegated powers, Chief officers are expected to follow the principles of decision making set out in Article 10 of the Constitution. In making decisions they are to consult where appropriate with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder, or other Member as appropriate, and make the records available. Decisions are recorded through a centralised system, and records which do not release confidential or exempt information are available for the public on the council’s website. Supplementary schemes of delegations are in place in individual service areas, further delegating certain responsibilities to appropriate officers in the authority.</p>
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Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored. There is nothing in the response to indicate what alternative council sizes have been explored – it just details the status quo.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<p>The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny function is the main way in which decisions of the Executive are scrutinised and decision makers held to account. Scrutiny make recommendations on policy development and implementation as well as providing challenge to service performance as part of the Council’s performance management framework.</p> <p>Scrutiny supports the council by remaining focussed on the four key principles of good scrutiny. These have been defined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny:</p>

- To provide a constructive “critical friend” challenge to executive policy-makers and decisions-makers.
- To amplify the voice and concerns of the public.
- To ensure scrutiny is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny role.
- To drive improvement in public services.

Durham County Council appoints a Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) and five “thematic” Overview and Scrutiny Committees each year to carry out the work of overview and scrutiny. These are aligned to the County Durham Vision ambitions of more and better jobs; people live long and independent lives and connected communities together with the fourth ambition in the Council Plan of an excellent council. They also oversee the agreed objectives associated with the ambitions.

The COSMB provides strategic leadership and oversees and co-ordinates the work of overview and scrutiny and the following five thematic committees:

- Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWHOSC)
- Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYPOSC)
- Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EEOOSC)
- Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC)
- Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SSCOSC)

Details of the areas of responsibility for each OSC can be found in Article 5 of the Council’s Constitution.

www.durham.gov.uk/constitution

The general responsibilities of the OSCs are to:

- review and/or scrutinise decisions or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council’s functions;
- make reports and/or recommendations to full council or the executive in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- consider and make reports or recommendations on any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants;
- exercise the right to call-in decisions made but not yet implemented by the executive;
- work to ensure that communities are engaged in the scrutiny process; and consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;

- promote equality and diversity across all of its work and the work of the County Council.

The Safer and Stronger Communities OSC has a statutory role in scrutinising the work of the statutory crime and reduction partnership - the Safe Durham Partnership.

The Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC undertakes the statutory health scrutiny role scrutinising health and social care provision by the council and its health care partners including NHS providers and commissioners.

The COSMB provides the main challenge and scrutiny of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and annual budget setting process with commentary and recommendations made to Cabinet and Full Council as part of their respective deliberations.

The Council's Constitution provides for elected members to call-in decisions made but not yet implemented by the executive. These provisions are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules within the Constitution. There have been a small number of call-in requests made by Members reflecting the principle that wherever possible, controversial items or decisions on which there may be significant public interest will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny prior to a decision being taken or will have been informed by OS member representations during the decision-making process.

The OSCs also provide a key opportunity for residents to ask questions and provide stakeholder challenge to the council's decision-making process with recent examples of these including environment and climate change/ecological concerns and NHS service change proposals. In order to complement public involvement and participation, each thematic OSC also appoints two non-voting co-opted members to add a degree of public challenge to the decision-making process.

Each OSC also has the ability to undertake bespoke review activity as required to examine proposals for new policies, challenge existing policy or investigate areas of under- performance to establish reasons for this and make recommendations to address these issues and concerns. These reviews are generally undertaken over a period of 3-6 months and involve task and finish group activity for a smaller number of OSC members by way of special meetings and site visit/field study activity where necessary. Task and Finish activity generally involves an additional 6-8 meetings during the review period with review reports signed off by the OSC before being submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

The total number of councillor positions across the COSMB and thematic OSCs is 131 comprising:-

COSMB – 26 members including the Chair and Vice Chair of the four thematic OSC, which each consist of 21 members.

The size of the OSC membership reflects the geographical size of County Durham, its diverse socio-economic and health challenges and also the need to ensure sufficient capacity amongst the membership to provide an effective overview and scrutiny function across all of the required disciplines of executive challenge, policy development, performance review and external partner scrutiny. In the 2012 LGA peer review the Overview and Scrutiny functions were highlighted as useful contribution through influencing policy development in areas related to the Council Plan and that 126 members appeared to be fit for purpose.

It would be necessary to reduce the number of members on both the Council Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) and the Overview and Scrutiny thematic committees with a reduction in Council Size.

Maintaining a Council Size of 126 Members would allow the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's to continue to function without change. However, there are currently more seats than there are Councillors eligible to sit on the Committees.

Presently these Committees have seats for 131 Councillors. As none of the Cabinet (10) can sit on any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC) all 131 seats must be filled by other Councillors (116) meaning that some Councillors sit on more than one of the Committees. A reduction in the number of seats on scrutiny without undermining the important role that scrutiny plays or disbanding the thematic committees could be achievable. It is however likely that this would require an even greater time commitment from Members both inside and outside of meetings.

Assuming Cabinet were to remain at ten members, a council size of 98 would leave 88 members to undertake significant scrutiny responsibilities. To accommodate a reduced number of Councillors, it is proposed that the number of Councillors of COSMB could be reduced to 21 which would include the Chair and Vice-Chair of each thematic OSC (12 members) and nine other Members. The thematic OSCs would reduce to 16. This would still mean that some Councillors will be appointed to more than one OSC but based on the existing arrangements, that is considered to be realistic. A council size of 98 would have the most impact in relation to the scrutiny arrangements, which currently engages the largest cohort of Members. The reduction in numbers is unlikely to result in a reduction in services/activity being delivered by the Council. A smaller and/or a reduced number of thematic scrutiny committees would impact on the ability of Members to effectively scrutinise Council performance across all service areas and delivery against the Council plan. It is therefore desirable to retain the existing Overview and Scrutiny framework.

It is considered that a Council size of anything lower than 98, for example, 85 would make it extremely difficult to retain the existing Overview and Scrutiny framework, which serves the Council very well. Many members would be required to serve on

	several of the OSC's which would place too great a time pressure on them. Care must be taken to ensure that Councillors do not have an excessive workload in this respect. They must be able to continue to have a work/life balance.	
Statutory Function	This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?	
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	<i>Analysis</i>	<p>The council's constitution provides for most planning applications to be determined via delegated powers. However, there are a small number of applications which are determined by Members. These include: the most controversial applications, those applications which have significant environmental impacts or those where the application is made by a member of the council or a planning officer (or certain close family members). In addition, certain applications can be 'called in' to committee by any Member, subject to providing material planning reasons for doing so. The council's constitution also provides that, where certain conditions are met, applications where Town or Parish Councils have made representations in respect of that matter and the planning officer is minded to arrive at a recommendation contrary to the views of the Town or Parish Council, such applications will be determined by members.</p> <p>For the period 2021-2022, the council determined 2,611 applications for planning permission. Of the applications determined, 2560 were determined via delegated powers, with approximately 2% of applications being determined by Members.</p> <p>As can be seen from the table below, since 2017-2018, there has been a modest downward trend in the proportion of applications determined by Members. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Planning Committees continued to conduct business, however, this was on a reduced scale, therefore the number of applications determined by Committee's were lower over that period. As a result there was an increase in the number of applications determined by delegated powers in 2021/22.</p>

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Total number of decisions	2623	2488	2586	2442	2611
Number of which were delegated	2514	2392	2500	2393	2560
Delegated %	96	96	97	98	98

Since Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, the council has utilised a committee system of three Area Planning Committees plus a County Planning Committee. Please refer to Article 4 of the Constitution, paragraphs 4.6 and 4.11. www.durham.gov.uk/constitution

Each area committee comprises 16 Members of the Council. Until May 2022, Committees comprised eight Members representing electoral divisions within the Committee's area and eight other Members from the rest of the county excluding members of the executive (except where the matter is delegated to an officer). This Council agreed to change this at its annual meeting in May 2022 so that seats are allocated in accordance with political balance only and there is no longer a split between local and countywide members. There was less appetite from members to sit on an area planning committee which is outside of their local area. The arrangements had also been criticised on occasion by the public who did not consider it appropriate for local planning matters to be determined by Councillors from outside the area. There was no such restriction on allocation to seats to members from a geographical area when benchmarking was undertaken with other councils in the region and other Unitary Authorities which have similar population. It is expected that Planning Committee's will continue to be structured in the same way given the amount of Electoral Divisions the Council is likely to have, even with a reduced Council size. Cabinet members are excluded from serving on any of the Planning Committee's.

It is difficult to quantify the time commitment to a Planning Committee for members, as each committee has differing numbers of applications and registered speakers. However, in general, members will be required to spend time reading the committee reports in advance of the committee, spend time attending the committee (and in the case of the Chair and Vice Chair of each committee, attend pre-committee briefing sessions),

		<p>receiving the reports, listening to the speakers and taking part in the debate. Committee's usually last between 1.5 to 2.5 hours (longer in exceptional circumstances).</p> <p>Data for the period May 2021-May 2022 is provided below for each Planning Committee.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="600 359 1697 630"> <thead> <tr> <th>Committee</th> <th>Number of meetings</th> <th>Time spent in meetings (hours)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>County Planning</td> <td>7</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central and East</td> <td>12</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South and West</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>4</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>30</td> <td>55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In addition to these Committee meetings, 14 site visits took place between May 2021 to May 2022 as we transitioned out of the coronavirus pandemic. Each site visit usually takes between 1.5 to 2 hours. It should also be acknowledged that Members travel to and from County Hall in Durham to attend the site visit. They are usually briefed about the site on the transport provided. Prior to covid there were anywhere between 40-50 site visits in a year.</p>	Committee	Number of meetings	Time spent in meetings (hours)	County Planning	7	14	Central and East	12	26	South and West	7	8	North	4	7	Total	30	55
Committee	Number of meetings	Time spent in meetings (hours)																		
County Planning	7	14																		
Central and East	12	26																		
South and West	7	8																		
North	4	7																		
Total	30	55																		
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i> 																		
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a General Licensing and Registration Committee comprising 27 Members and reviews/makes recommendations to the Council where appropriate on policies in relation to the licensing functions (except where the matter is delegated to a Sub Committee or to an officer). Three General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committees are scheduled quarterly and fortnightly. They each comprise of four Members plus either a Chair or Vice-Chair. The Sub-Committees discharge all of the functions of the General Licensing Committees except policy development and matters delegated to officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on 21/22 the average number of meetings held is 25. • Time commitment varies depending on whether there are one or two taxi drivers before the Sub-Committee at one meeting and the nature of the cases, but can usually last anywhere between one 																		

hour and two and a half to three hours. Where there are two panels scheduled in one day, the same members would sit on both.

- Hearings are scheduled in the Council diary fortnightly.
- Council has appointed three chairs who rotate so they chair meeting once every six weeks. The remaining members sit on a rota basis; the rota is drawn up annually from the membership of the General Licensing and Registration Committee (excluding the Statutory Licensing Committee members) on a random basis, with each member sitting on an equal number of panels (as far as possible).

Statutory Licensing Committee - (As and when required)

The Statutory Licensing Committee is a sub-committee of the General Licensing and Registration Committee and is comprised of 15 Members of the Council drawn from the 27 members of the General Licensing and Registration Committee. who, whilst predominantly serving the Statutory Licensing Committee and its sub committees, can when occasion demands also serve on other sub committees of the General Licensing and Registration Committee.

Statutory Licensing Sub-Committees (fortnightly)

There are three Statutory Licensing Sub-Committees, each comprised of four Members sitting with the Chair or Vice-Chair. Each Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee discharges all of the functions of the Statutory Licensing Committee except policy development and matters delegated to officers.

- Based on 2021/22, the average number of meetings held is 25.
- Time commitment varies depending on the nature of the hearing but can usually last anywhere between one and a half to two and a half hours up to around four hours. Where there are two panels scheduled in one day, the same members would sit on both.
- Hearings are scheduled in the Council diary fortnightly but ad-hoc meetings are also required on occasions.
- Council has appointed three chairs who rotate so they chair meeting once every six weeks. The remaining members sit on a rota basis; the rota is drawn up annually from the membership of the Statutory Licensing Committee on a random basis, with each member sitting on an equal number of panels (as far as possible)

Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>Highways Committee (monthly) The Committee comprises 21 Members. The Committee discharges the Council’s licensing, registration and regulatory functions in relation to common land and town and village greens and functions relating to public rights of way in cases where objections have been made and not withdrawn. The Committee also considers non-executive functions relating to highways or public rights of way which require a statutory notice or consultation and where objections have been made and not withdrawn and offers guidance in relation to some delegated functions.</p> <p>Appeals and Complaints Committee and Sub-Committees These meet as and when required. Thirty Members of the Council form this Committee, with individual appeals or complaint hearings being conducted by Sub-Committees of three Members of the Committee.</p> <p>Audit Committee (bi-monthly) The Audit Committee is comprised of nine Members of the Council. The Committee approves the council’s Final Accounts and is an advisory committee to the Council and the executive on audit and governance issues in order to provide independent assurance over the adequacy of the council’s risk management framework and associated control environment.</p> <p>Standards Committee (Quarterly) The Standards Committee comprises 11 Council Members with two non-voting co-optees from the parish councils. The Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members, co-opted members of the council and parish and town council members. It monitors and advises on the operation of the Code of Conduct and relevant training. It also deals with allegations of misconduct by Members of the council, parish councillors and co-opted members.</p> <p>The number of regulatory Committees are broadly expected to remain the same. There is likely to be a proportionate reduction in the number of Councillors serving on these Committee’s associated with any reduction in Council size and consideration given to some responsibilities being delegated.</p>

		<p>In addition to this, the council also has a number of strategic joint and other committees, panels and committees to discharge functions set out in the Constitution, including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee (Quarterly) • Charter Trustees for the City of Durham (Quarterly) • Chief Officer Appointments Committee (as and when) • Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington (Quarterly) • Constitution Working Group (as and when) • Corporate Parenting Panel (monthly) • Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee (Quarterly) • Pension Fund Committee and Local Pension Board (Quarterly) • Police and Crime Panel (Bi-monthly) • Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) (Tri-annually)
External Partnerships	Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i> 	
Analysis	<p>The Council is involved in numerous bodies at a local, regional, sub-regional and national level with a range of partners, many of which have decision-making powers that includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Durham Partnership Leader of the Council (CDP Chair) and Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services (HWB Chair) – eight meetings per year plus half day event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and Wellbeing Board Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services (HWB Chair) – six meetings per year plus development sessions - Safe Durham Partnership Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways – six meetings per year - County Durham Economic Partnership 	

	<p>Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships – four to six meetings per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and Climate Change Partnership Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change – four to five meetings per year • County Durham and Darlington Police and Crime Panel (12 members). • County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority (CDDFRA) contains 21 members. Usually hold around 6-7 meetings per year in addition to a Strategic Planning Session. The CDDFRA also have a number of small Sub-Committees covering the areas of Fire and Risk, Audit and Finance, Human Resources, Performance. • County Durham Care Partnership Forum (between three and 11 members) • Business Durham Advisory Board, contains seven members and meets quarterly. Five of the seven members are by position as Executive Members. • Charter Trust of the City of Durham contains 24 members. Three Executive Members currently serve as Charter Trustees based on the former City of Durham District Boundary. • Joint Audit Committee (one member) • North East Combined Authority (nine members – various committees) <p>Information on outside bodies is available at: joint and outside bodies 2021.pdf (durham.gov.uk)</p> <p>The Council agrees at its annual meeting the appointments to the joint bodies and other bodies to which the Council are invited to nominate representatives. Appointments to other bodies to which the Council are invited to nominate are made by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the appropriate Group Leaders with consideration to purpose alignment with a specific Cabinet Portfolio, electoral division, political proportionality of the Council.</p>
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Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	Description
	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
<p>Community Leadership</p>	<p>The typical councillor caseload differs depending on the demographics, locality and geography of the division they represent. Councillors represent their communities in the following ways:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hold surgeries • attend meetings of the Area Action Partnerships • use social media platforms, email and teams • attend meetings of Parish and Town Councils • represent their communities in Council meetings • facilitate the handling of complaints and queries either directly with officers or via the Councils customer relations management system • attend meeting of residents and community groups • impromptu contacts from constituents • street walkabouts • home visits. <p>Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)</p> <p>There are 14 AAPs each managed by a Partnership Board which has up to 6 positions for Durham County Councillors and is the decision-making mechanism for the AAP. Each Board meets between 6 – 12 times per year. Councillors are also encouraged to sit on the AAPs task and finish groups, Public Representative recruitment panels and to attend the AAP Forums which take place between 1 – 2 times per year and are open to anyone in the area.</p>

A recent members survey (January '22) saw Elected Members voting their top 2 priorities for AAPs as “Local Action” and “Engagement” with 79% of respondents saying it’s important that the County Council has a Countywide Engagement mechanism like the current AAP Forum which has over 15,000 members countywide.

