



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

**Date**            **Monday 23 January 2023**  
**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 2 December 2022 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue Budget 2023/24 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 13 - 68)
6. Council Plan 2023/24 - 2026/27 Refresh - Report of Chief Executive Officer (Pages 69 - 150)
7. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 151 - 160)
8. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

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

County Hall  
Durham  
13 January 2023

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 **Friday 2 December 2022 at 9.30 am**

### Present:

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

### Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Atkinson (Substitute) (substitute for E Adam), A Batey, B Coult, R Crute, M Currah (Substitute) (substitute for P Jopling), O Gunn, P Heaviside, L Hovvells, A Jackson, C Lines (Vice-Chair), J Miller (Substitute) (substitute for A Surtees), A Reed, P Sexton (Substitute) (substitute for J Charlton), K Shaw, M Stead and M Wilson

### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, J Elmer, J Howey, P Jopling, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, B Moist and A Surtees.

### 2 Substitute Members

Councillor Atkinson for Councillor Adam, Councillor Sexton for Councillor Charlton, Councillor Currah for Councillor Jopling and Councillor Miller for Councillor Surtees.

### 3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Board that all actions raised had been followed up after the last meeting.

### 4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Members of the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during the period 1 July to 30 September 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

### **Resolved:**

- i. That the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period covering quarter 2 2022/23, be received.
- ii. That the powers were being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remained fit for purpose.

## **6 Customer Relationship Management System Update**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which provided background and overview of the council's Granicus Customer Relationship Management System (CRM), an update on progress achieved in line with the roadmap for short to medium term improvement, and 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 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised that since COVID there has been a general move to online interaction and the way in which the Council have interacted with customers. Feedback was sought from customers and there were high levels of satisfaction overall reported however some performance challenges had been identified. Paragraph 8 of the report gave further details around that. 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. The current roadmap agreed by CMT in September 2021 focused 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

In conclusion, the Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised that the existing CRM contract would 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 would be revisited in line with these timelines.

Councillor Batey thanked the officer for the positive report. Referring to appendix 2 'What 3 words Pilot Exploration', she asked if this would go ahead as Pelton division would be willing to pilot the work. The Strategic Manager (Digital Engagement) advised that this was being explored and that there were some changes in terms of working practices that would underline the impact of identifying localities better. She went on to say that data geographical spread of usage across the County would be useful in terms of areas of deprivation.

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services added that mapping was used and was useful to see the spread and to inform what we were trying to achieve. She would bring back a further report to the meeting in January that used MAPs of where the customer access points were used as there had been a decrease in footfall.

Councillor Gunn replied that this would be helpful and was concerned for residents from small villages and would give an understanding to ensure residents had the ability and access to reporting any issues.

Councillor Coult suggested that parish councils could be used for those residents who could not access County Council buildings. She thanked officers for the positive progress as this could save a lot of time and money in the future.

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services reported that during COVID the service changed a lot of the ways in which they communicated and interacted with residents. For vulnerable communities this was still being explored.

**Resolved:**

- i. That the content of the report be noted;
- ii. That the roadmap and its associated progress that defines the short to medium term improvement of the current Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) be noted; and
- iii. That 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 be noted.

## **7 Poverty Strategy and Action Plan**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which presented a revised Poverty Strategy and Action Plan following a consultation exercise undertaken April to August 2022, and presented the updated Child Poverty Action Plan as a separate document which focussed on addressing child poverty aligned with the wider Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services highlighted the proposed four key objectives of the consultation of which the overarching vision was “to work together so fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county”. The proposed strategic objectives of the action plan were 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.

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services reported that the consultation exercise had had a good turn out and she went on to highlight the questions asked and the answers received. A number of gaps had been identified in access, transport, skills and young people. Furthermore, a number of groups were reported as missing such as single people, rural aspect, informal carers and disabled people, people with addictions and those in unexpected situations.

Councillor Crute thanked the officer and her team for the work undertaken to try to tackle deprivation and inequalities. He believed that the role of elected councillors was to remain to lobby government as since the response to last correspondence. He went on to say that we needed to face up to the real reasons as 13 years of austerity had had a devastating effect on the councils resources. He asked that this board write to the Prime Minister to remind him of this and also write to the secretary of state regarding levelling up and remind him that the deprivation we had in the county was worse now. He believed that levelling up was not about the authority spending £s drawing up bids that would be unsuccessful and he wanted to make a point to government before the local government settlement came out in December. He commented that there was a need before greed and that tax cuts for the rich meant public service cuts for the rest of us and it was all about putting resources where most needed to cover deprivation in County Durham.

Councillor Gunn seconded the proposal.

The Chair agreed that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister.

Councillor Crute asked to see a copy of the draft letter to ensure it focused on the real problems.

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services reported that there was a really powerful statistic in County Durham but she said that there was also strength in doing something across the region.

Referring to the groups of people missing Councillor Reed asked what support was available for those from other countries, especially when reaching the every child matters agenda. She also commented that there should be free school meals for every child. In response the Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised of the humanitarian support measures in place and that they had a group that met monthly which had a range of mechanisms in place. She also advised of the Child Poverty working Group that provided support for families during school holidays and used welfare assistance to support that. Culture and Leisure provided leisure activities and household support funds provided sources for free school meals. In addition there was a £15,000 fund for investing in children for particular talent, such as music, and this would help the children and young people to explore the potential.

With reference to a recent press release Councillor Miller said that he had been critical of the Cabinet rather than officers and wanted to set the record straight. He referred to page 67 of the papers in relation to the use of credit unions and was concerned that people should not be encouraged to get into debt to get out of poverty. He suggested that the wording could be amended to reflect that. He went on to page 70 of the papers in relation to rough sleepers including ex-offenders and how difficult it was for them to be offered housing. This was due to a two year ban being in place after the offence and he asked that conversations were had with housing providers. In response the Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised that credit unions were in place to support essential day to day items and the main purpose was not to get people into more debt. She would bring the discussion about rough sleepers to a working group with housing colleagues at its next meeting in December. From a customer access point of view she was keen to find out where the people who present as homeless were going and what plans we could put in place to improve their situation. Councillor Miller added that in order to help we needed to change policies.

Further to a question from Councillor Coult about plans to include children with special educational needs (SEN) when focusing on children from secondary schools highlighted in paragraph 79 of the report, the Head of Transactional and Customer Services confirmed that this would be the case. Councillor Coult said that at the recent County Durham Partnership event there was a commitment from everyone to have those difficult conversations around poverty and improve communications. Moving on to paragraph 83 of

the report about schools being utilised more she asked what plans were in place to pilot this. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services explained that there was a learning programme scheme in place to prepare young people for leaving school and she was looking at what extra support needs would be addressed. Furthermore, there was a model in place looking at support in schools with the North of Tyne carrying out a pilot on building the relationship with a parent and children through activities such as cooking. To develop the right model County Durham would require partners to play a role and to have resources in place to support it.

Councillor Gunn was pleased to see that the holiday activities had come along way and had developed since the ideas were first discussed. She thanked the community and voluntary sectors who helped with that but believed there to be a reliance on them and that this had become the norm. She acknowledged that those organisations were recognised and thanked for their contributions but that it should not be forgotten that it was the Council's responsibility to provide the necessary help and support to our communities. Councillor Gunn asked if the wording in the leaflet provided could be looked at regarding warm spaces as she did not feel that it was as welcoming as the one produced by Gateshead Council leaflet. She went on to say that we needed to ensure people felt welcome and that we would provide a warm space with food available, and this in turn would be easier for the volunteers to pass the message on. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services confirmed that they had based their communications on the one produced by Gateshead but she would look into it further. She added that the Warm Spaces working group met fortnightly and she would take the feedback to them to ensure we got the message right. She confirmed that voluntary and community groups have been given a toolkit and resources to use or personalise it.

Referring to warm home hubs Councillor Hovvels pointed out that Northumberland had been doing this for the last three years and that we could learn from them. She asked that information packs were available in the warm hubs so that people would know who to contact for different services. She continued that there was more of a reliance on volunteers but felt that the more we could help them the better it would be for those vulnerable and people who often slipped through the net. In response the Head of Transactional and Customer Services confirmed that key numbers were included in the leaflet and information pack handed out to all warm space hubs. With regards to Northumberland she advised that she did have ongoing conversations with them and that authorities were working collaboratively on this. Councillor Hovvels also advised of warm hub groups in Birmingham and Leeds that were reaching out to those hard to reach groups such as LGBTQIA+.

Moving on Councillor Hovvels about the continued support for Ukrainian families after sponsorships ended in January 2023 and would there be help to allow families to move back to Ukraine or offer a new scheme of support. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services would pick this up with and clarified that it would be discussed at a future working group, and that she would ask that an update be provided to this Board.

With reference to page 45 of the report Councillor Atkinson said that discussions had taken place at the County Durham Partnership event about child poverty and parent poverty and that any monies seem to be directed towards the child. He said that there needed to be a greater understanding of what money goes into a household and what is needed for. He also asked about the money for each household towards energy costs and asked what if the tenant or landlord received this payment. In response the Head of Transactional and Customer Services explained that the discount on energy bills was administered by the government and she believed that the landlords had been asked to passport the money through to tenants if energy prices were not part of the tenancy agreement. She advised that the government had directed the local authority to support off the grid tenants who use oil based heating. In terms of the household support fund she confirmed that this was to support with food and essential bills and the authority were descriptive of that.

Councillor Shaw informed the Board that there was already provision in place to deal with homelessness with housing providers and the probation service, developed with the last organisation of the Council. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services would pick this up with housing colleagues.

Councillor Gunn informed the Board of a groups called Cornerstone who work with ex-offenders supporting them with accommodation and training. She also asked that we acknowledge what schools were doing in terms of administering the household support fund 3.

**Resolved:**

- i. That the contents of the report be noted; and
- ii. That 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 be noted.
- iii. That a letter be sent to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State outlining the Council's position in relation to poverty.

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

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided Members with the six monthly update report which was to be submitted to Council on 25 January 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager highlighted the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Team, the focused briefing sessions delivered and the key areas of work covered during this six month period.

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report to be submitted to Council on 25 January 2023, be noted.

## **9 Resources - Quarter 2 September 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 September 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Accountant, Resources reported a cash limit underspend of £0.324 million against a revised budget of £25.961 million and a revised Resources capital budget of £10.546 million for 2022/23, with a total expenditure to 31 August 2022 of £1.443 million.

### **Resolved:**

That the forecast of outturn position be noted.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 10.51 am

## **10 County Durham Partnership Update**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided an update on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Partnerships Team Manager informed Members about the partnership event that had taken place on 30 November 2022 with a focus on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges. Actions from the event would cover any gaps that had been identified.

Members were also informed of the work around poverty action, child poverty and raising awareness around safeguarding.

Councillor Atkinson commented that it was a great event and was good to see the work carried out by the partnership and other networks.

Councillor Coult said that it had been a great opportunity to put ideas forward and great to see them being implemented.

Councillor Batey had concerns around transport, access and connectivity to events, groups and projects. She gave an example of a recent healthy eating half term project at Ouston which was not easily accessible by good transport links. She asked that this be built into future projects to enable people to gain access more easily. The Partnerships Team Manager would take this back for further discussions. Furthermore, Councillor Batey said that three of the four recent projects in the Chester-le-Street area was in an outlying area.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

Councillor Shaw left the meeting at 10.55 am

## **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 advised that new to the plan was the following:

- MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **12 Update in relation to Petitions**

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

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

Since the last update four new e-petitions had been submitted. Two were ongoing and two were rejected as other procedures applied. Two new paper petitions had been submitted and had both completed. A list giving details and current status of all active petitions was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**23 January 2023**



**Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to  
2026/27 and Revenue Budget 2023/24**

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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) the opportunity to comment upon Cabinet's proposals on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue Budget 2023/24.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The report to Cabinet sets out an update on the development of the MTFP 13 2023/24 to 2026/27 and the 2023/23 revenue budget following the government's Autumn Statement in November and provisional local government statement issued in December 2022.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 3 Members are asked to:
  - (a) Consider and comment upon the 18 January 2023 Cabinet report on the MTFP (13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and revenue budget 2023/24.

## Background

- 4 COSMB prioritises scrutiny of the MTFP and budget as part of the committee's work programme. Members have the opportunity to comment upon Cabinet's proposals contained in the attached report. The Board's views will be fed into the report on the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital budget 2023/24 to be submitted to Cabinet on 8 February 2023.
- 5 The Cabinet's report, attached, includes information on:
  - (a) The Chancellor's Autumn Statement
  - (b) Council Tax
  - (c) Better Care Fund
  - (d) New Early Discharge Grant
  - (e) Social Care Reforms
  - (f) National Living Wage
  - (g) Energy
  - (h) Services Grant
  - (i) Business Rates
  - (j) Policy Statement
  - (k) Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
  - (l) Core Spending Power
  - (m) Review of MTFP Model
  - (n) MTFP 13 Consultation and Participation
  - (o) MTFP 13 Summary
  - (p) Reserves Review

## Background papers

- None

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**Contact:** Helen Lynch

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None specific with the report.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are identified within the Cabinet report of 18 January 2023.

