



## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Date**            **Friday 2 December 2022**  
**Time**            **9.30 am**  
**Venue**          **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

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

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2022 (Pages 3 - 14)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 2 - 2022/23 - Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 15 - 18)
6. Customer Relationship Management System Update - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 19 - 36)
7. Poverty Strategy and Action Plan - Joint Report of Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 37 - 76)
8. Overview and Scrutiny Six Monthly update to Council - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 77 - 92)
9. Resources - Quarter 2 September 2022: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 93 - 104)

10. County Durham Partnership Update - Report of Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 105 - 132)
11. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 133 - 142)
12. Update in relation to Petitions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 143 - 152)
13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Lynch**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
24 November 2022

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

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

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, J Elmer, O Gunn, P Heaviside, L Hovvels, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, B Moist, A Reed, K Shaw, M Stead, A Surtees and M Wilson

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 24 October 2022 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, J Charlton, R Crute, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, B Kellett (Substitute) (substitute for C Marshall), C Lines (Vice-Chair), R Manchester, A Reed, M Simmons (Substitute) (substitute for B Coult), M Stead, A Surtees and M Wilson

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Charlton-Lainé, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, B Coult, J Elmer, O Gunn, P Heaviside, L Hovvels, L Maddison, C Marshall, B Moist and K Shaw.

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor B Kellett for Councillor C Marshall and Councillor M Simmons for Councillor B Coult

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, with the inclusion of Councillor A Reed recorded in the attendance.

The Democratic Services Manager (Interim) informed the Board that all actions raised had been followed up and confirmed that a summary of thematic scrutiny committee's involvement in the MTFP 13 budget process had been circulated to members of the Board on 12 October 2022.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 5 County Pound Project Update

The Board considered a report of the Head of Procurement, Sales and Business Services that provided an update on the progress of the County Durham Pound project which was initiated following CMT approval of the Social Value and Wealth Building Report on 30 September 2020, reported to Cabinet on 13 January 2021 and the launch event which took place on 29 September 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chief Procurement Officer delivered a detailed presentation that highlighted:

- The partners involved in the project
- The core objective
- The aims and objectives
- Timeframe
- Statement of intent
- Commitments of the objective
- Mechanisms for unlocking social value
- Social value knowledge hub
- Supporters
- The launch event

At this point in the meeting the Chief Procurement Officer shared a video from the launch event and then went on to explain the next steps.

Councillor Adam thanked the officer for his presentation and for all of the positive work that had been carried out with communities and charities. He asked how the grant money of £260,000 had been used and what would happen once that money had been spent and would this affect the project going forward. The Chief Procurement Officer explained the benefits of the social opportunity through contractors whereby they would be the beneficiaries of the social role. Volunteer time and links to help deliver activities would be identified via a social value portal admin group which would also link in via Business Durham. He added that they did have the resources until March 2024 but planning would need to commence next year to fund from that point in 2024.

Councillor Howey asked what the cost to the Council was and asked was this not just a bigger version of an Area Action Partnership, as a lot of this work was already being carried out as part of the AAP. In response the Chief Procurement Officer advised that there was no additional cost to the Council as there were current resources in procurement and Business Durham to cover it. With regards to the AAP he said that this would be a collaborative arm to that work but with a focus on business and spend and was also a great voice for the community and he viewed this as complimentary to the

work of the AAP. Councillor Howey was assured that officers were not being taken away from other areas of work as it was explained that this was embedded within processes of procurement, legislative changes, social value, environment and climate change.

Referring to the vast amount of buying power Councillor Jopling asked about what opportunities there were to save money and create jobs. She was pleased that charities would benefit through this process. The Chief Procurement Officer explained that buy in power was about trying to keep things local and that all organisations would be looking at creating more jobs. He advised of a Northumbrian Water (NWL) grant which the group can help publicise aimed at the third sector and sharing of knowledge by helping and educating other organisations of Social Value in procurement.

Councillor Jopling asked if the way in which we procured services would become easier as the system was quite complicated for smaller business to understand. The Chief Procurement Officer did not know all of the rules being proposed in a new bill but they were committed to explaining how to procure to all involved and this would be supported by Business Durham through programmes such as “routes to contract success”.

Councillor Lines referred to media coverage of OPEN and asked how this would open and speed up things for small businesses as it could often be onerous and off putting for them to engage with local sector procurement, and what were the ways in which it could be improved. The Chief Procurement Officer advised that OPEN had replaced the NEPO portal and was designed to be slicker with separate teams working on it. It was discussed at the launch event and Business Durham were sharing the message about how to get on the platform and use the OPEN system and would lead people through the process. There would be more opportunities as tier 2, 3 and 4 suppliers feeding into the tier 1 bidder.

Councillor Surtees said she was overjoyed with this project and was glad that the social value aspect which had been around for year, and through COVID, was giving the best opportunity to maximise on the assets in County Durham. She believed it was about money staying in County Durham and about people learning skills through training. She agreed that the AAPs had used social value for years and measured some of their outcomes on this. She welcomed being able to put this out there in the community and to create more jobs and training opportunities in County Durham. She asked if this was a Council led directive. The Chief Procurement Officer replied that this was not being advertised as Council led but was about all twelve partners being equal and coming up with ideas through a collaborative effort.

Referring to the launch event Councillor Stead asked how companies fed into the process and what they go out of it. He further asked if there was due

diligence about who could join, if bringing people together was helping the Council and if the projects would be more cost effective. The Chief Procurement Officer said that companies had to sign up to attend the launch event, there were opportunities to engage with all partners and knowledge was shared. He advised that there was a due diligence process for supporters but it had not yet been determined how they would be brought on board but assured members that they would all be validated. Discussions around this would take place in quarter three. He said that there would be a link to the economic strategy and that bidders would need to talk to local business to score higher in the marking assessment.

The Chair thanked the officer for his presentation and believed that this was truly revolutionary. He asked if we were qualifying what social value meant within the procurement process without affecting value for money for the best quality services at the best price for the tax payer. The Chief Procurement Officer said that a quality solution offering value for money would still stand and that social value would add to the tender.

**Resolved:**

- That the success to this point of the County Durham Project culminating in the successful launch event be noted; and
- That the next phase of the Project and procurement activities outlined to enhance the desired project outcomes be supported.

## **6 Medium Term Financial Plan (13) 2023/24 - 2026/27**

The Board 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 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services gave a detailed overview of the report including the impact of the pandemic, the future of Local Government funding and the sharp high level of inflation which impacting across the whole Council especially around fuel and energy costs. He went on to inform the board about interest rates, the national living wage, the increased pressures around looked after children.

Moving on to paragraph 10 of the report the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services reported that the local authority settlement could be received late December providing financial uncertainty and security and little time for the Council to react. Paragraph 12 highlighted the partial risk for the County on the fair funding review and paragraph 16 gave an explanation of the small inflation uplifts.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services reported that once again, the Council was heading into unprecedented times with a £30-40 billion gap in national finance resulting in further public sector funding cuts.

The Board were advised that there was a forecasted funding shortfall of £22 million and an overall shortfall of £37 million. A full savings plan was included within the report amounting to £17 million over the next four years. The forecasted savings of £11.8 million in 2023/24 would reduce the shortfall in 2023/24 to £25 million. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services that a savings plan to balance the budget for 2024/25 was in place and went on to talk about the MTFP reserves, the ER/VR reserve and the support reserve.

Members were appraised of a number of significant changes to the core assumptions for 2023/24 and in future years as well as consideration of increased costs and demand increases specifically linked to the impact of high levels of inflation. The key adjustments and major areas for consideration which were:

- Revenue Support Grant (RSG) / Fair Funding Review
- Business Rates, Section 31 Grant and Top Up Grant inflation uplift
- Pay Inflation
- National Insurance
- Price Inflation
- CPI Uplift impact upon adult care fees
- Energy Price Increases
- Cost of the Implementation of Adult Social Care Reform
- Children's Social Care Demographic Pressures
- Forecast increase in major contracts resulting from high levels of inflation
- Prudential Borrowing

In summary, the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services reported a funding reserve of £40 million with plans in place to re-prioritise planning for the future, with some difficult decisions ahead. A report would go to Cabinet in December or January depending upon when the settlement was received.

Councillor Crute said that he was disheartened by the level of reserves and believed the 'rainy day' had come. He asked how the Council could be sustained in future years. He appreciated that it was difficult to plan ahead with so many changes in central government and was concerned with interest rate rises and cuts to benefits, the increase of base rates and the impact on the capital programme. He asked the Chair to confirm that this committee would have a say in the future of the capital programme. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services confirmed that general reserves were still in place and a report to Cabinet in November would be

reporting £21 million of general reserves. The interest rates would be reported through the treasury management activities report to Council with a clear strategy around borrowing. He said that the Council had borrowed at very low rates over recent years to lock in the low interest rates. With regards to cash balances at £400 million this would be invested and by lending money at 4%. The capital programme would burn into that and the interest rates risk would be based on the forecast of spend but he assured members that the Council did not need to borrow any money for the next three years. He added that the capital programme was based on a balanced budget and would need the settlement figures to determine how much the Council could afford to invest.

The Chair agreed that there were a lot of big decisions that would need to be made and scrutiny was an integral part of the process with reports coming to this board or the thematic scrutiny committees first and be consulted upon. He was lobbying Cabinet to do just that.

Councillor Crute believed that this committee was the most appropriate way for members to scrutinise the capital programme and how communities were being affected. The Chair agreed that it was a priority for him for scrutiny to be involved and indeed last year was the first year that a report had come to scrutiny before Cabinet.

Referring to capital investment and borrowing Councillor Jackson asked why programmes were being paused and projects funded from earmarked reserves and what were we doing to address that. In response the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services explained that there was no risk on the majority of loans and should interest rates move dramatically then debt could be paid in full on those. The risk occurred with any future loans and therefore the decision to pause major capital programmes had been taken. He added that there would be no pause on any projects that were funded by grant but those that were based on borrowing had paused for now. The decision would buy time whilst the settlement was awaited.

Councillor Adam said that after 12 years of austerity it was looking increasingly likely that the Council would face another period of austerity which would impact on frontline services and result in having to make £17 million of savings. He asked where the Council would replenish the ER/VR money from. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services explained that if inflation was running at 10% then effectively this meant 10% of cuts to be made. He advised that reserves would pick up any costs of ER/VR.

Councillor Adam went on to ask if there would be a consultation exercise about the £70 million savings target. He expressed concern about revenue spend and the review of specialist care provision for adults and children's

services, peer reviews, AAP review and income generation from fees and charges, and asked how we knew if we would save money. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Service clarified that the savings targets provided did not touch the frontline services. He confirmed that consultation on the MTFP would begin at Durham on 26 October 2022 and there was an opportunity to take part online for schools and partners. He advised that service improvements and savings targets were monitored constantly and any underspend would be carried forward. He added that all services were trying to find efficiencies and everything was being reviewed. He assured members that quality impact assessments were carried out for each savings target.

Councillor Stead asked what percentage of time was being spent looking at revenue and income. He was interested to see how we could speed up making efficiencies and accelerating projects and asked how we could work smarter. In response the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services explained that the Revenue and Income teams were in place to advise. As far as benchmarking was concerned they looked at what income we were generating and were tracking where we were raising income compared to others. For example £3 million was generated for car parking compared to Newcastle generating £20 million however he explained that most areas where we generated income were reasonable. In terms of commercial income and helping the economy it was about hitting the right balance. Referring to the points about accelerating the capital programme and spending money faster he advised that we did not have the capacity to do that and that the private sector were also struggling with staffing and the rising costs of materials. The levelling up bids would add more capital on top of the current programme if successful. He assured members that the Council was well managed financially and had a good capital programme.

Councillor Stead commented that a lot of commercial properties were empty leaving a £16 million target to be funded from capital receipts.

Councillor Jopling was concerned about the amount of money owed to the Council from fees and charges and asked what was being done to recover that. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services explained that the Council had a council tax collection rate of 99% and that all monies would be collected eventually but if written off this would be against the debt provision. Some collection was paused during the pandemic for council tax, care and business rates however this was being followed up.

**Resolved:**

- That the updated MTFP forecasts and the requirement to identify additional savings of £52.569 million for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27, but also note that this forecast could change significantly based upon outcome of future government funding settlements, the ongoing impact

of the pandemic, demand for services and inflationary pressures upon the council be noted;

- That that at this stage a forecast £37.389 million of savings are required to balance the 2023/24 budget be noted;
- That the expected challenges in balancing the capital programme in light of increased cost of borrowing and construction price inflation be noted;
- That the savings included at Appendix 3 to support MTFP(13) are consulted on be noted;
- That the planned review of earmarked reserves and the need to replenish corporate reserves should these forecasts prevail be noted; and
- That the MTFP(13) consultation process as outlined in the report be noted.

## **7 Resources - Quarter 1 June 2022: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of June 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration highlighted the quarter one cash limit overspend of £0.139 million against a revised budget of £25.072 million. He went on to explain the actual expenditure highlighted in paragraph 10 of the report and the variances in the core budget shown in paragraph 11 of the report.

### **Resolved:**

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

## **8 Quarter 1, 2022/23 Performance Management Report**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which presented an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes for Quarter 1, April to June 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that performance had already been reported via the thematic committees however the report provided details of performance relating to:

- our economy

- our environment
- our people
- our communities
- our council

Referring to sickness absence and in particular in relation to mental health, Councillor Crute was concerned about staff and asked if this was being picked up by the individual services. He asked if the reasons for absence were due to COVID or day to day life. In response the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that this was a national trend but assured members that mental health awareness and training was available to all managers. He went on to advise that mental health aids were also available and as the biggest category for sickness absence it was being monitored closely. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services added that a wellbeing survey had recently been circulated to staff and that would be followed up.

Councillor Adam referred to employment levels and asked why firms were unable to recruit and was this due to skills involved. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager would find out and report back to Councillor Adam but did say that problems with recruitment were being seen across the board.

Regarding the tourist economy, Councillor Lines asked if there would be an opportunity for the County to bring in international visitors. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager said that he had not seen recent figures for domestic and overseas visitors but he would look into this and report back to Councillor Lines.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **9 Customer Feedback Report, Quarter 1, 2022/23**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which provide an overview of information collected from the council's customers to describe their experiences of using our services during the quarter one period of 2022/23, April to June 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services presented a new format of the report and highlighted that the main area for concern was the cost of living crisis increasing demand for financial support and advice services. She went on to advise that although service demand had increased and requests had become more complex, both complaints and compliments, had fallen, with fewer complaints progressing to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Board were informed that a more detailed report on the CRM would come to the next meeting.

With regards to the format between responses and timeliness, Councillor Crute referred to page 175 of the pack which seemed to show that the number of corporate complaints was worse than pre-COVID. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services would look into that. She explained that the first point of contact was working well however the subsequent contact required improvement and that key discussions with services would be needed. With regards to staffing/resources/funding/increase in demand she had started discussions with Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service and quarter 2 would show the outcomes following those conversations.

Councillor Jopling left the meeting at 11.50 a.m.

Further to a question from Councillor Batey about the CRM she was advised that a more detailed report would come back to the December meeting and would include an update on the members pilot.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**10 Adult and Health Services Annual Statutory Representations Report 2020/21**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided an overview of statutory representations relating to adult social care services for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The AHS Service Manager Operational Support highlighted that analysis of performance had identified key messages for 2021/22 including an increase in the number of complaints investigated from 75 in 2020/21 to 79 in 2021/22, and a reduction in the number of complaints that the Council declined during 2021/22 of 4 compared to 10 in the previous performance year.

It was also noted that the most common reason for making a complaint in 2021/22 was Finance Charging Policy.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **11 Notice of Key Decisions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which listed key decisions which were scheduled to be considered by the Executive.

The Democratic Services Manager (Interim) advised that new to the plan were the following:

- MTFP - Details of Provisional Finance Settlement
- Ecological Emergency - Outline Strategy and Action Plan

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**2 December 2022**



**Report on the Council's use of powers  
under the Regulation of Investigatory  
Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 2 - 2022/23**

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

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 21 July 2022 and 30 September 2022 (quarter 2) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Executive summary**

2. This report provides an update of the activity for quarter 2 of 2022/23 for Durham County Council in exercising its use of powers under RIPA for Directed Surveillance (DS) and Covert Human Intelligence Surveillance (CHIS).
3. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during quarter 2 is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that Members:
  - i. Receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period covering quarter 2 2022/23.
  - ii. Resolve that the powers are being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

## **Background**

5. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed.
6. Directed surveillance is covert surveillance that is not intrusive and is carried out in relation to a specific investigation or operation in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about any person (other than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances such that it is not reasonably practicable to seek authorisation under the 2000 Act).
7. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
8. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the quarter 2.

## **Quarter 2 Activity**

- 9 During quarter 2 there was one application for directed surveillance at several premises relating to underage sales of alcohol and tobacco. There were no CHIS applications presented to the Court.
- 10 The operation was completed with all the premises visited on the schedule.
- 11 Following the operation, Officers are reviewing what further action or surveillance may be required. Further action may include advice and guidance to premises owners, or it may lead to further surveillance with a view to considering enforcement action.
- 12 For information the comparison for the previous year in quarter 2, there were no authorisations for directed surveillance and no CHIS authorisations.

## **Background papers**

- None.

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## **Appendix 1 - Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council's objective is to make lawful and appropriate use of surveillance techniques where required whilst complying with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular the provisions of Article 8 of the ECHR securing respect for an individual's (qualified) right to privacy. Quarterly oversight by the board helps secure this objective.

### **Finance**

Not applicable.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Use of investigatory powers potentially engages the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular the qualified right to private and family life under article 8 of the European Convention. This right may only be interfered with in circumstances where it is necessary and proportionate to do so in pursuit of the public interest. Oversight by the Board of the Council's RIPA operations is designed to facilitate compliance with the Human Rights Act.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The appropriate use of an oversight of RIPA powers will enable the Council to provide evidence to support appropriate prosecutions and tackle crime.

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

An individual may complain to Investigatory Powers Tribunal that surveillance has been unlawful and if found to be unlawful could result in financial penalties and reputational damage.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



**Corporate Overview & Scrutiny**

**Management Board**

**2 December 2022**

**Customer Relationship Management System Update**

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**Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide:
  - a. Background and overview of the council's Granicus Customer Relationship Management System (CRM).
  - b. An update on progress achieved in line with the roadmap for short to medium term improvement.
  - c. An overview of findings following a recent systems review to understand the potential benefits, implications and risks that may exist by replacing the current CRM system.

**Executive summary**

2. The CRM system is a component part that makes up a large proportion of the council's corporate customer service offer. It is the primary system in operation in the corporate contact centre and is the main system that forms the council's online self-service offer with 500,000 service and information requests managed by the CRM across multiple channels each year.
3. Since its implementation in July 2016, the CRM system has continued to expand across the organisation creating self-service opportunities, digitised services, improved customer insight, and the generation of efficiencies in line with the objectives of the Digital Strategy.

4. The CRM system has supported the digitisation of over 130 processes, which generate over 337,000 self-service requests that would have otherwise resulted in an additional 35 FTE at a cost of approximately £740,000 to manage this contact through the traditional telephony channel and face to face channels.
5. The CRM system is well supported and receives positive user satisfaction scores from both customers and internal operators. 85% of customers (based on over 70,000 response) have given the CRM system a 4- or 5-star rating and has now become customers preferred contact channel of choice for simple transactions.
6. Customers also tell us they are satisfied with initial contact through the CRM as part of customer questionnaire. 79% (55% very satisfied and 24% satisfied) are very satisfied or satisfied with the initial contact, based on more than 58,000 responses.
7. However, given the scope of the CRM, the number of integrations with other line of business systems, and the degree of bespoke development to deliver line of business solutions, some performance challenges have been identified during the life of the product.
8. Whilst a proportion of this feedback can be attributed to the CRM or the development activity conducted within the CRM, a significant proportion of issues identified are not system related and the result of operational practices or the limitations of third-party line of business systems
9. Given some of the challenges identified and the rate at which technology moves so rapidly, in 2019 CMT approved a more detailed review and appraisal of technology solutions to explore the business case for the potential replacement of the CRM and website.
10. As the CRM and website were so pivotal in the organisation's response to Covid, it was determined that any re-procurement exercise should be delayed. Contracts for both systems were extended for a period of two years to March 2023 with further extensions available for the CRM system.
11. The extension of these contracts required new roadmaps to be developed to ensure that systems remain operational and compliant, that activities and resource were focused to generate the largest benefits for the organisation. This approach ensured that sufficient capacity was available to conduct a robust discovery project aligned to organisational priorities and changing customer needs and expectations.

12. The current roadmap agreed by CMT in September 2021 focuses on:
  - a. Essential upgrades and maintenance to ensure the systems remain operational and secure.
  - b. Compliance with legislation including GDPR and accessibility.
  - c. High priority development that will provide the greatest benefit to the customer and organisation.
13. Post pandemic progress in line with the roadmap has continued to be delivered while a wider enterprise architecture and application review was undertaken.
14. The applications review concluded that the CRM provides broad compliance with strategic direction and that there is no urgent need to change the CRM platform, particularly given the organisations constraints around finance and capacity.
15. Therefore, the existing CRM contract will be extended on current terms for 2 years in line with relevant contractual clauses and the development roadmap will be updated to ensure alignment with future organisational priorities over this period. Further and detailed business case development will be revisited in line with these timelines.

### **Recommendation(s)**

16. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are recommended to:
  - a. Note the content of the report
  - b. Note the roadmap and its associated progress that defines the short to medium term improvement of the current Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)
  - c. Note the conclusions of the recent application review and the commitment to extend the current CRM contract in line with relevant contractual clauses and update the development roadmap ensuring alignment with future organisational priorities over this period.