Each AAP has a budget attached to them to develop projects that address local need and are focused on locally voted priorities.

In 2021/2022 each AAPs budget was £454,902

Alongside the above, each County Councillor has their own budget for local projects and in 2021/22 this was £29,400

AAPs are also fundamental in tackling local neighbourhood issues, as well as being the key consultation vehicle for the council and our key partners.

Further information on the background and work of AAPs can be viewed here [AAPs](#). Examples of what projects elected Members support locally can be viewed via the individual councillor pages here [DCC Councillors](#).

The meetings and functions of AAPs provide an opportunity for elected Members to become more visible and connected within their respective communities as well as cementing their role as community leaders and ambassadors. A reduction in the number of Councillors, particularly to 85 is likely to impact on Members’ ability to participate in the AAPs. A reduction to 98 is likely to be more manageable.

However, the council is currently conducting a review of its community engagement structures and opportunities for communities to connect with the local authority in a meaningful way, ensuring residents feel empowered, able to influence service provision and support community action in the coming years. This review will need to take account of the potential reduction in Councillors.

There are 104 parish and town councils in County Durham in addition to 24 parish meetings. Fourteen of these councils meet the National Associations of Local Councils larger local councils’ criteria of having a budget of over £250,000 and or an electorate of over 6,000.

All but three areas of the county remain unparished: Chester-le-Street central area; South Crook and parts of Bishop Auckland; and the north Consett area. In the absence of parish councils raising local issues in these areas, the respective unitary councillors play an important role in communicating local issues between the authority and the community, a role enhanced by their representation on the Area Action Partnership Boards for these areas.

A Local Councils Charter was developed in the wake of Local Government Reorganisation in 2009 to support the working relationship between the local councils and the newly-established unitary authority. Post LGR, changes to working practices of both tiers of local government have strengthened and the Charter was recently simplified to a shorter working document which focuses on the principles of communication, co-operation and consultation. A key principle of the co-operation element of the Charter is the link supported through unitary councillors to local councils and parish meetings within their area, either through regular contact or because many unitary councillors also hold the office of town or parish councillor.

The Local Councils Working Group was formed in September 2012 as a formal engagement mechanism for the relationship between the unitary council and the 104 town and parish councils in the county. The vision of the working group is to enhance and support the working relationship between the authority and local councils for the benefit of the community. The working group comprises elected member and officer representatives nominated from both County Durham Association of Local Council (CDALC) forums and its executive. The county council representation includes Portfolio Holders for Partnerships, Finance and Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and service heads and is chaired by the Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement.

A survey of members was undertaken to ascertain their views of the time commitment the role carries. A copy of the survey and summary of results is attached as Appendix 1.

A significant majority of those responding believed that they worked in excess of the 16 hours per week suggested as an average for Councillor work. 30 out of the 45 respondents believe they spend an additional 16 hours on top of the 16 hour average carrying out their representational role. In an extreme case some members believed it to be an additional 40 hours. The latter is attributed to Councillors who are members of the Cabinet, as their roles could be said to be full time.

The working group reflected that the following issues are all known barriers to the number of meetings

- The time it takes to prepare for meetings

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of casework • Travel to and from meetings • Caring responsibilities • Work commitments <p>It is acknowledged that the approach taken by Councillors in respect of community engagement differs widely across the Council and differs not only as a result of the geography and demography of their divisions but also their personal circumstances. Whilst the majority of Councillors responding to the survey commented that they find the job rewarding, the working group are keen to ensure that a reduction in Council size does not adversely impact on that sense of “job satisfaction” or that increased workloads deter people from standing for election or re-election.</p> <p>It was noted that to some extent the workload of a Councillor, regardless of Council size will be high. Whilst those responding to the survey reflected high workloads, no Councillors have resigned as a result of heavy workloads, which would suggest that a council size of 126 Councillors remains appropriate. However, this would not address the electoral imbalance in certain parts of the County. If arrangements were to deliver greater electoral equality, there may be greater equality in the community representation workloads of Councillors.</p> <p>A reduction to 85 Councillors is likely to put an increased strain on Councillors, particularly if as a result of the reduction Members were required to take on additional roles/responsibilities. Councillors may find it increasingly difficult to represent their communities as they would like/expect, which may result in a democratic deficit.</p> <p>In the absence of being able to maintain the status quo, a reduction to 98 Councillors is considered to be reasonable. Although it is acknowledged that the workload for some Councillors may increase as a result.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users’ engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	Councillors deal with their casework in a variety of ways. There is a dedicated Member Services Team which assists Members with their constituent enquiries. If a councillor has asked Member Services to report a

resident's enquiry on their behalf this will either be logged via the council's Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) or direct with a service area/officer. Some Members do go direct to officers, however this is not the council's preferred option for reporting enquiries. Enquiries should be logged where possible on the CRM so they can be sent direct to the appropriate service area to be actioned.

Councillors are provided with a laptop, tablet and mobile phone. Councillors also have access to a Members' Portal, which can be used to log enquiries with service areas or request assistance from Member Services. The portal also has a number of other functions including access to the committee diary.

Technology has influenced the way councillors work and interact with residents. This can be via, email, Teams and social media platforms. The council actively advertises 'Save time do it online' to encourage residents to report issues to the council in this way.

In our survey of members we asked for an indication on the total number of hours a week that they spent dealing with casework. Of those who responded the average time spent dealing with casework was 18 hours. A copy of the survey and summary of results is attached as Appendix 1.

Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

Financial

The working group considered the financial implications of maintaining the Council's current size or reducing it to 98 or 85. The Council could save between £545,300 (85 Councillors) and £372,400 in respect of basic allowances (98 Councillors). Members allowances have remained unchanged since 2009, despite the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) making recommendations to increase the Basic Allowance on four separate occasions across the last 13 years.

It should be noted that if a reduction in the number of Councillors increased the workload, there may be a requirement to increase the basic allowance to reflect this. It will be for the new Council to set the allowances based on recommendations of the IRP. It is not known at this stage what the IRP recommendations are likely to be in light of any changes to Council size.

Any potential savings needed to be considered alongside any potential democratic deficit as a result of a reduction in Council size. The working group considered that the potential financial savings should not be a sole determinative factor when considering Council size. It is more important to ensure that the Council can make decisions effectively and for local communities to be represented appropriately.

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future. Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

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. The Council has a clear vision for the future set out in the vision for County Durham. The vision document sets out the Council's strategic direction and what it would like to achieve over the next 15 years and is written around three broad ambitions, developed following extensive consultation, for the people of County Durham:

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

The Council Plan aspires to deliver and build on these ambitions. The Council has supplemented these themes with priorities around our environment and our council.

The Council's current structures are designed to deliver on all three strands of strategic and community leadership and accountability and is set-up in achieving the people's vision and to ensure that resources are used in a transparent and effective way. Councillors' workloads are demanding and the potential for devolution presents an increased demand.

The County covers an area of 862 square miles. There are concerns that the demographic area and equality of size has a detrimental impact on those residents in more rural areas not being served equally as those in more urban areas. When considering Council size thought should be given to the requirement for those Members who represent communities outside of the administrative centre of Durham having to travel long distances to attend meetings, as the ability to hold formal meetings of decision-making bodies via hybrid or remote meetings is not legislated for currently.

Those Councillors are having to commit up to at least 40 minutes travel time (or longer) each way in order to carry out their corporate responsibilities. This requirement can be daily for those who hold Executive Portfolios and special responsibilities. Taking such a proportion of time out of a Councillors' day means less time is available to be spent representing the community. Reducing Councillor numbers greatly will likely contribute to a democratic deficit in these areas and there is a risk of democratic deficit with too small a council size.

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Therefore, taking into account the information provided by way of the Council Size template, the working group recommends a council size of 98 Councillors. In doing so, it acknowledges that officer support will need to be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate and enables the Council to continue to discharge its statutory functions effectively.

County Council

21st September 2022

**Treasury Management Outturn Report
2021/22**



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Richard Bell, Cabinet Member for Finance

Electoral division(s) affected:

All.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an overview of the Councils treasury management outturn performance for 2021/22, including:
 - (a) summary treasury position – position as at 31 March 2022 and comparator information for the position as at 31 March 2021;
 - (b) borrowing activity during the year and the position as at 31 March 2022;
 - (c) investment activity and details of investments held at 31 March 2022;
 - (d) treasury management indicators – performance against the key indicators adopted;
 - (e) prudential indicators – performance against the key indicators adopted;

Executive Summary

- 2 As at the 31 March 2022, the Council held £418 million in external borrowing and £328 million of investments. During the year additional new borrowing of £55 million was taken out. £25 million of this borrowing was with Phoenix Life, representing the final two tranches of a forward borrowing agreement of £60 million arranged in 2017/18 to

secure cost certainty (£15 million in August 2021 and £10 million in February 2022) and £30 million was with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), taken in August 2021 to take advantage of low interest costs.

- 3 All investments made in the year were undertaken in line with both the CIPFA Code and government guidance, which requires the Council to invest its funds prudently and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return or yield.
- 4 The average rate of interest on external loans outstanding at the year-end was 3.25%, with the average rate of interest earned on investments being 0.48%, representing continued low interest rates as the bank base rate remains at historic low levels. Net debt was £90 million at 31 March 2022, which is broadly in line with the position at 31 March 2021, when net debt was £91 million.
- 5 Throughout the year ending 31 March 2022, the Council has fully complied with its Treasury Management Strategy and underpinning Treasury Management Indicators relating to interest rate exposure, maturity structure of borrowing and sums invested for more than one year. The Council has also fully complied with the Prudential Code Indicators which relate to the capital programme and how much the Council can afford to borrow.
- 6 The report includes details of the Council's performance against the treasury management and prudential indicators set by County Council on 24 February 2021.

Recommendation

- 7 Council is asked to note the contents of the report and performance against the Treasury Management Strategy agreed by County Council on 24 February 2021.

Background

- 8 Treasury management is defined as ‘the management of a local authority’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks’.
- 9 The Council operates a balanced budget, which should result in cash raised during the year meeting cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, with a main aim of providing sufficient liquidity, ahead of the achievement of the best possible investment returns.
- 10 An important function of the treasury management service is to arrange the funding of the Council’s capital programme. The capital programme provides a guide to the borrowing need of the Council and there needs to be longer term cash flow planning to ensure capital spending requirements can be met. The management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, utilising longer term cash flow surpluses and occasionally debt restructuring to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 11 The Council adopts the latest CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) which is regarded as best practice in ensuring adequate monitoring of the Council’s capital expenditure plans and in setting its Prudential Indicators (PIs). This requires that Members agree and note the following reports, as a minimum:
 - (a) An annual Treasury Management Strategy in advance of the year (reported to the County Council on 24 February 2021 for the 2021/22 financial year);
 - (b) a mid-year Treasury Management Review report (reported to the County Council on 8 December 2021);
 - (c) an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report);
- 12 This report provides a summary of the following:
 - (a) summary treasury position – position as at 31 March 2022 and comparator information for the position as at 31 March 2021;

- (b) borrowing activity during the year and the position as at 31 March 2022;
- (c) investment activity and details of investments held at 31 March 2022;
- (d) treasury management indicators – performance against the key indicators adopted;
- (e) prudential indicators – performance against the key indicators adopted;

Summary Treasury Position

13 The Council's debt and investment position is managed to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments, and to manage risks within all treasury management activities.

14 At the beginning and end of the 2021/22 financial year the Council's treasury position (excluding borrowing by finance leases) was as follows:

	31.03.21	Rate /Return	Average Life	31.03.22	Rate /Return	Average Life
	£ million	%	years	£ million	%	years
Total Debt	363	3.43	22.44	418	3.25	23.79
Total Investments	272	0.34	0.33	328	0.48	0.37
Net Debt	91			90		

15 In summary, as at 31 March 2022, the Council held £418 million in external borrowing and £328 million in cash investments a net debt position of £90 million. The cash investments held reflect the receipt of significant Central Government grant funding in year where expenditure will be defrayed in 2022/23, as well as reflecting the additional borrowing taken out by the council to fund capital commitments and lock in low interest rates.

Borrowing Activity

16 At 31 March 2022, the Council held £417.985 million of external loans (excluding borrowing by finance leases), an increase of £54.566 million

from the start of the year. The borrowing position and the change since the start of the year is shown in the following table:

	31.3.21 Balance £ million	In-year Movement £ million	31.3.22 Balance £ million	Average Rate %	31.3.22 Average Life years
Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)	278.972	29.997	308.969	3.17%	18.73
Private Sector	84.278	24.586	108.865	3.47%	38.15
Pension Fund	0.169	(0.017)	0.151	8.15%	6.31
Total borrowing	363.419	54.566	417.985	3.25%	23.79

- 17 The Council's chief objective when borrowing is to strike an appropriate risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required.
- 18 During the year additional new borrowing of £55 million was taken out. £25 million of this borrowing was with Phoenix Life, representing the final two tranches of a forward borrowing agreement of £60 million arranged in 2017/18 to secure cost certainty (£15 million in August 2021 and £10 million in February 2022) and £30 million was with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), taken in August 2021 to take advantage of low interest costs.

Lender	Principal £ million	Interest Rate %	Length Years	Type
PWLB	10.000	1.860	23.00	Maturity
PWLB	20.000	1.650	13.00	Maturity
Phoenix Life	15.000	2.793	50.00	Annuity
Phoenix Life	10.000	2.807	50.00	Annuity

- 19 No maturity loans were repaid during 2021/22. The principal repayments made were £0.447 million and relate to annuity loan repayments.
- 20 No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the year as the differential between PWLB new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates made rescheduling unviable due to the premiums that would apply on early redemption.

Other Debt Activity / Long Term Liabilities

- 21 Although not classed as borrowing, the Council also raised £5.968 million of capital finance for replacement fleet vehicles and equipment via finance leases during the year to 31 March 2022. There was a further increase in liabilities of £2.707million, arising from a recalculation of the liability for phase two buildings at Freeman’s Reach, Durham City, following a five yearly rent review.
- 22 Total debt other than external borrowing stood at £82.739 million on 31 March 2022, taking total debt to £500.724 million. A breakdown of debt other than external borrowing is summarised below:

Lender	Position at 31 March 2021	Position at 31 March 2022	In Year Movement
	£ million	£ million	£ million
School PFI	36.562	35.670	(0.892)
Vehicle Finance Leases	11.705	11.998	0.293
Other Finance Leases	33.182	35.071	1.889
Total	81.449	82.739	1.290

Investment Activity

- 23 The Council has held significant funds that it has invested, representing funds received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During 2021/22, cash investment balances ranged between £325 million and £478 million.
- 24 As at 31 March 2022 the Council held cash investments totalling £327.809 million. The following table provides a breakdown of these investments split by the type of financial institution and maturity period.