### **Consultation**

The report includes information on the consultation process.

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

Equality considerations are built into the approach to developing MTFP (13) as a key element of the process.

### **Climate Change**

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

### **Human Rights**

Any human rights issues will be considered for any detailed MTFP (13) proposals as they are developed and decisions made to take these forward.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None specific with the report.

### **Staffing**

The savings proposals in MTFP (13) will impact upon employees.

### **Accommodation**

None specific within this report.

### **Risk**

None specific within this report.

### **Procurement**

None specific within this report.

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**Appendix 2:**

**Report to Cabinet 18 January 2023 - Medium Term Financial Plan  
2023/24 - 2026/27 and Revenue Budget 2023/24**

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Attached as a separate document.

## **Cabinet**

**18 January 2023**

**Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27  
and Revenue Budget 2023/24**

**Key Decision: CORP/R/22/01**

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

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

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

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

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

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide an update on the development of MTFP(13), covering the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 and on the development of the 2023/24 revenue budget in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement in November and the provisional local government finance settlement published on 19 December 2022.
- 2 The report includes updated financial forecasts, building on the figures previously considered by Cabinet in October 2022, together with the outcome of the MTFP(13) budget consultation process.

### **Executive Summary**

- 3 On 17 November 2022 the Chancellor of the Exchequer published an Autumn Statement (AS). The timing and content of the AS was vital due to the need to calm financial markets following the fiscal event (mini budget statement) in September 2022, which came at a time of high inflation and led to widespread uncertainty and reductions in the value of the pound followed by rapid increases in interest rates. The AS contained important announcements on future forecasts for government borrowing, taxation,

and public sector expenditure, alongside the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts for inflation, economic growth, and taxation yields.

- 4 It was widely expected that the AS would result in funding reductions for the public sector, particularly previously unprotected departments such as the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Communities, alongside a potential cap on public sector pay increases, due to the significant increases in the forecast of annual national deficits over the coming years - a combination of post Brexit economic challenges, the ongoing impact of the pandemic upon the economy and the poor outlook for the economy in the medium term.
- 5 In making the AS, the Chancellor of the Exchequer however deferred decisions on any significant funding reductions in the public sector until the next parliamentary period, with reductions now expected in the period 2025/26 to 2027/28. In the next two years, in recognition of the significant inflationary pressures being faced, additional funding was provided to the health service, education and to local government, as well as local government being provided with additional council tax raising flexibilities.
- 6 The additional funding being provided will result in an improved financial outlook for the council in the short term, with budget shortfalls reducing from those reported to Cabinet on 12 October 2022, where it was previously forecast that savings required over the next four years (assuming the Council maximised its council tax raising powers at that time) would be £52.569 million with £37.389 million of this falling into 2023/24.
- 7 The updated forecasts included in this report highlight that once the available government funding, taxbase growth, updated base budget pressures, and an assumption that the council raises council tax by the maximum sums available, the savings required over the next four years has reduced to £41.041 million, with £25.614 million of this falling into 2023/24.
- 8 The AS announced additional funding to meet rising demographic and costs pressures in social care (both adult and children social care) with specific grant funding also provided in order to focus investment to facilitate early discharge of patients from hospital into the community. In this regard local government was allocated £400 million as a Market Sustainability and Improvement grant in 2023/24, rising to £680 million in 2024/25 to be focussed on early discharge from hospital.
- 9 There was also an increase in the Better Care Fund nationally, with an additional £600 million allocated in 2023/24 rising to £1 billion in 2024/25. This funding is ring-fenced and must be pooled within the Better Care Fund and will be shared 50%/50% between the NHS and Local Authorities, with local investment plans to be agreed with the Integrated Care Board.

- 10 Significantly, the AS also announced the deferral of the planned Adult Social Care Reforms from October 2023 to October 2025 i.e., after the next General Election. These reforms included the introduction of revised means tests for adult social care charging and the introduction of a £86,000 cost care cap, as well as a requirement for authorities to undertake a review and implement changes which demonstrated that they were moving towards the payment of a fair cost of care to providers.
- 11 Whilst the reforms have been deferred, the funding previously allocated to the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Grant associated with these new policies is to be retained and repurposed into the Social Care Grant – to help upper tier authorities to meet demographic and costs pressures in social care (both adult and children social care).
- 12 The sums being made available to local government are £1.265 billion in 2023/24 rising to £1.877 billion in 2024/25. The AS announced that this funding would be provided to local authorities via the current Social Care grant distribution methodology, which takes into account council tax raising capacity, and was being made available to assist local authorities to address budget pressures in both children’s and adult’s social care.
- 13 The AS announced additional council tax flexibilities for local authorities. The current council tax referendum limit is 1.99% but from 2023/24 this will be increased to 2.99%. Upper tier local authorities were also provided with the powers to increase council tax by an additional 2% in 2023/24 and in 2024/25 for an adult social care precept. This means that upper tier local authorities now have the ability to increase council tax by up to 4.99% in both 2023/24 and 2024/25, with a clear expectation from government that these authorities do so in order to help meet the extraordinary inflationary pressures they are facing and to help protect front line services as far as possible. Every 1% of council tax increase generates the council circa £2.6 million of additional income.
- 14 By increasing the council tax by 4.99% instead of the previously forecast / assumed 2.99%, the council will be able to reduce the savings required to balance the budget by circa £5.1 million next year and the year after and by circa £2.6 million in 2025/26 and 2026/27, reducing the cuts / savings required by circa £15.4 million over the MTFP(13) planning period.
- 15 In 2022/23 the council had the flexibility to increase council tax by 1.99% for the referendum limit and by up to 3% for the adult social care precept. After due consideration council agreed to limit the 2022/23 council tax increase to 3% for the adult social care precept only and to forego the 1.99% base council tax increase rather than increasing council tax by the maximum 4.99%, which is what the government expectation was (this is baked into the Core Spending Power calculations) and what the majority of other upper tier councils did. This resulted in the loss of circa £5 million of council tax raising capacity within the base budget.

- 16 In County Durham 83% of all households reside in properties that are in Bands A-C. A 4.99% increase in the council's council tax charge would result in an increase of between £1.12 and £1.50 per week for these residents. The circa 54,000 households on low incomes who qualify for support through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, many of which would qualify for 100% support and pay no council tax, would be protected from any increase either in full or in part.
- 17 The AS confirmed that the National Living Wage would increase by 9.7% from April 2023, higher than the forecast 8.6% that was included in the previous MTFP forecasts, adding circa £3.4 million of additional budget pressure into 2023/24 and £0.4 million into 2024/25. It was also confirmed that local authorities would not fall within the energy price cap arrangements post April 2023, exposing local authorities once again to energy price volatility for 2023/24 although clear guidance on this is still awaited. The budget pressure remains at £9 million for energy price inflation next year at this stage.
- 18 In the AS there was no information published on the Fair Funding Review, the New Homes Bonus, Revenue Support Grant levels or on the Lower Tier Services Grant.
- 19 On 12 December 2022 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) published a Policy Statement which provided further detail on potential distribution methodology, including confirmation that the Fair Funding Review would not take place until after the next General Election.
- 20 The provisional local government settlement was published on 19 December 2022, with the final settlement expected to be confirmed in February 2023. The provisional settlement confirmed the additional funding forthcoming to local government that was announced in the AS and the allocation methodologies for 2023/24. It was a one year settlement again, so whilst the additional sums for 2023/24 were detailed, at this stage there are no approvals for 2024/25. Forecasts have been included as to what the sums forthcoming may be for 2024/25.
- 21 The provisional settlement confirmed the additional allocation for the council from the Better Care Fund of £4.327 million in 2023/24. Although the sum for 2024/25 was not confirmed it is forecast that this sum will increase to circa £7.1 million in 2024/25. This grant is ring fenced and will be pooled with a similar allocation to the NHS to be utilised to facilitate early discharge of patients from hospital. An additional sum of £4.704 million in 2023/24 was confirmed from the renamed (and repurposed) Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant with a forecast additional £3.2 million in 2024/25.
- 22 After discounting specific grants being transferred into the Social Care Grant from next year, the council will receive an additional sum of £17.066

million in 2023/24, with a forecast additional sum of £7.800 million in 2024/25. These sums will not however fully address the demographic and price inflationary pressures in Children and Adult Social Care alone (excluding pay inflation and energy) of £36.7 million in 2023/24 and £19.7 million in 2024/25.

- 23 After the discounting of specific grants being transferred into the Revenue Support Grant from next year the settlement also confirmed a 10.1% Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) uplift in Revenue Support Grant of £2.952 million as well as a CPI uplift in business rate retention funding of £15.1 million in 2023/24.
- 24 Unfortunately, the provisional settlement also announced a reduction in the Services Grant of £3.831 million in 2023/24 with a forecast additional reduction of £0.120 million in 2024/25, partly due to the removal of funding provided to finance the now withdrawn 1.25% employers' national insurance increase but also to facilitate a transfer of this funding to finance increases in Supporting Families funding. Alongside this reduction, the New Homes Bonus and Lower Services Tier grants have also been reduced by £3.008 million in 2023/24 to provide a guaranteed funding increase in the main for district councils. It is forecast that the remaining 2023/24 payment of New Homes Bonus of £1.860 million will be fully withdrawn in 2024/25.
- 25 The provisional settlement also confirmed £100 million of additional funding for local authorities to support the most financially vulnerable households in England in 2023/24 with meeting their council tax costs. The Council Tax Support Fund is aimed at providing further support to those low income vulnerable households already receiving Council Tax Reduction Support. Durham has been allocated £1.440 million to offer further reductions of up to £25 per claimant to those facing financial hardship – targeted at those already in receipt of some element Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2023/24 but still left with a bill to pay.
- 26 In overall terms, the provisional settlement provided some much needed additional funding, which will reduce the savings requirements over the next two years, particularly in 2023/24. The additional funding received by the council next year is £39.792 million, however, our unavoidable cost pressures total £81.906 million, leaving £42.114 million to fund from a combination of council tax increases, business rates tax base changes, savings and efficiencies and council reserves in order to balance the budget.
- 27 It is of significant concern however that there is a likelihood of funding reductions for the public sector from 2025/26 onwards. The AS announced that for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28 public sector funding will increase by 1% in real terms. This would intimate that the public sector funding will increase by 1% above inflation. On the basis that health, education and defence would likely be protected, this will likely lead to some tough grant reductions for that period for unprotected government departments such as

the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. At this stage, for modelling purposes, it is assumed that grant settlements for the council will be cash flat for the period 2025/26 to 2026/27. This may prove to be an optimistic assumption.

- 28 To ensure budgets can be balanced, whilst further clarity is sought and to provide time to work up proposals to reduce expenditure to address the underlying budget position, the October Cabinet report highlighted that a thorough review of all earmarked reserves was to be undertaken to ensure that corporate reserves are in place to ensure the council can set balanced budgets.
- 29 This review has been completed and the report sets out details of the earmarked reserves to be re-prioritised and the transfer of funding to the ER/VR reserve and to the MTFP Support Reserve, to provide capacity to balance the budget over the medium term, together with a proposed transfer to the Commercial Reserve.
- 30 Following the report to Cabinet in October, consultation was undertaken on the strategy set out in that report for balancing the Councils budget next year (2023/24), which included a set of proposed savings, proposed Council Tax increases and the utilisation of reserves, and on the MTFP financial forecasts / outlook for the Council.
- 31 Presentations have been made to the 14 Area Action Partnership Boards, and to key partners in the County Durham Partnership (CDP). Officers also attended meetings of County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and the Youth Council and met with Trade Unions representatives during the period of the consultation, which ran from 25 October 2022 to 22 November 2022.
- 32 Consultation was also published on the Councils website and promoted and CDP partners were written to seek their views on the Councils budget strategy. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board met on 24 October 2022 to consider the October Cabinet report. The questions posed during the public consultation were as follows:
  - (a) What is your view on our approach to balancing the 2023/24 forecast budget shortfall?;
  - (b) What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you or those you represent?;
  - (c) Do you have any alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings?;
  - (d) If the government do remove the cap, what is your view on the council utilising additional Council Tax raising powers above the current 2.99% forecast, given that we may be expected to do this?

- 33 The report sets out details of the consultation feedback received. The feedback will be taken on board in terms of finalising the saving that will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February as part of the budget setting process. The report sets out details of proposed changes to the savings previously considered by Cabinet. None of the savings previously put forward have been withdrawn at this stage, but there are some re-profiling proposals between 2023/24 and 2024/25. In addition, three new savings are to be considered, which increases the overall saving total to £18.611 million, and details of these are set out in the report.
- 34 Once the proposed revised MTFP(13) savings of £18.611 million are taken into account, £12.733 million of which would be deliverable in 2023/24, and assuming the council implement council tax increases in line with government expectations, the council is facing a £22.430 million shortfall over the four year MTFP(13) period, with a requirement to use £12.881 million of the MTFP Support Reserve to balance the budget next year whilst additional savings are developed to ensure a more sustainable budget is developed.
- 35 Planning for the councils 2023/24 budget will continue over the coming weeks with the budget report to be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 before being presented to Council on 22 February 2023.