## Background

17. The Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) is the main component part of the council's corporate customer service offer managing almost 500,000 service requests and over 360,000 requests for information each year.
18. The CRM provides customers with the ability to self-serve online for simple transactional service requests and forms a considerable proportion of the council's omni-channel customer management systems architecture, integrating with multiple line of business systems and data sources across the council.
19. The current CRM was implemented in 2016 and replaced the previous Oracle system introduced as a partnership across the two-tier Durham authorities prior to local Government reorganisation in 2009.
20. The original outcomes and deliverables of the CRM implementation programme were:
  - a. Increased customer access to digital transactional services and promote self-service reducing demand through the council's traditional higher costed methods of contact (i.e., email, face to face and telephone).
  - b. Automation and digitisation of processes to reduce duplication, double entry and non-value-added activity performed by back-office services resulting in operational efficiencies.
  - c. Meeting customer expectations and improving customer insight and intelligence by enhancing the knowledge and understanding of our customer's needs, their behaviours and level of satisfaction with services and using this information to actively improve.
  - d. Encouraging and promoting employees as digital advocates and encourage the amount of issue/fault resolution in advance of the customer reporting it; and
  - e. Improving data access and analysis to services to support decision making and service improvement.
21. The platform is a low code, easily configured form and work queue solution which has been enhanced with significant bespoke development to provide key functionality such as booking and support back-office case management and mobile solutions.

22. The CRM currently provides:
- a. The main system in the corporate customer contact centre and Customer Access Points (CAPs), and other contact centres for managing omni channel customer contact including almost 500,000 service requests per year and over 360,000 signposts for information or other services.
  - b. The customer online 'Doitonline' portal with over 269,000 customers generating more than 336,000 self service requests per annum, many of which are delivered to the front line.
  - c. The Members' Portal, an interface to the CRM that gives elected members the ability to raise requests on behalf of residents, track progress of requests and provides data in relation to requests and customer feedback in their area. It also provides links to other member systems and information such as learning and development and agendas, minutes, and papers.
  - d. The main back-office line of business system and mobile solutions for several services including, Clean and Green Service, HWRC permits, Pest Control, Community Hub, and Outbreak control.
  - e. The main customer feedback system for the authority managing council corporate complaints, compliments, and suggestions.
  - f. Fully automated online customer satisfactions surveys, of which over 1000 are received each month for over 100 different service request types.
23. The CRM system also provides a proportion of the Member's portal, enabling councillors to log requests on behalf of residents and linking to other information such as meetings and agendas and learning and development.
24. Use of the Member's portal product is low with the preferred channel being direct to Member support to raise requests on their behalf. Feedback from Members identified further improvement areas including regular, timely and comprehensive updates about cases raised and more detailed outcome or closure information.
25. The CRM has continued to be developed based on Member feedback and several new requirements have been identified which are currently unable to be fulfilled by the current CRM. A full evaluation of the market would need to be undertaken to understand if these requirements could be fulfilled by an alternative system or combination of systems.

## Feedback and Satisfaction

26. Transacting online has increased significantly in line with the growth of digital services over recent years. The Covid pandemic accelerated this trend. The percentage of online service requests has increased from 2% in 2016 to 74% across all services to date (for those online services managed by the CRM).
27. During the 12 months ending September 2022 online transactions increased from 65% to 74% compared to the same period in the previous year and many of our transactional services available online are now the preferred method of contact for our customers.
28. Customers (over 70,000 customers in the last 12 months) rate our 'Doitonline' CRM system as very good or good, with 83% giving it a rating of 4 or 5 stars (68% 5 stars, 15% 4 stars) and a further 7.5% giving it a rating of 3 stars.
29. Internally customer service agents also rate the system highly with 93% of employee rating the forms as 5 stars, based on a response rate of 8000.

## Challenges

30. Whilst the platform supports integration with other enterprise platforms, the development and maintenance of these integrations can be resource intensive and costly and are in the majority inhibited by the lack of open application programming interfaces (APIs) in the legacy line of business service systems. It is, however, important to note that this is common for most similar systems in the technology market.
31. The system's low code functional capability, ease of configuration, and the previous lack of any other solutions in the council's application architecture has resulted in the system expanding beyond its original remit to become the line of business and mobile solutions for several services.
32. Given the scope of the CRM, the number of integrations, and the degree of bespoke development to deliver line of business solutions, some challenges with performance have been identified during the life of the product.
33. Whilst a proportion of this feedback can be attributed to the CRM or the development activity conducted within the CRM, a significant proportion of issues identified are not system related and the result of operational practices or the limitations of third-party line of business systems

34. In response to challenges and in line with the council's Inspire Transformation Programme, the Digital Customer Board agreed CRM development roadmaps to address short and medium-term functional improvements and customer journey enhancements.
35. These roadmaps have seen the council achieve the following service developments:
  - a. The creation on online forms and process for Licensing including taxi drivers, animal licenses and street furniture.
  - b. The replacement of the historic health and safety system.
  - c. The innovation of mobile FPN issuing with e- learning education.
  - d. Mobile working for the Clean and Green Service.
  - e. LADO process review and online system development.
  - f. AAP funding forms created; and
  - g. Pest control route optimisation.
36. The board also approved a more detailed digital channel review and appraisal of technology solutions which could result in the potential replacement of the system.

## **Ignite Review**

37. In 2019, an independent consultant (Ignite Group) was engaged to carry out a digital channel review. This review concluded the following:
  - a. The durham.gov.uk website has many positives (optimised for search engines, generally well-structured pages, mobile responsive), but consideration should be given to making it more task focused, improving navigation, making calls to action clearer, and clearer presentation of key content.
  - b. 75% of customers rate (the digital forms platform) transactions as excellent or good, with negative feedback focusing on form design, login/registration, poor navigation, and complicated processes; and
  - c. The majority of the council's technology stack is fit for purpose and can be utilised to take Durham forward, but portals and authentication require further analysis and assessment to ensure the best experience for customers.

38. It was therefore proposed that a full review of our digital customer offer be undertaken to ascertain if alternative solution(s) could address some of these issues by providing the council with greater functionality.

### **Covid Response**

39. The planned timeline for the review of the council's digital customer offer was impacted by the pandemic however, the flexibility of the CRM from a complete digital solution perspective was of vital importance to the council during this period.
40. The CRM enabled the response to the COVID-19 crisis in a rapid and agile way, accelerating changes and delivering them in a matter of days and weeks, which would previously have taken months if not years to deliver in normal circumstances and which have been assessed as likely to have cost the organisation an additional £300k to deliver through more traditional contact channels.
41. The CRM was configured to manage many of the response processes required, including the Community hub, Volunteer unit, Outbreak control functions, PPE requests and business grant applications process, as well as many front-end grant forms for businesses and individuals. Over 30 digital processes and solutions were developed in total.
42. Given it would not have been appropriate to proceed with a review and procurement exercise during this time the CRM contract was extended until March 2023, in line with the available contract extension periods contained in the contract. Additionally, a further 2 years of available extensions exist for the CRM system.
43. This extension required new roadmaps to be developed to ensure that the system remained operational and compliant, and that activities and resource were focused to generate the greatest benefits for the organisation.

### **Revised CRM Roadmap**

44. During this period the council looked to wind down its complex development and line of business system integration programme for the CRM but committed to:
  - a. Upgrade the user interface of the customer portal/dointonline account to create an improved customer experience. This was completed in August 2022.

- b. Continue to support the council's overall priorities with new processes, systems, FPOC provision and data presentation as required.
- c. Refresh the council's approach to signposting to better understand and inform changes in relation to overall customer contact. This was carried out in February 2022 and the data is now being analysed to understand how we can improve information provision and reduce avoidable contact.
- d. Continue to deploy 'Case Notes' as a mechanism to record and improve information in relation to avoidable contact and non-value-added activity.
- e. Continue to change forms and processes to ensure legal compliance, for example GDPR and Accessibility (WCAG2.1AA).
- f. Deploy 'Case Viewer' across the organisation in replacement of Dash to improve staff experience, system performance and the productivity of dash. Dash is a work queue within the CRM which is used by service teams to manage cases where there is no integration with specific case management systems.
- g. Continue to develop or integrate priority projects as defined by Cabinet or CMT
- h. Continue to support cyclical activity for business-as-usual activity, for example, garden waste and Christmas tree collections.
- i. Continue to develop simple front-end customer forms which could easily be migrated to new systems or platforms, including the replacement PDF programme.
- j. Review and improve the council's current Member's Portal (hosted by the CRM) in line with the digital democracy roadmap and approach agreed by RMT. This is currently in development and expected to launch in the new year.
- l. Treat and resolve critical or high bugs and fixes where appropriate.
- m. Provide services with an element of continuous improvement where the investment of time and resources can be justified. This will be supported by a process for evaluation.
- n. Continue to provide customers with more opportunities to feedback and demonstrate we are listening by implement improvements where possible to support the council's 'you said, we did' approach which

will continue to be incorporated in the council's customer feedback report

- o. Continue to improve bulk communications marketing opportunities in support of the council's commercial agenda
  - p. A transition to real time data reporting and continue to support the access to, availability, quality, and presentation of data to services; and
  - q. Develop an appropriate transition programme should the future discovery project identify that a transition to a new solution is required.
  - r. A programme of system training for frontline services
45. Furthermore, during the last 12 months the system has flexed and adapted to the changing priorities and needs of the organisation and has also developed.
- a) Selective licensing form and process driving from a new legislative requirement for housing
  - b) A digitised process for planning enforcement
  - c) The creation of multiple services to support Ukrainian refugees including, housing support, advice for refugees and sponsors, in school year admissions.
  - d) Duty to refer – Housing solutions
  - e) Food – Report a problem – Environmental Health
  - f) Record Office Booking form – Resources

### **Member Service Request Review and Trial**

46. In addition to the agreed development roadmaps and in response to feedback and concerns raised by elected members regarding levels of customer service a situational analysis exercise was conducted in October 2021. This activity included the review of available data to support understanding of the current landscape, determine potential root causes and identify opportunities for improvement.
47. This analysis highlighted issues occurring after first point of contact that broadly linked to the following areas.
- a. not keeping customers informed of progress

- b. not explaining our decision making
  - c. taking too long to complete tasks and respond
  - d. not being clear or transparent on when the task will be done
  - e. having to request multiple times
  - f. Incorrect information/advice received upon case closure
48. Following discussions with group leaders in early 2022 a 12-week pilot commenced with six of our Members in April 2022. The pilot aimed to validating the impact and benefits of the trial approach and shape proposals for the longer-term service offer for Members.
  49. The pilot required Members within the trial to log all requests for service via Member Services or on a self-serve basis via the Members Portal rather than directly with service-based officers.
  50. This approach ensured requests were captured in one place and enabled requests to be tracked and monitored with additional detail sourced from service areas to provide comprehensive updates on progress to Members monthly.
  51. The pilot has worked well and has positively impacted Member experience. Member feedback confirms this approach has added value and bridged some of the gaps in service provision previously identified.
  52. A further test phase has commenced to assess the impact of Member portal digital enhancements in advance of any wider roll out. This will establish if the increased functionality and enhanced digitisation of processes bridges any further gap for Members in terms of experience as well as reducing the pilot resource burden identified

### **Corporate Enterprise Architecture Review**

53. In January 2022, the Council embarked on a core applications review which predominantly focused on the financial system, payroll system and CRM to understand what benefits could be achieved through a combined system replacement.
54. The applications review concluded that the CRM:
  - a. Provides broad compliance with strategic direction
  - b. There is no urgent need to change the CRM environment given the organisations constraints around capacity and the current financial landscape.

- c. There is no major benefit to incorporating it into an ERP solution in the way some suppliers claim.
  - d. Longer term a move to an enterprise level CRM platform that enables better access to data, enterprise level integration and integrated customer service provision end to end is recommended.
  - e. A future assessment of the CRM space could incorporate a view of efficient use of Microsoft licences and the needs of the process and case management areas to provide a comprehensive solution.
55. Whilst the review identified valuable recommendations for future direction of travel, the timeline for development of a business case for the replacement of systems and final proposals related to re-procurement must be considered against the context of the council's current financial and workforce capacity position.
56. Whilst benefits could be achieved through the adoption of a refreshed approach it is acknowledged that current functionality of the CRM systems does meet user requirements in the short term and the timeline for next steps should be carefully considered.
57. Therefore, the existing contract will be extended on current terms for 2 years in line with relevant contractual clauses and the development roadmap will be updated to ensure alignment with future organisational priorities over this period. Further and detailed business case development will be revisited in line with these timelines.

## **Roadmap Timeline and Resource Implications**

58. An update on the current CRM roadmap approved by CMT is outlined at appendix 2 and will be updated and in line with extended contractual timelines.

## **Conclusion**

59. The council previously approved a detailed review and appraisal of technology solutions which could result in the potential replacement of the CRM. This activity was delayed because of the Covid 19 pandemic and wider applications review and the current contract was extended until March 2023.

60. During this period progress against the roadmap continued to be delivered and included:
  - a. The refresh of the design and user interface of the Customer Portal
  - b. The introduction of a 4-tiered system for signposting and general enquiries
  - c. The replacement of multiple PDF's converting them into on-line self-service forms in line with accessibility legislation
  - d. Support to the Ukrainian including housing support, support and advice for refugees and sponsors and in year admissions.
61. The CRM continues to grow and remains well supported by customers.
62. The conclusion of the Application Review determined that the CRM was compliant with the Council's strategic direction the authority and there is no urgent need to change the CRM environment given the organisations constraints around capacity and the current financial landscape.
63. Whilst the review identified valuable recommendations for future direction of travel, the timeline for development of a business case for the replacement of systems and final proposals related to re-procurement must be considered against the context of the council's current financial and workforce capacity position.
64. Whilst benefits could be achieved through the adoption of a refreshed approach it is acknowledged that current functionality of the CRM systems does meet user requirements in the short term and the timeline for next steps should be carefully considered.
65. Therefore, the existing contract will be extended on current terms for 2 years in line with relevant contractual clauses and the development roadmap will be updated to ensure alignment with future organisational priorities over this period. Further and detailed business case development will be revisited in line with these timelines.

**Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

#### **WCAG2.1AA Accessibility Standards**

All websites should be accessible, especially by people with disabilities. Access to websites is governed by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the regulations).

The Regulations require that organisations must:

- a) Comply with the accessibility requirement (regulation 6) which means the requirement to make a website or mobile application accessible by making it perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (regulation 3).
- b) publish an accessibility statement in accordance with the model accessibility statement and keep that statement under regular review. (regulation 8).

### **Finance**

More accurate determination of any costs linked to contract extensions will be identified through ongoing procurement activity and will be considered within standard financial planning processes.

### **Consultation**

Ongoing consultation activity continues in line with the current CRM programme.

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

In relation to the accessibility requirement this would be enforced in the UK through the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland are the bodies responsible for dealing with the enforcement of accessible websites or mobile applications of public sector bodies.

Accessibility groups form part of consultation and feedback programmes.

### **Climate Change**

N/A

### **Human Rights**

N/A

### **Crime and Disorder**

N/A

### **Staffing**

N/A

### **Accommodation**

N/A

### **Risk**

Risk will be managed through ongoing governance frameworks

### **Procurement**

A variation to the existing GOSS contract to complete the iCM upgrade and to extend to 31 March 2023 has been put in place and the CRM has been extended. A further extension will be required to both systems.

## Appendix 2: CRM Roadmap

| Activity                                 | Project Area | Status   | Comments  |
|--|--------------|----------|---|
| Revised look and feel of customer portal | CRM Roadmap  | Complete | Complete in August 2022   |
| Signposting refresh                      | CRM Roadmap  | Complete | Complete in Feb 2022. Data currently being analysed, and improvement activity will be targeted  |
| CRM & Telephony integration              | CRM Roadmap  | Complete | Complete in Oct 2022. It was determined by Customer Services that little benefit would be achieved through the integration of the telephony and CRM platforms and the project has therefore been abandoned. |
| Case Note Deployment                     | CRM Roadmap  | Ongoing  | Originally scheduled to be completed this financial year. Analysis to see where case notes should be applied is ongoing, but progress has been impacted by capacity   |
| Member's Portal                          | CRM Roadmap  | Ongoing  | Changes to system have been developed and configured in test. Pilot process ongoing with 7 Member's to enhance additional information available. Launch in Q4.  |
| What 3 words Pilot Exploration           | CRM Roadmap  | Ongoing  | Exploring the possibility of integration  |
| Backlog Review                           | CRM Roadmap  | Ongoing  | Review and reprioritise the backlog to provide  |

| <b>Activity</b>                | <b>Project Area</b>       | <b>Status</b>              | <b>Comments</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|
|                                |                           |                            | more improvement to services  |
| Front Line training Programme  | CRM Roadmap               | Ongoing                    | Ongoing programme across major front-line services July 22 to August 23 |
| Real time data transfer        | CRM Roadmap               | Ongoing                    | Likely to be completed by March 2023                                    |
| Digital Solution Business Case | Business Case development | November 2022 – March 2023 |   |
| Accessibility Improvements     | CRM Roadmap               | March 2023                 | Majority of CRM now compliant   |



**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny**

**Management Board (COSMB)**

**2 December 2022**

**Poverty Strategy and Action Plan**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services**

**Councillor Alan Shield, Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion**

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present the revised Poverty Strategy and Action Plan following a consultation exercise undertaken April to August 2022.
- 2 To present the updated Child Poverty Action Plan as a separate document which focusses on addressing child poverty and is aligned with the wider Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.

**Executive summary**

- 3 At its meeting on 6 April 2022, Cabinet agreed to consult on a revised County Durham Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out a comprehensive response to the impacts poverty and its related issues are having on our residents across the county.
- 4 The Poverty Strategy and Action Plan aligns to and underpins the key aim of the County Durham Partnership Strategy: *Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county* and the priority theme of the Council Plan that *Durham has a thriving and inclusive economy with more*

*and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation.*

- 5 The consultation, which commenced following the April cabinet meeting and lasted up to 25 August 2022 was aimed at reaching out to partners and key voluntary sector organisations to determine the council’s approach to tackling the issues surrounding poverty and to develop an action plan which clearly sets out what will be done to address and reduce poverty across the county.
- 6 The consultation proposed four key objectives under the overarching vision of **“to work together so fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county”**. The proposed strategic objectives of the action plan are to:
  - use intelligence and data to target support to low-income households;
  - reduce the financial pressures on people facing or in poverty;
  - increase individual, household and community resilience to poverty; and
  - reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity.
- 7 The consultation asked a range of questions to determine if these objectives were the right ones; identify any gaps and to build on the work to ensure that the council’s approach aligned with that of key partners; using their insight to determine the actions and outcomes which would result in the biggest impact on addressing poverty.
- 8 It is recognised that the Inclusive Economic Strategy is fundamental to opening up the routes out of poverty and will be key to ensuring communities are supported to thrive. Maximising money going into our local communities, job creation and supporting businesses to start up and grow are key determinants in terms of tackling systemic and generational poverty issues. The consultation on the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan was therefore undertaken in tandem with the consultation to develop the Council’s Inclusive Economic Strategy.
- 9 The consultation was undertaken during a time of significant financial insecurity as the country continued its recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and then entered a period of rising energy, food, and other household costs, the ‘cost-of-living crisis’, due to the war in the Ukraine and resulting economic uncertainty. This situation, most recently compounded by soaring inflation and increased interest rates impacting on mortgage repayments has heavily influenced the context and feedback from the consultation exercise as both the council and its partners have experienced – and continue to see – increased demand for financial support/advice services. At the same time, our partner organisations have

seen reduced donations and face challenges in relation to volunteering/recruitment.

- 10 Discussions and feedback have therefore heavily reflected the need to have strong mechanisms in place to support those experiencing immediate financial hardship – as well as focussing on the medium to longer term strategies to enable our households to have access to incomes which support them to have a decent quality of life.
- 11 The decision to extend the current Local Council Tax Reduction scheme in its current form, into 2023/24 will help to continue to provide essential assistance to those low-income households across the county in terms of their Council Tax liability. The council also continues to fund the Welfare Assistance Scheme through the core budget of £1m, which provides support for those in crisis, which this year has been supplemented with additional funding from the Welfare Assistance Reserve given the increased demand.
- 12 Through robust partnership arrangements and in line with its commitment to ensure a focussed, coordinated approach to tackling poverty, through the Poverty Action Steering Group and Child Poverty Working Group, the Council continues to communicate and offer a range of support and advice mechanisms for Durham residents. This report provides an outline of those support mechanisms.
- 13 Feedback from the consultation exercise on the draft poverty strategy and action plan confirmed that the draft objectives presented to Cabinet in April were the right ones; the main changes resulting from the consultation are in relation to the action plan. The action plan has been updated to incorporate updated actions which reflect key areas of work both across the Council and through partners that were not reflected in the initial draft presented to Cabinet in April.
- 14 The Poverty Strategy and Action Plan sets out the council's intentions and provides details of the key mechanisms being deployed to reduce poverty across the county. This is an ever-changing landscape and actions and initiatives need to be informed by the current context and data/intelligence coming through from services and partner organisations; the Action Plan will therefore remain under constant review and subject to updates and monitoring through PASG.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 15 COSMB is recommended to:
  - (i) note the contents of the report and
  - (ii) note Cabinet's approval of the new Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026, endorsement of the underpinning Child Poverty Action Plan and agreement to receiving annual updates on the progress of

the new Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and Child Poverty Action Plan.