Financial Institution	0-3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months	12-24 months	Total
	£ million				
Banks	51.978	88.723	95.751	-	236.451
Building Societies	21.961	13.177	4.392	-	39.530
Central Government	-	-	-	-	-
Other Local Authorities	21.083	13.177	17.569	-	51.828
Money Market Funds	-	-	-	-	-
Total	95.021	115.076	117.712	-	327.809
% of total	29%	35%	36%	0	

- 25 The Council's investment policy is governed by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by County Council on 24 February 2021.
- 26 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance requires the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing public money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 27 The achievement of returns has continued to be challenging during 2021/22. As a result, the budget for investment income from cash balances was underachieved by circa £0.500 million. This shortfall was however made up through additional dividend income received in year.
- 28 Bank rate rises during the final months of the 2021/22 financial year have seen investment rates rise steadily in the last quarter. The bank base rate rose from 0.10% in December 2021 to 0.75% in March 2022. A further rise to 1% occurred in May 2022 and forecasts anticipate further rises to between 2.00% and 2.50% by the end of March 2023.
- 29 Whilst bank rate increases have seen returns offered by financial institutions steadily rise, there remains significant liquidity within the markets, slowing these rate rises translating into investment returns. Rates offered on the peer to peer market among local authorities have been significantly lower than many rates available through banks and building societies.

Treasury Management Indicators

30 There are three treasury management activity limits which are designed to manage risk and reduce the impact of an adverse movement in interest rates.

- (a) **Interest Rate Exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk when borrowing. The upper limits on fixed and variable rate interest rate exposures, expressed as the proportion of total borrowed was:

	31.3.22 Actual	31.3.22 Actual	2021/22 Limit	Complied
Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposure	£378.5m	80.5%	100%	✓
Upper limit on variable interest rate exposure	£39.5m	9.5	70%	✓

- (b) **Maturity Structure of Borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing were:

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	31.3.22 Actual	Complied
Under 12 months	0%	20%	3%	✓
12 months to 2 years	0%	40%	5%	✓
2 years to 5 years	0%	60%	8%	✓
5 years to 10 years	0%	80%	22%	✓
10 years and above	0%	100%	62%	✓

- (c) **Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 364 days:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments:

	Limit	As at 31.3.22	Complied
Actual principal invested beyond one year	£75m	£0m	✓

Prudential Code Indicators

- 31 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to have regard to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code) when determining how much money it can afford to borrow.
- 32 The objective of the Prudential Code is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent, and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. To demonstrate that the Council has fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the following indicators that must be set and monitored each year.

- (a) **Capital Expenditure:** The table below summarises capital expenditure incurred and how the expenditure was financed:

	2021/22 Forecast £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Difference £ Million
Capital Programme	158.979	143.068	(15.911)
Financed by:			
Capital receipts	7.713	7.364	(0.349)
Capital grants	73.129	60.010	(13.119)
Revenue and reserves	18.286	26.279	7.993
Net borrowing financing need for the year	59.851	49.415	(10.436)

- (b) **Capital Financing Requirement (CFR):** The CFR is a measure of the Council's underlying borrowing need for a capital purpose. The CFR includes any other long term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, finance leases). The actual outturn position compared to the updated estimate reported to Council in February 2022 is set out in the following table:

	2021/22 Estimate £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Difference £ Million
Capital Financing Requirement	545,723	534.013	(11.710)

- (c) **Actual Debt:** The Council's actual debt at 31 March 2022 compared to the estimate in February 2022 is as follows:

	2021/22 Estimate £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Difference £ Million
Borrowing	417,974	417.985	0.011
Finance leases	48.341	47.069	(1.272)
PFI liabilities	35.670	35.670	(0.000)
Total Debt	501.985	500.724	(1.261)

- (d) **Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement:** In order to ensure that over the medium term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years. This is a key indicator of prudence. The actual outturn position compared to the updated estimate reported to Council in February 2022 is set out in the following table:

	2021/22 Estimate £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Difference £ Million
Total debt	501.985	500.724	(1.261)
Capital financing requirement	545.723	534.013	(11.710)
Headroom (Internal borrowing)	43.738	33.289	(10.449)

- (e) **Operational Boundary:** This is the limit beyond which external borrowing is not normally expected to exceed. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary is acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

	2021/22 Estimate £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Complied
Borrowing	537.000	417.985	✓
Other long term liabilities	84.000	82.739	✓
Total	621.000	500.724	✓

- (f) **Authorised Limit for external borrowing:** This represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing and is a statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act

2003. It reflects the level of external borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

	2021/22 Estimate £ Million	2021/22 Actual £ Million	Complied
Borrowing	587.000	417.985	✓
Other long term liabilities	89.000	82.739	✓
Total	676.000	500.724	✓

- (g) **Actual and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream:** This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

	2021/22 Estimate %	2021/22 Actual %	Difference %
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	8.49	7.33	(1.16)

Conclusion

- 33 The Council has fully complied with its Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 for its full year activity covering the period to 31 March 2022.

Background Papers

- 24 February 2021 – County Council – Appendix 12: Durham County Council 2021/22 Annual Treasury Management Strategy as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, 2021/22 to 2024/25 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2021/22.
- 8 December 2021 – County Council – Mid Year Treasury Management Review 2021/22.
- 23 February 2022 – County Council – Appendix 12: Durham County Council 2022/23 Annual Treasury Management Strategy as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23.

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	Andrew Baldwin	Tel:	03000 263490

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council adopts the latest CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) which is regarded as best practice in ensuring adequate monitoring of the Council's capital expenditure plans and in setting its Prudential Indicators (PIs).

The Council's investment policy is governed by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Council on 24 February 2021.

Finance

The report details the Council's cash management, loans and investment activity during 2021/22. The report also provides the overall financing of the Council's capital expenditure, along with borrowing and investment income returns.

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that all staff involved in the treasury management function are fully equipped to undertake the duties and responsibilities allocated to them. Steps are taken to appoint individuals who are both capable and experienced and training is provided to staff to enable them to acquire and maintain an appropriate level of expertise, knowledge, and skills to undertake treasury management activity.

Accommodation

None

Risk

The management of risk is intrinsic to the Councils approach to Treasury Management.

The key objective of the Councils treasury management activities is the security of the principal sums it invests. All investments made in the year were undertaken in line with both the CIPFA Code and government guidance, which requires the Council to invest its funds prudently and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return or yield.

Our counterparty lists and limits on investments with counterparties reflect a prudent attitude towards organisations with whom funds may be deposited. Investment activities are limited to the instruments, methods and techniques referred to in TMP4 : Approved Instruments, Methods and Techniques.

A formal counterparty policy is in place which identifies those organisations from which it may borrow, or with whom it may enter other financing or derivative arrangements.

Procurement

The Council has appointed Treasury Management advisors to support staff involved treasury management activities and to support decision making.

Council

21 September 2022



Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-22

Report of Corporate Management Team
Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services
Councillor Mamie Simmons, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report April 2021 – March 2022 (attached as Appendix 2), for endorsement.
- 2 The Annual Report 2021-22 was agreed by the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting on 19 July 2022, and will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 September

Executive summary

- 3 Over previous years, a number of changes have been implemented to strengthen political and management oversight of the Corporate Parenting Panel and increase the voice of children and young people in our work. This continues to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for our young people.
- 4 The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's constitution and make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 5 This is the fifth Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel, following the changes to political oversight.

Recommendations

- 6 Council is requested to:
 - (a) Note the content of the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report

Background

- 7 The terms of reference make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 8 In September 2019, Durham County Council's Children's Services were inspected by OFSTED. The inspection report stated that 'The Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers.'
- 9 In July 2021, Durham County Council were subject to a remote focused inspection led by Children's Services and Skills on behalf of Ofsted's work into how England's social care system delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the coronavirus pandemic.
- 10 The inspection identified a range of strengths and recognised that the service knows its children well, with Ofsted commenting that the self-assessment provided an accurate picture of children in care.
- 11 The processes in place to listen to the views of children and young people and to ensure their views positively impact service delivery were acknowledged. Inspectors were extremely complimentary about the Children in Care Council, having had the opportunity to meet representatives, to hear about their experiences and achievements.
- 12 This has also been echoed in the recent ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) inspection, which took place in May 2022.

Development of the Annual Report

- 13 To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, it was agreed that young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from the Partnerships Team, would develop the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Reports.
- 14 The young people worked on the design, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it is easy to read and understand.
- 15 To ensure we continue to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Durham County Council Communications and Marketing Team have been involved in the development of the Annual Report to ensure it follows a more corporate format, whilst ensuring it uses language and design which is also appealing to young people.

- 16 The Annual Report is hosted on the Durham County Council website, Investing in Children website, and the Children in Care Council website.
- 17 The Annual Report includes information on:
- (a) What a Corporate Parent is
 - (b) The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (c) The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
 - (d) Key performance data
 - (e) Achievements during 2021/22
 - (f) Priorities for 2022/23

Conclusion

- 18 Council is recommended to note the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report, subject to it being endorsed by Cabinet, which provides oversight of the work undertaken during 2021-22, and the priorities for the year ahead.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's Constitution.

Finance

There are cost implications for design and print services, however the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report will primarily be shared by email, and will be hosted on the Children in Care Council, Investing in Children and Durham County Council websites to minimise printing and distribution costs.

Consultation

Young people from the Children in Care Council have been involved in the development of the Annual Report. The consultation has been done in the main through virtual meetings coordinated by Investing in Children, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Looked After Services are available to all children and young people in line with legal duties.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications

Human Rights

Children and young people have been central to the development of the Annual Report to ensure that their voices are heard.

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-22

Attached as a separate document

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County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel

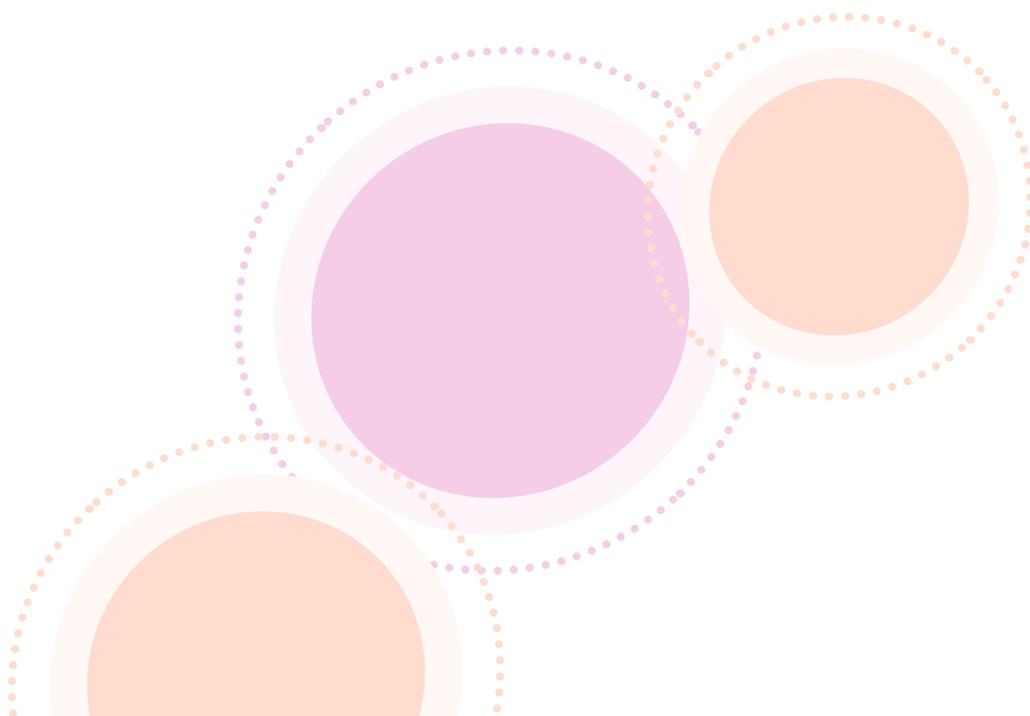
Annual Report
April 2021 - March 2022



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Message from the Children in Care Council (CICC)

representatives

“ I have been a part of the Corporate Parenting Panel for just under a year and it's been one of the many highlights I have achieved with Durham's CICC over the years alongside Investing in Children.

Having the opportunity to be on the panel, has allowed me to build up my confidence by speaking to elected members in County Hall by sharing my own and other care experienced children and young people's thoughts and opinions about what we think needs to be done within the care system, and in Durham. ”

Caitlyn
Co-opted member



Message from the Chair!



Councillor Mamie Simmons
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, I would like to thank everyone for their continued commitment during what has been another very challenging year.

The country was at the height of the pandemic as the financial year commenced and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic continued to impact on the delivery of services, both in County Durham and across the whole of England.

In Durham, staff, partners and volunteers have worked extremely hard and have adapted so well ensuring we were able to respond to the outbreak and to the changing rules and restrictions to ensure that all children, young people and their carers received the best possible help, advice and support.

The young people themselves have demonstrated tremendous resilience and have adapted, and often kept us right as we got used to new ways of communicating.

I am pleased to introduce the Corporate Parenting Panel's fifth annual report, which outlines the work undertaken across the service to help us understand and respond to need, ensuring our young people have the best possible opportunities available to them. **March 2022**



Councillor Michelle Walton
Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

“ Working with the Corporate Parenting Panel has been an honour, me and Caitlyn being chosen as the young people to represent IIC and giving us the opportunity to talk with all the managers that I aspire to, has been great.

Personally it has helped me massively with building confidence in presenting to others and is a unique and great experience to mention in my CV.

Out of everything I have been able to do with IIC, the CPP has definitely pushed me outside of my comfort zone the most and I'm forever grateful to show my passion for the future of young children to make sure their experience of foster care is the best it can be. ”

Luke
Co-opted member

What is a corporate parent?

Local Authorities must provide the care, support, and security that young people need if they can't stay at home safely and become the young people's 'corporate parent'.

Being a corporate parent isn't just up to the Corporate Parenting Panel, everyone should be looking out for our children and young people, and every councillor and council employee has a role to play as the eyes and ears of the community.

Being a corporate parent means doing whatever we can to support young people in our care and our care leavers, to help them achieve their full potential and have the best possible outcomes. This sometimes means being a corporate grandparent too.



Why are children in care?

Young people are looked after for a variety of reasons including neglect and abuse. They could also be in care if their parents are unable to look after them because of their own complex health needs or behaviours. Some young people have no parents to care for them, or they could be unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Where are children in care?

Children and young people can be in care in a range of settings, including foster care, children's homes, supported lodgings, and secure accommodation – the council is corporate parent to all of them.



Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

The CPP is a group that is part of the council, which is called a committee. It has 21 councillors as well as council officers. There are also 10 other members, including school representatives and young people's representatives to make sure there's a broad range of experience and knowledge and that children and young people are heard, and actively responded to.

Corporate parents have responsibility to act for the children and young people in our care as a parent would for their own child, and should ask three key questions:



CPP responsibilities

There are a number of things which the CPP must do:

- ✓ Make sure the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers, including:
 - Young people in residential care, foster care and supported lodgings
 - Young people placed for adoption or placed at home under care planning, placement, and case review regulations
 - Young people in secure homes or in custody
- ✓ Engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers.
- ✓ Work in partnership with other agencies to make improvements for our children and young people in care.
- ✓ Oversee the virtual school for looked after children and young people. For more information visit <http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtuelschool>. A sub-group has been established to lead on this work.
- ✓ Oversee Aycliffe Secure Services. Sub-groups have been established to lead on this work.