## **Recommendations**

- 36 It is recommended that Cabinet
- (a) note the content of the report detailing the content of the Autumn Statement and the provisional local government finance settlement;
  - (b) note that the draft settlement is better than was forecast but that the government have announced that funding settlements for the public sector but especially for unprotected government departments will be challenging for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28;
  - (c) note that proposals for how the additional allocation of £1.440 million from the Council Tax Support fund funding can be used and administered to enhance the current LCTRS will be included as part of the MTFP report to Cabinet in February 2023
  - (d) note the changes to the MTFP(13) planning assumptions set out in the report, including the proposed council tax increases in line with the government's expectations;
  - (e) note the proposed revisions to savings plans for MTFP(13);
  - (f) agree the transfers of reserves recommended as part of the reserves review;

- (g) note the budget shortfall for 2023/24 of £12.881 million with a £22.430 million savings shortfall over the four year MTFP(13) period;
- (h) note the consultation responses on MTFP(13) and consider these when finalising the 2023/24 budget; and
- (i) note that the 2023/34 revenue and capital budget and MTFP(13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 budget report will be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 and to Council on 22 February 2023.

## **Background**

- 37 Previous reports have been presented to Cabinet on the development of MTFP(13), covering the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 and on the development of the 2023/24 revenue budget – in July and October 2022 - to ensure Cabinet are aware of any forecast budget pressures that need to be accommodated and the need to achieve savings / increase council tax in order to balance the budget.
- 38 This report provides an update based on the latest financial forecasts, taking into account the quarter two revenue and capital forecasts presented to Cabinet in November and, significantly, the Autumn Statement made on 17 November and the provisional local government finance settlement published on 19 December 2022.

## **Autumn Statement**

- 39 The Chancellor of the Exchequer published the Autumn Statement (AS) on 17 November 2022. The statement was published against a background of significant turmoil in financial markets in the preceding weeks, following the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer's mini budget / fiscal event on 23 September 2022 where significant unfunded tax cuts had been announced, spooking the markets and leading to rapid increases in interest rates, the price of gilts alongside reductions in the value of the pound. The AS was aimed very much at seeking to calm financial markets.
- 40 The national finances are in a difficult position, with the forecast national deficits being very high and the economy forecast to be heading into a long recession, lasting well into 2024/25. It was widely anticipated that the public sector could face a very difficult financial outlook for 2023/24 and for the medium term, with a public sector pay cap being widely mooted prior to the publication of the AS.
- 41 The AS contained important announcements on future forecasts for government borrowing, taxation and public sector expenditure, alongside the Office for Budget Responsibilities forecasts for inflation, economic growth and taxation yields.
- 42 It was significantly reassuring that for the short term (i.e. the next two years) that the AS recognised the pressures councils were under and announced some much needed additional funding for adult social care and children social care, with a particular focus for adult social care being to invest in initiatives to facilitate early discharge of patients from hospital into the community.
- 43 The AS also announced additional council tax flexibilities for local government, with a clear expectation from government that these are used to help combat the inflationary pressures the sector was under. It was clear

however that funding reductions for unprotected government departments were likely for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28.

- 44 In the AS there was no information published on the Fair Funding Review, the New Homes Bonus, Revenue Support Grant levels or on the Lower Tier Services Grant. The key AS announcements impacting upon local government are detailed below:

### **Council Tax**

- 45 The council tax referendum limit has been increased from 1.99% to 2.99%. This change is a permanent change. In addition, the forecast 1% adult social care precept for the two years 2023/24 and 2024/25 has been confirmed at 2%. On that basis upper tier local authorities will be able to increase council tax by a maximum 4.99% per annum over the next two years.
- 46 Every 1% of council tax increase generates the council circa £2.55 million of additional income. By increasing the council tax by 4.99% instead of the previously forecast / assumed 2.99%, the council will be able to reduce the savings required to balance the budget by circa £5.1 million next year and in 2024/25 and by an additional circa £2.6 million in both 2025/26 and 2026/27, reducing the cuts / savings required by circa £15.4 million over the MTFP(13) planning period.

### **Better Care Fund**

- 47 An additional £600 million would be made available in 2023/24 rising to £1 billion in 2024/25. This funding to be shared 50%/50% between the NHS and local government. At the time it was expected that this grant would be specific to be utilised to improve early discharge of patients from hospital into community settings.

### **New Early Discharge Grant**

- 48 This grant to support discharge from hospital was expected to have broad grant conditions and to be £400 million in 2023/24 rising to £680 million in 2024/25.

### **Social Care Reforms**

- 49 Prior to the AS, the expectation was that the adult social care means test and cost cap changes, alongside the outcome of the fair cost of care process would be introduced in October 2023.
- 50 The AS confirmed however that the implementation date for the reforms has been deferred to October 2025 i.e. after the next General Election. The funding associated with the social care reforms (including the fair cost of care) of £1.265 billion in 2023/24 rising to £1.877 billion in 2024/25, will be distributed to local government as part of the current Social Care Grant.

The additional funding to be utilised to support budget pressures in children's and adult's social care.

- 51 It is not clear at this point if additional funding will be made available to local government in 2025/26 for the implementation of the social care reforms should they ultimately be implemented at that time.

### **National Living Wage**

- 52 Based upon forecasts from the Low Pay Commission the council was previously forecasting an increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) of 8.6% next year. The Low Pay Commission report released on the same day as the AS recommended an increase of 9.7% to £10.42 per hour from April 2023, with a forecast further 6.3% increase in April 2024 to £11.08. By 2024 the NLW is forecast to have achieved its aim of reaching two thirds of the median national earnings level.
- 53 The updated NLW forecasts have added circa £3.4 million of additional budget pressure into 2023/24 and £0.4 million into 2024/25.

### **Energy**

- 54 In the current year, the council is part of the national energy price cap scheme, which is limiting the impact of significant price increases and runs from October 2022 to December 2023. The AS confirmed that the energy price cap for 2023/24 will be targeted to those in need and that local government would not be part of the scheme. No detail has been released on the scheme at this point.
- 55 Energy markets continue to extremely volatile, however the £9 million budget uplift in 2023/24 has remained unchanged, though the recovery of this budget pressure over the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 as (hopefully) prices reduce has been reprofiled based on updated market expectations.

### **Services Grant**

- 56 The AS confirmed that this grant would be top sliced in 2023/24 as a result of the withdrawal from November 2022 of the 1.25% employers national insurance increase. No funding was to be withdrawn in 2022/23.

### **Business Rates**

- 57 The AS announced that the business rates multiplier would be frozen in 2023/24, ensuring total business rates charged would not increase.
- 58 There is a business rates revaluation to be applied from April 2023, which will result in business rates for ratepayers going both up and down, with some element of transitional relief in place to provide protection.

- 59 The AS confirmed local authorities would receive compensation through a Section 31 grant increase to recompense for the business rate multiplier being frozen, as it should have increased in line with CPI in September, which was 10.1%.
- 60 The AS also announced some ongoing business rate discounts for small businesses and retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

## Policy Statement

- 61 On 12 December 2022 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) published a Policy Statement which provided further detail on potential distribution methodology, including confirmation that the Fair Funding Review would not take place until after the next General Election.

## Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

- 62 The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 19 December 2022 and confirmed a number of increases in funding for local government mainly as a result of the £2 billion of additional core grant funding for local authorities in 2023/24, increasing to £3 billion in 2024/25. At the same time funding from the Lower Tier Services Grant, New Homes Bonus and the Services Grant has been repurposed to finance the 10.1% increase in RSG and the 3% funding guarantee (impacting mainly on District Councils). The final settlement is expected to be published in February 2023. The additional funding provided to local authorities with the councils provisional allocations are detailed below:

- (a) **Better Care Fund £600 million in 2023/24 rising to £1 billion in 2024/25** – Local government and the NHS will each receive 50% of this grant providing additional funding of £300 million in 2023/24 and £500 million in 2024/25. The funding has specific grant conditions with local government and the NHS pooling budgets with the aim of improving the discharge of patients from hospital. The council will receive £4.327 million in 2023/24 and a forecast £7.1 million in 2024/25 equating to 1.44% of the national allocation;
- (b) **Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant increase in grant of £400 million in 2023/24 rising to £680 million in 2024/25** – in 2022/23 the government announced additional funding of £2 billion to enable the implementation of adult social care charging reforms and the outcomes of a fair cost of care review. The first £160 million tranche of this funding was allocated in 2022/23 with the council receiving £1.9 million which was utilised in increasing fees to adult social care providers in 2022/23.

In the AS however the government announced that the social care reforms had been deferred from October 2023 to October 2025 and

that the remaining circa £1.8 billion of funding would be repurposed into the Social Care grant to provide support for both adult and children social care.

The council will continue to receive the £1.9 million in the future but in a repurposed Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant. This grant will be £6.609 million in 2023/24 and is forecast to increase by a further £3.2 million in 2024/25.

The additional grant of £4.7 million in 2023/24 is expected to have broad grant conditions requiring that this funding is utilised to support early discharge of patients from hospital.

- (c) **Social Care Grant additional £1.265 billion in 2023/24 rising to £1.877 billion in 2024/25 after discounting transfer of specific grant (Independent Living Fund)** – this funding is to be utilised to support demographic and cost pressures in children’s and adult’s social care.

This funding is being apportioned to local authorities based upon the Adults Relative Needs Formula (RNF) alongside an element of equalisation to consider that local authorities can raise differing amounts from council tax increases due to varying size of council taxbases.

This funding is only payable to upper tier authorities who provide social care services. Net of the transfer of £1.543 million of Independent Living Fund specific grant funding the council already receives, the council will receive an additional £17.066 million in 2023/24 increasing to a forecast £24.866 million in 2024/25, equating to 1.32% of the national allocation, increasing our Social Care Grant to £49.564 million in 2023/24 and to a forecast £57.364 million in 2024/25.

These sums will not however fully address the demographic and price inflationary pressures in Children and Adult Social Care alone (excluding price inflation and energy) of £36.7 million in 2023/24 and £19.7 million in 2024/25;

- (d) **Revenue Support Grant (RSG)** – local authorities will receive an inflation uplift of 10.1% in line with the September 2021 Consumer Price Index (CPI) on their 2022/23 RSG allocations.

The government are transferring three specific grants into RSG from next year, these being the Local Council Tax Administration Grant (allocation currently £0.913 million), the Family Annex Council Tax Discount Grant (allocation currently being £0.013 million) and the Natasha’s Law grant (allocation currently being £0.013 million).

After discounting the transfer of these specific grants into RSG the council will receive an additional £2.952 million next year, increasing RSG received to £32.991 million. CPI is forecast to be 6% in September 2023, so a further increase of £1.9 million in 2024/25 has been factored into the MTFP(13) forecasts. RSG is assumed to be cash flat in 2025/26 and beyond;

- (e) **Reduction in New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding** – it was previously forecast that the NHB may be abolished from 2023/24. The government have however agreed to continue the NHB funding for one more year. The council receives £4.082 million of NHB in 2022/23 which will reduce by £2.222 million to £1.860 million in 2023/24. Nationally the sum payable via NHB will reduce by £263.9 million in 2023/24 with this sum being diverted to ensure all authorities, but particularly district councils, receive a minimum 3% increase in funding in 2023/24 and also to partially finance the 10.1% increase in RSG. At this stage it is forecast that the £1.860 million of NHB received by the council will be withdrawn in 2024/25;
- (f) **Lower Tier Services Grant** – the council presently has a budget of £0.786 million from this grant but similar to NHB this funding is being top sliced to ensure all authorities, but particularly district councils, receive a 3% increase in funding in 2023/24 and to help finance the 10.1% increase in RSG. The council has lost 100% of this funding from 2023/24;
- (g) **Services Grant** – the council currently receives £8.776 million from this grant which for 2022/23 was specified as a one off grant. In 2023/24 the council will receive £4.945 million, a reduction of £3.831 million.

The grant has been reduced to reflect that the withdrawal of the 1.25% employers' national insurance increase from November 2022 which has produced a saving in the council budget. In addition, the government have top sliced this grant to increase the Supporting Families Grant, which is a specific grant in Adult and Health Services and to partially cover the 10.1% inflation uplift to RSG and to help fund the 3% funding guarantee.

- (h) **Council Tax Support Fund** - The provisional settlement contained £100 million of additional one off funding for local authorities to support the most financial vulnerable households in England in 2023/24.

The Council Tax Support Fund is aimed at providing further support to those low income financially vulnerable households already receiving some element Council Tax Support. Durham has been allocated £1.440 million to fund further reductions to those still facing

financial hardship as part of its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2023/24.

The government expects that the grant allocation is used to fund further reductions in the council tax liability of individuals receiving LCTRS support but still left with an outstanding council tax liability, by up to £25 in 2023/24.

Local authorities are also able to use a proportion of their allocations to determine their own local approaches to supporting economically vulnerable households with council tax bills.

As the council has already agreed its Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24, which includes continued use of previous Covid 19 Hardship Funding to provide up to £75 of additional support to Working Age LCTRS claimants, the scheme is being reviewed in the light of the Government's announcement. The Government guidance stipulates that the support of up to £25 should be provided to both Working Age and Pensioner claimants.