## Background

- 16 With around 21% of households living in relative poverty<sup>1</sup> before housing costs, and many more at risk of being pushed into poverty by an unexpected expense, unemployment, or change in family circumstances, poverty is a major issue for many County Durham residents and sits at the heart of many of the social and economic challenges we face.
- 17 The effects of poverty are widespread and not only confined to income. Due to poverty, there is significant inequality within our communities in relation to aspiration and opportunity, participation and social isolation, access to essential services, and health (both physical health and mental wellbeing).
- 18 Poverty across the county is driven predominantly by high levels of deprivation and insecure low-paid employment, and although poverty was prevalent pre-covid, the pandemic exacerbated the situation by disproportionately affecting low-income households and pushing many further into poverty.
- 19 The council is continuing to tackle all aspects of poverty. Its efforts are co-ordinated through the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) which works closely with key partners to help residents cope with poverty related issues and the impact of welfare reforms. Although our ambition is to do more than passively help residents claim benefits or support those in crisis, many poverty drivers, such as the strength of the economy, employment, or wage rates, are beyond the council's direct control.
- 20 On 6 April 2022 Cabinet considered and agreed to consult on a revised County Durham Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out a comprehensive response to the impacts of the wide-ranging poverty issues across the county.
- 21 Child poverty in County Durham continues to be on the rise with an estimated 28.9% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty in the year 2020/21, with the number of children eligible for free school meals also increasing to 21,200 eligible pupils. The council also recognises that many children and young people are victims of poverty due to the causes of child poverty not being separated from the causes of adult poverty. The council's Child Poverty Working Group (CPWG) sits under the PASG, and membership is made up of representatives from cross council services, key partner organisations such as education, health, police, and voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 22 The CPWG has also undertaken a refresh of its' plan on a page and associated action plan to reflect the changes in the overarching Poverty strategy and action plan and feedback through the Growing Up in County Durham Strategy consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> Living in households with less than 60% of median household income.

## Context

- 23 Welfare reforms, economic impacts resulting from the pandemic, and the current 'cost-of-living crisis' are affecting people across the county in different ways and all of which affect the underlying issues of poverty and wealth, however previous reports have highlighted the lack of cumulative impact assessment of these various components.
- 24 The latest information suggests that the county's child poverty rates in the under 16's has continued to increase over the last six years and now stands at 28.9%, this is over ten percentage points above the national average of 18.5% and the gap has increased by 2 percentage points since 2015/16.
- 25 Levels of employment in the county are consistently below national levels and currently stand at 71.2% of the economically active population, compared to 75.1% nationally. This comes coupled with lower weekly wages in the county of £450 compared to £510 nationally. The county's industrial heritage is still prevalent in the distribution and types of business and jobs in the county which are higher in the manufacturing and skilled trade and caring industries when compared to England – this is a major contributing factor to lower wages and therefore, a higher likelihood of a household experiencing poverty.
- 26 This industrial heritage has led to poorer health and lower life expectancies in the county compared to England. In deprived areas the gap in healthy life expectancy is even greater, with County Durham residents living up to 7.5 years less than those nationally.
- 27 Additionally, the county has higher levels of poor housing stock, particularly higher proportions of terraced housing, which were more prevalent in the east of the county in areas associated with heavy industry and mining. The 2011 Census indicated that 38.4% of all housing stock in the county was terraced compared to 24.5% nationally.
- 28 These higher levels of poorer housing conditions, coupled with the more rural nature of the county means that the county's residents also experience higher levels of fuel poverty (also linked with lower household incomes and lower levels of energy efficient homes). The latest data shows that 14.7% of households in the county experience fuel poverty compared to 13.2% nationally due to lower household incomes and living in lower energy efficient homes.
- 29 National commentary, and local partners, are advising of an increase in demand for help and support. According to Joseph Rowntree Foundation, about 7 million struggling families in the UK are living through a "frightening year of financial fear", going without food, heating, toiletries and even showering as they try to cope with the 'cost-of-living crisis'. The charity states that many people are falling deep into debt as they try to

stay afloat, using credit cards or cash from loan sharks to pay for food and other basics and building up arrears on energy bills.

- 30 A recent study of the Index of Deprivation combined with a bespoke Community Needs Index (which measures the lack of access to/availability of community facilities and assets), identified 255 areas in England that had been 'left behind'. County Durham was the upper tier authority with the highest number of these left behind neighbourhoods with 16 areas identified within the county.
- 31 The 'cost-of-living crisis' that the UK has experienced since late 2021 will lead to more residents experiencing poverty for the first time, for example low-income households spend a larger proportion than average on energy and food so will be more affected by price increases. Prices are continuing to rise at their fastest rate for more than 40 years, driven by higher petrol and food costs. UK inflation, the rate at which prices rise, jumped to 9.9% in the 12 months to August 2022, as reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 32 Our local partners including County Durham Foodbank and East Durham Trust are both reporting an increase in demand for food, financial support for utility bills, and advice around debt. They are also experiencing a reduction in donations.
- 33 The council's housing solution service are reporting an increase in the number of families presenting for help with their housing situation, an increase in the number of residents losing their private rented tenancy and an increase of residents in work and at risk of homelessness.
- 34 The increased pressures seen on our most vulnerable households has resulted in increased demand for support through the Welfare Assistance Scheme (WAS), which has seen unprecedented demand and call volumes regularly exceeding 500 per week and awards for Daily Living Expenses costing an average of £43,643 per month during the last quarter compared to £37,156 during the same period in 2020/21 – a 17.5% increase. Demand for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) also continues to be high.
- 35 Whilst we recognise as a local authority, we cannot entirely protect our residents, there are increased expectations on local authorities to help ease the immediate hardship of the 'cost-of-living crisis' and prepare for longer term impacts. This response would include:
  - (i) ensuring residents get what they are entitled to through income maximisation and benefits take up;
  - (ii) improve generosity and take up of council tax support;
  - (iii) avoid heavy handed debt collection practices;

- (iv) make it easy to tap into all the help on offer – the ‘no wrong door approach’; and
- (v) learn from pandemic approaches to funding local charities and community groups and take a far more collaborative approach to working with their local voluntary sector.

## Support Mechanisms

- 36 The council continues to have a strong approach to supporting financial inclusion and has maintained its commitment to effective “core” support mechanisms for low-income households through delivery of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS), Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme, and Welfare Assistance Scheme (WAS) for those in crisis, plus through the council’s commitment to supporting advice provision. These schemes have been augmented with a range of other interventions.
- 37 As the cost of living continues to put financial pressure on many of our residents, it has been important to ensure that information has been communicated across our communities and with partners on what support and advice is available. Frontline teams have been asked to play a proactive role when in contact with residents to ensure that they are referred to those services which can offer expert advice or provide additional financial support. The most up to date information can be found on our [Help with your money](#) page on the Council’s website. The financial support leaflet has also been sent to every household which receives Durham County News and has been circulated to GP Practices, partners in the Advice in County Durham Partnership, The Fire and Rescue service as well as libraries, leisure centres and community groups to ensure the information is disseminated as widely as possible.
- 38 This support includes a further allocation of £4.6m from the Government’s [Household Support Fund](#). This will be used to support residents between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023. The Council will continue to work with our partners to provide support to households in need, particularly those struggling with the cost of energy. The fund can also be used to support with costs associated with food, energy and water bills and wider essentials. In cases of genuine emergency, it can also be used to help with housing costs. Previous funding to support this scheme has been augmented with funding from the Welfare Assistance Reserve
- 39 Although applications for the [council tax energy rebate](#) payment have now closed; those households who have no Council Tax liability and have not yet been in touch to claim the payment, have been urged to contact the Council. Frontline Teams and partners have been asked to ensure that any dialogue with a resident about their financial situation includes asking whether they have received this. A further mail out to residents in this situation is underway and work is being done to ensure engagement with these households.

- 40 All households will receive a £400 discount this winter to help with their rising energy bills. The government has now confirmed that support equivalent to this amount will also be available for households who will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, including those that do not have a domestic electricity meter and heat network consumers on a private wire system. More detailed information on how residents can save on their energy bills can be found on our [help with your heating page and energy bills](#) web page.
- 41 The Council's Welfare Rights Team continue to offer benefit checks to ensure people are claiming all the support they are entitled to and are assisted, if needed, when encountering difficulties with benefit determinations. The team also produces [factsheets on benefits](#). The Customer Services team also provide support to complete forms or access online information in relation to financial support
- 42 Residents struggling with debt can access a free-to-use [MoneyHelper](#) service. Residents can also find further [debt advice](#) on the Council's website, including details of organisations in Durham and their areas of specialism.
- 43 The Council continues to work with [NEfirst Credit Union](#) to promote affordable loans and a cashback loan scheme for the purchase of furniture and white goods to support residents who don't qualify for Welfare Assistance.
- 44 Work with the County Durham Community Foundation to offer funding to the voluntary and community sector to create a network of warm spaces where people can get warm also continues. Residents are able to access a directory at [Durham Locate](#) with further information on the warm spaces network available on the website: [Warm spaces - Durham County Council](#)

## **Revised Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026**

- 45 The revised strategy aims to provide focus, strategic direction, and priorities for improving services and opportunities for residents in County Durham who are experiencing poverty or temporary hardship because of the 'cost-of-living crisis' and will cover a four-year period up to 2026.
- 46 The aim is to do more than just support residents to claim benefits and pay their rent or deal with those in crisis, though these remain important components. The PASG is seeking to improve the evidence and analysis and to make it everyone's business to support residents and mitigate the impacts of all forms of poverty and is exploring predictive modelling to enable more targeted and proactive interventions to prevent and alleviate the impacts of poverty.
- 47 The council should aspire to developing a compassionate coherent culture that seeks to maximise the value of our collective resources and appreciates the obstacles that internal and external silos create to supporting our financially vulnerable residents.

- 48 Although, the poverty strategy and action plan aim to reduce poverty across all ages and personal circumstances, it acknowledges that certain groups face a much higher risk of living in poverty than others. The strategy seeks to reflect the needs of vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities most at risk of poverty and identifies a range of factors that contribute to people's risk of experiencing poverty.
- 49 The Inclusive Economic Strategy is fundamental to opening up the routes out of poverty and will be key to ensuring communities are supported to thrive. Maximising money going into our local communities, job creation and supporting businesses to start up and grow are key determinants in terms of tackling systemic and generational poverty issues.
- 50 The review of the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix 2) undertaken by the PASG has considered the council's Economic Strategy and wider policy and considered how we can increase access to fresh, healthy, affordable food, support residents struggling with increases in the 'cost-of-living crisis' and loss of income, and how we can help residents improve their overall financial circumstances. It will help the council prioritise support for longer term, particularly in relation to:
- (i) debt: the debt built up over this period will not disappear once inflation eases. Households, especially those on low incomes, will be burdened with arrears and other debts for many months and years to come;
  - (ii) mental health: we know from previous recessions and crises that those experiencing the worst hardship often also experience serious mental health consequences, and these are exacerbated by on-going debts and financial insecurity;
  - (iii) civil society: a long-term strategy for collaboration between organisations in their area and for investment in their local social sector, from philanthropic as well as public sources, designed to maximise the sector's impact and effectiveness.
  - (iv) better jobs: to reverse the long term rise in working poverty, through the council's Economic Strategy; and
  - (v) affordable housing: increase the supply of low-cost rented homes, through the council's Economic Strategy.
- 51 The Vision for County Durham 2035 was written together with partner organisations and the public and sets out what we would like the county to look like in 15 years' time. It was approved by Council and launched by the County Durham Partnership in 2019.
- 52 The Vision for County Durham is structured around three ambitions, namely:
- (i) More and better jobs

- (ii) People live long and independent lives
  - (iii) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 53 Each of the three ambitions contains a number of objectives; the following objective which supports ‘more and better jobs’ has been adopted as the vision of the PASG, with the wording “to work together” added in:
- To work together so fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county***
- 54 To achieve the best possible outcomes for residents experiencing poverty, it is proposed that the revised strategic objectives will be:
- Objective 1: Use intelligence and data to target support to low-income households;
- Objective 2: Reduce the financial pressures on people facing or in poverty;
- Objective 3: Increase individual, household and community resilience to poverty; and
- Objective 4: Reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity.
- 55 The strategy is underpinned by a revised action plan which focuses on new actions and commitments which will enable the council to deliver the key priorities that have identified as being most important for reducing poverty levels in County Durham and achieving our vision.
- 56 Although a major focus of the last 24 months has been effectively supporting vulnerable households impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, moving forward the focus will be on a strong strategic approach to supporting residents through co-ordinated advice and guidance, with partners playing a key role in delivery. It will involve helping residents move away from accessing food/financial support through crisis intervention support such as foodbanks, energy banks and welfare assistance etc. by working with key providers such as the credit unions to improve access to low-cost loans and supporting work to address fuel poverty and digital exclusion etc.
- 57 The CPWG has undertaken a refresh of its’ plan on a page and associated action plan to reflect the changes in the overarching poverty strategy and action plan and feedback from the Growing Up in County Durham strategy consultation.

### **Child Poverty Plan and Action Plan**

- 58 The CPWG has undertaken a refresh of its’ plan on a page and associated action plan (Appendix 3) to reflect the changes in the overarching poverty

strategy and action plan and to ensure that its outcomes will contribute to the achievement of the overarching objectives in para 41.

59 The CPWG overarching vision is:

***Children, young people and families have the resources to meet their basic needs, including accessing opportunities to take part in society.***

60 To achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families experiencing poverty, the revised objectives for the CPWG will be:

Objective 1: To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources;

Objective 2: Practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families who are affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity;

Objective 3: Promote social inclusion and family resilience to help ensure all children, young people and families have access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing activities; and

Objective 4: Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.

61 The Child Poverty Plan and Action Plan has also considered and will align to wider policy developments within Children and Young People's Services including the Early Help provision, Family Hubs, and Start for Life Programme. This programme aims to help further develop our current Family Centre offer, ensuring services such as Midwifery, Health Visiting, DCC's One Point Service (Early Help), Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and other key partner organisations, working with families, to provide an integrated, accessible offer of support which is designed and delivered using co-production, based on the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing Principles.

62 The refreshed Child Poverty Plan and Action Plan will also build on the success of existing initiatives, such as 'Cutting the cost of the school day' and 'Fun with food' programmes to further improve and enhance these offers to meet the changing needs of our families and the increased demand we are starting to see from families experiencing financial hardship for the first time.

## Consultation and engagement

- 63 Consultation on the development of the strategy and plan and engagement in delivery is fundamental to achieving better outcomes for the residents of County Durham.
- 64 The PASG, with support from the CPWG have undertaken an extensive consultation exercise between April to August 2022 to give all key partners and stakeholders the opportunity to comment and contribute to the ongoing development of the revised Poverty strategy and action plan.
- 65 Nearly 500 individuals including residents, partners, elected members, DCC staff etc. attended face to face presentations with opportunities to comment and contribute via the following groups:
- (a) 14 Area Action Partnerships;
  - (b) County Durham Partnership;
  - (c) County Durham Together Partnership;
  - (d) County Durham Health & Wellbeing Board;
  - (e) County Durham Better Together Forum;
  - (f) Advice in County Durham Partnership Network;
  - (g) The County Durham Economic Partnership;
  - (h) County Durham Housing Provider Forum;
  - (i) Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board;
  - (j) Tobacco Alliance;
  - (k) DCC Extended Management Team; and
  - (l) DCC Strategic Management Team
- 66 For group members who were unable to attend, or did not comment during these sessions, there was the additional option of sending comments/feedback/suggestions etc. via a dedicated email address and electronic survey. 73 completed surveys were submitted and 27 e mails were sent to the dedicated inbox.
- 67 In line with the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing the CPWG undertook co-production activities throughout the summer months utilising the 'Fun and Food' programme to work with children, young people, and parents/carers to help shape and influence the key objectives and help partners to deliver help and support which is accessible, acceptable and builds family and community resilience.

## Comments and feedback received

- 68 Consultation was structured around considering the following three questions in relation to the poverty strategy and action plan:
- (a) Question 1: Are these the right objectives?
  - (b) Question 2: Where are the gaps/what more do we need to do?
  - (c) Question 3: Are there any groups of people missing?

### **General**

- 69 Although some feedback and requests for action are not within the power of local authorities and partners to deliver, it must be acknowledged the role local politicians can play in lobbying government on these issues e.g. threshold for benefits is too low, eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is too low and narrow, £20 uplift to Universal Credit (UC) should be re-instated, and the country needs a Universal Basic Income set at an adequate and realistic level, all employees should be paid the living wage as a minimum.
- 70 Even though most respondents agreed that stronger links to economic activity through the new inclusive economic strategy was the way forward and the overarching poverty strategy and action plan would address the wider long-term poverty issues experienced by many residents (both pre- and post-pandemic), there was a clear sense of urgency around actions which help support residents through the current 'cost-of-living crisis'. Many respondents felt the situation is now so critical it should take precedence over the longer-term actions to address the wider poverty issues.
- 71 Many partners and services are reporting seeing cohorts of residents experiencing poverty for the first time, and there was a general interest in how we can work together to identify and reach these residents to provide help and support.
- 72 There was a strong emphasis on working in partnership with respondents highlighting the need for effective links between organisations, particularly in relation to improved and simplified data sharing which would enable targeted interventions for those in most need. For example, knowledge of who is eligible for free school meals would enable targeted support around school uniforms, kids' clubs etc. Respondents also emphasised the need for the plan to be flexible to address emerging issues in a constantly changing environment and expressed the need to assess progress through key milestones and measurable targets.
- 73 There was a recognition that needs are becoming more complex and more joined up service delivery would deal more effectively with people with multiple issues such as financial difficulties and mental health, reducing duplication and being less reactive.

- 74 Many respondents were concerned about funding and resourcing. The pandemic has led to some partners reducing, moving online, or withdrawing service provision, and all organisations are experiencing budget pressures arising from the 'cost-of-living crisis'. There is concern that the Voluntary and Community Sector will be called upon to fill any gaps in service provision, at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain quality staff and volunteers, and cope with increased demand of a more complex nature.
- 75 It is acknowledged that stigma is still widely prevalent and remains a barrier to some residents reaching out for help and support – more so for residents who are finding themselves in financial hardship for the first time, and pride can make asking for help difficult and even impossible for some.

**Question 1: are these the right objectives?**

- 76 94% of respondents agreed with the inclusion of objective one (use intelligence and data to target support to low-income households) and objective two (reduce financial pressures on people facing, or in, poverty).
- 77 97% of respondents agreed with the inclusion of objective three (increase individual, household, and community resilience to poverty) and objective four (reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity).
- 78 Where respondents disagreed with the inclusion of an objective, the reason given most frequently was uncertainty as to how the objective could be achieved.

**Question 2: where are the gaps / what more do we need to do?**

- 79 A common theme was the need for action which would prevent people from going into poverty in the first place. Respondents also expressed a need for more support in the form of financial awareness, debt prevention, and budgeting skills, with a particular focus on children at secondary school / college to prepare them for the financial responsibilities of adulthood.
- 80 Some respondents felt the council could do more to stimulate local community energy options considering the current 'cost-of-living crisis'.
- 81 Improved public transport and better access to transport schemes were recurrent themes for helping people escape poverty. Many respondents felt there was a mismatch between public transport timetables and employment, education, and training opportunities, which when combined with expensive fares and long journey times, prevent some residents accessing opportunities. It was notable that respondents in rural areas felt that for training opportunities to be beneficial to communities, they need to be local. However, other respondents believed a non-local option would encourage take-up as it would allow people to obtain help anonymously.

- 82 Feedback suggested that many people are unaware of the services available to help them. Respondents stated they would welcome wider communication that informs residents of available support and how to access it, alongside campaigns which would highlight the dangers of specific actions, such as using loan sharks, and signpost them to alternative provision, such as credit unions.
- 83 Many respondents felt schools could be utilised more as a conduit to delivering key messages and information, mainly in the form of bulletins/letters which children would take home.
- 84 Respondents suggested more face-to-face support with longer opening times (from standard office hours of Monday to Friday) would increase accessibility for residents who need to travel, have caring responsibilities or don't have access to online sources of support and information. It was suggested that local community venues, for example libraries and community centres, be used for 1-2-1 consultations.
- 85 Some food projects have already been overwhelmed so longer term are required, around green spaces, community allotments etc.
- 86 Other comments included increasing the availability of affordable housing and more action to insulate homes.

***Question 3: are there any groups of people missing?***

- 87 Several recurring groups of people were identified in the feedback. Although some are already referenced in the document, respondents felt they should be given more prominence.
- 88 Low-income working families on the cusp of being eligible for benefits were highlighted as vulnerable to unexpected expenditure and could be pushed from 'just managing' into poverty as the 'cost-of-living crisis' takes hold.
- 89 Respondents identified single people with their own accommodation as a group, often with the least disposable income, in need of further support.
- 90 Residents in rural communities were mentioned as a group disproportionately affected by financial pressures caused by spatial isolation, few employment opportunities across a narrow range of sectors, a reliance on seasonal jobs, limited access to the labour market (e.g., transport, education, and training), higher fuel, food and transport costs.
- 91 Respondents explained that many informal carers had to give up employment or reduce their working hours during the pandemic due to a reduction in day services, specialist provision and respite. Lack of capacity in the system is preventing those people returning to the workplace so they remain on low fixed incomes. As many carers are experiencing

increasing expenditure due to needing extra heating or energy intensive specialist equipment, they are disproportionately impacted by the 'cost-of-living crisis'.

- 92 Disabled people, especially those who are immobile, housebound or with severe mental health conditions, were put forward as a group needing additional support. Many within this group struggle to complete online benefit forms, and some also find it hard to communicate their needs and can experience exasperated financial hardship due to additional costs associated with their disability.
- 93 Respondents felt there should be an increased emphasis on providing treatment for people with addictions which can consume household budgets and become a key factor in creating debt. For many, treatment centres are not local, and the cost of transport is often a barrier to people seeking help.
- 94 Respondents also highlighted a range of people who find themselves in unexpected situations that impact their financial situation, for example, those diagnosed with a serious illness such as cancer, experiencing a bereavement or leaving an abusive relationship. The cost of travelling to appointments was highlighted as a factor detrimental to health and wellbeing.
- 95 Groups with long term expenditure were also highlighted, such as housing costs, childcare.