More information on the Corporate Parenting Panel can be found in the [constitution of Durham County Council](#)

Updates against 2021/22 priorities

What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
<p>Transport</p>	<p>Discussions have taken place with colleges about bus pass deductions from care experienced young people's bursaries. New College Durham will no longer deduct these, and further conversations are taking place with the remaining college.</p> <p>Durham County Council have awarded all care experienced young people in County Durham who are in years 12 and 13 an 'all time top up bus pass' to use anytime, not just when they're going to college. Additional money is also available to extend this to young people who attend college outside of County Durham.</p> <p>Further discussions around access to public transport are continuing into 2022/23.</p>	<p>Happy</p>  <p>Young people feel that lots has been done but that this is an important area and there's more to progress</p>
<p>Consistent use of child friendly language</p>	<p>Six monthly language updates have been incorporated into the CPP work programme</p> <p>Staff are using language that young people understand, which is familiar to them for example, if a young person refers to their grandmother as 'nanny' then that term is used in their Care Plan.</p> <p>Other changes include 'family time' as an alternative to 'contact' and 'home' instead of 'placement'</p> <p>It was acknowledged that this is an ongoing exercise and young people continue to challenge and encourage us to use 'young-person friendly' language, where it is appropriate, as an alternative to professional terms.</p>	<p>Happy</p>  <p>The feedback from young people is that these small personalised changes mean a great deal to them</p>
<p>Care Experienced Young Inspectors programme</p>	<p>Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic, and the pressures and developments in residential services, work against this action has not been progressed, however this will be picked up for 2022-23.</p> <p>Discussions have recently taken place about also establishing a young people's scrutiny panel where young people would ask questions, review services and make recommendations for improvements. The internal children's homes and fostering teams as well as commissioned providers would be part of this process.</p> <p>The young people's scrutiny panel will be picked up as a priority area for 2022-23</p>	<p>Unhappy</p>  <p>Young people were disappointed that this project hadn't progressed but look forward to getting involved in both the Young Inspectors programme and the scrutiny panel and suggesting areas of focus for these.</p>

What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
<p>Sessional employment -paid opportunities with DCC</p>	<p>We offer Care Leavers the opportunity of paid work experience placements in Durham County Council.</p> <p>To support this, a Sessional Employment Co-ordinator was appointed in July 2021 and joint recruitment processes have been developed.</p> <p>Ten young people have placements agreed and further placements are anticipated.</p> <p>In addition, an agreement is also in place for a 'Benefits Calculator' to be completed by Welfare Rights for each Care Leaver.</p> <p>More information is available in the Employment, Education & Training (EET) section in the annual report.</p>	<p>Happy</p> 
<p>Family time</p>	<p>In response to young people's feedback we have reviewed family time spaces, and all family time plans.</p> <p>As a result we have updated some of the venues we use, and have stopped using some of the venues. We have also made requests for new family time venues.</p> <p>We are also working with a group of young people who are helping us to make some of our venues more 'teenager friendly'.</p> <p>We explained Covid rules as best as we could so that young people knew about and understood social distancing and the rules around this when meeting their families.</p> <p>Across the service we have implemented a renewed focus on making sure that everyone understands their family time plan after Covid implications.</p>	<p>Just ok</p> 
<p>Support for Care Leavers post 16</p>	<p>In response to feedback we have reviewed our Local Offer in comparison with national Care Leavers offers, and have made sure that young people know that our Local Offer to Care Leavers is easily available on the internet.</p> <p>We have reminded young people that the DurhamWorks offer is included in the information given to Care Leavers, including the job interview offer. This has been shared at CICC meetings and with the Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p>Our transport offer for college students has improved with the majority of colleges now offering bus passes. In addition, all students in years 12 and 13 have been offered an all time top up bus pass, to use for non-college travel.</p> <p>Care leavers are eligible for Freedom Cards, which offers a range of discounts and free activities, including swim and gym use, and in addition our wider financial offer for care leavers is being reviewed.</p> <p>We have a dedicated Care Leavers team, and have recently opened our first Care leavers hub, offering a safe place for young people to gather, socialise, do laundry, bathe, and access free meals.</p>	<p>Happy</p> 

What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
<p>Challenging stigma and discrimination for young people in care</p>	<p>The Art Stops project has been hugely successful, and has helped to increase positive images and reduce stigma of Care Experience young people across the region. Opportunities to expand this project are being considered.</p> <p>At each CPP meeting we celebrate the success of our young people and share 'proud moments'</p> <p>The use of language is a regular agenda item at social work team meetings, and six monthly language updates come to CPP meetings giving the young people an opportunity to share their thoughts on how things are going and what could be improved, as it is acknowledged that this is ever changing, and should be based on young people's personal preferences using language that is familiar to them.</p> <p>Films have been produced by young people, showcasing some of the issues that are important to them. These have and will continue to be shared appropriately to increase awareness.</p> <p>Meetings have taken place with community midwives to discuss how care experienced young people who are parents can be supported, and awareness is being raised about the corporate grandparenting role.</p> <p>Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) training has been undertaken by the CICC to raise awareness of care experienced young people within the Police service, and in addition PCSO 'buddies' have been aligned to our children's homes to build positive relationships between the police and young people.</p> <p>A range of foster care training is delivered by care experienced young people to potential foster carers so that they understand things from the young people's perspective from the outset. We also host the Fostering Stars Awards to showcase success.</p> <p>Some young people met with Josh McAlister, chair of the independent review of children's social care to share their views, and a young person's 'care experience story' was shared with him to feed into the review, as well as the story being shared as part of care day 2022.</p> <p>More information on the independent review can be found HERE</p>	<p>Just ok</p> 

Priorities for 2022-23

Each year, young people choose key priority areas that they would like the service and the Corporate Parenting Panel to focus on. It was agreed that the young people would identify key areas and share these with the CPP members at the six monthly joint CICC / CPP meetings.

It was felt that this would be a good balance, in order to keep things achievable and to enable us to focus on these areas and provide regular updates to the young people.



The following areas were identified by young people for 2022-23:

- Personalised Care
- Staff in Children's Homes and Foster carers
- Family Time

As well as these continuing priorities:

- Broaden and increase attendance at CICC meetings
- Establish a Young Inspectors programme and a Young People's scrutiny panel
- Transport

In order to increase the representative voice of the Children in Care Council all children in care will be given the opportunity to identify from these areas their order of priority and this will direct the plan of work moving forwards.

Children in Care (CICC)

The CICC is a group for children and young people who are looked after in County Durham and is supported by Investing in Children. The CICC members meet monthly to talk about issues which are important to them, highlight what works and share stories of the support they have received. This forum is well established, and has recently been split into older and younger groups as there were so many attendees, and the two age groups often had different priorities.

Senior managers from within Children and Young People's Services and elected members who are on the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) regularly attend CICC meetings.

More information on the CICC can be found at <https://www.durhamcicc.co.uk/>

Co-opted positions for CICC members

Two young people from the CICC have co-opted positions on the CPP providing panel representation from the CICC. They attend each meeting (supported by Investing in Children) to share feedback from the CICC. In addition, the CICC have a standing item on each CPP agenda, where they provide feedback from CICC meetings, ensuring members of the CPP hear real views and feedback directly from the young people. The young people are involved in decision making within the CPP, and this feedback is shared with relevant leads to influence service decisions and developments as necessary.

Joint CICC/ CPP meetings

In addition to the formal CPP meetings, children and young people from the CICC (supported by Investing in Children) host a joint meeting with the CPP every six months.

The young people set the agenda for the meeting and invite members and officers of the CPP to attend to meet with the CICC.

These meetings are less formal than the CPP meeting and provide an opportunity for all of the young people who are part of the CICC to raise issues which are important to them and have discussions directly with members and officers of the CPP and have their ideas, suggestions and comments heard.

Feedback from the discussions is collated and key issues are presented at a formal CPP meeting, for further discussion. Work takes place to address these issues within the service, and feedback is provided to the CICC at the next joint meeting.



CICC Newsletters

Young people from the CICC produce newsletters, which are shared with partners across the service, with children, young people and their families and with the CPP.

DCC continue to support CICC with the newsletter on a monthly basis and Durham County Council's marketing team helped the young people understand the editorial role and become a 'young editor' for the newsletter.

You can find copies of the CICC newsletters at <https://www.durhamcicc.co.uk/cicc-newsletters>

CICC catch ups

During 2020, CPP meetings were cancelled due to Covid restrictions so virtual monthly meetings were set up with the CICC, the Chair and Vice Chair of the CPP, the Head of Children's Social Care and some of the senior managers from the service so that young people were still able to have contact with the Panel on a regular basis.

Young people found these meetings really valuable and so when the CPP meetings were re-started a decision was taken to continue these meetings virtually on a bi-monthly basis to maintain regular contact with the CICC and the CPP leads.

Some of the things we discussed at these meetings were:

- IRO work
- Use of language
- Social worker profiles
- Understanding PEPs and the PP+ project
- Apprenticeships and job opportunities
- Brothers and sisters and the importance of staying together or maintaining contact
- Independent review of Children's Social Care
- Police work
- Peer mentoring
- Artstops project
- Bus Pass deductions from College Bursaries

Ofsted inspections

Ofsted's focused inspection of Children's Services, took place remotely on 13 & 14 July 2021, and looked at DCCs arrangements for children in care.

A letter outlining a summary of the findings was received from Ofsted on 23 August, which can be accessed [HERE](#)

The letter contained lots of positive feedback, including the work of the CICC, and the opportunities young people have to share their experiences, and included two areas for priority action and one area for improvement.

One co-opted member was involved in discussions with the inspectors, and the inspector said that the young person explained to them how much young people felt they had been listened to and how DCC responded really well to their feedback e.g. use of language.

The inspectors talked to the Head of Children's Social Care about how empowered the young people were, and shared really positive feedback that the work of the CICC was exceptional. The inspectors were really impressed with all of the young people they met.

Celebrate Me event

On Thursday 21 October 2021 – a Halloween themed celebration event took place virtually. Young people helped to plan the event, and chose the music and entertainment, and picked the Halloween theme and insisted all attendees dressed up. Although young people appreciate the challenges that covid brings, and enjoyed the virtual event and the diversity it brought, they still like face to face events.



Care day 2022



We hosted virtual events to celebrate Care Day 2022 with a variety of activities and communications on Friday 18 February and Monday 21 February, including:

- A play about the importance of promoting relationships with brothers and sisters
- Young people sharing their stories, poems, achievement and experiences.
- Virtual quiz: Young People v Staff
- Virtual session about the importance of life story work.

All of the young people has a great day and look forward to next years event.



Children's Social Care Teams

Children's Social Care Teams won a Mind of My Own award for a children's launch event, when young people designed the poster.



Independent Visitors

Did you know that any person in care (from primary school age, until you turn 18 years old) is entitled to an independent visitor. An independent visitor is a volunteer who can help with your mental health and wellbeing, help with social anxiety, and you can also plan trips and activities to do together. Ask your social worker for more information.

During 2021-22 the service received 68 referrals, which is a significant increase on the previous year (17 referrals), and 59 young people were matched with an Independent Visitor. Of these, 24 matches ended due to the young people becoming 18, not wanting Independent Visitor any more, or the Independent Visitor leaving the role – leaving 35 active matches.

The main impact of having an Independent Visitor is reported as an increase in confidence and self-esteem amongst young people. Developing independent skills is also reported as a significant impact. Feedback from users of the Independent Visitor service is ...



“Did you know that any person in care (from primary school age, until you turn 18 years old) is entitled to an independent visitor.”

“The work done with ‘A’ has seen him develop so much as in individual and his behaviour has improved so much’ (Social Worker)

‘B’ is a completely different person. Once upon a time he would not even talk to us. His confidence has increased so much’ (Foster carer)

‘I love going out with my Independent Visitor and doing different activities. I also get to choose which is great!’ (Young person)

‘It is like having a relative that cares’ (Young person)

‘The work that ‘C’ has completed with their Independent Visitor has allowed him to transition from foster care to independent living with vital skills to survive when lots of other support has gone’ (Social Worker)

‘The relationship between the Independent Visitor and ‘D’ is very strong. This is helping to support her through some very tough periods in her life and give her someone independent to talk to’ (Foster Carer)

Children with disabilities

There have been significant changes to services for children and young people with disabilities since 2019 which includes additional investment in front line staff as well as a remodelling of the service to create a 0-18 children's service and a 14-25 navigation service within adult social care services, focused on supporting the transition from children's to adults services.

We also work with partners to ensure that where appropriate, children are signposted to other services and sources of support.

Work has developed with a wide range of partner agencies to support these practice improvements to ensure the needs of our children and young people are met and they are in receipt of high-quality support and services.

A Governance Improvement Board for disabled children has been created which has oversight from a children's and adults services perspective and includes commissioning colleagues who are key to service development and innovation for children and young people with disabilities. The board is jointly chaired by Heads of Service in CYPS and ASC.

We have strengthened the voice of our children so they along with their parent/carers are informing their care plans, reviews. This means they influence the development of the services they receive and can be more confident that they are the right services for the child.

Our procedures and guidance have been updated and will be reviewed annually, and all of our children have up to date assessments which are also reviewed annually, and we see the children who receive our services regularly.

We have managed some of the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic by reviewing services and working with our commissioning colleagues to think differently about service delivery for families. As a result, improvements in the service can be evidenced by the increase in compliments from families and professionals and a reduction in complaints.



Young people have told us what they want from us:

Making our services be the best they can be for all children and young people:

- Specialist community hubs (short breaks)
- CICC development
- MOMO feedback
- Family Satisfaction Surveys
- Governance Group
- Disability Steering Board

That we know them well, and when we can't help we find someone who can

- Ensure that team culture promotes building good relationships with young people, their families and carers.
- That where possible, young people have the same social worker throughout their childhood.
- When you cannot help or when the criteria is not met, you will endeavor to provide advice, support and guidance to help meet young people's needs.

'My social worker is very fun' (young person)

'The team are kind and caring, giving the right information at the right time, even when the child doesn't meet their eligibility criteria'. (Carers)

Ensure needs are understood and regularly discussed by people who know the young people best

- Young people are visited regularly by their named social worker.
- Annual assessments focusing on what's working well for young people, their families/carers, what they are worried about and what needs to happen to meet their needs.
- Ensuring young people have a robust plan to meet needs and/or keep them safe. That these are reviewed and updated regularly by young people, their families and carers.
- Parents/carers have access to carers assessments.
- When young people are ready to move into the Navigation team it is done in a timely manner and their transition to adulthood is really well planned.



'it means we get to see the same people and know what is going to happen next' (young person)

'The support, that I'm getting my own independence but I'm already independent. When I'm at the Metrocentre the workers let me go and do bus spotting on my own, they are always upstairs [in the Metrocentre]. I would like them to 'Take me out more often and have more quality time' (young person)

Supporting Solutions Service

Supporting Solutions Service offers:

- Edge of care support, offering intensive interventions where there has been a relationship breakdown
- Family Group conferences to support families to put in place a sustainable plan to support the young people
- Missing from home work
- Child Exploitation support and interventions
- Access to an out of hours bed for one night where there is a crisis situation

During 2021-22, 198 young people received support from the SSS service, 138 of these were referred in 2021/22, whilst the other 60 had been referred prior to this.

- 130 young people who received support from Supporting Solutions were able to remain in the care of their family and 6 young people were able to return to the care of their family after a period in care. 10 young people were supported to remain in their long-term placement.

- The crisis bed at The Nest was used on 59 occasions, for a total of 73 nights.
- 231 initial Family Group Conferences were completed in 2021/22; for 197 of these the plan supported the child/young person to remain with or return to the care of their family.
- The Erase child exploitation workers have supported 92 young people who were identified as high risk of criminal or sexual exploitation in 2021/22. When reviewed in April 2022 43 young people remained high risk, but for 49 young people their risks had reduced (26 to medium risk and 23 to low risk).
- 683 young people were reported missing in 2021/22, a total of 1992 missing episodes. This is an increase of over 80% on the previous year. Of the 1910 occasions where a Return Home Interview was offered 1417 were completed, and information shared with partners to inform risk reduction planning.