Proposals for how the funding can be used and administered to enhance the current LCTRS will be included as part of the MTFP(13) report to Cabinet in February 2023.

- 63 The government has also announced that the implementation of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) would definitely be delayed until at least 2025/26.
- 64 Overall, the settlement is better than was originally forecast by the council and by most commentators. The additional funding received by the council next year is £39.792 million, however, our unavoidable cost pressures total £81.906 million, leaving £42.114 million to fund from a combination of council tax increases, business rates tax base changes, savings and efficiencies and council reserves in order to balance the budget.
- 65 The major concern for the council must be however what happens to financial settlements from 2025/26 onwards, where it is forecast that funding uplifts for the public sector will be limited to an average of 1% real terms uplifts for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28. If as expected the NHS, Education and Defence are protected then it is highly likely that local government would face funding reductions. At this stage for modelling purposes it is forecast that there will be cash flat settlements for local government which are funding reductions in real terms.

### **Core Spending Power (CSP)**

- 66 The provisional CSP figures for the council, which factor in assumptions on council tax increases in line with the referendum limits and the maximum permissible under the Adult Social Care Precept, would indicate a more positive position compared to previous years, provided that the Council

utilises the additional council tax flexibilities that have been provided. The England average is a 9.2% CSP increase next year, whilst Durham's position is forecast to be 10.3%. A number of issues need to be considered in this regard however:

- (a) the CSP calculation forecasts that the council will increase council tax by the full 4.99% available i.e. the revised 2.99% referendum level plus the 2% adult social care precept raising powers. Any 1% below the 4.99% assumed would reduce the CSP by 0.5%;
- (b) the CSP includes the additional Better Care Fund which comes associated with a new burden and as such is not available to support core council service provision.

67 In terms of comparative CSP per dwelling positions the table below compares the council with a number of authorities and the England average. If Durham received a CSP per dwelling equivalent to the national average CSP of £2,360 per dwelling the council would receive an additional £42 million of government funding.

Area	Core Spending Power Per Dwelling
	£
England	2,360
Durham	2,193
Middlesbrough	2,557
Newcastle	2,371
Northumberland	2,280
Richmond Upon Thames	2,236
Wokingham	2,213

### Review of MTFP Model

68 The report to Cabinet on 12 October 2022 provided an update on the forecast revenue budget position for 2023/24 as well as an update for the MTFP(13) planning period 2023/24 to 2026/27.

69 An ongoing review of base budget pressures and savings options has been carried out resulting in a number of amendments to the base budget pressures forecasts for the MTFP(13) period. The major amendments and updates to the forecasts that were reported previously which are included in the updated MTFP(13) model attached at Appendix 2 are detailed below:

- (a) **Government Funding**

The revised model includes the government funding published in the provisional settlement and detailed above. In overall terms, after discounting grants provided for a specific purpose, the Council is forecast to receive £17.883 million of net additional grant funding in 2023/24 and a forecast £10.920 million of additional grant funding in 2024/25 to assist it with setting its budgets over the next two years;

(b) **Business Rate Retention**

The autumn statement confirmed that the total sums associated with business rate retention would increase by 10.1% in 2023/24 in line with September 2022 CPI. The model has been updated to reflect this in relation to business rate local share, Section 31 grants and the Top Up grant. It is assumed that CPI will be 6% in September 2023 and this has been used to determine estimated increases for 2024/25. Compared to the assumptions built into the October report, the updated forecasts include an additional £1.9 million of funding in 2023/24 and a reduction of £3.65 million in 2024/25;

(c) **Council Tax Increases**

The 12 October 2022 MTFP(13) update report included an assumption of council tax increases of 2.99% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (a 1.99% base council tax increase and a 1% adult social care precept each year) and a 1.99% increase in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The updated modelling assumptions, in line with government expectations and in light of the significant inflationary pressures being faced, is that council tax increases of 4.99% will be applied in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (a 2.99% base council tax increase and a 2% adult social care precept each year) and a 2.99% increase in 2025/26 and 2026/27. The additional revenues generated from these higher increases are £5.4 million in 2023/24; £5.6 million in 2024/25; £3.2 million in 2025/26; and £3.4 million in 2026/27.

These increases are necessary to assist in helping to set a balanced budget in the context of our unavoidable cost pressures, which total £81.906 million in 2023/24 and £163.303 million over the four year MTFP(13) planning period.

Inflationary and demand pressures in Adult and Children's Social Care alone total £45.2 million next year. Despite £21.8 million of additional government grant support being provided to help support these areas and £5.0 million possible through the Adult Social Precept there is still a funding gap of circa £18.4 million next year.

In 2022/23 the council had the flexibility to increase council tax by 1.99% for the referendum limit and by up to 3% for the adult social care precept. After due consideration council agreed to limit the 2022/23 council tax increase to 3% for the adult social care precept only and forgoes the 1.99% base council tax increase rather than increasing council tax by the maximum 4.99%, which is what the government expectation was (this is baked into the Core Spending Power calculations) and what the majority of other upper tier councils did.

In County Durham 83% of all households reside in properties that are in Bands A-C. A 4.99% increase in the council's council tax charge would result in an increase of between £1.12 and £1.50 per week for these residents. The circa 54,000 households on low incomes who qualify for support through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, many of which would qualify for 100% support and pay no council tax would be protected from any increase.

(d) **Council Tax Base**

The 12 October 2022 MTFP(13) update report forecast a £3 million increase in the taxbase for 2023/24. The council tax taxbase setting report to Cabinet on 16 November 2022 however, identified a 1,980.1 (1.38%) Band D equivalent increase in the taxbase for 2023/24 equating to a £3.4 million increase. The tax base estimates in the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 now build in an assumed 0.9% annual increase in the tax base year on year. Compared to the assumptions built into the October report, additional revenues from tax base increases across the MTFP(13) planning period are £1.800 million higher than previous estimates;

(d) **Pay Inflation**

Pay inflation was previously forecast to be 4% in 2023/24 and 3% in 2024/25. In the light of the 9.7% increase in NLW and the consequential impacts on lower grades within the local government pay spine which are very close to the NLW hourly limit, it is felt prudent to increase the 2023/24 assumption to 5% but reduce the 2024/25 assumption to 2% as inflation is forecast to reduce significantly in that year and the NLW is forecast to have achieved its policy aim of convergence with two thirds of the nation median earnings by 1 April 2024. The impact of these changes is an increase in the provision for pay inflation of £2.5 million in 2023/24 (to £12.2 million) and a reduction of £2.5 million in 2024/25 (to £5.2 million);

(e) **Price Inflation**

Price Inflation was previously forecast to be 4% in 2023/24. It is now forecast that inflation will stay high across most of 2023/24. It is felt prudent therefore to increase the price inflation forecast from 4% to 5%. The impact of this change is to increase the budget pressure for price inflation by £1.1 million in 2023/24 to £5.3 million;

(f) **Holiday Pay**

A legal case has been settled nationally on the treatment of holiday pay for casual staff, which has necessitated a change in the way the council calculates and pays for holiday pay for these workers. This will result in a forecast £0.380 million increase in casual workers' pay from 2023/24;

(g) **Adult Social Care Fees**

The higher than forecast increase in NLW and higher rates of CPI have resulted in a forecast fee uplifts in 2023/24 to £21.9 million;

(h) **Adult Social Care Reform**

The deferral of the Adult Social Care reforms until October 2025, which would have seen the introduction of amendments to the means test for care charging and the introduction of the £86,000 cost cap, has meant that the cost of these changes has had to be reprofiled. It was forecast that the means test changes would result in additional costs (lost income) for the council of £3.5 million. This cost has been reprofiled to impact in 2025/26 and 2026/27 rather than 2023/24 and 2024/25;

(i) **Pension Fund Valuation**

The pension fund actuary has finalised deliberations on the pension fund triennial revaluation. The revaluation will result in a £4.4 million reduction in the annual deficit recovery payment to the pension fund and the employers pension contribution rate will fall from 18.5% to 18.1% saving £0.7 million. The total £5.1 million reduction in cost is higher than the previous £2.8 million forecast;

(j) **Children's Demographics**

The looked after children budget continues to face significant pressure mainly as a result of the complex nature of children requiring care but also due to the lack of supply of care placements which is resulting in increased costs. The updated budget forecast, which is based on the placement mix at 30 November 2022 and factors in an assumed 5% inflationary pressure next year, has increased from £7.5 million to £13.8 million;

(k) **Home To School Transport**

Growth required in this budget was previously forecast to be £2.6 million. Updated forecasts considering the impact of service volumes, the increased cost of contracts tendered from a September 2022 start, the increase in contract prices for base inflation and the cost of contracts to be relet from September 2023 has resulted in an increase in the forecast cost to £8.3 million. This sum is a large increase which is mainly the full year effect of the contracts relet in September 2022 costing in excess of 25% more than the previous contracts;

(l) **Waste contracts**

During 2023/24 waste volumes have been slowly moving back towards pre COVID levels. This has enabled the forecast £2.6 million increase in the cost of waste contracts to be reduced to £1.6 million;

(m) **External Audit Fees**

In recent years audit firms have struggled to fulfil external audit contracts. This has been due to a mixture of tendered contract costs being too low and a problem with recruiting new auditors. The Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) has retendered for all local authority contracts resulting in significant increase in costs. The cost increase for the council is £0.350 million;

(n) **Homelessness**

During COVID lockdowns local authorities were required by government to house anybody whom at that point was homeless. Costs were able to be recovered via government COVID grant funding. That funding has now ceased but the council is still expending significant sums, above the budget provision to deal with the increased demand which has not dissipated.

At the same time a higher number of people are presenting as homeless at the present time due. It is forecast that a budget increase of £0.750 million is required in order to set a balanced budget next year and address the current overspending in this area;

(o) **Investment Income**

Two factors are resulting in a short term increase in investment income. Council cash balances are high at the present time but are forecast to reduce significantly as reserves are expended but particularly as the councils circa £600 million capital programme is

expended. In addition interest rates are higher at the present time than in previous years.

It is forecast that the investment income budget will be over recovered by £7 million in 2023/24 due to these two factors. It is then forecast however that cash balances will significantly reduce in 2024/25 bringing income back within budget. On that basis a £7 million one off benefit is introduced in 2023/24 but then withdrawn in 2024/25;

(p) **Prudential Borrowing**

Due to the current high level of cash balances the council does not forecast that borrowing will be required during 2023/24, though there remains an underlying need to borrow in line with our Capital Financing Requirement and Treasury Management policies. It is forecast however, that as cash balances decrease that borrowing will be required during 2024/25.

With this in mind the £3 million provision for new additional prudential borrowing previously required in 2023/24 has been reprofiled into 2024/25. Public Works Loans Board (PWL) interest rates have increased over the last six to nine months. Rates were previously circa 2.5% but have now increased to as high as 5%. With this in mind prudential borrowing cost forecasts for 2025/26 and 2026/27 have been increased to £3.4 million and £3 million respectively to ensure future years capital programmes can be financed, though the level of borrowing these budget provisions can fund will be lower than previous MTFP budget setting rounds.

(q) **Collection Fund Deficit Recovery**

The provision for recovery of the deficit that was created in the Council Tax Collection Fund in 2020/21 during the height of the pandemic, which in line with regulations was to be amortised over three years has been revised.

In the October Cabinet report provision of £0.792 million had been made in 2023/24. Based on the improved recovery over the last year and an improved forecast in terms of the Collection Fund to 31 March 2023, this provision can be removed from the budget next year.

70 Taking on board available government funding, taxbase growth, updated base budget pressures, and an assumption that the council raises council tax by the maximum sums available, the savings required over the next four years has reduced to £41.041 million, with £25.614 million of this falling into 2023/24. This compares to a previous forecast of savings

required over the next four years of £52.569 million with £37.389 million of this falling into 2023/24.

- 71 The MTFP(13) report to Cabinet on 12 October 2022 identified £17.731 million of savings options for consultation, with £11.873 million of the savings being in 2023/24, leaving a shortfall of £25.516 million to be met from the MTFP Support Reserve in order to balance the budget.
- 72 Work has continued to identify additional savings which could be considered whilst the profile of delivery of savings continues to be reviewed.
- 73 Additional savings have been identified from the early redemption of debt (£0.200 million), a restructure of Head of Service posts (£0.081 million) and from the removal of the free after two policy for council car parks introduced to aid COVID recovery in 2021/22 (£0.600 million).
- 74 None of the savings previously put forward have been withdrawn at this stage, but savings linked to a restructure of the Internal Audit Team will need to be reprofiled between 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 75 The revised savings factoring in the new additional savings identified now total £18.611 million, with £12.733 million achievable in 2023/24 and work continues to refine these proposals, which will be considered and approved at Cabinet and Council in February as part of the budget setting process. An updated Equality Impact Assessment factoring in the consultation feedback and further work undertaken since the initial screening was undertaken in October will be factored into the February reports.