## **New Poverty Action Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026**

- 96 The plan presented has been updated to reflect the feedback received as part of the consultation exercise, where practicable. These new and updated actions complement existing projects, initiatives and services and will be delivered alongside to further enhance and improve outcomes for our residents.
- 97 The council's PASG will continue to provide leadership and direction in delivering against the action plan and co-ordinating and joining up the response internally within the council and will explore predictive modelling to enable more targeted and proactive interventions to prevent and alleviate poverty.
- 98 Existing working groups including the CPWG will continue to work with services and partners to deliver some of the immediate actions where necessary, although it is expected a lot of the activity can be delivered through existing resources and organisations. Working with partners from across the public, private and third sector will continue to underpin our approach.

- 99 CPWG will continue under the guidance of the PASG, to be proactive and responsive to developing and implementing approaches to mitigate the impact of poverty and cost of living crisis on children and families, ensuring we do this in co-production with families and key partner organisations.
- 100 The existing relevant services, projects and initiatives from the previous action plan which have been adopted as 'business as usual' will continue to be monitored and reported via the appropriate service reporting channels and also regular updates will be given to the PASG.
- 101 Annual updates for the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan will be provided for: Cabinet; the County Durham Partnership; the Advice in County Durham Partnership; AAPs; and other partners etc.
- 102 The Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (and CPWG action plan) will be a dynamic action plan which will react to relevant policy developments and the evidence reported on the impacts being experienced by residents; with that in mind, it will be formally reviewed on an annual basis with elected members, including overview and scrutiny continuing to receive timely updates and briefings from both the CPWG and PASG.

## **Conclusion**

- 103 The council has consistently recognised that it cannot reduce poverty on its own as this requires a system wide response: collaboration and a focus on delivering common outcomes is the key to success.
- 104 Although a major focus of the last 30 months has been effectively supporting vulnerable households impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, the council and its partners have continued to address the underlying issues experienced by low-income households and to respond to the new issues being experienced due to the current 'cost-of-living crisis'.
- 105 During the pandemic our efforts to address and alleviate poverty increased significantly but there is still much to do. By maintaining our partnership-based approach to delivering the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, and the Child Poverty Plan and Action Plan we are making it everyone's business to respond to poverty and ensure financial inclusion.

## **Background papers/Other useful documents**

- [Cabinet report, Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, April 2022](#)
- [Cabinet report, Poverty Issues, December 2021](#)
- [Poverty Dashboard – Durham Insight](#)

## **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.

### **Finance**

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

The longer-term financial implications for the council are at this stage difficult to quantify and are dependent on the speed of economic recovery.

### **Consultation**

The Poverty Action Strategy and Action Plan has been through a full consultation exercise as detailed in the report.

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

In terms of equality, poverty disproportionately impacts women (as they are more likely to have caring responsibilities), people with a disability and certain age groups: children in households experiencing poverty, and older age groups in particular as they generally won't be able work to mitigate the impact of poverty. Therefore, the poverty strategy, although directed at those most economically disadvantaged, will help to mitigate impact for equality groups much more likely to be disproportionately impacted by socio-economic disadvantage.

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

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Although there are no direct implications arising from this report, Human Rights encompass both fundamental values and specific rights; providing a framework, linked to equality and dignity for consideration of poverty and its impacts.

## **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable.

## **Staffing**

Resource and staffing implications are fully considered as part of a proposal/action and will be fully considered by the service and the Poverty Action Steering Group.

## **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

## **Risk**

Not applicable.

## **Procurement**

Not applicable

# Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

2022-2026



## What is poverty



Poverty affects millions of people in the UK. Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation - and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.’

### **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

Therefore, poverty is multi-faceted. It comes in many shapes and forms and varies both in terms of its duration and severity. Some people experience being trapped in poverty over several years, others experience poverty for a short while, for example when between jobs. For some people, being in poverty means having limited options across a range of household goods but is survivable. For others, poverty means not being able to afford the basics needed to live, e.g., housing, food, clothing, energy, and effectively being destitute. A key indicator of destitution is the extent of reliance on emergency food provision.

The severity of poverty is often linked to duration. The longer someone experiences financial problems, the more their financial buffers are eroded and the greater the risk that their decisions will push them further into poverty. Living in poverty over time can impact on mental health and wellbeing, leading to the use of unhealthy coping mechanisms and family breakdown. This can result in an intergenerational cycle of worklessness.

Poverty sits at the heart of many of the social and economic challenges we face, and relates not only to income but to opportunity, participation, and access to services. Its impact can last a lifetime by limiting aspiration, damaging relationships, and eroding life chances. The council is fully committed to tackling all aspects of poverty and has adopted the following objective from the County Durham Vision (2019 - 2035) as its vision.

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

## National, Regional and Local Context

County Durham is ranked the 26th most deprived area in England for employment and the 42nd most deprived for income (of 151 upper tier local authorities).<sup>1</sup>

An estimated 21% percent of households across the county live in relative poverty<sup>2</sup> before housing costs, rising to 25% after housing costs.<sup>3</sup> This compares to an England average of 17% (rising to 22% after housing costs). The gap in relative poverty between County Durham and England has widened in recent years, and a quarter of households living in relative poverty have at least one working adult.

An estimated 70.1% of people<sup>4</sup> (aged 16 to 64) are employed. This is in line with the regional level (70%) but lower than the national level (75.4%). People with a disability are much less likely to be employed (47%) than those without a disability (79%).<sup>5</sup>

For those in employment, wages across the county are comparatively low with full-time annual pay around 7% lower than the England average. In addition, an estimated 21% of jobs across the county pay less than the £9.50 hourly rate set by the living wage foundation<sup>6</sup> (although the proportion has fallen in recent years, it remains higher than the 17% average across England), and an estimated 2.4% of employees (around 5,300 people) are employed on zero-hour contracts.<sup>7</sup>

### Average Wages

Includes full and part time

|                  | 2020    | 2021    | Change        |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------------|
| County Durham    | £23,877 | £24,252 | £375 (1.6%)   |
| Northeast        | £23,559 | £23,414 | -£145 (-0.6%) |
| England          | £26,055 | £26,192 | £137 (0.5%)   |
| Gap with England | -£2,178 | -£1,940 | Narrowing     |

Although, average wages across County Durham have increased by more than the Northeast and England averages, they remain relatively low.

This has led to comparatively lower levels of gross disposable household income (GDHI). The latest data shows GDHI is increasing at a slower rate than the rest of the country so the gap both regionally and with the rest of England is widening. The data also shows the Northeast has the lowest GDHI per head in the United Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

## Gross disposable household income per head of population

|               | 2019    | change since 2018 | County Durham gap |
|---------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| County Durham | £16,617 | +1.9%             |                   |
| Northeast     | £17,096 | +2.2%             | £479 (3%)         |
| England       | £21,978 | +2.2%             | £5,361 (32%)      |

The onset of COVID-19 made many people's financial situations worse. Although the government reacted to mitigate the worst of the economic shock and keep families afloat, the loss of income from being furloughed, rising costs of living and additional expenditure incurred during lockdown hit households with the least disposable income hard. School closures and the staying at home directive led to additional costs for basic household essentials (meals, heating, equipping children for online learning) especially as their normal coping strategies were no longer available to them, e.g., eating at friends and families, accessing the internet in their local library, buying essentials from charity shops.

At the start of the pandemic (March 2020), 10% of the county's population aged 16-64 were claiming Universal Credit. This peaked at 15.9% in March 2021 and is currently 15.6% (August 2022) which equates to 51,596 individuals across 43,464 households.<sup>9</sup> Research has shown that many of the low-paid workers who lost their jobs or were furloughed had few, if any, savings to fall back on.

Research<sup>10</sup> into the experiences of families with children claiming Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit during the pandemic shows that 70 percent cut back on essentials (including food), 60 percent borrowed money (mainly through credit cards and payday loans) and more than 50 percent fell behind on rent or other essential bills.

4,000 more children and young people (aged 0 to 19) have become eligible for free school meals since the start of the pandemic, meaning almost 30% of children and young people are now eligible (21,220). However, 29% are not being claimed.<sup>11</sup>

As we transition from the pandemic, many household budgets remain tight. The cost of living continues to soar, with inflation running at 10.1%<sup>12</sup> and the Bank of England forecasting it to peak at 13.3% at the end of March 2023. This inflationary increase is largely driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by the war in Ukraine.

As almost 15% of households across the county were experiencing fuel poverty in 2020, we expect this to increase as the cost of living crisis progresses - with people in rural areas and/or already struggling being disproportionately affected. As fuel prices increase, the cost of transport will increase and accessibility of the poorest people to essential services is likely to decrease, again exacerbated in rural areas.

## Foreword

Welcome to the Poverty Action Plan for 2022-26. This document not only describes the extent to which poverty impacts the prosperity of the county and its residents, it also outlines what we will do to protect those most at risk of poverty and exclusion, increase equality of opportunity and ultimately ensure fewer people are affected by poverty and deprivation.

Some of the actions outlined in this plan can be delivered quickly and have an immediate benefit. However, most are long-term and will take time to manifest into a changed and improved situation. We know that tackling poverty takes time.

Poverty is a major issue across County Durham. High levels of deprivation, insecure employment, and comparatively low wages has led to many households with little disposable income. In addition, a significant proportion of our older people have fixed incomes, including those who have not worked for a long time and who are now beginning to hit retirement age. With few savings and unable to access any financial support from family or friends, many people are finding themselves in precarious financial situations. Unexpected expenses, unemployment or a change in family circumstances are often catalysts for driving people into a cycle of problem debt and ultimately poverty – or even destitution.

The pandemic made the situation worse, hitting lower-income households and those with little disposable income hard. However, as we begin the recovery phase and transition to 'living with COVID-19', we need to consider not only the immediate financial impact of the pandemic, but the longer-term poverty impacts such as education outcomes and opportunities for young people. We need to mitigate where we can. As we transition from the pandemic, the household budgets of many of our residents remain tight with the cost of living at a 40 year high and continuing to increase.

This plan does not sit in isolation but is aligned to other council and partnership plans and strategies that have some involvement in tackling poverty. The plan is underpinned by the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing principles, with people and place at the heart of its development. Only by working together can we ultimately break the cycle of poverty.



**Paul Darby**  
Corporate Director of Resources,  
Chair of the Poverty Action  
Steering Group



**Cllr Alan Shield**  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Equality and Inclusion

## Objective 1

### Use intelligence and data to target support to low-income households

It is important that we utilise both the council's and partners' data and intelligence to identify vulnerable low-income households and to monitor the effectiveness of our initiatives and programmes.

To escape poverty, people ultimately need access to an income which is both secure and sufficient to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living. However, for many people, achieving this is a struggle. Too many jobs do not provide decent pay, prospects or security. Many people struggle to gain employment or move onto better things, hindered by their background, a lack of marketable skills, low self-esteem, poor job search/interview skills, childcare needs, lack of reliable transport etc. In addition, some people don't access their full benefit entitlement (both in work and out of work benefits) because they are unaware of their entitlement, particularly if their circumstances change, because they find the process difficult due to their poor literacy and numeracy skills or difficulties interacting with the system, or because they feel ashamed.

Broadly speaking, some groups of people are impacted more than others. Children bring additional costs not fully covered by the benefit system and often reduce the capacity of adults to earn from employment – particularly for single parents, those with caring responsibilities, and families with a disabled child. Older people and those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) are the least likely to ask for help due to social stigma. Single people under the age of 25, those with a limiting health condition or disability, and those with complex support needs associated with homelessness, drug and/or alcohol problems, domestic abuse or involvement in the criminal justice system are more likely to be disproportionately affected by poverty.

In addition, people face financial challenges at transition points such as leaving home or care, moving into a new home, being diagnosed with a serious illness, experiencing bereavement or relationship breakdown. Those without access to wider family support are particularly vulnerable and can be a trigger for significant financial difficulties. Many victims of domestic abuse have experienced having money withheld from them as a key method of controlling and mistreating them. Research has shown that victims of domestic abuse often must choose between being plunged into homelessness and poverty or staying with their abuser. In addition, people who become unexpectedly unemployed can quickly find that what was affordable becomes unaffordable.

## Actions

### Ongoing / annual programme of work

- Using data available both nationally and locally to inform initiatives and projects aimed at addressing poverty; this includes predictive modelling to develop effective, targeted approaches when needed to address emerging issues affecting households
- Improve data capture and intelligence which informs the work and reporting mechanisms of the Poverty Action Steering Group and wider partners
- Carry out a programme of targeted campaigns to increase the number of people undergoing benefit checks, for example, holiday hunger campaign, over-75s, Care Connect users, women and pensioners.
- Promote, with childcare providers and families, the support available to help with childcare.
- Deliver 'Benefit Awareness Training' to service teams
- Carry out workshops to give staff the skills and confidence to identify customers who are potentially vulnerable (through bereavement, mental health ill-health, relationship breakdown) and signpost them to available support
- Provide training to local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to enable them to identify residents in need of financial support and provide appropriate advice and support to maximise their benefit entitlement.
- Ensure residents can access information on available financial support
- Increase awareness of benefit entitlements and programmes which support people into suitable employment.
- Deliver employability programmes that assist residents to access and sustain job opportunities (Council Plan Action). Programme includes:
  - Durham Advance extended to Dec 2023
  - LINKCD extended to Dec 2023
  - CLLD projects extended to Dec 2022
  - Refugee Resettlement Programme extended to March 2024
  - FLEX programme introduced to Dec 2023

### 2022

- Develop a key set of measures to be used to determine the impact of the work of the Council and partners in addressing poverty related issues
- Review the Special Guardianship Order (SGO) policy to meet the needs of kinship carers, identifying access to a wide range of support/services and financial support.

## 2023

- Develop an approach for using confidential datasets, ensuring the data can be shared, joined-up and used without compromising data protection legislation.
- Understand the levels of reported financial abuse within specialist domestic abuse services and partners.
- Give people who are in poverty a voice to tell their story and change the narrative to reduce stigma which can be associated low income.
- Work with communities and partners to review and reframe communication and engagement plans to reduce stigma around poverty and increase uptake of financial entitlements.
- Develop an evidence-based approach to ensuring that food provided through food inequality initiatives work with government recommendations on healthy eating and adopt the Eatwell Guide as the standard they work towards achieving for their food offer.
- Work with health to explore how financial wellbeing MECC and referral and/or signposting individuals to financial support can be embedded into a range of health pathways, for example community connectors.
- Maximise the use of the County Durham Pound and explore further possibilities of how social value can impact the poverty agenda
- Review of advice services across County Durham focusing on location, accessibility, and quality of service.
- Widen the 'First Point of Contact' offer to include more detailed support conversations to help those in financial difficulty.
- Review the Healthy start vitamin programme delivery and implement a phased distribution process to ensure eligible families have access free vitamins and are aware of the benefits of healthy eating.

## 2024

- Continue to work with external partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide support to those who are impacted by the transition to Universal Credit.
- Continue to work with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to identify and engage with people who are entitled to benefits but are not claiming.
- Work with partners to identify locations that can act as community hubs for residents to obtain financial advice/ information, and help to improve their digital skills.

## 2025

- Work with partners to strengthen the process for identifying people who are vulnerable, a) financially, b) in relation to health and well-being
- Develop a joined-up Business Intelligence approach to managing poverty data
- Ensure public health contracts maximise opportunities to refer and/or signpost individuals and families to financial support

## Objective 2

### Reduce the financial pressures on people facing or in poverty

People living in poverty can expect to pay more for almost everything they buy. Not only do they lack the financial resources to take advantage of special offers and buy in bulk, but they are also mostly locked out of the best bank accounts, borrowing rates and energy tariffs which would reduce their regular outgoings. This 'poverty premium' is exacerbated in rural areas where the cost of food and fuel can be higher, houses can be more difficult to insulate and therefore more expensive to heat, and where poor public transport links puts increased emphasis on having a private car.

In addition, Britain's worsening cost-of-living crisis is hitting low-income families hard, putting household budgets under more pressure than ever. The cost of living continues to soar, with inflation running at 10.1%<sup>13</sup> and the Bank of England forecasting it to peak at 13.3% at the end of March 2023. This inflationary increase is largely driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by the war in Ukraine. With more financial pressures are on the horizon including expected increases in rents, mortgages, water bills and energy bills, we expect more people to be pushed into poverty over the coming months. Low-income working families which are 'just about managing' and vulnerable to unexpected expenditure remain at high risk.

Those with the least disposal income are being hit the hardest by this cost-of-living crisis and we expect demand for poverty-related council services and those of the Voluntary and Community Sector, e.g., food provision, to increase in the coming months. And it is likely that more people on lower incomes will resort to payday loans and other high-risk financial support to pay for essentials, increasing those coping with the continuous cycle of problem debt. Addictions (including smoking, alcohol, drugs or gambling) are also key factors in lowering incomes and creating problem debt.

## Actions

### Ongoing / annual programme of work

- Raise awareness of illegal doorstep lending through targeted campaigns
- Deliver a range of initiatives to alleviate fuel poverty (Council Plan Action)

### 2022

- Support the Advice in County Durham Partnership to ensure their referral pathways are effective.
- Ensure the mechanisms in place to support those in crisis remain effective, including the council's Welfare Assistance Scheme.
- Expand the use of the benefit calculator to other services across the council.
- Continue to provide effective support mechanisms for more vulnerable households, through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and Partnership support arrangements.
- Deliver a range of initiatives to alleviate food inequality (The 'Bread and Butter' Thing is one strand)
- Support the Durham Food Partnership to deliver its strategy to alleviate food insecurity
- Expand the programme which effectively distributes surplus foodstuffs (at extremely competitive prices) to individuals and families in need (Bread and Butter Thing)
- Provide wrap-around support (financial engagement - eg benefits advice) as part of 'Bread and Butter Thing' provision.
- Understand the housing market to help people who are struggling with their housing costs to remain in their homes.
- Develop a joint action plan for the housing poverty group and provide updates to the poverty action steering group.
- Develop an incentive scheme to enable Ukrainian guests to access private rented houses at the end of their accommodation with UK hosts.
- Develop and implement 'Cutting Cost of the Pre-school Day' to 50 nurseries and pre-school settings.
- Deliver 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' programme to an additional 75 schools/colleges across the county, focusing on communities top 30%.
- Explore a model to further extend 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' to include audit of impact.
- Fully understand and consider current market forces and implications in relation to the application of the Durham living wage; in particular the position in relation to DCC's workforce; future supply chains and wider businesses across the county.

## 2023

- Work with partners to ensure a consistent approach to debt advice provision across the county (supports a national review through money advice and debt service)
- Evaluate the outcomes from the Advice in County Durham Partnership Financial capability project
- Improve access to, and encourage more people to use, credit unions to obtain low-cost credit
- Improve the service offer provided by Housing Solutions to assist households struggling with their housing costs and work with the wider council services
- Undertake a review of the Healthy Start Programme offer for County Durham and provide recommendations to improve uptake and reduce inequalities

## 2025

- Use the approach to wellbeing to scope how to create financial wellbeing at community level to help people feel more secure and in control of their finances, both now and in the future, knowing that they can pay the bills today, can deal with the unexpected, and are on track for a healthy financial future.

## Objective 3

### Increase individual, household and community resilience to poverty

Resilience against poverty is built on many interlinking factors: a person's psychological wellbeing, their household stability, support available from family and friends, access to the labour market, skills at managing their finances, and access to financial products and assets which act as a buffer against problems. Being financially aware and having good budgeting skills are essential to all residents.

The labour market across County Durham is dominated by the public sector which is traditionally lower paid than the private sector and has been subjected to a pay squeeze in recent years. Other major employers tend to be from the lower paid sectors such as construction labouring jobs and lower value manufacturing jobs (assembly and fabrication). This has exacerbated the wages difference between our county and other areas across the country which have a better balance between public and private employment. This narrow business base can be barrier to people increasing their employability and access to better pay. This is exacerbated across our rural communities which are more spatially isolated and more reliant on seasonal employment.

## Actions

### 2022

- Improve the referral pathways in relation to financial advice and support for frontline staff in Children's Social Care and the One Point Service
- Deliver three training programmes about financial literacy and budgeting to frontline practitioners working with children, young people and families
- Set up a new service (young person project) to support young people aged 17.5 years transitioning from children's services and Children Looked After (CLA) to help prepare them with skills for independent living at 18 years and assist with finding suitable accommodation post 18 years (pilot for 18 young people).
- Develop 'My Future is Durham' initiative into a wider programme for schools and colleges.
- Arrange a jobs fair to introduce Ukrainian guests living across the County to potential employers

### 2023

- Community book – Project within the County Durham Together programme: Develop a business case and recommendations for an accessible digital repository of services, enabling people to access the appropriate services, support, activities at the right place and right time.
- Explore the feasibility of delivering Mental Health Awareness Training at scale to staff and volunteers who work with people experiencing poverty to help address the known impacts of poverty on mental health.
- Investigate the possibility of expanding/duplicating the Mental Health Hospital Discharge Scheme (dispersed accommodation – housing first model) to support people leaving services and increasing throughput in order to support more vulnerable people.
- Review the Devolution deal once clarity is received and assess how it impacts the local area, e.g., skills appropriate to local economy
- Ensure a smooth transition from European Funding Streams to the Shared Prosperity Fund
- Fully understand the findings from the 'left behind communities' research and identify actions to address some of the issues highlighted.
- Explore the use of local Anchor Organisations to improve the training and employment prospects of those living in left behind neighbourhoods.
- Join up the Financial Ability project (formerly Durham Savers initiative) with 'money matters and advice' provision programme:
  - Continue to develop the communication for local organisations to signposting information.
  - Embed into Learning and Development portal and create further support materials, whilst maintaining communications and feedback from internal colleagues.
  - Engage with existing networks, develop new partnerships and re-engage previous partners
  - Continue to re-engage with DWP Work Coaches and front-line staff following lifting of COVID restrictions
- Scope how to create financial wellbeing at community level to help people feel more secure and in control of their finances, both now and in the future, knowing that they can pay the bills today, can deal with the unexpected, and are on track for a healthy financial future

- Provide financial support initiatives to people who are homeless, leaving care or veterans
- Raise awareness of financial abuse as a form of domestic abuse and what support is available for victims/survivors within communities
- Deliver initiatives that support rough sleepers, ex-offenders and other vulnerable people into accommodation (Council Plan Action)
- Increase awareness of adult commissioned services which support vulnerable people to access housing, maximise income, reduce debt, provide employability support and reduce social isolation. Undertake a review of current drop in's venues across the County to ensure inclusion of difficult to reach communities.
- Continue to identify and develop the services and support available to young people leaving care through their local offer which support independence and enhance their life chances
- Explore the feasibility of delivering Tobacco Awareness Training at scale to staff and volunteers who work with people experiencing poverty. Stopping smoking can increase family income, reduce the impact of absenteeism from the workplace and helps to reduce long term health conditions which can lead to the inability to engage in employment.
- Explore the feasibility of including signposting, referrals and outcome measures from a range of public health interventions into services which support people experiencing poverty e.g. Making Every Contact Count (MECC).
- Join up the work being done on green spaces with food poverty / food resilience /sustainable low cost food.