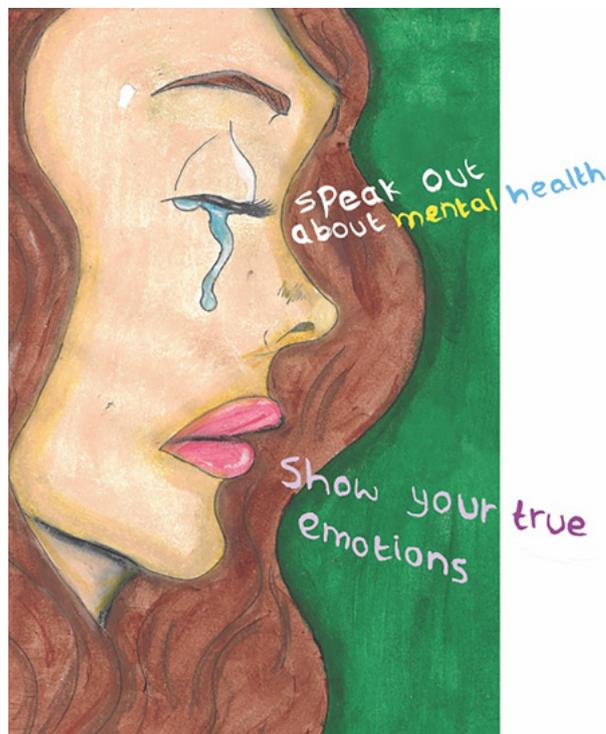
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Durham Children's services works with the national scheme for the dispersal of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and has done for some time. The scheme became mandatory around 6 months ago and since that time an increasing number of children who are seeking asylum alone have moved into the care of Durham Children's services.

The children come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, with the majority having been trafficked into the country and have then been detained by border control through the South of England Counties.

The needs of these children are significant, and services are developing and responding to their needs in terms of safe places to live, education physical and emotional health services along with opportunities to enjoy life.

A social work consultant from the children in care teams leads much of the practice in this work and has established a football group with a number of young people that meets and plays weekly. The language of football is assisting the young people to reduce feelings of isolation, build networks and have fun together. It is hoped this can develop into a regional group where young people will be able to meet others from their home communities and build supportive networks for their adult lives.



Fostering Friendly Award

The Designated Nurse for Children in Care was successful in their application for the Fostering Friendly Award. Fostering Friendly Employer status was gained in April 2021 following review of policies within the CCG to ensure that they provided flexibility for employees who were or were considering being foster carers. The subsequent Fostering Excellence Award was gained in November 2021. This achievement highlighted the support the CCG provided to foster carers / potential foster carers in their role so encouraging the uptake of foster parents for our most vulnerable children across County Durham. The Designated Professionals support and take part in fostering friendly fortnight – led by the local authority, to encourage people to consider the role but also highlight the excellent although often challenging work our foster carers do. County Durham CCG were the first NHS organisation to have received this accolade. The Designated Professionals will continue to champion foster cares both at place and across the ICB and as such will be committed to being able to make a difference for the people and children within our communities.

Fostering Services



The fostering service in Durham has 252 fostering households offering around 460 fostering beds to children. The service is well recognised, and the work of foster carers is valued throughout the Council and with partners.

The fostering community is under significant pressure to meet the needs of children and the demand for fostering beds significantly outstrips the capacity.

The fostering team is split into 6 teams to organise the work and to support the ability to recruit and train carers, match them to the right carers and to support the carers in their fostering role across the county.

The fostering team also support connected carers with dedicated fostering social work support. Around 15% of children in foster care live with connected person carers. Many of these children leave care under a legal order to these carers if they are not able to safely return home

Foster Care Review

In early 2022, a Service Manager was appointed to undertake a review of the support and recognition of foster carers and the work that they do. This includes a review of the criteria for foster carer skill levels, as well as reviewing foster carer payments known as 'payment for skills' (PFS) to ensure they have enough money to support and care for their foster children.

Foster carers were asked to share their thoughts around what we do well, or what we could do differently so that we can ensure Durham's core offer to its foster carers is as good as it can be and acknowledges the hard work that they do.

Mockingbird Family Model

The Service Manager also led on the implementation and roll out of the Mockingbird Model, which is a project committed

to increasing and retaining our foster carers which is critical to stabilising fostering placement. The model also increased the level of support offered to foster carers and children.

TV Advert

A number of targeted campaigns take place across the year to increase the number of foster carers. We recently launched our first TV advert, watch it [HERE](#)

Did you know... ? ?

We have a group called 'M8s' that provides support for foster carers own children, if they have them. This gives an opportunity for the young people to meet others whose parents are foster carers, and to have fun whilst sharing their experiences.



Mind of My Own App

To ensure all we do has children's voices at the centre, we have several ways that we engage and in addition to our direct work, all young people are supported to access the Mind of My Own app. This enables young people to share their views, successes and any challenges with their social workers ahead of their Looked After Reviews or Foster Carer Reviews. The app also allows young people to contact their social worker if they have any worries or queries about anything at any time.

You can find out more about the app in this presentation: [Mind of my own](#)

'Fostering Friendly Employer Award'

The County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group have worked with the Fostering Network to achieve the 'Fostering Friendly Employer' Award, which will help staff who are, or who wish to become foster carers.

Foster care training

Feedback from the training is so good, there have been requests to make the sessions even longer so that more can be discussed.

Foster Care awards

Because of Covid restrictions, the 2021 awards were postponed as we were not able to have any in person celebrations, so for the 2022 awards we decided to go all out!!

We hosted the Foster Care Star Awards on Wednesday 9 March 2022 at the Gala Theatre, Durham to recognise the outstanding achievements of foster carers, as well as their families who have welcomed children and young people into their homes and lives.

Over 100 carers and their families received awards for long-service, outstanding achievements, sons and daughters of carers and all-round support. As the 2021 event was postponed, even more carers were recognised this year for their efforts to help young people reach their full potential.

A new, publicly nominated award was also given to the foster family seen by local communities as having gone 'above and beyond' in making a child feel comfortable, safe and secure in their new family home. It was an excellent event, and there were lots of very proud staff and elected members.



Did you know...



Staying Put arrangements means that if a young person and their foster carer agree, the young person can continue to stay with their foster carers when they turn 18, even though they become a care leaver. This may be something a young person wants to do because they want support while they finish their education, or they might just want more time to make the transition to independence. They can stay with their foster carer until they are 21.

The Annual report of the Fostering Service 2021-22 is available on request.

Children's homes



We currently have nine registered Children's Homes across the County (with a 10th being registered) offering residential care to children and young people. This could be support and care for young people who cannot live at home, or short respite breaks when children and young people with disabilities need to have a little time away from their family or carer. Many developments are taking place within residential services including new systems, new peripatetic staff teams, deputy managers being introduced in all homes and physical works being undertaken on the buildings to ensure they are homely and fit for purpose.

Sufficiency

A number of new children's homes are being developed to ensure that as many children as possible live within County Durham and are able to maintain links with their schools, friends, families and hobbies. The new homes are different sizes (ranging from 1 to 3 places) so that children and young people with more complex needs can be cared for. An Edge of Care home is also being planned; this will offer short breaks and wider support to young people and their families to help them to remain living at home.

Staying Close

This is similar to the staying put principles, when young people leave our children's homes they may not feel ready to be fully independent, so we will look for accommodation options that are close to their former children's home so that they are able to pop in for advice and support, or to use laundry facilities, have a meal etc when they need to.



NYAS

All children in Care have access to independent advocacy services through the National Youth Advocacy Service.

Regulation 44 / elected members

Some of our elected members attend the Regulation 44 inspection visits alongside the NYAS inspectors on a quarterly basis ([more information on Reg 44 visits can be found here](#)). Posters of the inspectors are on display in the home, so that young people know who is visiting, and can identify them easily:

Home/Councillor	
Framwellgate Moor, Durham Cllr Mamie Simmons	
New Lea House, Stanley Cllr Michelle Walton	
Park House, Sherburn Village Cllr Stacey Deinali	
Coxhoe Cllr Chris Varty	
West Rainton Cllr Bev Coult	
High Etherley Cllr Samantha Townsend	
Hickstead, Newton Aycliffe Cllr Joyce Charlton	
Orchard House, Sacriston Cllr Cathy Hunt	
Moorside, Spennymoor Cllr Beaty Bainbridge	
Walworth, Aycliffe Secure Centre Cllr Ken Robson	
Barnard and Durham, Aycliffe Secure Centre Cllr Jake Miller	
Lumley, Aycliffe Secure Centre Cllr Chris Hood	

Adoption

Adopt Coast to Coast was established as the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), and the launched virtually on 1 April 2021 as the go to agency for those who are interested in adoption. Adopt Coast to Coast is a partnership RAA, and is made up of the following three partners (spokes):

- Cumbria County Council
- Durham County Council
- Together for Children who deliver children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council

Adopt Coast to Coast is working with partners to embed models of early permanence in Durham, for example 'Fostering for Adoption', and work across the partnership to develop the post adoption support offer.

Adopt Coast to Coast's marketing activity for 2021-22 was all about brand recognition, and getting the name out as far and wide as possible. This was impacted by the pandemic as we were unable to use some of the traditional methods, so we focused on the following:

- Public relations – stories about our launch, appeals, events, campaigns and more ...
- Internal communications – amongst our three partners
- A radio campaign in April during the launch month, and a further two campaigns in October and March

- A TV advert to celebrate the launch of Adopt Coast to Coast which can be viewed [HERE](#)
- Google advertising, making sure Adopt Coast to Coast appears highly when searched for
- Facebook and Instagram advertising to raise awareness and promote events
- Display advertising on key websites to raise awareness of Adopt Coast to Coast
- Third party campaigns e.g. joining in with activity for National Adoption week

Adopt Coast to Coast's marketing activity for 2022-23 will focus on:

- Potential enquirers for groups of brothers and sisters, children with additional health needs and/or developmental uncertainty.
- An initiative with neighbouring regional adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs) to increase opportunities for children to be adopted by families living in the North East and Cumbria.
- Reviewing and developing marketing activity and recruitment practice across the spokes, being mindful of the lived experience of children and their adoptive families and the findings from the national mystery shopper activity.





Katie and James were one of six couples to have started their journey with Adopt Coast to Coast and had a child placed with them before the services' first anniversary. Katie said:

“What was clear from the start was that you don’t have to be a certain way to adopt, you don’t need lots of money just time and love. “We’d had so many years to prepare for adoption and we always knew it would be our route to parenthood so we accepted it and knowing him has been the best four weeks of our lives – he’s just amazing. I was worried before we started all of this that we wouldn’t have a connection but he’s our whole world - he 100% feels like our son already.”

DCC Adoption/Service

This has been a really busy year for Durham’s Adoption Team in all areas of the service. The post adoption service has helped to secure funding through the Adoption Support Fund to the value of almost £376000.115, and adopted children have benefitted from therapeutic support as a result of this.

The numbers of enquiries from people considering adoption have risen hugely and the team have responded to 216 enquiries, whereas in the previous year 100 enquiries were received.

Across the year, 30 information sharing events have been held for people in the enquiry stage to attend, and feedback from these has been very positive. One attendee said

‘It was all very positive and information was provided in an easy to understand way.’

- Information, counselling and preparation courses have been held monthly for those moving along the assessment process. These have been held jointly with our Regional Adoption Agency partners in Together For Children and Cumbria.

- A total of 40 adoptive households were approved in this time frame. This was a combination of single adopters, heterosexual and same sex couples.

- 65 children were matched with their adoptive families, with a further 6 being placed under Fostering for Adoption. Again, these figures are increased on previous years.

- We continue to be proactive in responding to enquiries, and provide a wealth of information and support at all stages on their journey to becoming adopters.

Care Leavers

The Durham County Council Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers has been developed, covering January 2022 to December 2024. It outlines our vision, and areas for action.

The strategy has a strong focus on learning from those who are care experienced to drive forward practice improvements in County Durham and help our young people to build strong relationships that will endure.

Local Offer to Care Leavers

The Local Offer has been published on our website and gives details of how DCC will support young people with:

- Options about where they live
- Helping with money, benefits, and financial advice
- Looking after their health (physical, mental, and sexual); drug, alcohol and smoking cessation support; support about relationships.
- Education, Employment & Training

Care experienced young people have undertaken a research project to look at Durham's local offer, which included a trip to York Council to look at their care leavers offer. The research project benchmarked Durham against other regional and national local authorities local offers.

Moving forward, colleagues and young people from ten other Care Leavers services will visit Durham and vice versa. The ten Local Authorities will provide feedback on Durham's services in June 2022. Consideration is being given to hosting a conference to share this feedback, and what it means for us in Durham.

Durham compares well to other areas, however plans have been put in place to make our local offer even better, and the proposals will be presented to the Chief Executive Officer and DCCs Corporate Management Team.

We will include an update in next year's annual report, but some of the key things in the local offer are:

- Improving the quality of pathway plans
- Strengthening our corporate commitment to our care leavers
- Making sure our young people have a variety of suitable accommodation options
- Improving the health outcome of care leavers, following the impact of Covid
- Helping prepare our young people for adulthood, which does not mean 'independence' as we recognise that everyone needs support throughout their lives
- Improved coproduction

An action plan has also been developed for 2022/23 which outlines how we will do what we say we are going to do, and by when.



Midwifery offer to care experienced young people

We have a group called 'M8s' that provides support for foster carers own children, if they have them. This gives an opportunity for the young people to meet others whose parents are foster carers, and to have fun whilst sharing their experiences.

Supported lodgings

Supported lodgings provides a safe, supportive and friendly home environment for young people, aged between 16 and 25 years old, who are leaving care and do not want to live independently. Supported lodgings providers give young people a key to their home, their own room, access to a bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities.

Each young person is different, but many need practical support and help with things like learning to cook, doing laundry, budgeting, attending appointments, or even to help them find a job, or access education and training.

Supported lodgings can be short term, or for up to two years, and in Durham we have several supported lodgings providers and always seek to recruit more.

Care Leavers hub

The care leavers hub was officially launched on 28 February 2022, by our care leavers. The hub is a safe space to engage with services and each other, and just a welcoming place to hang out, get warm, clean and fed. A programme of events has been developed for the hub for the year ahead, and some further ideas for the hub include a monthly Sunday dinner club with a yorkshire pudding making competition.



Drive project



The project supports young people by providing driving lessons, up to the value of £500. The project pays for one lesson, the young person pays for the next lesson, and so on then the project pays for the first theory test and one practical test. This is available for looked after young people aged 17+ and care leavers up to the age of 21 (25 if in full time education).

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic restrictions the project was on hold during 2020-21 and we are still seeing the impact of this as the pandemic has impacted on the availability of driving lessons nationally.

We are working with the DCC procurement team to consider options, ensuring that lessons are secured with reputable instructors.

Health

It is the responsibility of Durham County Council, County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and commissioned health services to identify and address the unmet health needs of children who become looked after.

Physical health

The CCG commission County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) to:

- Provide medical services
- Undertake initial health assessments (IHAs)
- Undertake review health assessments (RHAs) for those living out of the Local Authority boundary but within a 20-mile radius.
- Complete health passports for those children aged 15½ years old and above.

Public Health commission Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) to undertake RHAs for young people living within the Local Authority boundary.

These health assessments result in individual health plans being developed which form, part of the young person's overall care plan.

The CGG has recruited a Designated Nurse for children in care, and 'children in care' is now a key focus within training offered by primary care professionals.

- Year on year there have been increasing numbers of young people entering care, which has posed some challenges to the CCG in responding to the increasing numbers, especially on the back of the existing Covid pressures.