### **MTFP(13) Consultation**

- 76 Between 25 October to 22 November 2022, consultation was undertaken with residents and partners regarding proposals to balance the council's budget for the next financial year (2023/24). During the same period and beyond to 1 December 2022, presentations were made to the 14 Area Action Partnership Boards.
- 77 Officers also attended meetings of the County Durham Partnership (CDP), County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and the Youth Council and met with Trade Unions representatives during the period of the consultation.
- 78 Consultation was published on the Councils website and promoted and CDP partners were written to seek their views on the Councils budget strategy. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board met on 24 October 2022 to consider the October Cabinet report. The questions posed during the public consultation were as follows:
  - (a) What is your view on our approach to balancing the 2023/24 forecast budget shortfall?;

- (b) What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you or those you represent?;
  - (c) Do you have any alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings?;
  - (d) If the government do remove the cap, what is your view on the council utilising additional Council Tax raising powers above the current 2.99% forecast, given that we may be expected to do this?
- 79 The consultation was promoted with press releases; social media posts; posters displayed in libraries and Customer Access Points and targeted emails were sent to a range of partners.

**Participation**

- 80 The approach enabled the council to engage with 1,020 people who provided their views.
- 81 Feedback was received across the protected groups, although rates were not always directly comparable with population data for the County. More women (59.9%) than men responded to the survey. In terms of age, 83.5% of respondents of respondents were between the age of 18-64, with 16.3% over the age of 65. Recent census 21 data releases show County Durham’s 16-64 years population is 61.8%, demonstrating a disproportionately higher engagement rate with the ‘working age’ population. There was only one respondent from the under 18 age group however a targeted engagement session was carried out with 17 members of the Youth Council to provide a representative voice for younger residents.
- 82 The disability respondent rate was 19.1%, which is broadly representative with census 11 rates of 18.9% (for working age) and 23.6% (for overall county population). 2.5% of respondents were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic which is lower than recently released census 21 ethnicity data for the County at 5.3%. Respondents from the remaining protected groups were representative of the population with 6% from the lesbian, gay and bisexual population and 36.8% having no religion or belief. There was a slightly higher response rate from Christians (60.4%) compared to the County wide rate of 54.6%.
- 83 Full detail of responses can be found in Appendix 3 with summary detail below and an analysis of respondents across various protected characteristics detailed in Appendix 1 also:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
Survey Online	628
Paper surveys in Libraries	38

<b>Method</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
Paper surveys in Customer Access Points	2
14 AAP Board meetings	269
AAP survey responses	30
Youth Council	17
County Durham Association of Local Councils	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,020</b>

84 The outcomes from across the consultation have been recorded and analysed and key messages are summarised below.

85 A total of 668 people completed a survey either online or via a paper version. The views expressed differed between those that accessed the material on line versus those that participated in one of the facilitated sessions, where there was an opportunity for questions to be asked and a more informed debate took place.

### **Our approach to balancing the 2023/24 forecast budget shortfall – online and paper responses**

86 When respondents were asked about their level of agreement with the approach to balancing the 2023/24 budget shortfall, there were 609 responses to this question. 49% of responses either agreed or neither agreed nor disagreed, whilst 51% disagreed.

87 When asked to explain their views, 810 comments were received with 620 of these being negative comments. Whilst the comments spanned across all the proposals, the majority of comments related to:

- (a) the 2.99% increase in council tax;
- (b) the impact of further reductions on back office on frontline service delivery.

### **Back-office savings**

88 There were 167 comments relating to the back office savings that were consulted on. The largest number of comments related to general disagreement (42) and concern that these would impact on the delivery of front line services (30).

89 From the comments that supported the approach, the need for a balanced approach was mentioned.

### **Income raising opportunities**

- 90 There were 67 comments relating to income raising opportunities that were consulted on. In the main, there was more positive response (39) to the range of income opportunities proposed which included support for selling renewable energy (15), and a need to explore more commercial and profit making opportunities (9).

### **Review of front-line service subject to further consultation**

- 91 There were 69 comments which focused on the need to retain services for the vulnerable, the sports and culture offer, and suggestions to review the use of contractors and the management of commercial services as a way of achieving savings.

### **Use of council reserves**

- 92 There were 47 comments on the planned use of reserves and from these, 16 comments were in support whilst 22 comments disagreed with the approach and a further 9 raised concerns about the sustainability of this approach.

### **Council Tax increases of 2.99%**

- 93 There were 244 comments received in relation to increasing the council tax by 2.99%. The largest number of comments (215) disagreed either in general (106), or specifically mentioned that they felt that families would struggle financially (55) or that the council tax is already high (38). A small number of responses related to reviewing the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (6) or to reduce council tax.
- 94 From the responses in support (29), 14 agreed generally with the approach, a few suggested charging student properties (legally this cannot be implemented), with four supportive of further increases.

### **The impact of this approach upon you or those you represent**

- 95 Respondents were asked to tell us how they felt they would be impacted by the proposals and why they believed this would be the case. 605 responses were received to this question with 29% stating that it was either a positive or neither positive nor negative, whilst 71% stated that it would have a negative impact on them.
- 96 The vast majority of comments related to concerns about the impact on either household budgets or potential reduction in services for the public (427). From those, the highest number of comments (165) were concerned about the impact of the cost of living, with a further 39 saying that they cannot afford to pay more. 117 stated that this would lead to reduced services for the public.

### **Alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings**

97 In total 541 comments were received suggesting alternative ways in which savings could be achieved. The main responses have been grouped into the following categories:

- (a) **Efficiencies (101)**– make the savings from increased efficiencies (85), examine licences, subscriptions and procurement (11), other (5);
- (b) **Staffing costs (148)** – reduce salaries to senior officers (37), reduce number of management posts (29), reduce staff travel / work from home (29), reduce the cost of councillors including numbers, allowances and projects (19), promote cross-cutting roles and increase knowledge (10), redeploy staff into essential services (12), reduce use of consultants and agency staff (8), other (4);
- (c) **Capital projects (71)** – stop investment in capital or regeneration projects (38), do not proceed with plans for the reopening of the DLI Museum and Gallery project (19), invest more in invest to save projects (14);
- (d) **Buildings (55)** – reduce the number of buildings and land used (36), retain the money from the sale of the new HQ and stay in County Hall to utilise these funds (14), other (5);
- (e) **Services (55)** – reduce grounds maintenance across the county (11), reduce non-essential services (22), review services (22);
- (f) **Increase charges (26)** – increase charges for services, fines and parking (22), parking (4);
- (g) **Council tax (20)** – increase the tax cost for higher band properties (11), charge for student properties (9);
- (h) **Energy efficiency (19)** – increased use of solar power and renewables (19);
- (i) **Businesses (14)** - Support profitable businesses to expand (14);
- (j) **Revenue projects (12)** – reduce arts projects and public events (12).

### **The council utilising additional Council Tax raising powers above the current 2.99% forecast**

98 There were 612 responses regarding the prospect of raising the council tax above 2.99%. During the consultation period, the government announced that they were making changes to the Council Tax referendum limits and amending the Adult Social Care Precepting powers in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and that they expected local authorities to take up these new flexibilities. 36% of responses either agreed or neither agreed nor disagreed, whilst 64% disagreed with the prospect of council tax increases beyond 2.99%.

- 99 The main reason given was that the increase will be unaffordable and will cause hardship (51), its already too high (26), need to make savings in alternative ways (18) and that it will be wasted (14).
- 100 There were 36 comments / responses in agreement, stating that it is required, it will protect services, is affordable and there are measures in place to protect people in low income households through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

### **Summary of feedback – AAP Board Meetings**

- 101 A presentation was delivered to each AAP Board where they could ask questions and provide feedback. Members of the public were invited to attend the meetings and a feedback survey was available to collect responses. In total, 30 surveys were completed by those who attended these sessions across the 14 AAPs.
- 102 The key themes which emerged from the combination of AAP Board discussion and analysis of surveys are detailed below.

### **The proposed approach**

- 103 There was an understanding and acceptance that budget reductions must be achieved and the importance of maintaining services – particularly front line services. It was difficult to achieve consensus on the feedback from the AAP meetings, however 19 of the 30 survey responses completed by AAP attendees agreed with the approach set out.
- 104 **Council Tax increase of 2.99%:** There was general debate at boards who all appreciated the problem however there were some concerns expressed about the impact on low income household who are also confronted with the increases in cost of living and energy prices were expressed.
- 105 The importance of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to protect those on the lowest income was highlighted and recognised. However, there was concern that households which are not eligible will be impacted more and the cost of living crisis could result in an increase in eligible households for the scheme.
- 106 **Use of reserves:** The majority of AAPs supported the use of reserves as a short term measure; however, concerns were about sustainability into the future and that we must maintain a safety net to deal with future emergencies such as storm Arwen.
- 107 In addition to the key themes above, comments were made that it may impact some geographical areas more than others and these are detailed below.
- 108 **Poverty:** Comments from East Durham cited that it has high levels of poverty and deprived neighbourhoods with 45% of children already living in

poverty. Concern was expressed that we needed to ensure that these neighbourhoods are supported during these difficult financial times.

- 109 **Rural issues:** Whilst recognising the higher costs of delivering services in rural areas, they needed to be maintained. Comments were also received in relation to the impact on rural areas of high energy prices, in particular, for villages that are not connected to the gas network as well as the impact on rural schools.

### **The impact of this approach upon you or those you represent**

110 The potential impacts of the approach include:

- (a) loss of services for those who need them in particular those services which support individuals of all ages;
- (b) household budgets;
- (c) funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector, local communities and AAPs;
- (d) weakened essential services as a result of back office reductions;
- (e) reductions in funding for Social Care could result in more costly services in the future;
- (f) staff morale of remaining fewer staff and a loss of knowledge and skills.

### **Alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings**

111 Alternative ideas for balancing the budget include:

- (a) opportunities of additional funding through devolution;
- (b) lobby Government following 10 years of austerity and its impact on left behind neighbourhoods;
- (c) pause spending on capital expenditure projects;
- (d) review commissioned services provided by profit making organisations;
- (e) reduce the number of buildings and increase co-location of services.

### **The council utilising additional Council Tax raising powers above the current 2.99% forecast**

112 The response to this question was divided. Most AAPs felt that household budget pressures would increase if the Council Tax was raised higher than 2.99% especially for those on low incomes or already living in poverty.

- 113 However, there was agreement from some which felt that increasing council tax is necessary and better than reduction in services and a fair approach to increasing revenue.

## **Summary of feedback from Partners**

### **County Durham Partnership**

- 114 The County Durham Partnership received a presentation on the council's budget proposals during the consultation period. CDP representatives were asked to submit their views in writing. Responses were received from Durham Police, the Police Crime and Victim's Commissioner (PCVC) and Livin, the housing representative on the Board.
- 115 **The Police and PCVC** expressed concern in their joint response about how balancing finances might affect the commitment to improve public services, wellbeing and economic growth but recognised that the challenges were not of the council's making. They recognised that there will be some difficult decisions to make but are confident in the council's ability to deliver these following thorough planning, full consultation and impact assessment and that the council would continue to lobby for a greater share of funding. The response highlighted a concern that the impact of the proposals on staff would be recognised and managed in terms of their wellbeing.
- 116 **Livin** agreed with the proposed approach to balancing the budget making the following comments. 'A council tax rise would be more palatable if incomes were rising by a similar level, rather than being stagnant, and that council tax exemptions should continue to be utilised to support the most vulnerable in the county, especially whilst cost of living remains high'. They also agreed with the principle of raising council tax above 2.99%, as additional receipts can support vulnerable residents and help avoid cuts to frontline services. Livin also said we should protect front line services as far as possible, as when gaps or shortfalls occur, members of their staff (untrained) have been required to fulfil responsibilities usually carried out by adult and children's services.

### **Town and Parish Councils**

- 117 The County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) received a presentation at their Larger and Smaller and Medium Council Forums on 24 November.
- 118 Town and Parish councils were largely sympathetic with the proposals as they are facing similar budgetary challenges in setting their budgets for 2023/24 and beyond. Their main comment was that members hoped that the budget could be balanced without too many reductions to front line services.

- 119 City of Durham Parish Council responded separately, again acknowledging the challenging circumstances the council finds itself in. It is supportive of the fact that the proposals put forward have explored every avenue to achieve the savings without heavily impacting on front line services but is concerned that further staff reductions should not impact on services for the most vulnerable. The Parish Council was welcoming of the income raising proposals but did express a concern about the impact of increased demand for planning application services and how that may affect assets outside the scope of the local development plan. The response also mentions the adverse impact of central government policy in relation to lost Council Tax revenue due to student exemptions.

### **Youth Council**

- 120 The Youth Council had a presentation on the council's budget on 14 November with 17 young people attending. The young people were concerned about inflation and how council tax rises would affect people already struggling. They were concerned about the effect that the need to make savings might have on support schemes for young people, home to school transport and youth engagement activities like the Youth Council.