## 2024

- Implement and evaluate the impact of the new Durham Help service offering mental health support to residents who are looking for employment, education and training through the various DCC employment programmes.

## 2025

- Evaluate the delivery of support to 1,300 school pupils in years 10 and 12 who are classed as vulnerable and at risk of not making a successful transition into education, employment, and training.
- Provide targeted and engaging delivery of numeracy and literacy to improve the levels of basic skills across the county (through the Multiply programme and mainstream Adult Education Budget).

## 2026

- Broaden the county's business base to include a range of jobs across both private and public sectors.

## Objective 4

### Reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity

The ability to interact digitally is essential to addressing social and economic inequalities and levelling up our communities. Many of the cheapest ways of accessing goods and services are only available online. Mainstream banking has been removed from many of our highstreets, especially in rural areas, and many educational courses and job applications are restricted to online access. In addition, people who are not using online services can lack a voice and visibility in the modern world, as government services and democracy increasingly move online.

However, some people can afford neither the equipment nor the broadband required to get online. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, around 51% of households with an income of less than £10,000 had home internet access, compared to 90% of households with an income of more than £40,000. Even when poorer households were physically able to access the internet, they were less likely to have the skills to utilise it. In rural areas levels, digital inclusion may be further reduced by poorer quality broadband and mobile connections.

If people are to escape poverty, they need to be able to reach the key services that will help them (both financial and health-based) and the wider labour markets which will employ them. However, this remains a struggle for many of our most disadvantaged residents due to availability, a mismatch between need and timetable, cost, or long journey times. Therefore, affordable transport is key to breaking the cycle of social exclusion and reconnecting our less affluent areas and rural communities to their wider labour markets and key services.

Participation in sport, outdoor physical activity and cultural events positively impacts people, especially young people. It contributes to both physical and mental health, involves engaging with others in a positive way, encourages concentration and motivation, and teaches other life skills that help their education and working lives. However, those from low-income households are often prevented from participating as few free sporting activities exist outside school and charges to access culture and sport are often unaffordable.

## Actions 2022

- Refresh the first point of contact offer at the Customer Access Points (CAPs) to focus on digital inclusion and self-serve with support, access to the internet and a device being at the forefront of service delivery.
- Deliver communications plan to promote the availability of lower cost connectivity services such as social tariffs for those in receipt of certain benefits.
- Further develop online postcode checker to facilitate signposting to digital inclusion related support in terms of access to devices, connectivity and training/skills.
- Fully understand the findings from recent consultation which asked children, young people and adults, many of whom currently do not participate in leisure activities, about the barriers preventing them from becoming more physically active and identify actions to address some of the issues highlighted.

## 2023

- Use data and intelligence to identify our most vulnerable communities to support access to public transport.
- Continue to work on proposals linked to the Bus Service Improvement Plan which includes a cap on bus fares, especially for young people, demand responsive bus services in rural areas and tailored routes to meet the specific requirements of rural communities.

## 2025

- Investigate the feasibility of broadband providers, working with social housing providers, to provide social tariffs for those in receipt of certain benefits.
- Continue delivery of the Digital Durham programme working with partners to further develop our digital infrastructure and increase the number of properties able to access gigabit-capable broadband services at an affordable cost.
- Explore opportunities to develop a digital inclusion strategy which supports a strategic and joined up approach to digital inclusion and mitigates the digital inclusion gaps.

## Endnotes

- 1 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019
- 2 Living in households with less than 60% of median household income
- 3 Households Below Average Income (HBAI) statistics, 17/18 to 19/20
- 4 Annual Population Survey (Office of National Statistics, April 2021 to March 2022
- 5 Annual Population Survey (Office of National Statistics), April 2021 to March 2022
- 6 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) (Office of National Statistics), 2020/21
- 7 Labour Force Estimates (Office of National Statistics), April to June 2021
- 8 Office of National Statistics, 2019
- 9 Stats Xplore, March 2020 to August 2022. Households to May 2022
- 10 Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children
- 11 On School Census Day in January 2022
- 12 UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to July 2022
- 13 UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to July 2022

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# Plan on a Page: Impact of poverty on children, young people and families (2022-2023)

Vision: Children, young people and families have the resources to meet their basic needs, including accessing opportunities to take part in society

Priorities

1. To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources

2. Practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity

3. Promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing activities.

4. Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment

## Outcome Measures: How we will know if we have been successful?

- a. Local and national data and intelligence along with feedback from children, young people and families will ensure we have an accurate understanding of the level and impact of poverty for children in our neighbourhoods across County Durham.
- b. We will have a set of key measures of poverty across County Durham.
- c. Communications will be streamlined and coordinated through the CPWG.

- a. We will deliver 'Cutting the Cost of the School and Pre School Day' programme to an additional 50 schools/ colleges/nurseries in communities in top 30% deprived neighbourhoods.
- b. A minimum of 500 number of staff registered to use the new AiCD portal and report on usage.
- c. Financial ability training will be delivered to 200 key stakeholders working directly with children and families
- d. We will increase the uptake of FSM with eligible families from 76% to 80% in line with regional uptake
- e. We will increase the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers target to be agreed by Health Weight Alliance

- a. 50,000 children will access the County Durham 'Fun and Food' programme in 2022.
- b. 25,000 children will access free swimming sessions in 2022.
- c. Co-production activities with children, young people and parents will inform a plan to provide accessible leisure, cultural, sporting and wellbeing activities

- a. Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers at GCSE is reduced (target to be agreed);
- b. Reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET to 4.5% and the proportion of young people whose destination is not known to 1.0% by 2022-23.
- c. Deliver Work Related Learning and Enterprise activities to 3,500 students during each academic year.
- d. Provide transition support to 900 Year 10 and Year 11 identified secondary school students during each academic year

## Actions: What are we going to do?

- 1.1 National and local Child Poverty data and intelligence, hosted on Durham Insights will be analysed and shared to help inform and target service developments.
- 1.2 We will report and monitor against the set of agreed poverty measures which impact on children.
- 1.3 We will raise the profile through a targeted communications and marketing plan to promote accessible and relevant information to families and key stakeholders.

- 2.1 Utilising the THRIVE Model refresh the 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' and 'Pre-School Day' resources for all schools and deliver a targeted programme to an additional 50 schools/colleges/nurseries.
- 2.2 Train all OPS,CSC, HDFT, CDDFT/VCS and commissioned services staff working directly with children and families to use the new AiCD portal;
- 2.3 Financial ability training will be targeted at and accessed by key stakeholders working with CYP&F.
- 2.4 Work with key partners and through co-production with children and families to develop and implement a programme to increase the update of financial support including Free School Meals available to families.
- 2.5 In collaboration with the Healthy Weight Alliance group we will develop a promotional campaign to increase the uptake of Healthy Start Digital Card to eligible families.

- 3.1 Implement a coordinated countywide 'Fun and Food' programme in line with DfE expectations and community need including during half term holidays.
- 3.2 Source sustainable funding to provide a 'Fun and Food' programme during half term holidays.
- 3.3 Utilising the Approach to Wellbeing model to develop and implement an approach to promoting social inclusion for children, young people and families to facilitate accessible leisure, cultural, sport and wellbeing activities.

- 4.1 Durham Works will provide support to young people who are NEET to progress into sustained education, employment and training pathways, including Apprenticeships;
- 4.2 Durham Works will provide specialist careers advice and pathways for Looked after Children, Care Leavers and SEND to enable young people to realise their aspirations;
- 4.3 Durham Works will deliver Work Related Learning and Enterprise activities in primary and secondary schools;
- 4.4 Durham Works Programme for Schools will support students in Years 10 / 11 who are identified at risk of becoming NEET in secondary schools (including special schools and alternative education providers);
- 4.5 Durham Enable will support individuals who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to access employment.
- 4.6 We will consult with young people who are NEET to understand their barriers to progressing into education, employment and training, in order to ensure our support offer meets their needs.

## Enabling Factors: What will make our outcomes possible

We will apply the **County Durham Wellbeing Approach principles** to all work of the Child Poverty Working Group  
 We will apply the **THRIVE model** to ensure proportionate and tailored response to service design and delivery  
 Whole system approach to ensure effective interventions. Workforce development based around making every contact count  
 Strong leadership and leading by example across all areas e.g. councillors, leaders, education.  
 Connecting with our communities through County Durham Area Action Partnerships

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**2 December 2022**

**Overview and Scrutiny Six Monthly  
update to Council**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the six monthly update report which is to be submitted to Council on 25 January 2023.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The update report highlights some of the work scrutiny has undertaken in the six month period to November 2022 and complements the annual report which was submitted to Council in September 2022.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 3 Members are asked to:
  - (a) Note the Overview and Scrutiny six monthly report to be submitted to Council on 25 January 2023.

## Background

- 4 Statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny arrangements in local authorities was published in 2019. The guidance stated, amongst other matters, that authorities should take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work scrutiny is doing.
- 5 As a result, the County Council reviewed its constitution in March 2021 which included a new provision for a six-monthly report on overview and scrutiny activity to be submitted to Council.
- 6 The report highlights some of the work scrutiny has undertaken in the six month period to November 2022 and complements the annual report which is submitted to Council each year.

## Background papers

- None

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**Contact:** Helen Lynch

Tel: 03000 269732

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None specific with the report.

### **Finance**

None specific with the report

### **Consultation**

None specific with the report.

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

None specific with the report.

### **Climate Change**

None specific with the report

### **Human Rights**

None specific with the report

### **Crime and Disorder**

None specific with the report.

### **Staffing**

None specific with the report

### **Accommodation**

None specific within this report.

### **Risk**

None specific within this report.

### **Procurement**

None specific within this report.

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**Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny – Six Monthly Update Report  
to Council 25 January 2023**

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Attached as a separate document.

**Council**

**25 January 2025**

**Overview and Scrutiny – Six Monthly Update**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Craig Martin - Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide information to County Council on the activity of overview and scrutiny for the six month period to November 2022.

**Executive summary**

- 2 It has previously been agreed that a six month update on the activity of overview and scrutiny is considered by Council, in addition to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report which is submitted to Council in July/September each year.
- 3 This update sets out the approach that scrutiny has been taking since the elections in May 2021, regular matters which feature in the committee work programmes and highlights some items which have formed part of more in-depth scrutiny over the six month period to November 2022.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 4 Council is recommended to note the information on overview and scrutiny activity which has taken place in the six month period to November 2022.

## Background

- 5 As a result of statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny arrangements in local authorities published in 2019, the County Council agreed a six-monthly report of overview and scrutiny activity be submitted to council to assist in the communication of scrutiny's role and purpose.
- 6 This update report highlights some of the work scrutiny has undertaken in the six month period to November 2022 and complements the annual report which is submitted to council each year.
- 7 Following the local elections in May 2021, a Joint Administration was established, and a new chair and vice-chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) were appointed. In their role as the strategic driver of the overview and scrutiny function, they have encouraged an inclusive and transparent approach to carrying out scrutiny.
- 8 Contributing to policy development is a key task for scrutiny and the scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs have a clear ambition to increase activity in this field.
- 9 Overview and scrutiny has continued the practice of meeting with members of the Executive regularly. This approach was recommended in the statutory guidance issued in 2019 and it was acknowledged that Durham County Council has a strong record of sharing information with the Executive.
- 10 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) oversees and co-ordinates the work of overview and scrutiny committees. Five thematic overview and scrutiny committees scrutinise the following themes:
  - Adults, Wellbeing and Health
  - Children and Young People
  - Economy and Enterprise
  - Environment and Sustainable Communities
  - Safer and Stronger Communities
- 11 Durham County Council's overview and scrutiny function has embedded the four principles of good scrutiny in all the work it does. These principles, originally developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, inform and shape scrutiny work. They state that overview and scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive critical friend challenge
  - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
  - Be led by independent minded people who take responsibility for their role
  - Drive improvement in public services
- 12 Scrutiny committees undertake regular monitoring of budget and performance reports, receive updates on previous reviews and undertake light touch and in depth review activity.
- 13 All scrutiny members have received the corporate induction training following the May 2021 elections. This has been supplemented by bespoke scrutiny training delivered by the Scrutiny team. Overview and scrutiny members have also had the opportunity to take up training provided by the LGA in collaboration with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.
- 14 The Chair of COSMB has asked the thematic scrutiny committees to consider options for efficiency savings and income generation opportunities. The work is ongoing and will be reported in the Annual Report.
- 15 Comprehensive work programmes are developed by scrutiny committees each year and this update highlights only some of the work they carry out.

### **Scrutiny Committee Activity**

- 16 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)

Chair: Councillor Craig Martin,  
Vice Chair: Councillor Chris Lines

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 13) 2023/24 – 2026/27

- a) COSMB has a constitutional role in assisting Cabinet in the development of the council's annual budget. The Council is operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty with concerns about the impact of inflation and fuel and energy prices. The Board continues to be updated by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services and will consider the impact of the local government financial settlement on the council's budget and MTFP forecasts.
- b) Poverty Action Strategy and Plan

The Board have considered a report on the Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy and Plan have been reviewed to better address the wider issues of inequalities and improve strategic direction and priorities for services and opportunities for residents in County Durham experiencing poverty. COSMB considered the report and agreed to forward their comments to the Secretary of State. The Board will receive an update following the conclusion of consultation on the refreshed Strategy and Plan.

c) Final Outturn for the General Fund and Collection Fund 2021/22

The Board added scrutiny of the final outturn for the General Fund and Collection Fund 2021/22 to their work programme this year. The Board were informed about the impact COVID had had on expenditure although with Government support funding this had resulted in an underspend of £3.7million. COSMB were advised that the pandemic still had an ongoing impact on services. Members raised questions about the Council's reserves which the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services responded to.

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

Chair: Councillor Patricia Jopling  
Vice Chair: Councillor Joanne Howey

a) North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System

- The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care system was established on 1 July 2022 replacing all Clinical Commissioning Groups in the region including NHS County Durham CCG. The Committee has examined the proposals for structural change in terms of Commissioning arrangements, responsibilities and collaborative working between the NHS and Local Government Social Care as well as considering and commenting on the draft North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Strategy. Update reports have been considered by the Adults, Wellbeing and Health OSC on 15 July and 21 November 2022.

b) Winter Planning

At its meeting on 21 November 2022, the committee examined the plans put in place across the health and social care system for both surge and cold weather activity and admissions 2022. The plans demonstrated how the system supports the health and wellbeing of the workforce; embeds infection prevention and control; protects elective surgery; promotes safe and effective discharges from

hospital and supports people to remain in the community and avoid hospital admissions.

c) Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25

The committee considered and commented on the Health and Wellbeing Board's draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) 2022-25. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for the production of a draft PNA which is subject to a statutory 60 day public consultation. The Committee submitted a response as part of the consultation which included the following feedback:-

- Public responses to surveys undertaken by County Durham Healthwatch and the Community Champion network showed a high percentage of people having easy access to pharmacy services;
- The lack of pharmacy services in certain areas was a concern particularly the absence of any 100 hour pharmacies, pharmacies with core opening hours after 6p.m. weekdays and any with core opening hours on a Sunday in the Chester-le-Street locality.
- The Committee notes and supports the assessment within the draft PNA that:-
  - (a) The provision of all essential and necessary advanced services (New Medicine Service and Community Pharmacist Consultation Service) in County Durham are adequate to meet the current and future needs for pharmaceutical services;
  - (b) The provision of the other relevant advanced service, the Community Pharmacy Seasonal Influenza Vaccination is adequate however a more equitable provision is required across all localities;
  - (c) The widespread provision of the new other relevant advanced services (the Hypertension Case-Finding Service and the Smoking Cessation Service) should be encouraged.

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

Chair Councillor Anne Reed  
Vice Chair Councillor James Cosslett

a) Child Exploitation Workshop

The Committee had requested a workshop on Child Exploitation following considering the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. Members were provided with information that included the four stages of exploitation and signs and symptoms. Members also received information on County Lines and Police powers.

b) Growing up in County Durham draft Strategy

CYP OSC members received a final opportunity to comment on the draft strategy. Members commented on the importance of setting achievable targets and suggested that the use of some wording in the strategy was subjective and referenced the need to increased opportunities and the importance of breaking down barriers. Members suggested a greater emphasis on poverty as a common thread throughout.

c) Ofsted ILACS May 2022

The Committee received a report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services advising members of the key findings and outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection. The committee learned that the service had received an overall Good judgement. The Corporate Director agreed to members request to come to a future meeting with the action plan and service improvement plan.

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

Chair Councillor Bill Moist

Vice Chair Councillor Andrew Jackson

a) County Durham Economic Partnership

E&E OSC in invites on an annual basis the Chair or Vice-chair of the County Durham Economic Partnership to attend a meeting of the committee to discuss their priorities, current activity, and future plans. The Vice-chair of the partnership, Sue Parkinson attended the meeting of the committee held in June where the discussion centred around the role of the partnership in supporting the development and delivery of the County Durham Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The committee will receive at its December an update in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan and the first round of projects.

b) County Durham Employment Land and Strategic Sites

As part of the 2021/22 work programme the committee had received an overview of key strategic employment sites in the county, and it was felt by members when determining the committees work programme for 2022/23 that the committee should receive a further report detailing progress on delivery of these sites and the availability of commercial and industrial land and premises across the county together with detail of their contribution to job creation. At the October meeting of the committee members were made aware of: the further development of the key strategic employment sites including the number and type of jobs on those sites, other employment locations within the county; the potential for other strategic employment sites; how we attract investment and barriers to investment; availability of land and premises to attract new businesses; how we promote land and premises and how businesses identify available land and premises. The committee will continue to monitor the development of the key strategic employment sites within the county.

c) Inclusive Economic Strategy

The committee has provided comments in relation to feedback from, 'Our Big Econ-versation' the major consultation event launched at the end of January to shape the draft Inclusive Economic Strategy. At its meeting on the 7 November members received the emerging Inclusive Economic Strategy for consideration. The comments made by members at that meeting were formulated into an overview and scrutiny response which was shared with the Service Grouping to help shape the final strategy. In addition, it is proposed that the committee will consider the Delivery Plan for the strategy once it is developed, possibly within the next six months.

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

Chair Councillor Bev Coult  
Vice Chair Councillor Jonathan Elmer

a) Waste Management

The committee considered an update of resources and Waste Management Services in County Durham which discussed the waste tonnages, levels of recycling and contamination and what measures the Council has in place to reduce the current levels of contaminated waste. Members also received information updating them on the Tees Valley Energy from waste project and information on the Environment Act and Resource and Waste Strategy. Members in attendance at the committee had a greater understanding of the challenges faced by the Council, particularly in relation to reducing the level of contamination as they had taken the opportunity to visit Thornley Waste Transfer Station, Biffa Material Recycling Facilities and Suez Energy from Waste plant.

b) Fuel Poverty

The committee received information highlighting the level of fuel poverty in County Durham and the work undertaken by the Council to promote and deliver various programmes to tackle fuel poverty which had resulted in County Durham having the fifth highest take up nationally of fuel poverty grants.

c) DCC Allotment Management and update on recommendations

Members received information on DCC's current allotment management arrangements and a progress update on recommendations made by the committee following their review of DCC 's Management of Allotments undertaken in 2019. The committee made several recommendations that suggested a rental review; reconsideration of the allocation process to take co workers into account; a review of the allotment portfolio; establishment of area allotment associations; provision of smaller sized plots; offer management of allotments to Town and Parish Councils where there is an appetite to do this; allotments to be managed by one DCC service team and the removal of large animals over a period of time.

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

Chair Councillor Joyce Charlton  
Vice Chair Councillor Phil Heaviside

a) Anti-Social Behaviour Draft Strategy

The committee held a focussed briefing session with officers on anti-social behaviour prior to considering the strategy at a special meeting in October as part of the consultation process. At the special

meeting, members welcomed the strategy and were supportive of the proposal to have a single front door approach for reporting anti-social behaviour. They highlighted good communication was key to the success of the strategy. Members stressed the knowledge they have of issues in their local communities and the role they can have as partners within the strategy. The important role of Neighbourhood Wardens in responding to incidents and dealing with issues was discussed. Landlords, the selective licensing scheme and issues with empty properties, both residential and commercial were commented upon. The committee's observations on the draft strategy were reported back to the SDP.

b) Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) and Safer Streets 4 Programme

The Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy was launched in July 2021 and the SWaN fund was established to fund initiatives connected to the strategy. At its meeting in September 2022, SSC OSC received a presentation on the Durham City Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) initiative and the outcome of the fourth round of Safer Streets funding programme. Members were pleased to receive the positive update and learn about the valuable services the SWaN Hub provided to those looking for support in Durham City. Members referred to the sustainability of the scheme and it was hoped longer term funding would be secured.

c) Briefing Sessions

In advance of detailed reports presented to the committee, members requested to hold focused briefing sessions with officers to provide an overview on issues including arson suppression and anti-social behaviour. Held via Microsoft Teams, the sessions have been of value to members and enabled a greater insight to these subject areas.