- Moving forward, the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and potentially children from Ukraine will also bring challenges, especially as these young people will come to us with no or limited medical and / or mental health history or differing systems of health care.

Mental Health

At present the CCG commission Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) to provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to support young people with mental health difficulties (Tier 1-3).

NHS England provide in patient mental health services (Tier 4).

Durham County Council commissioning additional mental health support from Full Circle which is a therapeutic service dedicated to working with care experienced young people. The Full Circle have an important role in responding to mental health needs of children in care and adopted children. Full Circle is a social work led team, made up of Therapeutic Social Workers employed by the Local Authority, including a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Nurse Specialist, who are employed via and have links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) service within Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

Full Circle utilise a trauma informed approach to assist placement stability by supporting the children's foster carers and adopters, social workers, residential staff, educational staff and the child's care team to support the child's recovery from complex trauma and abuse.

The availability of suitable in-patient services is also a challenge for the service.



Self-Care & Mental Health for Kids

Share your own feelings to encourage self-awareness. 

Find social groups that help them feel like they belong. 

Set aside time for low-stress or solo activities. 

Practice self-care for yourself to set the standard. 

Focus on articulating feelings. "I am angry," "I am sad." 

Encourage journaling and diaries. 

Encourage your child to focus on the moment. 

Establish a self-care routine. 

Recognize toxic stress events. 

Cultivate interests and hobbies. 

BlessingManifesting

Priorities for health moving forward include:

- Continued support for the recruitment of foster carers
- Improved data collection
- Working with local authorities to augment information sharing processes
- Improving mental health outcomes for young people - the number of Children in Care accessing CAMHS services and their needs are fully understood

Joint work continues with Local Authority partners to:

- Facilitate the date of the first Looked After Review being communicated to the Foundation Trust to expedite a timely IHA appointment – this is a longstanding challenge for the LA to meet the statutory 5 day timeframe.
- Augment the information sharing pathways following a child entering care and relevant documentation is distributed to the Foundation Trust in a contemporaneous manner.

Health outcomes for children in care and those care experienced continue to improve:

- Health Needs Analysis to be complete to inform future service delivery
- Continue to liaise with NHS England colleagues to ensure children in care are prioritised by dental practices across the region
- Immunisation campaign to be promoted
- Recognising the needs of Children in Care who are reported missing.
- Improving terminology used for Children in Care health assessments by working with the Children in Care Council.



As of July 2021, there were 573 Durham looked after children of statutory school age:

- 48% primary / 52% secondary.
- 46% female / 54% male.
- 81% County Durham schools / 19% out of County schools, which is an increase of 3.6% from the previous year.
- School attendance for the whole looked after cohort was 89.3%
- Fixed term exclusions remain low at 5.6% (22 children)
- 49% had an identified special educational need (SEN), which is an increase of 6% from the previous year.
 - 21% are supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
 - 28% had a school SEN Support Plan, an increase of 4% from the previous year
 - Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) were the primary need for 39% of primary aged children and 51% of secondary aged children.

The Virtual School are proactive with SEN to ensure young people are known, and that interventions are available for schools to access as early as possible. If a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is moved out of the Local Authority area to have their care needs met, it is important that Durham retain the plan for that child until an appropriate setting has been found. In Durham, every child who is looked after who has an EHCP now has an identified SEND Caseworker as well as their PEP Caseworker.

Language

Following on from discussions with young people about the language we use, the Virtual School has raised this at network meetings, so schools are aware that this is a priority for CLA. We have also developed the use of the Clear Cut Communication Tool at the entry into care and at the personal education plan (PEP) meeting to support young people by understanding their communication needs. This helps everyone involved in the child's life to provide the right support which should then lead to better outcomes.

- For 2020/21 centre assessed grades were used as there were no formal examinations due to Covid. Our young people performed well with some young people achieving strong sets of results.
- For 2021/22 children will sit their Key Stage 2 SAT's and formal exams for GCSE will take place for young people in Year 11. This will bring additional challenges for our CLA

Virtual School Sub group

Agreement was made by the Corporate Parenting Panel to bring two new reps onto the Virtual School sub groups to ensure representation from maintained nurseries and post 16 education.

Education fun fund

Given that schools were not operating in the usual way during 2021-22 due to Covid, there was an underspend in the Pupil Premium Plus money, which is allocated from Government. The Virtual School transferred £3,000 PP+ money to the CICC for an Education Fun Fund project.

Within schools, PP+ money must be spent on educational resources whereas this project could be more flexible around purchasing non education equipment.

Young people from the CICC set up the project, and developed an application process whereby young people can apply for up to £150 for non-educational items, which would not typically be funded in this way for example, sport and exercise equipment, boxing lessons, art and craft supplies, instruments and music lessons etc.

Post 16 young people attending further education colleges have been involved in a government pilot where they have received PP+ funding for one financial year. This has supported them to access the wider college life and has encouraged good attendance. A Mentor was employed to provide additional pastoral support.

Education/Employment & Training

A range of support continues to be available for care leavers to enable and support them to progress into education, employment and training (EET).

DurhamWorks programme for schools

This programme provides support for young people aged 15 and 16 to help them to make a successful progression from Year 11 into to post 16 learning.

During the 2021-22 academic year, a total of 800 young people who were identified as being at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) were supported, including 34 Looked After Children. Of these, 28 Looked After Children (82.4%) progressed into a positive post-16 learning destination.

DurhamWorks

DurhamWorks provides care leavers with wrap around support to enable them to progress into and remain in Education, Employment and Training.

Since its inception in 2016, 665 young people supported by DurhamWorks have identified themselves as being Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these, 599 young people have completed the programme, with 417 (69.9%) young people progressing into a positive Education, Employment or Training destination.

DurhamEnable

This is a new supported employment service available for our Care Leavers, aged 18 plus who have learning, physical and/or mental health barriers to employment. Overall, DurhamEnable aims to support over 900 County Durham residents between now and December 2023.

Durham County Council Pathway for Young People

The pathway continues to be embedded to provide more opportunities for care leavers within Durham County Council 'The Family Business'. As part of this, a sessional employment programme offers care leavers opportunities to undertake paid work experience which align to their talents, interests and aspirations.

A sessional employment Coordinator was appointed in July 2021 to facilitate the programme and they are actively engaging with Care Leavers, Young People's Advisers, Durham County Council Human Resources staff, as well as Service Managers. Joint recruitment processes have been developed in conjunction with Durham County Council

Human Resources staff, a programme has been designed and delivered to support Care Leavers and staff, and an agreement is in place for a "Benefits Calculator" to be completed by Welfare Rights for each Care Leaver.

At present, ten Care Leavers are currently undertaking Sessional Employment and placements have been agreed in the following areas: Construction, Farming and Protective Landscapes, Motor Vehicle, Human Resources, DurhamWorks and Catering. Further placements are anticipated in Quantity Surveying as well as with CYPS Young People's Service.

Apprenticeships

Further action was undertaken to support more Care Leavers into Durham County Council Apprenticeships. This included the ring-fencing of Apprenticeship opportunities specifically for Care Leavers, as well as delivery of bespoke training to support Care Leavers with their applications and to prepare them for the interview stage. There are currently seven Care Leavers undertaking Apprenticeships within Durham County Council.



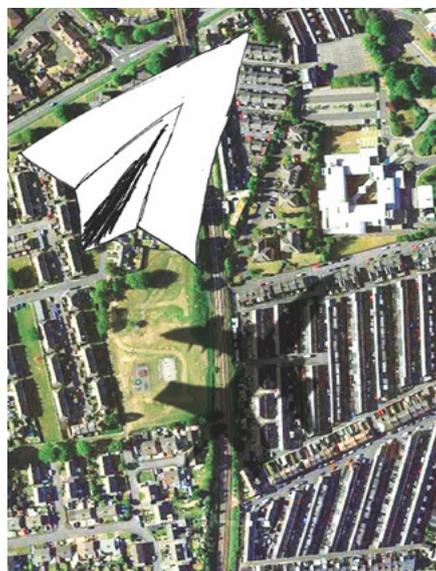
Youth Hubs

DurhamWorks has liaised with the Department for Work and Pensions to set up 'Youth Hubs' across County Durham. These are spaces where unemployed young people can access a range of intensive support and provision to enable them to find a job. Youth Hubs are operating in Stanley and Peterlee, and an exciting new Youth Hub opened in Bishop Auckland in March 2022.

PP+ Pilot

A 'Keep In College' incentive payment of £20 per week is in place for care leavers who achieve over 80% authorised attendance. There are currently 52 Young People attending 14 different Further Education Colleges, who are receiving this.

All information is available on the [DurhamWorks website](#)



Key performance data

- There were 982 children in care at the end of March 2022. This is higher than last year, however our rate of children in care per 10,000 children in County Durham remains lower than in the North East and our Statistical Neighbours.
- Our number of children in care has fluctuated during the year following an increase in children leaving care once Family Courts reopened, but also a reduction in children coming into care in through most of 2021. Children becoming looked after has returned to similar pre-COVID levels but we have experienced another recent reduction in children leaving care. This is a direct impact of the Somerset Judgment, with 30 children who are currently placed for adoption experiencing a delay. If these delays had not occurred, we would be at a similar number of CLA to last year (949).
- The National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has also started in year and the first young people have started to arrive in Durham. This will also lead to an increase in children who come into our care throughout the year.
- 62 children were adopted in 2021/22. This equates to 18% of all children leaving care which is higher than in England and the North East in 2019/20.
- A higher proportion of children in care in Durham are in a foster placement than in our comparators (74% compared to 71% in England and 72% in our statistical neighbours in 2020-21).
- Around a quarter of our children in care are placed outside of County Durham, but the vast majority are within neighbouring local authority areas. Often closer to their home than if placed in other areas of the county. This continues to be consistently lower than in our comparators.
- We have experienced significant placement pressures during, and following, COVID which has led to an increase in children having 3 or more placement moves and long-term stability for some of our children aged under 16 who have been in care for more than 2 1.2 years.
- We have seen an increase in the number of children in care reported as missing alongside the number of missing episodes, with some children regularly reported as 'missing'. This is a potential impact from lockdowns during COVID. Multi-agency work is ongoing with Police and other partner agencies to monitor, understand and address this.
- Performance in relation to our care leavers remains positive in relation to accommodation suitability and education, employment and training remains above or at benchmarks
- Educational attainment data is included in Virtual School and EET sections.

Aycliffe Secure Centre

In April 2021
ASC had its full
unannounced
Inspection and
was judged as
Outstanding
Overall.

In November 2021
ASC had an
interim inspection
and was awarded
Sustained
Effectiveness.



“ Our mission statement: **“Through developing and investing in our staff and infrastructure, Aycliffe secure centre will continue to provide each young person with a safe, secure, caring home and school. Encouraging and motivating each young person to be the best they can be in an environment they can enjoy.”** ”

Aycliffe Secure Centre provides secure homes and onsite school for up to 38 young people, eight of whom are sentenced or remanded by the Youth Custody Service. In addition, there are places for 30 young people who are looked after for their own safety, under section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989, commission by Local Authorities. Over the last year, we reduced our occupancy levels due to the impact of Covid19, so we only had 4 out of the 5 houses in use.

The philosophy of the centre is that of Exceptional Parenting underpinned by Trauma informed care. We have been an active part of the National SECURE STAIRS framework and received an annual review last Autumn which highlighted the exceptional work and support offered to young people and staff alike. Through this trauma informed care young people understand their journey and

work to build confidence, positive self-esteem, and resilience. Young people have enhanced multi-agency care and support and have been encouraged to have a significant voice and have been part of the mantra “no decision about me without me.”

Over this last year, living with the impact of the Covid19 pandemic we have continued to follow the centres recovery road map, and followed both national and local guidance in order to keep everyone as safe and well as possible. Ensuring the use of PPE, effective testing and effective measure of Infection control are in place has taken a whole centre approach which has been challenging, particularly in ensuring staffing levels are kept conducive to individuals and groups of young people and helping everyone’s mental health and wellbeing was at the forefront of our minds.

Highlights over the year include:

- School has remained open throughout the pandemic.
- The horticultural and park area is being actively used in both the curriculum and for leisure.
- Health and Social Care is now part of the curriculum.
- Several of our young people have been entered and achieved success in the national Koestler Awards
- Our first young person to achieve their CSCS card (Construction Skills Certification Scheme)
- Young people have been able to keep contact and connected to those who are important to them through technology in particular Teams.
- Since the roll out ,135 multi-agency staff have participated in the 5x day Trauma informed care

- Psychological formulation and reformulations are undertaken with and for all of our young people.
- Reflective practice is embedded into the whole centre
- We have developed and Enhanced Practitioner role to up skill workers and help with succession planning
- We have launched the new radio system which will also reduce air wave noise pollution
- Stage one of the electronic case management systems ClearCare roll out has been achieved
- Refurbishments of the catering and music classrooms
- Significant improvements have been made to the infrastructure
- Hybrid working has been implemented within the support services.
- Face to face meeting with Investing in Children have recommenced

We also work with our catering company to ensure that food is both nutritious and meets the tastes and needs of all our young people, and one of the suggestions they made was to have a themed night where food from different countries and cultures is tried. This has been established on Wednesday nights - so far, the Indian curry night has been the favourite! These activities have been embraced and enjoyed.



Involving the young people in their care is vital to their success and one young person's Social Worker said:

“We have just completed the formulation/ transition meeting. (Young person) did a presentation to at least 16 people (professionals) including the new service provider about what she has gained from therapy and general interventions from the multi-agency team at Aycliffe and how she can carry this on into independence. It was outstanding and testimony to the work that has been undertaken with her in the nine months she has been at Aycliffe. I was blown away by it. The care and intervention they have received at Aycliffe is second to none and now she has a fighting chance of success in the community with good, continued support.”

Young people said:

“G is the kindest interventions worker I have ever had.”

“K is a good little umperlumper. He is a great negotiator he is also a role model to other staff and should be entitled to a pay rise.”

“I can see the difference in myself since I first came here. It has helped me being here and I will stay in touch with H and C.”

We continue to promote engagement, leisure and hobbies including,

- Celebrating events including, birthday, religious and faith days and leaving meals and mobility
- Animal care, having regular pets and small animal care visiting
- BBQ's and pool parties
- Centre wide quizzes and competitions
- Pampering sessions
- Sporting activities and pastimes, including football, trampolining, the gym, and dancing and mindfulness
- Gaming, Lego, board games and crafting

Future developments at Aycliffe includes the building and registering of the Transitions Home, which will offer up to four young people a steppingstone from living in secure accommodation to moving into the community in a safe and sequential way. The building work commenced in February 2022 and is set to be completed by October 2022. We are beginning the registering process and have recruited the Homes Manager who will be with us soon.

Proud moments

In response to young people telling us that they sometimes faced stigma and discrimination, agreement was made by the Corporate Parenting Panel that proud moments would be shared at each meeting to highlight young people's achievements and successes - no matter how big or small.