### **MTFP(13) Summary**

- 121 The report to Cabinet on 12 October 2022 highlighted significant shortfalls over the MTFP(13) period. After taking into account the savings options proposed for consultation the shortfall was £35.1 million over the MTFP period with £25.5 million of the shortfall in 2023/24.
- 122 The MTFP(13) model attached at Appendix 2 includes detail of the grant increases detailed in the provisional local government settlement. The model also assumes that the council will raise council tax by the maximum sum possible utilising the new council tax flexibilities being 4.99% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and 2.99% in 2025/26 and 2026/27. Building in the council tax assumptions, the grant increases detailed in the provisional local government finance settlement, the revised base budget pressures and the revised options for savings the savings shortfall is summarised below for the MTFP(13) period 2023/24 to 2026/27.

	<b>Savings Requirement</b>	<b>Less Savings Options</b>	<b>Savings Shortfall</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
2023/24	25.614	(12.733)	12.881
2024/25	2.226	(2.225)	0.001
2025/26	5.213	(1.873)	3.340
2026/27	7.988	(1.780)	6.208

**TOTAL                    41.041                    (18.611)                    22.430**

## Reserves Review

- 123 To ensure budgets can be balanced and to provide time to work up proposals to reduce expenditure to address the underlying budget position, the October Cabinet report highlighted that a thorough review of all earmarked reserves was to be undertaken to ensure that corporate reserves are in place to ensure the council can set balanced budgets.
- 124 The reserves review has taken place in the context of a significant reduction in reserves, as reported in the Quarter 2 forecast of outturn to Cabinet on 17 November 2022, which forecast that total earmarked and cash limit reserves (excluding school reserves) would reduce by £44.915 million in 2022/23, from £235.529 million to £190.614 million, as summarised below:

	<b>Earmarked £ million</b>	<b>Cash Limit £ million</b>	<b>Total £ million</b>
Opening Earmarked Balances as at 1 April 2022	-223.964	-11.565	-235.529
Adjusted for increase (-) / use of Earmarked Reserves	41.516	3.399	44.915
Transfers Between Earmarked and Cash Limit Reserves	0.146	-0.146	0.000
<b>Earmarked Reserve Balances as at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>-182.302</b>	<b>-8.312</b>	<b>-190.614</b>

- 125 In addition, the General Reserve was forecast to reduce by £4.587 million to a forecast year-end balance of £21.311 million, taking the balance below the minimum threshold agreed by Council in February 2022 of £23 million.
- 126 In undertaking the review, the following factors were considered in terms of determining the level of earmarked reserves that could be required over the coming years to support the MTFP and the councils commercial activities:
- (a) **MTFP(13) shortfalls** – the latest forecast is that there will be a shortfall of £12.881 million in 2023/24 with that sum requiring the utilisation of the MTFP Support reserve to balance the budget, with additional shortfalls of circa £10 million in future years also. More worryingly, the forecasts for 2025/26 and 2026/27 assume that local government does not receive funding reductions as a result of the fiscal tightening in public finances detailed in the 17 November 2022 Autumn Statement. To cover this risk it is imperative that corporate reserves are available to support the MTFP during that period also;
  - (b) **ER/VR reserve** – if the council is required to achieve significant savings over the coming years to balance budgets the current balance will not suffice. It is also recognised that the council is also required to fund ER/VR costs in maintained schools;

- (c) **Commercial Reserve** – the current reserve balance of £5 million will not suffice to cover the short term costs that will be incurred in relation to commercial developments at Milburngate and Net Park 3;
- (d) **General Reserve** – the councils current policy is to seek to hold this reserve at between 5% and 7.5% of the councils Net Revenue Budget Requirement. This is a range of between £23 million and £35 million. The council is facing a £14.6 million overspend which impacting upon the general reserve balance with it forecast to stand at £21.3 million at the end of 2022/23, which is below the recommended minimum. There is a risk that the council continues to face higher than forecast inflationary and demand led budget pressures in future years and it is imperative that corporate reserves are in place to protect the financial position of the council.

127 The reserves review has taken these issues into account and it is recommended that the following reserves are transferred as part of the review process.

- (a) **Town and Villages Reserve £16.833 million** – the total investment from the reserve was £25 million. From this sum £4.2 million was invested into AAP's and Members budgets. In addition a sum of £0.8 million is planned to be invested in a range of revenue programmes. A sum of £3.167 million was invested from the reserve up until the 31 March 2022 leaving an available balance of £16.833 million. All of the future investments of the programme will be capital investments. It is recommended that the remainder of the full programme is funded as part of the development of the MTFP(13) capital programme with the reserve utilised within the reserves review process;
- (b) **Members Priorities Reserve £5.801 million** – the MTFP(12) report to Council on 23 February detailed a range of Member Priority investments of £10 million. A range of these priorities were capital investments. Capital expenditure of £3.114 million is forecast in 2022/23 and it is recommended that this is financed from capital contingencies freeing up the reserve. The planned £2.687 million of investment in future years will be considered as part of the development of the MTFP(13) capital programme with the reserve utilised within the reserves review process;
- (c) **Equal Pay Reserve £5 million** – All liabilities have been assessed and it is felt that the £9.479 million reserve can be reduced by £5 million;
- (d) **Culture Reserve £3 million** – at the end of 2022/23 a Cultural Reserve of £5 million was created to enable the council to

significantly invest if the council was successful in the City of Culture bid for 2025. Although the council was not successful with the bid it is still recommended that the council has a significant cultural programme in 2025. The reserve will be reduced by £3 million resulting in £2 million still being available for a 2025 cultural programme;

- (e) **Feasibility Reserve £1.8 million** – at the end of 2022/23 an earmarked reserve of £3.8 million was created to ensure the council could carry out robust feasibility studies to support the Levelling Up Fund capital bids thus securing our optimum chance in succeeding in bids for circa £100 million of government funding. It is forecast that £2 million will have been expended in developing the bids resulting in £1.8 million being available for utilisation in the reserve review;
- (f) **Review of all other earmarked reserves £5.885 million** – all earmarked reserves have been reviewed to identify where there is a firm commitment of investment. This review has identified there are 25 reserves where sums could be utilised as part of the reserves review totalling £5.885 million.

128 The table below summarises the reserves that have been identified for transfer to enable corporate reserves to be replenished and support the council in setting balanced budgets and making sound decisions on savings in a timely manner. The total sum available being £38.319 million

	<b>£m</b>
Town and Villages	16.833
Member Priorities	5.801
Equal Pay Reserve	5.000
Culture Reserve	3.000
Feasibility Reserve	1.800
Service Earmarked Reserves	<u>5.885</u>
<b>TOTAL RESERVES AVAILABLE</b>	<b><u>38.319</u></b>

129 It is recommended that the £38.319 million is utilised as follows:

	<b>Current Balance</b>	<b>Addition</b>	<b>Revised Balance</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
MTFP Support	15.162	27.319	42.481
ER/VR Reserve	5.313	7.500	12.813
Commercial Reserve	4.971	3.500	8.471

- 130 The replenishment of the reserves set out above will ensure the council is well placed to face future financial challenges either relating to balancing future years budgets and supporting the MTFP process or providing cover for budget overspends thus protecting the General Reserve.

## **Conclusion**

- 131 The provisional settlement received is in the main positive for the council and is to be welcomed. It will assist in helping to support the balancing of the 2023/24 budget provided the council tax raising flexibilities are taken, which is a clear expectation from central government. It will however not allow a balanced budget to be set without the need for significant savings (£12.733 million) and use of reserves next year (£12.881 million).
- 132 The provisional settlement however does not provide long term certainty for local government, with many uncertainties still in place in relation to settlements, especially beyond 2025/26.
- 133 The report sets out details of the consultation feedback received. The feedback will be taken on board in terms of finalising the saving that will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February as part of the budget setting process. The report sets out details of proposed changes to the savings previously considered by Cabinet. None of the savings previously put forward have been withdrawn at this stage, but there are some re-profiling proposals between 2023/24 and 2024/25. In addition, three new savings are to be considered, which increases the overall saving total to £18.611 million, and details of these are set out in the report.
- 134 To ensure budgets can be balanced, whilst further clarity is sought and to provide time to work up proposals to reduce expenditure to address the underlying budget position, a thorough review of all earmarked reserves has been completed and the report sets out details of the earmarked reserves to be re-prioritised and the transfer of funding to the ER/VR reserve and to the MTFP Support Reserve, to provide capacity to balance the budget over the medium term, together with a proposed transfer to the Commercial Reserve.

135 Planning for the councils 2023/24 budget will continue over the coming weeks with the budget report to be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 before being presented to Council on 22 February 2023.

### **Background papers**

- Autumn Statement, published 25 November 2022
- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, published 19 December 2022

### **Other useful documents**

- Medium Term Financial Plan (12), 2022/23 to 2025/26 – Report to Council 23 February 2022
- Medium Term Financial Plan (13), 2023/24 to 2026/27 – Report to Cabinet 13 July 2022
- Medium Term Financial Plan (13), 2023/24 to 2026/27 – Report to Cabinet 12 October 2022
- Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24 – Report to Council 19 October 2022
- Council Tax Base 2023/24 and Forecast Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31 March 2023 – Report to Cabinet 16 November 2022
- Forecast of Revenue and capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 30 September 2022 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(12) savings – Report to Cabinet 16 November 2022

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget for 2023/24. It also has a fiduciary duty not to waste public resources.

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

### **Finance**

On 17 November 2022 the Chancellor of the Exchequer published an Autumn Statement (AS). It was widely expected that the AS would result in funding reductions for the public sector alongside a potential public sector capped pay increases, due to the significant increases in the forecast of annual national deficits over the coming years - a combination of post Brexit economic challenges, the ongoing impact of the pandemic upon the economy and the poor outlook for the economy in the medium term.

In making the AS, the Chancellor of the Exchequer deferred decisions on any significant funding reductions in the public sector until the next parliamentary period, with reductions now expected in the period 2025/26 to 2027/28. On a more positive however, additional funding was provided to the health service, education and local government, as well as local government being provided with additional council tax raising flexibilities.

The additional funding being provided will result in an improved financial outlook for the council in the short term. The report highlights that there is a savings shortfall in 2023/24 of £25.614 million required to balance the 2023/24 budget, with £41.041 million of additional savings required across the next four years.

Additional savings of £18.336 million across the MTFP(13) period have been factored into the forecasts to assist in balancing budgets across the MTFP(13) period, taking the overall savings proposals to £18.611 million.

Additional savings have been identified from the early redemption of debt (£0.200 million), a restructure of Head of Service posts (£0.081 million) and from the removal of the free after two policy for council car parks introduced to aid COVID recovery in 2021/22 (£0.600 million).

The savings factored into the October Cabinet report have been subject to consultation during October and November. None of the savings previously put forward have been withdrawn at this stage, but savings linked to a restructure of the Internal Audit Team will need to be reprofiled between 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Final decisions on savings to be implemented will be taken as part of the budget setting report in February 2023.

The achievement of £12.733 million of savings in 2023/24 will help reduce the 2023/24 funding shortfall from £25.614 million to £12.881 million whilst the £18.611 million of savings proposed will reduce the savings shortfall over the four years of MTFP(13) from £41.041 million to £22.430 million.

To ensure budgets can be balanced whilst clarity is provided and to provide time to work up proposals to reduce expenditure to address the underlying budget position, the October Cabinet report highlighted that a thorough review of all earmarked reserves was to be undertaken to ensure that corporate reserves are in place to ensure the council can set balanced budgets.

This review has been completed and the report sets out details of the funds to be re-prioritised and the transfer of funding to the ER/VR reserve and to the MTFP Support Reserve, to provide capacity to balance the budget over the medium term.

The application of reserves to balance the budget is not a sustainable solution to the financial challenges we face.

## **Consultation**

The report provides full detail on the MTFP(13) consultation process.

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

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

The October report contained summary details of the impact assessment on the proposed savings. An updated Equality Impact Assessment factoring in the consultation feedback and further work undertaken since the initial screening was undertaken in October will be factored into the February reports.

The table below provides information of the MTFP consultation responses.

Around 85% of overall online/paper questionnaire respondents provided equality monitoring information as set out in the tables below:

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	190	38.9%
Female	293	59.9%
Prefer to self-describe	5	1.0%
Non-binary	1	0.2%
Total	489	100.0%

Age	Number	Percent
Under 18	1	0.2%
18-24	6	1.2%
25-34	46	9.3%
35-44	129	26.2%
45-54	119	24.1%
55-64	112	22.7%
65-74	61	12.4%
75+	19	3.9%
Total	493	100.0%

Disability	Number	Percent
Yes	94	19.1%
No	398	80.9%
Total	492	100.0%

Religion or Belief	Number	Percent
Christian	282	60.4%
None	172	36.8%
Buddhist	4	0.9%
Agnostic	2	0.4%
Atheist	2	0.4%
Muslim	2	0.4%

Religion or Belief	Number	Percent
Pagan	2	0.4%
Spiritualist	1	0.2%
Total	467	100.0%

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White British	468	97.5%
White Non-British	5	1.0%
Mixed Race	4	0.8%
Travelling Community	2	0.4%
Asian or Asian British	1	0.2%
Total	480	100.0%

Sexual orientation	Number	Percent
Heterosexual/straight	408	94.0%
Gay or lesbian	20	4.6%
Bisexual	6	1.4%
Total	434	100.0%

Feedback was received across the protected groups, although rates were not always directly comparable with population data for the County. More women (59.9%) than men responded to the survey. In terms of age, 83.5% of respondents were between the age of 18-64, with 16.3% over the age of 65. Recent census 21 data releases show County Durham's 16-64 years population is 61.8%, demonstrating a disproportionately higher engagement rate with the 'working age' population. There was only one respondent from the under 18 age group however a targeted engagement session was carried out with 17 members of the Youth Council to provide a representative voice for younger residents.