## **Background Papers**

Reports and minutes (June – November 2022)

- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
- Adults, Wellbeing and Health OSC
- Children and Young People OSC
- Economy and Enterprise OSC

- Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC
- Safer and Stronger Communities OSC

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**Contact:** Helen Lynch

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities published in May 2019 stated that to maintain the interest of full council in the work of the scrutiny committee, authorities should take steps to ensure full council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.

The council must have regard to the statutory guidance when determining its scrutiny arrangements and have good reasons for not following any aspects of the guidance

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

The statutory role of some scrutiny committees means that consultations are regularly considered.

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

All scrutiny reviews are subject to an equality impact assessment

### **Climate Change**

The council has declared a climate emergency and scrutiny committees such as the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC receive regular reports on the commitment to contribute to reducing the causes of climate change and the implications of responding to and adapting to the inevitable impacts of climate change. Any climate change implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

Any crime and disorder implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

**Risk**

None

**Procurement**

None

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**02 December 2022**



**Resources – Quarter 2 September 2022:  
Forecast of Revenue and Capital  
Outturn 2022/23**

**Ordinary Decision**

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**Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide details of the updated forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of September 2022.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The quarter 2 forecast position shows that the service is forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.324 million against a revised budget of £25.961 million.
- 3 The Resources Cash Limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2023 is forecast to be circa £0.864 million. Other earmarked reserves under the direct control of RMT are forecast to total £15.476 million at 31 March 2023.
- 4 The revised Resources capital budget is £10.546 million for 2022/23, with a total expenditure to 31 August 2022 of £1.443 million (13.68%).

**Recommendation(s)**

- 5 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is recommended to note the forecast of outturn position.

## Background

6 County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2022/23 at its meeting on 23 February 2022. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, corporate savings/adjustments, budget transfers between service groupings and budget profiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major budget areas maintained by the Resources service grouping:

- Revenue Budget - £25.961 million (original £25.249 million)
- Capital Programme - £10.546 million (original £11.977 million)

7 The original Resources General Fund budget has been revised in year to incorporate a number of budget adjustments as follows:

**£,000s**

### Quarter 1:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Transfer to NCC – Business Support                     | (22)  |
| Transfer to REG – Business Support                     | (176) |
| Transfer to REG – Health & Safety                      | (795) |
| Transfer to REG – County Records                       | (258) |
| Transfer from CYPS to HR                               | 71    |
| Transfer to Contingencies                              | 26    |
| 2021/22 Pay award                                      | 977   |
| Transfer to Corporate Budget                           | (8)   |
| Transfer from Business Support Reserve                 | 24    |
| Transfer from Procurement Development Reserve          | 77    |
| Transfer from Human Resources Reserve                  | 95    |
| Transfer from ICT Reserve                              | 19    |
| Transfer from Legal Expenses Reserve                   | 27    |
| Transfer from Legal Services Reserve                   | 34    |
| Transfer from Digital Workforce Transformation Reserve | 30    |
| Transfer from Revenue & Benefits Reserve               | 193   |
| Transfer from Internal Audit & Corporate Fraud Reserve | 67    |
| Transfer to Transformation Programme Reserve           | (90)  |
| Transfer from Resources Cash Limit Reserve             | 292   |

### Quarter 2:

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Transfer from REG – Business Support | 38 |
| Transfer from AHW – Business Support | 49 |
| Transfer from AHW – Strategy         | 43 |

**TOTAL** **713**

The revised General Fund Budget for Resources is £25.961 million

- 8 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2022/23 and show:
- The approved annual budget;
  - The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
  - The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
  - For the Resources revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.
- 9 The service is forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.324 million (1.25%) against a revised budget of £25.961 million. This compares to the previous forecast, reported at quarter 1 of a cash limit overspend of £0.139 million and is therefore an increase in the underspend of £0.463 million across the two forecasts.
- 10 The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

## Type of Expenditure (Subjective Analysis) (£000's)

|                                      | 2022/23<br>Budget<br>£000 | YTD<br>Actual<br>£000 | QTR2<br>Forecast<br>of outturn<br>£000 | Variance<br>(under) /<br>over<br>spend<br>£000 | Items<br>Outside<br>Cash<br>Limit<br>£000 | Reserves<br>£000 | Cash<br>Limit<br>Variance<br>£000 | Memo<br>Item: Q1<br>Cash<br>Limit<br>Variance<br>£000 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Employees                            | 68,409                    | 31,054                | 69,279                                 | 870  | (1,662)                                   | -                | (792)                             | (233)   |
| Premises                             | 2,049                     | 381                   | 1,975                                  | (74)   | 55  | -                | (19)                              | (20)  |
| Transport                            | 729                       | 308                   | 585                                    | (144)  | -   | -                | (144)                             | (139)   |
| Supplies and<br>Services             | 17,012                    | 11,214                | 17,169                                 | 157  | -   | -                | 157                               | (435)   |
| Third Party<br>Payments              | 52                        | 4,474                 | 44                                     | (8)  | -   | -                | (8)                               | (8)   |
| Transfer<br>Payments                 | -                         | 11                    | -                                      | -  | -   | -                | -                                 | -   |
| Central<br>Support and<br>Capital    | 27,031                    | 271                   | 27,063                                 | 32   | (62)                                      | (937)            | (968)                             | 80  |
| <b>Gross<br/>Expenditure</b>         | <b>115,282</b>            | <b>47,713</b>         | <b>116,115</b>                         | <b>769</b>                                     | <b>(1,587)</b>                            | <b>(937)</b>     | <b>(1,774)</b>                    | <b>(755)</b>  |
| Income                               | (89,923)                  | (13,902)              | (88,473)                               | 1,450  | -   | -                | 1,450                             | 894   |
| <b>Net<br/>Expenditure</b>           | <b>25,359</b>             | <b>33,811</b>         | <b>27,642</b>                          | <b>2,219</b>                                   | <b>(1,587)</b>                            | <b>(937)</b>     | <b>(324)</b>                      | <b>139</b>  |
| HB Transfer<br>payments              | 104,245                   | 46,997                | 104,245                                | -  | -   | -                | -                                 | -   |
| HB Central<br>Support and<br>Capital | 300                       | -                     | 300                                    | -  | -   | -                | -                                 | -   |
| HB Income                            | (103,943)                 | (907)                 | (103,943)                              | -  | -   | -                | -                                 | -   |
| <b>HB Net<br/>Expenditure</b>        | <b>602</b>                | <b>46,090</b>         | <b>602</b>                             | <b>-</b>                                       | <b>-</b>                                  | <b>-</b>         | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>  |
| <b>Total Net Exp</b>                 | <b>25,961</b>             | <b>79,901</b>         | <b>28,243</b>                          | <b>2,282</b>                                   | <b>(1,669)</b>                            | <b>(937)</b>     | <b>(324)</b>                      | <b>139</b>  |

## By Head of Service (£000's)

|   | 2022/23<br>Budget<br>£000 | YTD<br>Actual<br>£000 | QTR2<br>Forecast<br>of<br>outturn<br>£000 | Variance<br>(under) /<br>over<br>spend<br>£000 | Items<br>Outside<br>Cash<br>Limit<br>£000 | Reserves<br>£000 | Cash<br>Limit<br>Variance<br>£000 | Memo<br>Item: Q1<br>Cash<br>Limit<br>Variance<br>£000 |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Central Establishment Recharges         | (24,184)                  | -                     | (24,184)                                  | -  | -   | -                | -                                 | -   |
| Corporate Finance & Commercial Services | 4,079                     | 2,149                 | 4,006                                     | (73)   | (109)                                     | -                | (182)                             | (86)  |
| Internal Audit and Insurance            | 1,172                     | 482                   | 1,148                                     | (24)   | (30)                                      | -                | (54)                              | (42)  |
| Legal & Democratic Services             | 8,593                     | 4,035                 | 8,639                                     | 46   | (135)                                     | -                | (89)                              | (136)   |
| Service Management / Central Charges    | (10,497)                  | 124                   | (10,715)                                  | (218)  | 218                                       |                  | -                                 | -   |
| HR & Employee Services                  | 4,972                     | 2,041                 | 5,251                                     | 279  | (133)                                     |                  | 146                               | 141   |
| Transactional & Customer Services       | 8,556                     | 9,405                 | 8,636                                     | 80   | (473)                                     |                  | (392)                             | (175)   |
| Digital Services                        | 13,940                    | 6,868                 | 14,687                                    | 746  | (269)                                     | (136)            | 341                               | 488   |
| Corporate Policy Planning & Performance | 2,263                     | 997                   | 2,288                                     | 25   | (85)                                      | (33)             | (93)                              | (48)  |
| Procurement Sales & Business Services   | 16,368                    | 7,277                 | 17,767                                    | 1,399  | (632)                                     | (768)            | (1)                               | (3)   |
| Pension                                 | 97                        | 434                   | 118                                       | 21   | (21)                                      |                  | -                                 | -   |
| <b>Net Expenditure Excluding HB</b>     | <b>25,359</b>             | <b>33,812</b>         | <b>27,641</b>                             | <b>2,282</b>                                   | <b>(1,669)</b>                            | <b>(937)</b>     | <b>(324)</b>                      | <b>139</b>  |
| Housing Benefit                         | 602                       | 46,089                | 602                                       | -  | -   |                  | -                                 | -   |
| <b>Net Expenditure</b>                  | <b>25,961</b>             | <b>79,901</b>         | <b>28,243</b>                             | <b>2,282</b>                                   | <b>(1,669)</b>                            | <b>(937)</b>     | <b>(324)</b>                      | <b>139</b>  |

- 11 The table below provides a brief commentary on the variances against the revised budget analysed by Head of Service. The table identifies variances in the core budget only and excludes items outside of the cash limit (e.g. redundancy costs) and technical accounting adjustments (e.g. capital charges):

| Head of Service                         | Service Area                       | Description  | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 |
|---|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Central Establishment Recharges         | Central Establishment Recharges    | No material variances.   | 0                                  | 0                                  |
| Corporate Finance & Commercial Services | Corporate Management               | £1,000 under budget on supplies & services   | (1)                                | (182)                              |
|   | Management Priority                | £26,000 under budget on employees.   | (26)                               |                                    |
|   | Financial Systems                  | £49,000 over budget on employees.  | 49                                 |                                    |
|   | Financial Management               | £97,000 under budget on employees.<br>£42,000 over budget on supplies & services.<br>£54,000 overachieved income.                                    | (109)                              |                                    |
|   | Strategic Finance                  | £95,000 under budget on employees.   | (95)                               |                                    |
| Procurement Sales & Business Services   | Procurement                        | £1,000 overachieved income.  | (1)                                | (1)                                |
| Pensions                                | Pension                            | No material variance.  | 0                                  | 0                                  |
| HR & Employee Services                  | Advice & Guidance                  | £6,000 over budget on employees<br>£10,000 under budget on transport<br>£17,000 over budget on supplies & services.<br>£35,000 under achieved income | 48                                 | 146                                |
|   | Head of People & Talent Management | £14,000 over budget on employees.  | 14                                 |                                    |
|   | Payroll & Employee Services        | £17,000 over budget on employees.<br>£4,000 under budget on transport<br>£77,000 under achieved income.  | 90                                 |                                    |
|   | Occupational Health                | £6,000 under budget on supplies & services.  | (6)                                |                                    |

| Head of Service                   | Service Area       | Description   | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Transactional & Customer Services | Customer Relations | £134,000 under budget on employees.<br>£10,000 under budget on transport<br>£23,000 under budget on supplies & services   | (167)                              | <b>(392)</b>                       |
|                                   | Service Management | £23,000 under budget on employees.<br>£14,000 over budget on supplies & services  | (9)                                |                                    |
|                                   | Revenue & Benefits | £191,000 under budget on employees.<br>£17,000 under budget on supplies & services.<br>£8,000 overachieved on income  | (216)                              |                                    |
| Digital Services                  | Digital Services   | £192,000 underbudget on employees.<br>£34,000 underbudget on premises.<br>£50,000 underbudget on transport.<br>£192,000 underbudget on supplies & services<br>£136,000 underbudget on central<br>£10,000 overbudget on direct revenue funding for capital schemes.<br>£935,000 under achieved income. | 341                                | <b>341</b>                         |
| Internal Audit and Risk           | Insurance and Risk | £3,000 underbudget on employees.  | (3)                                | <b>(54)</b>                        |
|                                   | Internal Audit     | £38,000 underbudget on employees<br>£2,000 overbudget on supplies & services<br>£2,000 overachieved income.   | (38)                               |                                    |
|                                   | Corporate Fraud    | £16,000 underbudget on employees.<br>£12,000 underbudget on supplies & services<br>£15,000 underachieved income   | (13)                               |                                    |

| Head of Service                         | Service Area                  | Description   | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 | Year End (under) / overbudget £000 |
|---|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Legal and Democratic Services           | Corporate and Democratic Core | £48,000 underbudget on employees.<br>£17,000 overbudget on supplies & services<br>£29,000 overachieved income.  | (60)                               | (89)                               |
|   | Legal and Other Services      | £285,000 underbudget on employees.<br>£16,000 underbudget on premises.<br>£8,000 underbudget on transport<br>£187,000 overbudget on supplies & services.<br>£93,000 under achieved income.  | (29)                               |                                    |
| Corporate Policy Planning & Performance | Head of Transformation        | £1,000 underbudget on employees   | (1)                                | (93)                               |
|   | Equality & Strategy           | £42,000 overbudget on employees.<br>£2,000 underbudget on transport<br>£2,000 underbudget on supplies & services<br>£35,000 overachieved on income (relating to the overspend on employees) | 3                                  |                                    |
|   | Research & Intelligence       | £26,000 overbudget on employees.  | 26                                 |                                    |
|   | Transformation                | £116,000 underbudget on employees.<br>£5,000 underbudget on supplies & services   | (121)                              |                                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            |                               |   |                                    | <b>(324)</b>                       |

13 In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit.

### Capital Programme

14 The original Resources capital programme was £11.977 million, and this has been revised for additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget profiling. The revised budget now stands at £10.546 million.

15 Summary financial performance to the end of August 2022 is shown below:

|   | <b>Original Annual Budget 2022/23</b> | <b>Revised Annual Budget 2022/23</b> | <b>Actual Spend 31/08/2022</b> | <b>Remaining Budget 2022/23</b> |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|   | <b>£000</b>                           | <b>£000</b>                          | <b>£000</b>                    | <b>£000</b>                     |
| Digital Services  | 10,561                                | 9,130                                | 1,320                          | 7,810                           |
| Corporate Finance & Commercial Services and Transactional & Customer Services | 16                                    | 16                                   | 6                              | 10                              |
| Corporate Policy, Planning & Performance                                      | 1,400                                 | 1,400                                | 117                            | 1,283                           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>11,977</b>                         | <b>10,546</b>                        | <b>1,443</b>                   | <b>9,103</b>                    |

16 The revised Resources capital budget is £10.546 million with a total expenditure to 31 August 2022 of £1.443 million (13.68%). A full breakdown of schemes and actual expenditure to 31 August 2022 is given in Appendix 2.

17 At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and at that time service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

### **Background papers**

- County Council Report (23 February 2022) – Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23.
- Cabinet Report (14 September 2022) – Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 30 June 2022.
- Cabinet Report (16 November 2022) – Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 30 September 2022.

### **Other useful documents**

- Previous Cabinet reports / None

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The consideration of regular budgetary control reports is a key component of the Council's Corporate and Financial Governance arrangements. This report shows the forecast spend against budgets agreed by the Council in February 2022 in relation to the 2022/23 financial year.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital outturn position.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable.

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

The consideration of regular budgetary control reports is a key component of the Councils Corporate and Financial Governance arrangements.

### **Procurement**

The outcome of procurement activity is factored into the financial projections included in the report.

## Appendix 2 Resources Capital Programme 2022/23 – Detailed Monitoring Statement to 31 August 2022

| Resources  | Revised Annual Budget | Actual Spend | Remaining Budget |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|
|  | 2022/23               | 31-Aug-22    | 2022/23          |
|  | £000                  | £000         | £000             |
| Applications and Development                       | 549                   | -            | 549              |
| Design and Print                                   | 2                     | -            | 2                |
| Head of Service                                    | 2                     | -            | 2                |
| Technical Services                                 | 5,007                 | 1,191        | 3,816            |
| Customer Relations                                 | 137                   | -            | 137              |
| Digital Durham                                     | 1,673                 | 129          | 1,544            |
| Digital Engagement                                 | 1,760                 | -            | 1,760            |
| <b>ICT Services Include Design and Print Total</b> | <b>9,130</b>          | <b>1,320</b> | <b>7,810</b>     |
| Migration of HR/Payroll Functionality              | 16                    | 6            | 10               |
| Policy Planning & Performance                      | 1,400                 | 117          | 1,283            |
| <b>Financing Resources Total</b>                   | <b>1,416</b>          | <b>123</b>   | <b>1,293</b>     |
| <b>RES Total</b>                                   | <b>10,546</b>         | <b>1,443</b> | <b>9,103</b>     |

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**2 December 2022**

**County Durham Partnership Update**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

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

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

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

**Electoral division affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Executive summary**

- 2 The **County Durham Partnership** event this year will take place on 30 November and will focus on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges.
- 3 **£1.4 million** has been allocated to **Fun and Food projects** for Summer 2022, with **£434,753.39** allocated to community Fun and Food projects through AAPs, with **90** projects in total.
- 4 Durham County Council is working with voluntary sector partners and the Poverty Action Steering Group to develop a **Warm Spaces Network**, which builds on the actions already being taken by the voluntary sector to provide a place for local people to visit to stay warm, socialise and to get connected to other useful services.
- 5 Consultation with key partners and members of the public on the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was undertaken at various stages over recent months. The IES will be a key document to support the County's economic growth in the future. At the heart of the strategy is a

simple ambition: more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. To achieve this, the IES sets a framework for an inclusive economy, focusing on People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet.

- 6 The Employability, Upskilling and Discretionary Project through Bishop Auckland College has been hugely successful. A number of AAPs have provided grants to support this project. It is aimed at engaging with clients who are most distanced from the labour market and who experience significant barriers to accessing work, training and/or volunteering. Previous outcomes clearly demonstrated the need for funding, with grants payable to applicants who can demonstrate that there are jobs available upon completion of the training or that the skills and support gained will enable applications to be made into the essential skills sector.
- 7 Our AAPs continue to focus on how poverty affects our residents in rural communities and provide support. Properties that aren't connected to the gas grid network and reliance on fuels such as oil or Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), which is more expensive than electric and gas from the network. means residents have to pay more for heating costs. Alongside this, the nature of rural housing is that it is often older and not as well insulated.
- 8 In addition, residents in rural communities tend to pay more for essential goods in local shops rather than less accessible cheaper supermarkets.

### **Recommendation**

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

## Background

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

## County Durham Partnership board and forum

- 11 The **County Durham Partnership** Board met in May and July.
- 12 In May, the County Durham Partnership received a presentation as part of the consultation process for the Poverty Action Strategy where it was concluded that Partnership working is key to tackle this area of work.
- 13 Both the May and July meetings focused on the County's response to the various Humanitarian Support programmes currently running nationally.
- 14 Meetings continue to have regular updates from Thematic Chairs to focus on key areas of their work for the County Durham Partnership. The May meeting focused on the work of the Environment and Climate Change Partnership and the wider promotion of the new Climate Change Website <https://climatecountydurham.org.uk/>
- 15 Governed by the Safe Durham Partnership, the July meeting gave an overview of the Publicly Accessible Locations/Zones pilot across the North East and the partnership approach to make the public safer ahead of the impending Protect Duty in 2023 on the back of the Manchester Arena Inquiry.
- 16 In June 2022, **the County Durham Partnership Forum** took place virtually. The focus of the meeting was two workshops relating to:
- (a) the review of Community Engagement and how stakeholders could best be involved in the review; identifying strengths and areas of good practice in AAPs as they currently operate; and identifying areas of further development to be explored through the review;
  - (b) Sharing the position regarding Levelling up Fund bids and engagement with stakeholder prior to the bid submission in July 2022.

## County Durham Partnership event

- 17 The **County Durham Partnership** event this year will take place on 30 November and will focus on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges.
- 18 In the true spirit of Partnership working, this event is hosted alongside Advice in County Durham (AiCD) Partnership to facilitate a joint approach around how collectively we can meet those needs and focus on the cost-of-living pressures across the wider County Durham Partnership.

## Review of Community Engagement

- 19 An independent review is taking place to review the County Council's community engagement processes. The review focuses on assessing current structures and governance with a view to ensuring the Council has a community engagement mechanism that provides support for our communities in line with the Council's future vision and priorities and also reflects the needs of the wider County Durham Partnership.
- 20 ERS, the consultants commissioned to undertake the review, have been carrying out an extensive range of interviews and visioning events to aid development of the proposals. The outcome of the review is anticipated to be complete by the end of the current calendar year.