Some of our proud moments include:

- A young person who won a competition with posters and leaflets they had created. The young person had been grateful for the opportunity to showcase their talent and the praise they received had increased their confidence, improved their schooling and relationships and had also led them to decide to pursue art as a future career.
- A young person who lives in one of our children's homes volunteers with a local community allotment project, and worked hard to support the project's activities and raise awareness of environmental issues. This led to a commendation from the volunteer lead and the project is now supporting the young person to achieve the John Muir award for raising awareness of the natural environment.
- A young person who had been finding life particularly difficult, received help and support from specialist services to overcome their difficulties and as a result, developed such empathy for other young people in similar positions, that they are now leading activities and providing help and support to others. The young person is helping others to live their lives to the full and realise that they are valued and can make positive contributions.
- One young person had suffered numerous traumas which had a long-lasting impact, resulting in them missing much of their education. With support, the young person had grown stronger and secured a trial day for a job. On their first day at work, the employers were so impressed, they offered them the job at the end of the day. This was a well-deserved achievement for the young person, who had shown great strength and determination to succeed.
- A young person whose past experiences had led to them finding it difficult to form relationships and to share thoughts, feelings and fears with others, discovered their talent for baking. The young person enjoyed making and decorating cupcakes, and one day, decided to make a special cupcake as a 'thank you' for a teacher who had provided support through some particularly difficult times. This gesture was a very brave step for the young person who was acknowledging the trust and attachment that had been formed.
- A young person living in shared care arrangements had experienced difficulties and disruption in their life, however they are now making remarkable progress, attending school regularly and achieving new goals both at school and in their personal life. Staff and their family had noted the changes and said how proud they were to see their progress and the kindness shown when caring for their younger sibling who has additional needs.
- One young person who has disabilities completed a sponsored walk for the Dogs Trust and raised over £100. Everyone was really proud of their achievements.
- Young people living at one of our children's homes became aware of a 'toilet-twinning' project and set about fundraising for this to help make a difference to children who are living in difficult circumstances. They raised £100 of donations to provide a toilet for a family in Afghanistan, and their positive proactive work was recognised and praised.

- A young person who was preparing to move into supported living arrangements had been reflecting on the past whilst preparing for the future. They explained that they felt loved and prepared for the next phase of life, knowing that their family will continue to support them, just as they had done throughout the years. Their carers spoke of how proud they are and how they were pleased to see such a positive outcome for this young person.
- Young people living at one of our children's homes were so happy with their new bathroom facilities that they arranged an official opening event to celebrate. The event included a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, handing over of the ceremonial 'toilet roll' and a tea party. Staff were proud at the effort the young people had made and were pleased to see how much they value their home, which emphasised just how important it is that young people are provided with high quality facilities.
- A year 11 student with an Education Health and Care Plan moved out of Durham to access specialist provision. They produced an outstanding piece of descriptive writing, expressing their thoughts and feelings about their new surroundings which had provoked an emotional response from staff, who were so impressed that they sent a message to the young person to congratulate their good work, and encouraging them to continue writing.

- The Head of the Virtual School had supported a young person during their transition into year 7, and they met again several years later at a Children in Care Council meeting. The young person had done well through school and acknowledge how valuable the support from the Virtual School had been to them at the time.
- One of our older young people stood as an independent candidate in their local election in May 2021. Although they were not elected, we were very proud that they had the confidence to do this and to take the next steps in their lives, knowing they have the support they need around them.
- Finally, the young people are proud of the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, who donates 'corporate grandparent' gifts of hand-knitted baby clothes, to be given to our care leavers who have children of their own. The young people are appreciative of the kind gesture.



Achievements

PCSO training

In late 2020, the Children's Commissioner for England asked for the CICC to get involved in some focus groups to inform the National Police Chiefs Council's work in updating their strategy in relation to police and children. The aim of this was to influence how police interact with children, and they specifically wanted to include voices of children, particularly those with care experience.

Following completion of this work with the NPCC, the CICC approached Durham Constabulary to discuss their thoughts on the interventions they have received from police regarding care interventions or in relation to crime.

As a result, the CICC have delivered training sessions to highlight the importance of child focused, and child sensitive work, and this is being shared to a broader group of officers in Durham Constabulary to ensure that better relations are established with the police.

In addition, police will form links with our children's homes with 'police buddies', so that they are visiting the young people in a positive capacity – not just when there are problems or concerns.

Government's Independent Review of Children's Social Care

In March 2021, Government commissioned an independent review of Children's Social Care, chaired by Josh McAllister - a link to the review can be found [HERE](#)



A report was commissioned by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) in the North East on Children's Social Care, which will feed into the review to highlight the picture in Durham to influence national policy, and to share sector led improvements.

In addition, one of our young people attended a national event hosted by Josh McAllister, to discuss their views on children's social care, and another young person wrote about their thoughts on the review, which have also been shared. This young person's story was also shared in a variety of ways, including a film and podcast as part of the Care Day celebrations.



IIC Membership Award

The membership award gives organisations national recognition for the good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue that results in change.

At present, 18 Durham County Council Services have an active IIC Membership Award, which recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice across Children's Services.

Artstops - creative images in public spaces

[#artstops](#) [#durhamartstops](#)

Twelve care experienced young people connected with this project to produce and designed a range of images which have been put on display in bus stops across the Durham and Chester-Le-Street area. Use this [interactive map](#) to see exactly where they are.

Following the success of this project, further discussions are taking place to see how this project can be implemented in other areas of County Durham.

The young people's artwork, poems etc can be viewed here: [HERE](#).

Peer mentoring

Seven young people have undertaken the training to become peer mentors. IIC and the CICC are working with DCC staff to ensure that the young people taking part in the programme have the support that they need to make sure they feel safe and know what to do with any information that is shared or disclosed during these sessions.

The peer mentor programme is being developed and implemented slowly to ensure all plans and support are in place.

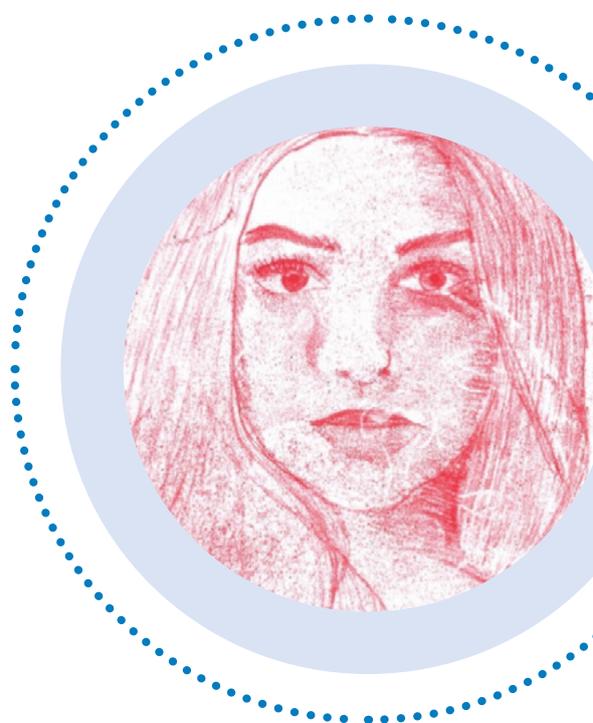
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) work

An IRO document has been developed with young people from the CICC. This will be sent out with the invites for the review meeting so that young people know what will happen and who they will meet.

They young people have also developed this animation which explains the role of an IRO <https://www.youtube.com/embed/GEM-w-x7xtc>

Social worker profiles

It was suggested by young people that social workers (and Full Circle/CAMHS workers) provide profiles of themselves so that young people know a little bit about them e.g. if they have children, favourite foods, movies they like etc as well as their work contacts and a picture of themselves.



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County Council

21 September 2022

**Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report
2021/22**



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 as required by the Council's Constitution. The report is attached at Appendix 2.

Executive summary

- 2 In accordance with Article 5 paragraph 5.09 of the Council's Constitution, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is required to report annually to the County Council on its work with recommendations for its future work programme.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 That County Council receive the annual report for 2021/22, in accordance with the Council's Constitution to report annually on overview and scrutiny activity.

Background

- 4 Each year the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report is prepared to provide information on activity by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the five thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This work programme activity includes in-depth and light touch review work, and overview activity including monitoring of performance management and budgetary reporting.

- 5 The Annual Report includes detail on the statutory scrutiny roles relating to health and crime and disorder.
- 6 The Annual Report has been agreed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board prior to submission to County Council.

Background papers

- None

Contact: Helen Lynch

Tel: 03000 269732

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council's Constitution requires the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to report annually on the work of all the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Finance

None

Consultation

Members of the Council's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered and commented on the report prior to it being presented to County Council.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Impact assessments are carried out for all overview and scrutiny reviews.

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Annual report 2021/22 (attached as a separate item)

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/2022

Introduction

With the election of a joint administration in May 2021, the council appointed a cohort of new members into the important positions of chair and vice-chair of our overview and scrutiny committees. Some of our chairs and vice chairs were newly elected to the council and they have risen to the challenge of being a county councillor with the added responsibilities of being a committee chair and vice chair.

It has been my privilege to have been appointed as chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) alongside Councillor Chris Lines as my deputy.

The role of COSMB is to be the strategic driver of the overview and scrutiny function by overseeing and co-ordinating the work of its committees. As chair I am passionate about the important role scrutiny can play within the council's decision making structures. I want to ensure that all our overview and scrutiny committees fulfil their potential.

My aim is for scrutiny to be an open and transparent function which is inclusive for all scrutiny members. I hope that through our scrutiny work, we can make a lasting impact on our residents and communities in County Durham. This can only be achieved by working together across the committees and ensuring we represent the views and voices of our communities.

Throughout our first year I have urged all scrutiny committees to get involved in policy development work. By being involved in early discussions around policy areas we can use our influence to help shape policy and improve outcomes for communities and businesses in County Durham.

Councillor Craig Martin

Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

Scrutiny provides a valuable tool to scrutinise how we deliver our services and to drive improvement. We are supported by a dedicated scrutiny team and senior and specialist officers across the council. We have developed a strong scrutiny culture which adds value to the work of the council.

Durham County Council has embedded the four principles of good scrutiny, developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, in all our work. These are:

- To provide a constructive critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decisions-makers
- To amplify the voice and concerns of the public
- To ensure scrutiny is carried out by independent minded people who lead and own the scrutiny role
- To drive improvement in public services

Overview and scrutiny is a valuable part of local democracy and has important statutory roles in the scrutiny of health and crime and disorder.

DCC appoints members to six overview and scrutiny committees. DCC has 126 members in total and of these over 80 take part in scrutiny activity.



Scrutiny committees decide which areas they wish to examine. This may arise following representations by members of the public about a particular matter; be an issue identified by councillors themselves; or follow on from reports or performance assessment on the council's activities made by the cabinet or outside agencies.

We also promote scrutiny by maintaining an excellent relationship between executive and non-executive members and meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest.

The overview and scrutiny process provides an opportunity for members of the public and local communities to comment upon any service.

Co-optees and engagement

We continue to work with the non-voting co-optees who sit on our scrutiny committees. They bring skills, knowledge and their own expertise and views to scrutiny and provide important external challenge to our work programme.

We have also promoted engagement of local expert and academic researchers in overview and scrutiny where they can add to our work.

This ownership of the work programme and strong organisational culture underpins scrutiny's legitimacy as an effective and strategic function.

Co-opted members appointed to scrutiny committees ensure a strong external representation and help scrutiny to engage with the public.

We value the different perspectives and challenge our co-optees bring to our work. Co-optees

- Act as an independent voice for those who live or work in County Durham.
- Bring specialist knowledge, skills and an element of external challenge to the overview and scrutiny process.
- Take an interest in, attend and contribute to the committees and working groups to which appointed.
- Establish good relations with other members, officers and co-optees.

We undertake a full refresh of our co-opted members every four years and anyone who would like to express an interest is requested to contact the Scrutiny Team.

Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

Each year the scrutiny work programme is developed to ensure a balanced programme. Alongside considering overview reports and updates, we plan focussed review work throughout the year. These reviews can be light touch or in depth and are usually reported to Cabinet and the appropriate thematic partnership.

Since the pandemic, most in depth scrutiny work has been paused due to the need to hold on-line meetings, a reduced schedule of meetings and the capacity of both members and officers.

In November 2021 Cabinet requested that Overview and Scrutiny establish a working group to investigate the merits and consequences of Durham County Council declaring an Ecological Emergency. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) considered evidence as to whether an ecological emergency should be declared over two special meetings and considered evidence from Neighbourhoods and Climate Change service grouping and key partners. ESCOSC unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that DCC declare an ecological emergency and also agreed further additional recommendations in relation to:

- The development of an Ecological Emergency Response Plan
- For the Ecological Emergency Response Plan to be merged with the Climate Emergency Response Plan over the fullness of time.
- The need to ensure the best ecological practice is integrated across all Council services.
- The need to ensure that ESCOSC receives regular updates on the development of the plan and once developed monitors the progress of the plan against the actions and targets in the plan on a regular basis.

The report and its recommendations were agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 April 2022.

In June 2021 Cabinet agreed to review options for the potential future use of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and surrounding grounds. Cabinet asked the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) to consider whether the former DLI museum could be brought back into use to house the collection and to look at the options to repurpose the building and/or site.

In July 2021 COSMB held a special meeting with key stakeholders invited to submit representations framed around questions outlined by Cabinet on repurposing the building and options for the site. The meeting generated a lot of interest and gave an opportunity for questions to be asked on the

information presented. The outcomes of the meeting formed part of the evidence base for the review by Cabinet.

Planned Overview and Scrutiny in 2022/23

The work programmes for overview and scrutiny focus on the priority areas identified within the Council Plan, the Cabinet's Forward Plan of decisions, the County Durham Vision 2035, partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in government legislation.

The process for developing the Council's overview and scrutiny work programmes is consultative and comprehensive. Initial proposals are influenced by legislation, plans and strategies, performance reports and include engagement with the executive, partners and officers. Each overview and scrutiny committee chair ensures there is a clear focus on the committee's role and forward plan of work. Where there are any cross-cutting matters, joint meetings are held to avoid duplication and make the best use of capacity of both members and officers

Work programmes are usually finalised during June and July and are designed to ensure there is flexibility and capacity to take on topics which may arise throughout the year.

A summary of the key issues for the 2022/23 Work Programme is below:

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

- Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting
- Welfare Reform and Poverty
- Corporate Initiatives
 - Digital Inclusion
 - Digital Solutions
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Performance and budget outturn
- Customer Feedback
- Council Plan
- HQ Review
- The County Durham Pound
- Terms of Reference for Scrutiny
- General Fund and Capital Final Outturn
- Marketing and Communications
- County Durham Partnership Update

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Availability of commercial land and supply across the county
- Key strategic employment sites
- Job creation
- Regeneration of Town and Villages
- Support to business sector
- Housing
- Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Skills development and skills requirements
- Aykley Heads Strategic Employment sites
- Integrated Transport Management

- Visitor/Tourism economy and cultural offer

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Child Poverty
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Early Years
- Best Start in Life
- Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- CAMHS – Waiting Times
- Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- Support for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- School Funding
- SEND Green Paper
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Autism Strategy
- Reducing Parental Conflict

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Air Quality in County Durham
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- SUPS monitoring against action plan
- Fly Tipping
- Strategic Waste Management
- Fuel Poverty
- Highway, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- DCC's Management of Allotments
- Visitor Economy – Tourism and Cultural Offer
- Leisure Transformation Programme
- Physical Activity Strategy
- Transport Policy & Activity – Regionally & Locally
- Woodland Management
- Parks, Nature Reserves and Open Spaces
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Arson and deliberate fires
- Off Road Bikes and Vehicles
- Reducing Re-offending
- Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Probation Services
- Counter Terrorism
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
- Road Safety

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- NHS Statutory Consultations/Legislation plans
- Development of Integrated Care Systems and Partnerships
- Health and Social Care Integration
- Shotley Bridge Community hospital

- Public health funding and services/campaigns
- NHS Foundation Trust performance and Oversight –
 - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
 - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
 - North East Ambulance Services NHS FT

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 2021/22



Cllr Craig Martin
Chair



Cllr Chris Lines
Vice chair

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) provides a strategic direction for the work of all the overview and scrutiny committees.