The disability respondent rate was 19.1%, which is broadly representative with census 11 rates of 18.9% (for working age) and 23.6% (for overall county population). 2.5% of respondents were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic which is lower than recently released census 21 ethnicity data for the County at 5.3%. Respondents from the remaining protected groups were representative of the population with 6% from the lesbian, gay and bisexual population and 36.8% having no religion or belief. There was a slightly higher response rate from Christians (60.4%) compared to the County wide rate of 54.6%.

## **Climate Change**

The council budget will be developed to provide resource to enable the council to meet the requirements set out in the council's Climate Change Emergency Response Plan.

## **Human Rights**

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

## **Crime and Disorder**

None

## **Staffing**

The impact of the MTFP forecasts and the savings proposals that have been developed to contribute to the financial challenges faced is detailed within the report.

Should the MTFP(13) savings proposals set out in the October report, as amended for the changes outlined in this report be implemented in full, it is estimated that there will a 118 FTE reduction across the four years. HR policies will be strictly adhered to in terms of any restructure activity and priority will continue to be placed on seeking voluntary redundancies and early retirements to mitigate against the need for compulsory redundancies.

The staffing / HR implications arising from the action that will need to be taken to meet the circa £22.4 million shortfall over the next four years are yet to be determined and will need to be outlined in future reports for MTFP(14) and beyond.

## **Accommodation**

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings of £275,000 were previously factored into MTFP(12) from the expected move to the new HQ and closure/demolition of the existing County Hall building at Aykley Heads.

Based on the revenue estimates that underpinned the review of the options for disposal of the building on the sands and the implementation of an alternative strategy, net revenue running costs are still forecast to be at least £0.275 million less than the 2022/23 £1.954 million budgeted running cost of County Hall. This saving is factored into the MTFP(13) savings proposals, alongside further building rationalisation and efficiencies to protect front line service delivery.

## **Risk**

The council is continuing to operate in a period of significant financial uncertainty and volatility. When the 2022/23 budget was approved on 23 February 2022, the council was concerned about the ongoing and consequential impact of the pandemic and the uncertainty of future local government finance settlements.

Whilst these concerns remain, they are now overshadowed by the forecast impact of high inflation, especially in relation to fuel and energy prices and from increases in bank base rates. The impact of inflation is being experienced across all council services with no part of the council's budget unaffected. Energy costs are significantly above original budget forecasts, despite a 40% increase being built into the base energy budgets this year, along with the majority of other major spend areas such as waste and transport.

Prudent financial planning assumptions have been made in terms of forecasting the base budget pressures the council will face over the coming years. The underpinning rationale is explained in detail in the report.

A robust approach to Risk Assessment across the MTFP process will be followed especially in relation to any individual risk assessments of savings plans. The savings plans have been assured in terms of delivery with every attempt made to seek to protect front line services as far as possible.

## **Procurement**

None



## Medium Term Financial Plan - MTFP(13) 2023/24 - 2026/27 Model

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Government Funding</b>				
Revenue Support Grant (10.1%, 6%,0%,0%) - incl. rolled in grants	-3,891	-1,900	0	0
Social Care Grant - includes rolled in Independent Living Fund	-18,609	-7,800	0	0
Better Care Fund - ASC Discharge Grant	-4,327	-2,800	0	0
Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant	-4,704	-3,200	0	0
Lower Tier Services grant reduction	786	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus grant reduction	2,222	1,860	0	0
Services Grant reduction	3,831	120	0	0
B Rates/S31 - S31 Adj & CPI increase (10.1%/6%/1.5%/1.5%)	-7,800	-5,000	-1,100	-1,100
Top Up - CPI increase (10.1%/6%/1.5%/1.5%)	-7,300	-4,700	-1,050	-1,050
<b>Other Funding Sources</b>				
Council Tax Increase (4.99%/4.99%/2.99%/2.99%)	-12,600	-12,900	-8,200	-8,500
Council Tax Base increase	-3,400	-2,300	-2,500	-2,600
Business Rate Tax Base increase	-500	-500	-500	-250
<b>Estimated Variance in Resource Base</b>	<b>-56,292</b>	<b>-39,120</b>	<b>-13,350</b>	<b>-13,500</b>
Pay Inflation (5%/2%/2%/2%)	12,200	5,200	5,300	5,400
Holiday Pay Adjustment	380	0	0	0
Pay Inflation 22/23 Shortfall (Average of 6.6% plus one day leave)	7,000	0	0	0
Employers National Insurance (Health & Social Care Levy)	-1,500	0	0	0
Price Inflation (5%/1.5%/1.5%/1.5%) - excludes social care fees	5,300	1,500	1,550	1,600
<b>Base Budget Pressures</b>				
Social Care Fee Uplift - includes NLW and CPI	21,900	13,200	3,300	3,500
Better Care Fund - New Spending Requirements	4,327	2,800	0	0
Specific Grants Rolled into RSG and Social Care Grant	2,482	0	0	0
Adults Charging Reforms	0	0	1,750	1,750
National Living Wage Other Service Areas	350	400	50	50
Pension Fund Revaluation	-5,100	0	0	0
Energy Price Increases	9,000	-2,000	-3,000	-3,250
Social Care System Licenses	100	0	0	0
Adults Demographic Pressures	1,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Children's Demographic Pressures	13,800	5,000	5,000	5,000
Tees Valley SPV Set Up Costs	0	0	30	0
Low Carbon Team - staffing & partnership development	84	0	0	0
Vehicle Fleet - Transfer to electric vehicles	0	0	1,328	3,238
Community Protection Workforce Development	218	196	-200	-200
Woodland Protection / Nature Reserves / Public Rights of Way	0	0	-145	0
Waste Services	-1,000	0	0	0
Waste Inflation	2,600	0	0	0
Transport Inflation (Local Buses)	1,200	0	0	0
Transport Inflation (School Transport)	8,300	0	0	0
Core ICT System Inflation	193	0	0	0
CYPS Social Care Preventative Strategies	808	0	0	0
CYPS Fostering Investment	1,738	0	-1,200	0
CYPS Social Workers	811	0	0	0
NCC Tree Inspections	90	0	0	0
NCC Humanitarian Support	123	0	0	0
NCC Civil Contingencies	30	0	0	0
REG Park and Ride Reprourement	220	0	0	0
REG Durham Bus Station	100	0	0	0
REG Buildings Repair and Maintenance	100	0	0	0
REG History Centre Front of House Team	148	0	0	0
REG North East Screen Industries Partnership	206	0	0	0
RES Barrister Support for CYPS Social Care	513	0	0	0
RES ICT Licencing	85	0	0	0
External Audit Fees	350	0	0	0
Homelessness	750	0	0	0
Aykley Heads Cultural Venue (Former DLI Building)	0	600	0	0
Unfunded Superannuation	0	0	-100	-100
Investment Income	-7,000	7,000	0	0
Prudential Borrowing	0	6,400	3,400	3,000
Net Collection Fund Position after 75% Grant applied	0	-450	0	0
<b>TOTAL PRESSURES</b>	<b>81,906</b>	<b>41,346</b>	<b>18,563</b>	<b>21,488</b>
<b>Use of One Off funds</b>				
Adjustment for use of MTFP Support Reserve in previous year	0	0	0	0
Use of MTFP Support Reserve in year	0	0	0	0
<b>Savings</b>				
Savings Agreed in MTFP(10)	0	0	0	-275
MTFP(13) Savings	-12,733	-2,225	-1,873	-1,505
<b>SAVINGS SHORTFALL</b>	<b>12,881</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3,340</b>	<b>6,208</b>
<b>TOTAL SHORTFALL</b>				<b>22,430</b>

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## Durham County Council Budget Consultation 2022

### Format of response

	Frequency	Percent
Mobile	240	35.9%
PC	356	53.3%
Tablet	32	4.8%
Paper	40	6.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	31	5.1%
Agree	157	25.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	111	18.2%
Disagree	164	26.9%
Strongly disagree	146	24.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Please tell us why.

	Frequency
Council tax increase negative: Generic disagree	106
Miscellaneous positive: Generic agree	69
Miscellaneous negative: Generic disagree	62
Council tax increase negative: Will make families struggle	55
Back-office reductions negative: Generic disagree	42
Council tax increase negative: Already high	38
Miscellaneous negative: Review services council provides	33
Back-office reductions negative: Will impact upon services	30
Service cuts negative: Incorrectly directed at front line workers/management instead	29
Use of reserves negative: Generic disagree	22
Service cuts negative: Will impact upon services	19
Additional income/charges positive: Selling renewable energy	15
Council tax increase positive: Generic agree	15
Miscellaneous negative: No redundancies/staff cuts	15
Miscellaneous negative: Will impact staff wellbeing/safety	15
Service cuts negative: Protect services for the vulnerable	15
Service cuts negative: Theatres/leisure centres/sport/cultural services	14
Use of reserves positive: Generic agree	14
Miscellaneous negative: Review council buildings/land	13

	<b>Frequency</b>
Miscellaneous negative: New council headquarters	12
Additional income/charges positive: Generic agree	11
Back-office reductions negative: Cut councillors allowances	11
Back-office reductions positive: Generic agree	10
Miscellaneous positive: Savings need to be made	10
Additional income/charges positive: Explore commercial opportunities & profit making further	9
Service cuts negative: Review use of contractors and management of commercial services	9
Use of reserves negative: Uncertainty of future reserves	9
Additional income/charges negative: Don't use FPNs	8
Council tax increase negative: Stop council tax concessions	8
Additional income/charges negative: Don't increase green waste charges	7
Additional income/charges negative: Generic disagree	7
Back-office reductions negative: Need to be targeted	6
Council tax increase positive: Charge student properties	6
Back-office reductions positive: Needs to be balanced	5
Miscellaneous negative: DLI	5
Service cuts positive: Protect leisure centres etc	5
Additional income/charges positive: Increase FPNs	4
Council tax increase negative: Will cost money	4
Council tax increase positive: Agree with social care precept	4
Council tax increase positive: Increase further	4
Additional income/charges negative: Penalises the public	3
Back-office reductions negative: Loss of knowledge and experience	3
Council tax increase negative: Reduce council tax	3
Generic neutral	3
Miscellaneous positive: Partnership working/AAPs	3
Service cuts negative: Generic disagree	3
Additional income/charges negative: Questions money attainable	2
Miscellaneous negative: Sliding scale of council tax	2
Miscellaneous negative: Stop capital outlay	2
Service cuts negative: Keep CAPs open	2
Service cuts positive: Generic agree	2
Use of reserves positive: Use more reserves	2
Additional income/charges negative: Don't charge those with financial appointees	1
Back-office reductions negative: Outsource staff	1
Council tax increase negative: Disagree with social care precept	1
Long term information	1
Miscellaneous negative: Increase parking	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>810</b>

### What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you?

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely positive	8	1.3%
Positive	24	4.0%
Neither negative nor positive	145	24.0%
Negative	261	43.1%
Extremely negative	167	27.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Why do you believe this to be the case?

	Frequency
Less money/increased cost of living	165
Less services (generic)	117
Can't afford/can't pay	39
Less staff	29
Staff less secure/worried	28
Pressure on staff/mental health	21
<i>10 categories &lt;20 responses</i>	<i>54</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>

### Why do you believe this to be the case?

	Frequency
Less money/increased cost of living	165
Less services (generic)	117
Can't afford/can't pay	39
Less staff	29
Staff less secure/worried	28
Pressure on staff/mental health	21
Small change to council tax	13
Unhappy residents	10
Change of employment circumstances	7
Not impacted	7
Affordable change	5
Services protected	5
Improved efficiency	3
Need to protect services	2
Alienate vulnerable CAP users	1
Required	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>

**Do you have any alternatives to the approach, whilst making the required savings?**

	<b>Frequency</b>
Cut the fat/make available savings	85
Reduce senior wages	37
Reduce number of buildings/land	36
Stop Capital project expenditure	34
Decrease management numbers	29
Reduce staff travelling/WFH	29
Increase charges for services/fines/parking	22
Remove non-essential services	22
Increased use of solar power/wind power/renewables /energy	19
Reduce cost of Councillors (numbers/pay/benefits/projects)	19
Stop DLI	19
Invest to save programmes	14
Use HQ money/keep CH	14
Expand profitable businesses	13
Cut back on arts projects/public events	12
Pass all ERVR/staff cuts/redeploy into essential services	12
Cut back on grounds maintenance throughout the county	11
Increase higher band CT	11
Look at council licenses, subscriptions, procurement	11
Crosscutting roles/knowledge	10
Get rid of AAPs	9
Look at CT and students including student landlords	9
Reduce/simplify benefits system	8
Stop using consultants and using agency staff	8
Review leisure centres	7
Reduce access to care services	6
Get rid of design and print services/publications	5
Rent council buildings by daily rate	5
Cut back on regeneration projects	4
Don't fill any vacancies	4
Bring people on benefits to work	3
Pursue debts	3
Charge employees to park	2
Charges on council parking for public	2
Increase general taxes on the wealthy individuals and companies	2
Review council tax rates in rural areas/target group	2
Dissolve Parish Councils	1
Reduce fleet size	1

Support small businesses	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>541</b>

**If the government do remove the cap, do you agree or disagree with the council utilising additional council tax raising powers over the current 2.99% forecast?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly agree	55	9.0%
Agree	112	18.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	55	9.0%
Disagree	114	18.6%
Strongly disagree	276	45.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Please expand here.**

	<b>Frequency</b>
Disagree: Will cause hardship/unaffordable	51
Disagree: Too high already	26
Agree: Protects services	19
Disagree: Save in alternative ways	18
Disagree: Will be/has been wasted	14
Agree: Affordable	11
Neutral: As long as reasonable increase	9
Disagree: House size does not reflect wealth	6
Disagree: Taking from the poor to help the rich/others	5
Agree: Is required	3
Disagree: Deflects blame from Government	3
Disagree: Lobby/protest about the Government	3
Agree: Poor are supported	2
Agree: Use to promote climate change	1
Neutral: DCC will do what they want	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>

**Are you responding as:**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A resident	562	91.5%
A Durham County Council employee	150	24.4%
A business	11	1.8%
An organisation	8	1.3%
Other	2	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>119.4%</b>

If other, please specify.