## Fun and Food programme

- 21 **£1.4 million** has been allocated to **Fun and Food projects** for Summer 2022.
- 22 The following activities and opportunities for Children, Young People and Families were available throughout the summer with Durham's Fun and Food programme.
  - (a) activities at 38 libraries;
  - (b) free swimming at all DCC leisure centres;
  - (c) 19 commissioned projects through our commissioning portal;
  - (d) 13 projects through schools (the total number of schools is greater as some school projects cover multiple school sites);



Children enjoying a Fun and Food craft session

- (e) 7 community arts projects each delivering across multiple community venues;
  - (f) 14 family centres offering Fun and Food activities;
  - (g) community groups have also been able to take up opportunities for trips to a range of venues including Bowes Museum; Raby Castle; Hamsterley Forest and the Centre for Life.
- 23 In addition, projects have taken place at the Aycliffe secure unit; two Gypsy, Roma, Traveller projects and a Special Educational Needs and Disability offer through short breaks and Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).
- 24 **£434,753.39** was allocated to community Fun and Food projects through AAPs, with **90** projects in total.
- 25 **Spennymoor AAP** have provided Fun and Food funding to Trinity Methodist Church to operate the “Messy Summer” during the summer holidays.
- 26 Support was provided for approximately 40 families who were encouraged to work together and join in messy sensory activities that are fun, encourage healthy eating and sensory activity. A range of activities were undertaken which include:
- (a) **Messy Planting** – families involved in planting up salads and greens (or similar), with guidance from an instructor. Families take the pots home with written instructions on how to care for the plants. Recipe ideas are also provided;
  - (b) **Messy Movement** - Families involved in a fun and active session, involving messy cooperative games, dance and movement. Using the parachute, ball pool balls, balloons, bubbles and streamers, families have active fun making lots of colourful mess!;
  - (c) **Messy mixing** - Families involved in mixing up some healthy recipes, for example, colourful couscous, with guidance from an instructor. Families are able to take home their creations to share with their family. During the session, families were provided with a drink and healthy snack and received a recipe box and step by step instructions to take home, allowing them to make a tasty and healthy meal for the whole family.

- 27 Getting children ready for going back to school can be very expensive and another drain on family finances. Families that attended the face-to-face session were invited to request a back-to-school pack for their school age children. This included basic uniform items, such as a polo shirt, t-shirt, socks, a water bottle and a filled pencil case, along with items to support wellbeing, all packed into a bag that can be used as a school bag or for PE kit. Children attending nursery will receive a mini version of the back-to-school pack.

### **County Durham Warm Spaces Network**

- 28 DCC is working with voluntary sector partners and the Poverty Action Steering Group to develop a **Warm Spaces Network**, which builds on the actions already being taken by the voluntary sector to provide a place for local people to visit to stay warm, socialise and to get connected to other useful services. In some cases, there will also be access to refreshments and/or wi-fi.
- 29 Financial support is being provided by Durham County Council and the County Durham Community Foundation. Through the Foundation, grants of up to £1,000 are available to community groups to help them offer a Warm Space. This could be something set up specifically to help people this winter or to support and widen an existing service that is offered. For example, the grant could cover the costs of providing a designated space with chairs and hot drinks, open at regular times each week.
- 30 The fund will also consider applications from local groups running activities for a particular community, such as a toddler group. The grants could be used for the following purposes:
- (a) utility bills, including gas and electricity;
  - (b) staff time;
  - (c) volunteer expenses;
  - (d) venue hire;
  - (e) equipment or furniture (for example extra chairs) for the warm space;
  - (f) the provision of drinks and food for those accessing the warm space.

- 31 Our Warm Spaces are free, and people can stay for as long, or for as short a period as you wish (within their opening hours). A depository of warm spaces will be held on Locate. Further information is available online [www.durham.gov.uk/warmspaces](http://www.durham.gov.uk/warmspaces).

## Safeguarding

- 32 The **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP)** continued working towards achieving its Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2023. The DSAP has continued to regularly share and promote headline messages related to the safeguarding adults agenda. It has maintained its updates of the local picture to statutory and relevant partners, and wider stakeholders and continued to seek related assurance. In recent months the DSAP has shared key briefings with all partners which include (not exhaustive):



- (a) Practitioner Briefing related to 'closed cultures';
- (b) continuation of a suite of 'what good looks like' related to Mental Capacity Act (2005) Assessments;
- (c) DSAP newsletters and e-bulletins (including key updates to keep people safe from fraud and scams for example, Coronavirus vaccine related scams). There were over 39,000 visits to the DSAP website between April 2021 and March 2022.

- 33 The DSAP continued to extend its online training offer, it issued over 800 Raising a Concern Workbook certificates to professionals, staff and volunteers by the end of March 2022. Between April and June 2022, the DSAP had issued 13 themed e-bulletins with updates including:

- (a) Anti-slavery Network information and resources;
- (b) Hoarding Awareness Week;
- (c) 7 dedicated self-neglect briefings developed by regional Safeguarding Adults Review Champions;
- (d) Homelessness Briefings;

- (e) Trauma and Trauma Informed Practice.
- 34 The DSAP continues to seek assurance from statutory and relevant partners, through its working groups and Board activity. In recent months assurance updates included:
- (a) Durham County Council, Adult and Health Services – Principal Social Worker;
  - (b) Durham County Council – Channel Panel Chair;
  - (c) Healthwatch County Durham – Annual Report 2021-2022;
  - (d) Durham County Council, Safeguarding and Access Service - Mental Capacity Amendment Act (2019) and Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) – LPS Implementation Project/MCA Lead Officer;
  - (e) Durham County Council, Housing Solutions (Safeguarding and Homelessness focus).
- 35 Lesley Jeavons, DSAP Independent Chair, has met with Senior Officers as well as Operational Safeguarding Leads across the partner organisations as part of her continued work programme. The Independent Chair has also worked alongside colleagues of the Regional and National Network of Safeguarding Adult Board Chairs (NNSABC) as required, and in line with their related programmes of activity. The Independent Chair continues to share key and relevant updates to the Chief Officer Safeguarding Group.
- 36 The DSAP undertook a range of consultative exercises in Summer 2022, which included:
- (a) review of its government arrangements;
  - (b) revised multi-agency Information Sharing Agreement;
  - (c) updated Safeguarding Adults Review Protocol (in line with national updates);
  - (d) new policy for managing professional differences of opinion;
  - (e) new protocol for working with adults reluctant to engage.
- 37 The week commencing 21 November will be National Safeguarding Adults Week and the DSAP will host its fifth safeguarding week (and its third virtually) during this week.

- 38 The event will be supported by the Safe Durham Partnership and this year's event will be focussed upon the following key themes:
- (a) Safeguarding in everyday life;
  - (b) Self-Neglect;
  - (c) Creating Safer Organisational Cultures;
  - (d) Elder Abuse;
  - (e) Domestic Abuse, Digital Safeguarding in a Tech-Society;
  - (f) Prevent (countering terrorism).
- 39 A wide range of learning opportunities will be made available during the week through a range of dedicated workshops which include NHS Lunch and Learn; Predatory Marriage (learning from real life examples) and Safeguarding Adults in Care Homes, facilitated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The week will close with the start of 16 Days of Action to end domestic abuse.
- 40 **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)** partners requested a review to consider the options for a future learning model for the partnership.
- 41 A number of frameworks used by other partnerships were considered and it was agreed that the DSCP move towards a new meeting structure. Changes towards this new model will be progressed into 2022/2023 and the DSCP aims to provide analysis of the impact of this new direction in next year's Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) annual report.
- 42 The development of the improvement areas will be progressed and up until the new arrangements are in place, the partnership will continue with the improvement areas below:
- (a) Management Understanding and Decision Making;
  - (b) Voice and Lived Experience of the Child;
  - (c) Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm;
  - (d) Child Sexual Abuse.

- 43 Other priorities for the partnership include:
- (a) continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies;
  - (b) improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact;
  - (c) progress and launch the DSCP website;
  - (d) maintain the Child Protection procedure updates;
  - (e) progress the work of the Child Death Overview panel.
- 44 The redesign of the new DSCP website has come from the learning from audits, reviews and practitioner surveys with the intention of focussing on realising the following benefits:
- (a) creating an effective communication channel within the Partnership;
  - (b) improving the accessibility of safeguarding tools and resources to practitioners;
  - (c) improve efficiency to partnership administration of training;
  - (d) present an effective public facing representation of the Partnership and its work.

### **Humanitarian Support**

- 45 As a result of recent significant developments in the migration and asylum landscape globally and nationally, the county is now engaged in six different programmes delivering refugee, migration and asylum support, some developed at speed in response to a global emergency. A separate report has been provided to Cabinet on the County's response to these issues.

## Vision 2035: More and better jobs

46 In December 2021, Cabinet agreed to the process for developing a new Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES). The Big Econ-versation was undertaken between 31 January and 22 April 2022 with over 86 events held and attended by over 1500 people and a total of 1455 surveys were completed including 918 residents, 94 businesses and 443 young people.



47 Using information from the Economic Review, the Economic Statement and the Big Econ-versation an IES has been drafted. The draft was circulated in June to key partners and members of the public who had expressed an interest in continuing their involvement in the consultation process. A further draft went out for public and partner comments during September 2022. The IES will be a key document to support the County's economic growth in the future.

48 At the heart of the strategy is an ambition for 'more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy'. To achieve this the IES sets a framework for an inclusive economy, focusing on People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet. The IES will be presented to an upcoming Cabinet meeting.

49 In addition to the IES, during the summer, bids were submitted for £98.94 million from Round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up fund towards five Levelling Up schemes with a total expenditure of £131.17 million. This follows a successful bid which saw the Bishop Auckland Parliamentary Constituency awarded £20 million from Round 1 of the same fund in 2021. County Durham has been identified as one of the areas of greatest need of levelling up in the UK and has been classified as a Tier 1 area by Central Government. Round 2 announcements for successful bids are anticipated as part of the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.

50 The money will be used to promote regeneration and economic growth in the County, providing support and intervention to build a better economy and allow residents to benefit from new and better jobs.

51 However, there are a number of critical factors influencing financial insecurity that have been magnified in recent times: including the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic; rising living costs caused by inflationary pressures, in particular in relation to food, fuel,

energy and utility costs; and the economic uncertainty arising from the conflict in Ukraine which is compounding the squeeze on household budgets.

- 52 For those individuals that are affected by this, **AAPs** recognised that in a lot of circumstances this would require re-training, learning new skills and developing new career paths to support people into the jobs market.
- 53 Grants from **East Durham Rural Corridor, 4Together, Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH), GAMP and Spennymoor AAPs** (which were match funded by Livin) set up a discretionary fund to be delivered through their Livin Futures Employability team, with grants payable to applicants who can demonstrate that there are jobs available upon completion of the training or that the skills and support gained will enable applications to be made into the essential skills sector. Examples of areas that the grant supports are:
- (a) training courses and qualifications;
  - (b) clothes for interview;
  - (c) travelling expenses to interviews;
  - (d) protective clothing (PPE);
  - (e) tools for the job;
  - (f) DBS checks.
- 54 The maximum grant given was £400 per person with the intended outcomes to support tenants back into employment, enable them to access the necessary support needed to secure employment to offer them access to further support through internal and external partner services, including financial wellbeing, links to mental health, social isolation and domestic abuse.
- 55 Monitoring information highlights that 77 applicants have been supported across the five AAP areas. Of the clients from the **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP**:
- (a) 13 went into employment (72% against clients supported);
  - (b) 1 into self-employment;
  - (c) 1 into further education;
  - (d) 2 still working with Livin Futures;

- (e) 1 disengaged.
- 56 There were various items funded including data protection fees and business insurance for a person going self-employed, bus passes and lunch for AMAZON course, work boots, jacket, driving lessons and theory, recognised qualifications in health and safety, safety equipment, laptop and interview clothes, bike, tools and uniform costs.
- 57 **BASH AAP** has supported the Employability, Upskilling & Discretionary Project through Bishop Auckland College which has been hugely successful. It aimed at engaging with clients who were most distanced from the labour market and who experienced significant barriers to accessing work, training and/or volunteering.
- 58 Through the Employability Fund, established by the project, the specialist training provided has been linked to employment opportunities, and in many instances, training had been to address legislation requirements for specific sectors, for example Health and Safety and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme training and licences, that had to be secured by the clients before being considered for employment. The range of courses was diverse, and training included: HGV, Forklift Truck, Health and Safety and First Aid, and the Discretionary Fund also supported with travel costs, uniform and beauty pack, removing the barriers for accessing training.
- 59 The project supported 23 people into employment, with many of the clients who have accessed training and secured employment having low self-esteem, and in many instances, lack academic potential. Accessing training that meets their ability/needs, has had a positive impact not only in improving their employability prospects but having a positive impact on their self-esteem.
- 60 In addition, learning/training undertaken has the potential to energise the individual, their family and their community, enabling and empowering them to change their lives, leading to greater wealth, social and economic well-being and a healthier lifestyle.

## Case Study

KP, secured funding towards the cost of undertaking HGV Class 1 training. He was already employed but wanted a career change, that would allow him to be more financially stable. He has successfully completed the training and has gained new employment with a Haulage Firm in Redcar.

Feedback from KP: "The funding towards this course has given me a huge advantage, that without, I would have been unable to complete. Alongside the job opportunities that I would have gone without. I am very grateful for the opportunity to take this course and develop my skills further, which has widened my skill set and given me the opportunity to develop my career into something I wanted to do. The funding has opened doors for me, which would otherwise been closed to me.

- 61 **Derwent Valley AAP** has funded Derwentside Trust to allow it to support people to become job ready. The employment readiness programme will enhance and build on individuals' confidence, interpersonal skills and team working skills, improve their ability to research and apply for work, help to develop their CVs and provide them with recognised qualifications that will support their personal development and enhance their opportunities for employment.
- 62 The programme is available for people of all ages who are unemployed and offers support, advice and guidance on careers that they wish to develop.
- 63 The Ladder Centre has secured **4 Together AAP** funding to expand and enhance their employability and benefit support project. The project aims to support residents across the AAP area to maximise their income during these challenging financial times. This may include supporting individuals to navigate the benefits system or offering support with securing training or employment. A large focus of the project is to increase the amount of accessible support available in the 4 Together Partnership area, by creating weekly drop-in sessions at community facilities and implementing outreach work and home visits. The project began in April 2022 and has



The Ladder Centre in Ferryhill

already supported over 150 individuals in 4 Together Partnership area. The demand for this project is expected to amplify due to increases in the cost of living.

- 64 **Weardale AAP** residents are particularly susceptible to the cost of living impacting on their lives due to the lack of shopping outlets and a majority of the heating systems being oil, which has seen a large price jump during recent months. The rural advice worker continues to support residents by identifying unclaimed benefits but has seen a marked increase in the debt case work. Most of the clients are in the 55+ age group and 80% have disclosed a disability related to a health issue. During the summer the advice worker received 31 new clients and plans with the AAP Board are in place to manage a further increase in caseload during the winter.
- 65 At the request of an informal cross-party elected members faith reference group, the Partnerships Team have re-launched the Breakfast Seminars which bring together elected members, officers, partners, and individuals from **faith and community groups** in roundtable conversations on challenging and timely topics. The first seminar explored how, following the pandemic, we can 'build back fairer' by working to create a more inclusive economy and better-connected communities in County Durham. Further seminars have explored responses to poverty and the challenges of facilitating change, and the housing crisis. The seminars provide a 'reflective breathing space' for open discussion which is welcomed by all who participate.
- 66 The **Economic Partnership** is now supporting the development and delivery of the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). In order that the investment plan for Durham is developed through broad engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, working closely with local partners, as required by the guidance, a specially enhanced **County Durham Economic Partnership+ (CDEP+)** has been created, which incorporates a wider membership than just the Economic Partnership, including local MP's, Parish Councils, other thematic partnership board chairs and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and reports findings to the Economic Partnership.
- 67 The **CDEP+** has been meeting regularly to support the work needed to gather local evidence of opportunities and challenges through the lens of the three investment priorities for UKSPF:
- (a) supporting local businesses;
  - (b) communities and place;
  - (c) people and skills.

68 Four task and finish groups, focussed on communities, business, innovation, and skills, were chaired by various members of CDEP+, and have been carrying out initial work on developing the local context, identifying past activity that has been effective, and collating information to form part of an evidence base and this has been presented to the **Economic Partnership**.

69 The guiding principles for the plan were:

- (a) ensuring flexibility;
- (b) maximising synergies;
- (c) addressing funding gaps;
- (d) de-risking annualised funding;
- (e) Net Zero.

With proposed activities divided into three areas as follows:

70 **Proposed Activities: Supporting Local Business:**

- (a) activities that increase productivity;
- (b) providing a broad business support offer;
- (c) strengthening the local business ecosystems.

71 **Proposed Activities: Communities and Place:**

- (a) improvements to town centres and high streets and stimulating vitality;
- (b) improvements to community and neighbourhood infrastructure - including community resilience, address digital exclusion, and green infrastructure;
- (c) promotion of the County - building on the County of Culture programme.

72 **Proposed Activities: People and Skills:**

- (a) providing a broad employment support offer;
- (b) supporting inclusivity through tailored support - particularly for young people and adults from vulnerable groups;
- (c) address barriers to work for those disengaged from the labour market.

73 This work dovetails to the Inclusive Economic Strategy.

## People live long and independent lives

74 From 1 July the Integrated Care Board (ICB) came into operation and CCGs were dissolved. Dave Gallagher, Executive Director of Place Based Delivery (Tees Valley & Central), North East & North Cumbria ICB, is the new representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

75 Cllr Hood, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services, became the new chair of the **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)** at the HWB meeting on 28 September and Michael Laing, Director of Integrated Community Services, County Durham Care Partnership, is the Vice Chair of the Board.

76 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** agreed the HWB Annual Report 2021-22 which outlines the work carried out which has been led and supported by the HWB during 2021-22 which has impacted positively on the strategic priorities detailed in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 (JHWS).

77 The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the health and wellbeing of our population and increased health inequalities. The partnership response during these challenging times was particularly strong and there are positive lessons, practices, and collaborative experiences to build on, enabling the HWB to confidently address some of the future challenges we face over the forthcoming year and beyond.

78 **Teesdale AAP** has supported the Phoenix Day Care to enable the organisation to rebuild strong foundations and maintain a good level of service. Phoenix was established in 2015, after the closure of day care services for adults in Barnard Castle and provides a bespoke adult day care service that is open for people aged 18 plus who have a learning disability, physical or sensory impairment, have mental health issues or the elderly and for people that are at risk of social isolation.



An activity at Phoenix Day Care

79 The service has enabled people to maintain long-term friendships and reduce the impact of social isolation and support families and carers. The 12 current service users and their families will benefit but they aim to offer additional places and raise their profile through marketing initiatives, networking and developing links to other referral organisations. They will also offer voluntary opportunities and work placements to adult care students.

80 **Mid Durham AAP** funded Silver Talk, a Karbon Homes project to assist in providing a telephone befriending service to older people who live alone and



may be impacted by social isolation and the associated issues. The funding helped towards the Silver Talk Coordinators post and also the recruitment of local volunteers. The funds also helped provide improved telephonic equipment. This was joint venture with **Derwent Valley and Stanley AAPs**.

81 The service continues to grow and very much came into its own at the height of the pandemic when AAP staff and other 'Community Hub' staff at the time referred many people who came forward presenting issues of isolation. The service is quite simple in that it connects a caller/friend/volunteer with a person registered for the service and they call to just have conversation over 30 minutes or so making the person feel valued and ensuring they have someone to talk to when they may have no one else. Referrals to other services are made where needs are identified.

82 Karbon Homes has subsequently sustained the coordinator role by making this a permanent provision within the organisation.

83 **East Durham AAP** has enabled a Community Resilience subgroup to be set up which looks at supporting those in financial hardship to look at the holistic picture in terms of escalation into personal or emotional needs that impact on overall wellbeing. This includes the involvement of a number of organisations such as MIND, Calm and East Durham Veterans Trust.

84 The Children, Young People and Families Partnership agreed the Growing up in County Durham (GUICD) Strategy, our strategy for children and young people. The wider context of Growing Up in County Durham is reflected in the strategy, including the impact of Covid-19, which covers young people's physical health, mental health and wellbeing and signposts to other strategies provided where common themes and issues are identified.

85 A strategy development group was established to oversee the development work, including the coproduction process and ensure a wide cohort of partners, VCS representatives, children, young people, families and carers were involved in its development. This ensured it reflected what we were told is important to those who use and need community support and services as well as the wider population, focusing on strengths, rather than deficits.

- 86 **Durham AAP** has supported Belmont Community Centre to directly deliver more services that benefit the local community. The centre has established two weekly sessions, one is a traditional carer and toddler group, and the other session offers sensory play that benefits young children with special educational needs. The sessions are also helping to bring carers together in a social setting which is improving their overall wellbeing.
- 87 'Faith and Wellbeing' events which brings together local **churches and faith groups** within an AAP have been held in all AAPs, with the final event in Weardale AAP taking place in the Autumn.
- 88 The thirteenth 'Faith and Wellbeing' event was held in **Chester-Le-Street AAP**. Working in partnership with North East Churches Acting Together (NECAT) these workshops consider the huge amount of work, often unseen, which is going on to contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and to see how we can work better together. A particular focus of the Chester-le-Street event was to invite the local social prescribing link workers so that they could be more aware of the types of activities which go on in local churches and church halls to which isolated or vulnerable people could be referred so that they are better able to have long and independent lives.

## **Connected communities**

- 89 Anti-social behaviour is a key priority for the **Safe Durham Partnership**. An Anti-social Behaviour Strategy is currently in development, which sets out its vision of "improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour" and guiding principles on how we will work together to identify those issues that have the most impact on residents and visitors within County Durham.
- 90 Consultation has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders, including AAPs, Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Better Together Forum and the Youth Council from September to November and the Strategy will be agreed at the **Safe Durham Partnership** in early 2023.
- 91 After a break in delivery due to the coronavirus pandemic, Year 9 pupils at Woodham Academy and Greenfield Secondary School welcomed back the team of volunteers from Prison! Me! No-Way! for the delivery of their Crime and Safety Awareness Days, funded by **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership (GAMP)**.
- 92 Originally set up by prison officers, Prison! Me! No-Way! (PMNW) is a national charity which aims to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of becoming involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour.