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23
- Review of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive
- Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Budget Outturn reports
- Workplace Transformation: Enabling Smarter Working
- Poverty Issues
- Customer Feedback - Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions
- County Durham Partnership
- Refresh of non-statutory, non-voting overview and scrutiny co-optees
- Annual Statutory Representations 2020/21
- Updates on Petitions
- Notice of Key Decisions

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Patricia Jopling
Chair



Cllr Rochelle Charlton-Laine
Vice chair

The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWH OSC) has a statutory role under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 as amended to scrutinise local health services

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Overview and Scrutiny Review of Access to GP services in County Durham
- An Overview of Adult Social Care
- An Overview of Public Health Services
- Winter Planning and the work of the Local Accident and Emergency Delivery Board
- Shotley Bridge Community Hospital updates
- Local Outbreak Management Plan updates
- Health Protection Annual Assurance Updates
- Integrated Care Systems
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Inspection CQC Improvement Plan update
- NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2020/21 responses and 2021/21 priorities for
 - North East Ambulance Service NHS FT
 - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
 - Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- NHS Dentistry Services – Availability and Access
- Improving access to Primary Access
- QWELL – Digital Mental Health Services for Adults
- County Durham and Darlington Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery Services (Primrose Lodge, Chester-le-Street)
- Director of Public Health Annual Report
- County Durham and Darlington NHS FT – No Not Attempt CPR Policy
- North East Ambulance Service NHS FT – 999/111 services – System processes, demand, capacity and performance
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Chris Hood
Chair



Cllr James Cosslett
Vice chair

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

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Introduction to Children and Young People's Services
- Children, Young People and Families Partnership
- Overview of Child Protection Process
- Relationship Based Social Work Practice
- Developing a new County Durham SEND Strategy
- Children's Adolescent Mental Health Service update
- Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Key Findings and Actions from OFSTED's focused visit
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Child Poverty in County Durham
- Free School Meals
- Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
- Inclusion/Exclusion Update
- Developing a new County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- Impact of the Education White Paper: Opportunity for all – Strong Schools with Great Teachers
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- EHE Progress update
- Holiday Activities with Food
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Young Carers
- Neglect
- Stronger Families Programme
- Reducing Parental Conflict
- Durham Works

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Bill Moist
Chair



Cllr Andrew Jackson
Vice chair

Economy and
Enterprise Overview
and Scrutiny Committee
(Economy OSC)

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Introduction to the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping
- Strategic job creation plan
- Strategic key employment sites
- County Durham's visitor economy
- Managing change in County Durham's towns and villages
- Investment pipeline
- Support provided to the retail sector by DCC
- Business Durham progress
- Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Housing update
- Transport policy and activity in County Durham and the wider region
- Highways, footways and bridge maintenance
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP)
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Bev Coult
Chair



Cllr Jonathan Elmer
Vice chair

Environment and
Sustainable
Communities Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee (Env&Sust
OSC)

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Overview of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Climate Emergency Response Plan
- Renewable Energy Projects
- Fly-tipping
- Strategic Overview of Resources and Waste Management Services
- Single Use Plastics
- Highways, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project
- Draft Physical Activity Strategy
- Scope Three Emissions
- Transport Policy and Activity in County Durham
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- Community Action Team
- Heritage Coast and the Tourism Offer
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership Update
- Winter Maintenance
- EU and Other Funding
- DCC Fleet
- Stockton to Darlington Railway Bicentennial Celebrations
- Theatres
- Air Quality Management in County Durham
- History Centre
- Fuel Poverty
- Bereavement Services
- Libraries

- Lumiere
- Woodland Management
- DCC Allotments
- Flood Risk Management Authorities

Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Joyce Charlton
Chair



Cllr Phil Heaviside
Vice chair

SSC OSC has powers under the Police & Justice Act 2006, as amended, to scrutinise work being undertaken by the statutory crime and disorder reduction partnership - the Safe Durham Partnership

Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Safe Durham Partnership – Overview
- County Durham Youth Justice Service
- Open Water Safety
- Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group
- Arson and Deliberate Fire Setting
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and whole system approach to domestic abuse
- Nuisance motorbikes and quads – Time Limited Action Plan
- Community Protection Service
- Public Protection Service
- Safer Cyber
- Road Safety
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Group
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 – Prevent Update
- Probation Service
- Civil contingency planning and Storm Arwen review
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue
- Informal Awareness sessions on:
 - Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services
 - Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Counter Terrorism – Prevent Awareness
 - Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV)

Regional Scrutiny

The North East Regional Employers' Organisation supports a region-wide North East Joint Scrutiny Member/Officer network where all North East local authority scrutiny leads discuss national developments in scrutiny. The network also provides an opportunity to share work programmes and priorities and consider emerging issues that have an impact across local authority boundaries.

Durham County Council have chaired and administered the regional network until recently.

North East Combined Authority scrutiny arrangements

We continue to work with other regional authorities as the North East Combined Authority (NECA) which is comprised of the four councils of Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

NECA has three broad areas of focus:

- Transport
- Employability and Inclusion
- Economic Development and Regeneration

We have representation on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise and challenge decision-making on behalf of our communities. The committee investigates matters of significant importance to residents across the areas covered by the four councils with a view to influencing decisions.

Durham County Council is represented on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Lines the Chair and Vice-Chair of COSMB. Councillor Bev Coult the Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the nominated substitute member.

Transport is of strategic importance to the North East and both NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority (Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland councils) work collaboratively to ensure effective decision making takes place across the region. We work with NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority on a North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee established with representatives from all seven authorities. Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Lines the Chair and Vice-Chair of COSMB represent Durham County Council. With Councillor Bev Coult, Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the nominated substitute member.

Both scrutiny committees usually meet at varying locations across the NECA area and meetings are open to the public.

Further details on NECA can be found at www.northeastca.gov.uk.

Regional Health Scrutiny

The Council continues to work collaboratively at a regional level to ensure that the impact of changes to health services across local authority boundaries does not adversely impact upon residents of County Durham.

The North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee consists of lead Health Scrutiny members from all 12 north east local authorities.

The committee is charged with scrutinising issues around the planning, provision and operation of health services in and across the north east region, comprising for these purposes the areas covered by all constituent authorities.

Sub Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committees

The emergence of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and associated Integrated Care Partnerships has resulted in the establishment of two Integrated Care System/Integrated Care Partnerships Joint OSCs within the region.

North East and North Cumbria ICS and Northern and Central ICP Joint OSC

This Joint OSC comprises representatives from Durham County Council; Gateshead BC; Newcastle City Council; North Tyneside BC; Northumberland CC; South Tyneside BC and Sunderland City Council

North East and North Cumbria ICS and Central and Southern ICP Joint OSC

This Joint OSC comprises representatives from Darlington BC; Durham County Council; Hartlepool BC; Middlesbrough BC; Redcar and Cleveland BC; North Yorkshire County Council and Stockton on Tees BC

Durham County Council is the only North East Council with representatives that sit on both ICS/ICP Joint OSCs.

The regional and sub-regional joint scrutiny overview and scrutiny arrangements will be used to scrutinise the development of the ICS/ICPs and any associated proposals for substantial developments or significant variations in services.

Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Overview and Scrutiny team is part of the Resources Directorate.

Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer.

Michael Turnbull, Interim Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Diane Close, Jonathan Slee and Ann Whitton - Overview and Scrutiny Officers.
Clare Luery - Scrutiny Support Assistant.

Scrutiny office: 03000 265978

Email: scrutiny@durham.gov.uk

Website: www.durham.gov.uk

Key contacts:

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County Council

21 September 2022

**Annual Report of the Standards
Committee 2021/22**



**Report of Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and
Monitoring Officer**

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an overview of the work of the Standards Committee during 2021/22 and to set out the future direction which the Committee intends to take during 2022/23.

Executive summary

2. The Standards Committee has continued to promote the principles and values of good governance within the Council and across the County. The Members of the Standards Committee are committed and dedicated to ensuring that high standards of conduct are maintained by all local elected Members.
3. This report sets out the progress made by the Standards Committee in 2021/22 in respect of code of conduct issues for the elected Members within County Durham.
4. This report also sets out the training provided to Members as well as the work programme of the Standards Committee to achieve the objective of promoting and maintaining high standards.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that the Council note the report.

Background

6. Although there is no legislative requirement for Standards Committees to produce an Annual Report, doing so is recognised as good practice. Not only does the report publicise the work of the Committee to the general public, it is also a means for the Authority itself to monitor the Committee's work.
7. References to Articles in the Council's Constitution in this report are to those that existed during 2021/22.

Membership of the Standards Committee 2021/22

8. The Standards Committee is comprised of 11 County Council Members and 2 Parish/Town Council Members as follows:

County Council Membership

Councillor J Nicholson - Chair

Councillor F Tinsley - Vice Chair

County Councillors - Councillor Jim Atkinson, Councillor Anita Savory, Councillor David Stoker, Councillor Mark Abley, Councillor Liz Maddison, Councillor Tracie Smith, Councillor Tony Stubbs, Councillor Chris Varty and Councillor Lesley Mavin

Parish and Town Council Representatives

Councillor Terry Batson is a consultant Arborist and a former Local Government Officer. Councillor Batson is also a Member of Tow Law Town Council.

Councillor Ralph Harrison is a former Member of Chester le Street District Council who continues to serve his local community as a Member of Sacriston Parish Council.

Independent Persons

9. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to appoint one or more Independent Persons to assist in the Standards process.
10. The Independent Persons :
 - a. must be consulted by the Authority before it makes a finding as to whether a Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct or decide on action to be taken in respect of that Member.

- b. may be consulted by the Authority in respect of a Standards complaint at any other stage and they may be consulted by a Member or a co-opted member.
- 11. The term of office of the two Independent Persons, John Dixon Dawson and Peter William Jackson came to an end on 21 September 2021. A recruitment exercise for their successors took place between 1 February 2021 and 21 April 2021, and the Council on 14 July 2021 approved the appointment of Alan Fletcher and Kayleigh Louise Wilkinson as the Independent Persons from 22 September 2021 with a term of office of two years with the option to extend once.
- 12. The Committee during 2021/22 gave thanks to the outgoing Independent Persons and welcomed the two new Independent Persons. The Monitoring Officer and Governance Lawyer delivered training to the Independent Persons as part of their Induction to the Standards Committee.

Role of the Standards Committee

- 13. The Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in the Council's Constitution as follows:
 - a. promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;
 - b. assisting Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and where appropriate, the Planning Code of Practice;
 - c. advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
 - d. monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
 - e. advising, training or arranging to train Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice;
 - f. granting dispensations to Members and Co-opted Members of the Council from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice in

circumstances where this function has not been delegated to the Monitoring Officer;

- g. the assessment and/or referral for investigation of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members, if requested to undertake this function by the Monitoring Officer;
- h. the determination of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;
- i. dealing with any alleged breach by a Member of a Council Protocol, in accordance with procedures approved by the Committee;
- j. overview of the Officers' Code of Conduct;
- k. overview of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.

14. Each year the Standards Committee agrees a work programme, which reflects the Terms of Reference set out above.

Code of Conduct Complaints

15. In 2012, following the implementation of the Localism Act 2011 and associated changes to the Standards regime, the Monitoring Officer was appointed as the 'Proper Officer' to receive complaints of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.
16. The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority, after consultation with the Independent Person, if appropriate, to determine whether a complaint merits formal investigation. Wherever practicable, the Monitoring Officer seeks resolution of complaints without formal investigation and she has discretion to refer decisions to a Standards Hearing where she feels that it is inappropriate for her to make the decision. The Standards Committee receives a quarterly report on the discharge of this function.
17. During 2021/22 the number and breakdown of complaints regarding breaches of the Code of Conduct was as follows:

Year	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022
Total no. of complaints received	48	49

Source of Complaints	Councillors	22	Councillors	23
	Public	21	Public	20
	Parish/Town Council employee	0	Parish/Town Council employee	5
	Anonymous	0	Anonymous	0
			Other – MP	1
Complaints against including withdrawn and rejected	County Councillors	15	County Councillors	12
	Parish Councillors	13	Parish Councillors	29
	Town Councillors	36	Town Councillors	16
	Dual-hatted	0	Dual-hatted	2
Independent Persons Involved	The Independent Person was consulted in 8 complaints.		The Independent Person was consulted in 5 complaints.	
	The Independent Person also attended the Standards Hearing Panel on 14 December 2020.		The Independent Person also attended the Standards Hearing Panel on 23 November 2021.	
Outcomes	No Further Action	19	No Further Action	22
	Local Resolution	16	Local Resolution	20
	Investigation	5	Investigation	3
	Standards Committee		Standards Committee	
	Hearing Panel	1	Hearing Panel	3
	Withdrawn/Rejected	4	Withdrawn/Rejected	2

18. In 2021/22 the number of complaints remain consistent with the previous years. There was an increase in the number of complaints where local resolution was recommended on the previous year and a similar trend was observed in respect of the complaints where the recommendation was no further action.

19. A Hearing Panel of the Standards Committee was convened on 23 November 2021 to consider the complaints against County Councillor. The Panel upheld the Investigating Officers finding of a breach of the Member Code of Conduct and made recommendations in respect of the complaints raised.

Work of the Standards Committee during 2021/22

20. During 2021/22 the Standards Committee met on four occasions and considered the items contained within the work programme shown at Appendix 2.
21. In addition to the items proposed to be considered on the work programme, the Standards Committee conducted a review of the arrangements for submitting complaints against Members. The Committee agreed to introduce an online form, which was launched in April 2022.
22. The Committee has continued to receive regular reports in relation to standards and governance issues nationally. This has included an update on the Government's response to the Committee in Standards in Public Life's report and recommendations in relation to ethical standards in local government. The Government has indicated that they will consult further in respect of some of the issues raised.
23. Following the completion of the Member Induction programme, the Committee reviewed the Member's Social Media Toolkit and subject to a minor clarification, considered the Toolkit to remain fit for purpose.
24. The Monitoring Officer and Governance Lawyer delivered training as part of the induction programme to new and returning Councillors at both County Council and Town/Parish Council level. Training was also delivered on behalf of the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with CDALC to Town and Parish Councillors in respect of interests.

Future work plan

25. The Standards Committee agreed its work programme for 2022/23 which is shown at Appendix 3. The work programme covers standing agenda items and allows flexibility to add additional agenda items which may arise during the course of the year.
26. The Standards Committee will continue to monitor any Government activity arising out of its response to the CSPL report referred to above. It will aim to participate in any consultation exercises on this or other relevant topics as well as monitor any changes in legislation arising from this.

Background Papers

None

Further Information

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council has a duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and to adopt a code of conduct that is consistent with the Nolan Principles and to have in place arrangements under which allegations can be investigated and decisions made. The publication of an Annual Report aids the public understanding and awareness of the committee's work and demonstrates how the Council discharges its section 27 duty.

Finance

There are no financial implications arising out of the report.

Consultation

There are no consultation implications arising out of the report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no equality and diversity implications arising out of the report.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications arising out of the report.

Human Rights

There are no Human Rights implications arising out of the report.

Crime and Disorder

There are no Crime and Disorder implications arising out of the report.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications arising out of the report.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

Appendix 2: Work Programme 2021/22

25 June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of appointment of Independent Persons. • Annual Report 2021/22 • Work Programme 2021/22 • Review of national standards picture. • Complaints update.
3 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of national standards picture. • Complaints update. • Review of Code of Conduct complaints procedure. • Co-opted membership on the Standards Committee (<i>reported at meeting on 11 March 2022</i>)
2 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of national standards picture. • Complaints update. • Member Training and Development. (<i>deferred to 2022/23</i>)
11 March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of national standards picture. • Complaints update. • Review of Local Assessment Procedure – Digital Form • Social Media Guidance review. • Review of Work Programme 2021/22 and work Programme 2022/23. (<i>deferred to first meeting of 2022/23</i>)

Appendix 3: Draft Work Programme 2022/23

10 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2022/23• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.
2 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Annual Report.
5 December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Member Training and Development.• Review of Local Determination Procedure.
17 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of national standards picture.• Complaints update.• Review of work programme 2022/23 and future work programme