- 93 The Crime and Safety Awareness Days are delivered by qualified and experienced professionals through a number of hard-hitting, factual and engaging presentations, workshops, dramas and role-playing activities, which encourage pupils to make positive decisions and to stay safe. Workshops included:
- (a) **Prison Life** – delivered by long-serving prison officers, this session covers the realities of prison life and the general impact of the loss of freedom of choice. Pupils were given the chance to visit a life size replica and fully furnished prison cell to get a real feel for an inmate’s living conditions;
  - (b) **Street Scene** – through a role-playing activity on ‘Confrontation Street’ pupils looked specifically at the impacts of antisocial behaviour;
  - (c) **Choices and Consequences** – pupils met with serving and ex-prisoners (now employed by PMNW) explaining to the pupils how and why they ended up in custody. Pupils heard a first-hand account of being locked in a prison cell, the lack of freedom and the impact a prison sentence can have on family and friends.
- 94 During the sessions pupils are taken from their normal daily school routine and treated like offenders to ensure maximum realism. The project engaged with over 300 pupils across both schools.
- 95 Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. PREVENT is about working together to safeguard and support people who might be vulnerable to radicalisation. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- 96 A Home Office Benchmarking/performance review of Prevent, which was recently carried out, has commended Durham as an area of good practice which has scored highly in this process despite being an unfunded area.
- 97 The **Safe Durham Partnership** (partners include County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and Durham Constabulary) initially led a campaign to raise awareness of cold water shock, in partnership with Fiona Gosling, who lost her son Cameron to Cold Water Shock in 2015.

98 An Open Water Safety Task Group set up by **Chester le Street Area Action Partnership**, was set up in response to ongoing concerns around water safety at Riverside Park following an incident last year where a young child needed to be rescued from the river.



Members of the Open Water Safety Task Group in Chester-le-Street

99 As part of the work the group have arranged for staff and volunteers who work in the park to receive Throw Rope training from the Fire Service. The group have also designed and added a meeting point sign for park users for if children get separated and with emergency numbers if needed.

100 A series of Open Water Safety Assemblies took place in Chester-le-Street during the summer targeting the schools closest to Riverside Park in order to educate children and young people of the dangers of swimming in the river.

101 The task group has worked with Fiona Gosling, Police and Fire colleagues and local community partners.

102 The annual County Durham Environment Awards 2022, organised by the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**, recognise the outstanding conservation and voluntary work that has taken place across the County.

103 Now in its 33rd year, the event celebrates the county's community groups, individuals, businesses and other organisations that go the extra mile to improve their local environment in a sustainable way.

104 Having been moved online due to social distancing guidelines and the coronavirus pandemic, this year the awards will return for an in-person ceremony in early 2023. Winners at the 2022 awards included:

105 **‘Waste Management’ category winner** - Recyke y'Bike, a recycling charity that refurbishes donated bikes. These bikes are then sold to the public at a reasonable cost as a way of encouraging cycling across Durham, this helps provide exercise for local residents, reduces the number of bikes being sent to landfill, as well as helping to fund other community-based activities related to cycling in the county.



Children enjoying their recycled bikes

106 **“Volunteer Group” category winner** - The Friends of Riverside Park at Chester-le-Street. This group has worked on a number of projects through the park to promote and protect the wonderful spaces on their doorstep, such as creating the Sands Memorial Garden, a maze and sculptures. They worked on creating a memory garden, full of sustainable and sensory planting, which is maintained by the group. They also raised funds for numerous benches around the park.



Friends of Riverside Park

107 Members of the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership’s** Climate Emergency workstream have been building on the momentum of last November’s County Durham COP event. They ran four ‘Together Towards Net Zero’ events during the early Summer, with the aim of developing a programme of mutual support where partners that are leading the way on one aspect of carbon reduction, offer help and technical assistance to others who wish to take similar action, to create a Hub of expertise. The events, which were held in partnership with Business Durham, included workshops, talks, and ended with a net zero business showcase. Feedback has been excellent, and partners are looking at next steps.



EV charging point in County Durham

- 108 A project supported by the Climate Emergency workstream have had their work recognised. The Scaling on Street Charging Infrastructure (SOSCI) project, which has so far seen 153 EV Charging Points installed across the county, won the national award for 'Best Electric Vehicle Charging Project' at the MJ Achievement Awards 2022, which were held at the Park Plaza Hotel in Westminster, London on 24 June.
- 109 **3 Towns AAP** supported Jack Drum Arts to deliver BOP (Building our Planet) Fest, a family friendly 'green' festival produced in collaboration with local young people. The festival took place on 14 August and provided a day of free summertime activities including live music, entertainment, drop-in workshops, local stalls and food traders at Glenholme Park in Crook for local residents of all ages to enjoy.
- 110 The festival programme included:
- (a) Mossy Rock Main Stage - live music from professional bands;
  - (b) Little Mossy Rock - performances from local groups / bands;
  - (c) Green Feet - street theatre entertainment;
  - (d) Climart Activities - eco themed drop-in workshops including junk instrument making, eco graffiti, upcycling and seed planting etc;
  - (e) Green Minds - chill-out sensory space for families / neuro divergent young people;
  - (f) Green Prints - climate change information / festival merchandise stall;
  - (g) Green Tea - spoken word / speakers corner;
  - (h) Fayre Trade - carnival stalls;
  - (i) Save the Plan-eat - local eco-friendly catering stalls.
- 111 This project has been developed in consultation with local young people from the 3 Towns area who have been supported by the Jack Drum team and festival mentors from Harambee Pasadia Festival to plan, programme and deliver the festival.

112 'Bop Fest' was a sustainable festival that celebrates the environment, inspiring action behind the scenes and in the encounters members of the community have with activities. Using the hierarchy of environmental action: Avoid, Reduce, Reuse, Replace, consideration was given to use of materials, travel, energy use and food waste.



Bop Fest Young Leaders

113 Long-term plans are for 'BOP Fest' to be an annual event co-produced with local young people giving them opportunities to be involved in organising events for the community in which they live.

114 Stanley Town Council has received funding support from **Stanley AAP** to strengthen its partnership with Durham County Council to further improve the local environment by entering the Northumbria in Bloom National Competition and carry out environmental improvements in Stanley. In Bloom is not just about flowers, it includes the Local Environment, Children & Education, Community Safety, Tourism & Heritage, Health & Wellbeing, supporting Local Groups & Communities, working with Partners and Agencies, and Regeneration & Economic Development. In 2021, Stanley was awarded Silver Gilt for its Stanley in Bloom entry and efforts. The engagement of local residents has been key to the vast improvement to local communities and the local environment as part of the Northumbria in Bloom entry workstreams.

115 An event to showcase and celebrate the work of the VCS across County Durham was organised by the **Better Together VCS Forum**. The event provided a networking opportunity to share and celebrate good practice in the sector and raise awareness of where organisations work and what they offer.

## **Conclusion**

116 As we work through recovery from the restrictions of the pandemic, communities across the County are still facing what could be a protracted period of hardships, both for their beneficiaries and for the organisations, their staff, and their volunteers. Debt, poverty, poor mental health, and the cost-of-living crisis are undermining the capacity in all sectors to be as effective as they want to be in enabling social and economic growth and wellbeing. However, we do have very strong partnerships in the County. Relationships and resilience within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector, have been tested, and are largely healthy and strong. County Durham communities have been writing the manual on resilience for the last hundred years. There is much to be proud of.

## **Background papers**

- None.

## **Other useful documents**

- None.

## **Author**

Julie Bradbrook

Tel: 03000 267325

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

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

### **Consultation**

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

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

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

### **Climate Change**

This is recognised throughout partnership activities.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

**Risk**

None.

**Procurement**

None.

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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



**2 December 2022**

**Notice of Key Decisions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny management board is recommended to give consideration to items listed in the notice.

**Background**

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

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

### **Current Notice of Key Decisions**

- 7 The notice of key decisions that is attached to the report at Appendix 2, is the latest to be published prior to the papers for the Board being dispatched to members. The notice complies with the requirements for Cabinet to be able to take key decisions at the meeting held on 14 December 2022. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 31 March 2023.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Finance**

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

### **Consultation**

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

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

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

### **Climate Change**

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

### **Human Rights**

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

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

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

### **Accommodation**

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

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

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

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## SECTION ONE - CORPORATE

| Ref. No.     | Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting) | Description of Decision to be Made                             | Background Documents | Lead Cabinet Member                                    | Main Consultees & Means of Consultation | Contact details for further information  | Scrutiny Involvement   |
|--------------|---|--|----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| CORP/R/22/01 | 18/01/23  | MTFP - Details of Provisional Finance Settlement               |                      | Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council |   | Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services<br>Tel: 03000 261946 | Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of the MTFP through COSMB meetings |
| CORP/R/22/01 | 08/02/23  | MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 |                      | Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council |   | Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services<br>Tel: 03000 261946 | Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of the MTFP through COSMB meetings |

**SECTION TWO - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

| <b>Ref. No.</b> | <b>Date of Decision<br/>(i.e. date of<br/>Cabinet<br/>meeting)</b> | <b>Description of<br/>Decision<br/>to be Made</b> | <b>Background<br/>Documents</b> | <b>Lead Cabinet<br/>Member</b> | <b>Main Consultees<br/>&amp; Means of<br/>Consultation</b> | <b>Contact details<br/>for further<br/>information</b> |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|

**SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

| <b>Ref. No.</b> | <b>Date of Decision<br/>(i.e. date of<br/>Cabinet<br/>meeting)</b> | <b>Description of<br/>Decision<br/>to be Made</b> | <b>Background<br/>Documents</b> | <b>Lead Cabinet<br/>Member</b> | <b>Main Consultees<br/>&amp; Means of<br/>Consultation</b> | <b>Contact details<br/>for further<br/>information</b> |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|

## SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH

| Ref. No.  | Date of Decision<br>(i.e. date of<br>Cabinet meeting) | Description of<br>Decision<br>to be Made | Background<br>Documents | Lead Cabinet<br>Member                              | Main<br>Consultees<br>& Means of<br>Consultation | Contact details<br>for further<br>information              | Scrutiny<br>Involvement  |
|-----------|---|--|-------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| REG/08/22 | 14/12/22  | Inclusive Economic<br>Strategy           |                         | Portfolio Holder for<br>Economy and<br>Partnerships |  | Mike Allum, Spatial<br>Policy Manager<br>Tel: 03000 261906 | The Economy and<br>Enterprise OSC has<br>considered the draft<br>Inclusive Economic<br>Strategy (IES) at its<br>meeting on the 7<br>November 2022.<br>The comments<br>made by members<br>at the meeting were<br>formulated into an<br>Overview and<br>Scrutiny response<br>which has been<br>shared with the<br>Service Grouping<br>and will be used to<br>further develop the<br>Strategy prior to<br>consideration of the<br>Strategy by Cabinet<br>in December. |

## SECTION FIVE - NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

| Ref. No.  | Date of Decision<br>(i.e. date of<br>Cabinet meeting) | Description of<br>Decision<br>to be Made                         | Background<br>Documents | Lead Cabinet<br>Member                                       | Main<br>Consultees<br>& Means of<br>Consultation | Contact details<br>for further<br>information                          | Scrutiny<br>Involvement  |
|-----------|---|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| NCC/04/22 | 14/12/22  | Ecological<br>Emergency - Outline<br>Strategy and Action<br>Plan |                         | Portfolio Holder for<br>Neighbourhoods<br>and Climate Change |  | Steve Bhowmick<br>Environment &<br>Design Manager<br>Tel: 03000 267122 | The Environment and<br>Sustainable<br>Communities OSC<br>will consider the<br>strategy and the<br>action plan at its<br>meeting on the 20<br>January 2023. |

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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**2 December 2022**



**Update in relation to Petitions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide for information the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 Members are requested to note the update report on the status of petitions and e-petitions received by the Authority.

**Background**

- 3 Following the introduction of The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 all of the petitions that have been received by the Authority are processed by democratic services in line with its petitions process.
- 4 The Board have received update reports on petitions since September 2008.
- 5 From the 15 December 2010, the Authority has provided a facility for members of the public to submit e-petitions on the Council's website.

**Current Notice of Key Decisions**

- 6 Since the last update four new e-petitions have been submitted. Two are ongoing and two were rejected as other procedures applied.

- 7 Two new paper petitions have been submitted, and have both completed. A list giving details and current status of all active petitions is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation**

Petitions which refer to a consultation exercise are reported to committee for information and forwarded to the relevant officer for consideration

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

None.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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| Nature of Petition  | Appropriate Service/Officer                                 | Summary of Information  | Status of Petition            |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| <p>Petition 419</p> <p>Reduce 40mph speed limit at Vigo Lane</p> <p>Received 11.06.22<br/>No. of signatures - 308</p> | <p>Michelle McIntosh<br/>Traffic Assets Team<br/>Leader</p> | <p>Petition asking the Council to reduce the current 40mph speed limit at Vigo Lane, provide vehicle activated speed signs and to provide safe crossings adjacent to all junctions along Vigo Lane and to facilitate reduced emissions.</p> <p>We can appreciate that residents often have a desire for a lower speed outside or close to where they live. The Council take these concerns seriously and give them full consideration when we evaluate changes to speed limits. When undertaking these speed limit reviews we use the guidance issued by the Department for Transport and our own considerable local experience of implementing speed limits within the County. We also work closely with Durham Constabulary when considering changes to speed limits.</p> <p>It is an intention of the Department for Transport guidance to ensure that speed limits are credible with the aim that they become self-evident and enforcing by virtue of their surroundings.</p> <p>During the review process many criteria and factors are considered and evaluated. The existing vehicle speeds, nature of the road and its surroundings, local needs, existing highway infrastructure, frontage property development, highway signs, road markings and street lighting, the various road users, the credibility of the speed limit and accident history are some of these factors being considered. The length of speed limit, distance between speed limit terminal points and the number of changes along the route are also considered.</p> <p>The section of 40mph speed limit on Vigo Lane has no direct frontage development, wide verges, properties set well back or obscured by vegetation or walls and good footway provision. All these elements are conducive to a credible 40mph speed limit</p> | <p>Petition <b>CLOSED</b></p> |

| Nature of Petition | Appropriate Service/Officer | Summary of Information   | Status of Petition |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|
|                    |                             | <p>and no changes have been considered appropriate when the provision of the new development along Vigo Lane has been considered at the planning stage.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the setting of speed limits can be quite an emotive issue with some motorists and residents generally demanding lower speed limits on roads. However, in many cases when motorists are travelling through similar environments where a speed limit may lack credibility a converse stance may intentionally or unintentionally be taken. We therefore have a difficult task in striking a balance and providing a compromise based upon the national and local strategies and also taking local factors into account.</p> <p>As is often the case, a speed limit which lacks credibility results in a significant proportion of motorists ignoring the limit and potentially driving at even higher speeds and, can also lead to greater risk taking. In addition the imposition of non-credible lower limits can raise expectations that the speeds of vehicles will suddenly reduce but this is seldom being achieved in practice, thus creating further annoyance for both residents and motorists, and also unfair criticism of and demands on the police who have to enforce the speed limits.</p> <p>Having checked the accident recording database shared with Durham Constabulary, I can report that there has been one personal injury accident along this section of Vigo Lane in the past 4 years, this being our standard search criteria. The incident involved a car and bicycle where it is recorded that the passenger of the vehicle has made contact with the cyclist. This accident was not recorded as being attributable to the highway or speeding. Whilst we would wish to see no accidents occurring, compared to many other locations within the county, this represents a very favourable accident record.</p> |                    |

| Nature of Petition   | Appropriate Service/Officer                             | Summary of Information  | Status of Petition                               |
|--|---|---|--|
|  |   | <p>Given the accident details, existing vehicle speeds and road environment, the current 40mph speed limit is considered to be the appropriate speed limit for this road.</p> <p>Further response sent clarifying that local needs, safety of residents and the wider community, health and safety and various other factors were considered and evaluated throughout the decision making process. Traffic Assets team to carry out a speed survey following the school summer holidays, when traffic flows and speeds will reflect a more normal pattern, to allow a review the current speed conditions on this road. If the survey data warrants a further review of the speed limit on this section of road, then the team will investigate fully.</p> <p>With regards to the loose manhole covers, our Highways Maintenance team are going to investigate and if they are a council asset, they will be repaired. If they belong to a third party utility company, then we will report it to the company responsible and request that they are fixed as a matter of urgency.</p> |  |
| <p>Petition 422</p> <p>Road Safety Improvements – A177 Shincliffe Village/High Shincliffe</p> <p><b>E-Petition</b><br/>Received 15.08.22<br/>No. of signatures</p> | <p>Michelle McIntosh<br/>Traffic Assets Team Leader</p> | <p>Petition asking the Council to reduce the speed limit to 30mph on a 735m stretch of road, from the start of Willow Tree Avenue to part-way up Shincliffe Bank. (Note that a 40mph speed limit within County Durham is enforceable from 10%+2 = 46mph.) - Improve road signage to advise people of the approaching risks to reduce the number of accidents travelling southbound out of the city.</p>   | <p>E-Petition to run from 20.8.22 – 20.11.22</p> |

| Nature of Petition  | Appropriate Service/Officer                                    | Summary of Information  | Status of Petition  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Petition 423</p> <p>Request for traffic mitigation measures on Lowes Barn Bank</p> <p><b>E-Petition</b><br/>Received 15.08.22<br/>No. of signatures</p>  | <p>Michelle McIntosh<br/>Traffic Assets Team Leader</p>        | <p>Petition asking the Council to provide short and long-term solutions to the continually worsening traffic problems on Lowes Barn Bank, a residential 'c' road:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to mitigate the exceptionally large increase in car and HGV traffic using this road as an unofficial / unsigned diversion route in Summer/Autumn 2022 during the multi-month B6300 closure, and the resultant stationary traffic / chaos for much of the working day - including air quality monitoring.</li> <li>- to propose workable solutions to restrict HGVs from using this steep road as a short-cut, which we feel is a completely inappropriate and unsafe route for such vehicles, given the 'c' classification and character of the road - especially given the proximity to the alternative 'A' road routes.</li> <li>- to propose solutions to limit the speed of all vehicles to a safe speed at times of day when traffic is flowing - especially on the downhill approach to the sharp bend.</li> </ul> | <p>E-Petition to run from 19.8.22 – 30.9.22<br/>Deadline extended to 31 December 2022</p> |
| <p>Petition 425</p> <p>Request for bus service to run around Picktree Lodge Estate, Chester-le-Street</p> <p>Received 6.09.22<br/>No. of signatures 137</p> | <p>Cathy Knight<br/>Integrated Passenger Transport Manager</p> | <p>Petition asking the Council to provide a bus service around the Picktree Lodge estate, similar to or a continuation of 702 that serves the North Lodge estate so that the whole community has better access to Chester-le-Street town centre.</p> <p>Much of Picktree Lodge Estate is a considerable distance from the nearest local bus route and this must pose a particular challenge for residents without a car or with a desire to leave the car at home. The community's aspiration for a local bus service will be recorded but there are currently a number issues that are impacting the local bus service industry, namely:</p> <p>a. Difficulties recruiting and subsequent retention of driving staff</p>   | <p>Petition <b>CLOSED</b></p>   |

| Nature of Petition  | Appropriate Service/Officer  | Summary of Information   | Status of Petition            |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|
|   |  | <p>b. The end of central government pandemic related financial support for the sector</p> <p>c. Passenger numbers are not recovering to pre pandemic levels and are not forecast to do some for some time</p> <p>d. Increased costs for bus operators</p> <p>As a result bus operators are reviewing their networks and making adjustments to ensure that they are financially sustainable and reliable going forward. Unfortunately a service to Picktree Lodge is unlikely to be commercially sustainable and would require continuing financial support from the Council on a continuing basis. In the meantime the Council’s Link2 dial-a-ride service (information and bookings available through 03000 269999 or <a href="https://www.durham.gov.uk/link2">https://www.durham.gov.uk/link2</a> ) does provide an option for people to undertake journeys of up to 5 miles where they do not have access to a mainstream bus service.</p> |                               |
| <p>Petition 427</p> <p>Hett Bus Stop</p> <p>Received 03.10.22</p> <p>No. of signatures - 72</p> | <p>Cathy Knight, Integrated Passenger Transport Manager</p> <p>Tony Leckenby, Sustainable Transport and Advertising Team Leader</p> <p>Peter Ollivere, Policy Team Leader (Spatial Policy)</p> | <p>Petition asking the Council to place a bus stop in Hett to connect Hett with the rest of the county.</p> <p>The council’s Link2 bus service does provide an option for people to undertake journeys of up to 5 miles where they do not have access to a mainstream bus service. The Link2 service will pick you up and set you down at your address, therefore there will be no requirement to provide any new bus stop infrastructure.</p> <p>The council note your interest to reducing pollution in County Durham and applaud your commitment to organising a petition in Hett village about how to improve sustainable transport links in your local area. You might be interested to know that the council are always looking at ways to promote transport modes that reduce pollution.</p>  | <p>Petition <b>CLOSED</b></p> |

| Nature of Petition  | Appropriate Service/Officer                | Summary of Information   | Status of Petition  |
|---|--|--|---|
|   |  | As well as helping support people to use buses more frequently, the council are also putting in more walking and cycling paths to make it easier for people who do not want to travel by car. For those people that need to travel by car, the council are putting in hundreds of electric vehicle charging posts because electric vehicles are less polluting than cars that run on fossil fuels. |   |
| Petition 428<br>The Play/Recreation Area is at The Wynd, Pelton.<br><br><b>E-Petition</b><br>Received 10.10.22<br>No. of signatures | Anna Wills<br>Asset Management Team Leader | Petition asking the Council to stop discussions with a housing developer, Bellway Homes. Bellway Homes have been given permission by Durham County Council to carry out site investigations on land registered as an Asset of Community Value.   | E-Petition to run from 10.10.22 – 20.1.23                                 |
| Petition 429<br>A181 near Thornley and Cassop<br><br><b>E-Petition</b><br>Received 10.10.22<br>No. of signatures 36                 | Dave Lewin<br>Strategic Traffic Manager    | Petition asking the Council to make changes to the road A181 near Thornley & Cassop to avoid accidents & increase safety.  | E-Petition ran from 10.10.22 – 14.11.22<br>Awaiting response from service |