	Frequency
Visit library within County Durham	1
Volunteer within County Durham	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>

Are you:

	Frequency	Percent
Male	197	38.7%
Female	306	60.1%
Prefer to self-describe	5	1.0%
Non-binary	1	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

What is your age?

	Frequency	Percent
Under 18	1	0.2%
18-24	6	1.2%
25-34	46	9.0%
35-44	130	25.3%
45-54	120	23.4%
55-64	113	22.0%
65-74	68	13.3%
75+	29	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	101	19.8%
No	409	80.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

What is your religion or belief?

	Frequency	Percent
Christian	292	60.3%
Buddhist	4	0.8%
Muslim	2	0.4%
None	179	37.0%
Agnostic	2	0.4%
Atheist	2	0.4%
Pagan	2	0.4%
Spiritualist	1	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### What is your ethnicity?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White British	487	97.6%
White Non-British	5	1.0%
Asian or Asian British	1	0.2%
Mixed Race	4	0.8%
Travelling Community	2	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### How would you describe your sexual orientation?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Heterosexual/straight	425	94.0%
Gay or lesbian	20	4.4%
Bisexual	7	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**23 January 2023**

**Council Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27 Refresh**

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



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Hewitt, Chief Executive Officer**

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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To consider the draft refresh of the Council Plan covering the four-year period 2023-2027 and provide feedback before it is submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval by Council.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Council Plan is our primary corporate planning document. It details the council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035, together with our own objectives and improvement agenda. It aims to provide a readable and accessible summary for members, officers, partners and the public on our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that will undertake over the forthcoming four years to help achieve these priorities.
- 3 The current Council Plan covers the period 2022/23 – 2025/26 and was agreed at Council in June 2022. In line with that report, it is intended that the plan is updated and refreshed on an annual basis going forward in line with our medium-term financial planning and budget setting arrangements, with approval of both plans scheduled for Council on 22 February 2023.
- 4 The Council Plan aligns to both the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced and the County Durham Plan which is a spatial representation of our ambitions contained within the Council Plan around housing, jobs and the

environment until 2035 as well as the transport, schools and infrastructure to support it.

- 5 The Council Plan is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning arrangements providing more detailed information on the actions, major projects and improvements which are being undertaken to deliver our priorities.
- 6 The major changes between the current plan and the revised updated plan are set out in Appendix 2.
- 7 The draft plan is presented for consideration in Appendix 3.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 8 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are recommended to consider and agree the content of the draft Council Plan 2023-2027 attached at Appendix 4.

## Background

- 9 The Vision for County Durham 2035 was developed together with partner organisations and the public and sets out what we would like the county to look like in 15 years' time. It was approved by Council and launched by the County Durham Partnership in 2019.
- 10 The Vision for County Durham is structured around three ambitions, namely:
  - (a) More and better jobs
  - (b) People live long and independent lives
  - (c) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 11 Each of the three ambitions contains a number of strategic objectives.
- 12 The tenet of these ambitions and each of the strategic objectives are adopted within the current Council Plan and supplemented by a number of other council-specific objectives to capture corporate initiatives and what is important to Durham County Council.
- 13 The current structure and format of the Council Plan was agreed last year and the updated / refreshed plan attached remains in line with that. It is structured around five themes being:
  - (a) **Our economy** – capturing the council's contribution to the **more and better jobs** ambition within the Vision together with the council's agenda as set out in our Inclusive Economic Strategy.
  - (b) **Our people** – capturing the council's contributions to the **long and independent lives** ambition within the Vision together with our priorities set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
  - (c) **Our communities** – capturing the **connected communities** ambition within the Vision and supplementing it with specific actions around helping those communities most in need of support.
  - (d) **Our environment** – capturing the council's priorities and plans around a climate emergency and an economic emergency together with our role in waste management, pollution and custodianship of the natural environment.
  - (e) **Our council** – capturing Durham County Council's organisational priorities around effective resource management, creating a workforce for the future and making best use of data and technology to provide the best services to our customers.

- 14 The document sets out under each ambition, what our priority is, what our achievements have been, what the issues are to address, what the council's contribution is in this area, what our future approach will be, what major projects we will be undertaking and what are the key performance indicators and targets for each objective.
- 15 As a public authority, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, the council is required to set equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. These are incorporated into the plan also.

### **Next Steps**

- 16 The draft plan and comments by scrutiny will be considered by Cabinet on 8 February and presented for approval at Council on 22 February.

## 17 Conclusion

- 18 The draft Council Plan 2023-2027 contained in Appendix 3 sets out our priorities, key programmes of work and associated performance management arrangements for the forthcoming four years.
- 19 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document within our policy framework and constitutionally, requires approval by Council.

## Background papers

- None

## Other useful documents

- [A Vision for County Durham 2035](#)
- [Current Council Plan \(2022 – 2026\)](#)

## Author(s)

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**Contact:** Andy Palmer

Tel: 03000 268551

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Constitution of the Council sets out the policy framework of the Council which includes the Council Plan and performance management framework.

### **Finance**

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

### **Consultation**

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

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

The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to set out equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. The Council Plan sets out our equality objectives to identify and tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

### **Climate Change**

The Council Plan contains a specific theme of "Our Environment" to elevate and highlight this important agenda and the work of the council in this area.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

**Risk**

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

**Procurement**

None

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## Appendix 2: Major Changes to the Council Plan 2023-2027

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### Amendments made to the 2023-27 Plan

Page No.	Section	Changes Made
-	Title Page	Plan period amended to 203/24 to 2026/27
1-2	Foreword	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference made to cost of living increase (para. 3)</li> <li>• Reference to sale of Sands building removed (para. 3)</li> <li>• Reference added about new HQ proposals (para. 4)</li> <li>• Reference added re increased financial pressures (para. 5)</li> <li>• Reference to City of Culture 2025 bid updated and added reference to bicentennial of Stockton – Darlington Railway (para. 6)</li> <li>• Added reference to ecological emergency (para 8)</li> </ul>
3	Population and Area	Population fig. updated re Census 2021
4	Council Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence added to explain the purpose of this section</li> <li>• Corporate parent to 912 children changed to over 1,000 children</li> <li>• Reference to supporting over 10,000 people through community hubs during the pandemic changed to supporting over 150 Warm Places</li> <li>• Fig. for length of highways maintained amended</li> <li>• Subsidy fig. provided to bus operators amended</li> </ul>
5	Our Planning Framework	Reference added about our transformation agenda (2 <sup>nd</sup> bullet)
6-7	Themes, Priorities and Objectives	<b>Our Economy</b>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist businesses to restart and grow the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic (removed)</li> <li>• Work with others to mitigate the impacts and harness the opportunities of exiting the European Union (removed)</li> </ul> <p><b>Our People</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to protecting adults with care and support needs from harm added to objective around vulnerable people</li> <li>• Reference to public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic removed from objective about protecting and improving the health of the local population</li> <li>• <i>Ensure that there is no unwarranted variation in opportunity and outcomes between our communities</i> changed to <i>Narrow the inequality gap between our communities</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Our Communities</b></p> <p>Objective about providing support to community groups adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic removed</p> <p>Footnote explaining objectives in bold are from the County Durham Vision 2035 added</p>
8-10	Our Vision	<p><b>Our Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to an inclusive green economy added</li> <li>• Reference to specific employment sites replaced with a general comment about strategic employment sites</li> <li>• Reference added regarding the County Durham Pound added</li> <li>• Wording changed around The Story at Mount Oswald in line with new branding</li> <li>• Wording updated re City of Culture 2025 bid</li> </ul> <p><b>Our Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets re carbon emissions amended in line with CERP2</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference added regarding the Education Service working to reduce the carbon footprint of schools</li> </ul> <p><b>Our People</b></p> <p>Reference added re Education Service preparing young people for life and employability</p>
10-11	Our Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Para inserted re equality and inclusion (para. 1)</li> <li>New wellbeing principles diagram replacing previous diagram</li> </ul>
12-13	Our Financial Plan	To be updated
13	Monitoring	Paras 1 and 2 added to explain the difference between <b>key measures</b> and <b>council service performance indicators</b> added
-	Context: COVID-19 – Response, Restoration, Reset/Recovery	Removed section
14	Priority – Our Economy	Rewrite of this section by service to better align it to the new Inclusive Economic Strategy
15-16	Our Economy – Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bullet around North East devo deal</li> <li>New Inclusive Economic Strategy</li> <li>UK Shared Prosperity Fund</li> <li>Levelling Up ids</li> <li>Festival programmes delivered</li> <li>SEND support figures</li> <li>% children and young people in good or better schools</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation figs. For 16-17 year olds in education, employment and training</li> <li>Investment in Beamish Museum (out of date)</li> <li>Lumiere figures (out of date)</li> <li>Project Genesis investment (out of date)</li> <li>Investment in Barnard Castle by GSK (not a council achievement)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in Durham City by council and university (out of date)</li> </ul> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jade Business Park, Integra 61, NETPark, Forrest Park and Aykley Heads bullets rewritten to be more outcome focused</li> <li>Attendance fig added for last year's festival programmes.</li> </ul>
15-16	Our economy – Issues to Address	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic recovery from COVID-19</li> <li>Cost of living crisis</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weaker global economy</li> <li>COVID-19 business support arrangements</li> <li>Ability of businesses to respond quickly in the short-term is limited</li> <li>Exit from EU</li> <li>COVID impact on educational achievement</li> <li>Pupils attending good or better schools</li> <li>Jobs under furlough</li> <li>School attendance strategies and COVID</li> </ul> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment figures</li> <li>Fuel poverty figures</li> <li>Ofsted results for schools</li> <li>Pupils claiming free school meals</li> </ul>
16-18	Our Economy – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated NETPark figures (para 2)</li> <li>Updated Jade Business Park para (para 3)</li> <li>County Durham Pound referenced (para 4)</li> <li>Reference top government education white paper removed (para 5)</li> <li>Work with University of Durham and New College Durham and Durham City Incubator added (para 6)</li> <li>Employability scheme figs updated (para 7)</li> <li>Para added on the work of Business Durham (para 8)</li> <li>Update on City of Culture 2025 (para 10)</li> <li>Para on COVID-19 business support deleted</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Para added on Poverty Strategy (para 11)</li> </ul>
18-19	Our Economy - Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID restrictions para removed</li> <li>• COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan para removed</li> <li>• Para on labour market demographic most affected by COVID removed</li> <li>• Para 2 rewrite in line with Inclusive Economic Strategy</li> </ul>
19-20	Our Economy - Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
21-22	Our Economy – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
23	Priority: Our Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More detail on how climate change affects the planet added by service (para 1)</li> <li>• More detail on ecological emergency added by service (para 3)</li> </ul>
23-24	Our Environment: Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing government funding for decarbonisation projects</li> <li>• Sustainable transport projects (reopening rail lines)</li> <li>• Bog restoration added</li> <li>• Scaling On Street Charging Initiative added</li> <li>• County Durham Fuel Poverty Partnership added</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic waste going to landfill</li> <li>• Carbon emissions from council operations since 2008/09</li> <li>• Single use plastics (out of date)</li> </ul> <p>Amended:</p> <p>Latest carbon emissions reduction figs.</p>

24	Our Environment: Issues to Address	Removed: Climate emergency declaration  Amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reopening rail lines detail</li> <li>• Air Quality Management Areas – Reference to Chester-le-Street AQMA removed</li> <li>• Ecological emergency – reference added to an action plan</li> </ul>
25	Our Environment: Council Contribution	Council contribution to countywide carbon emissions moved to <b>Our Council</b> section  New para added to differentiate council role in reducing carbon emissions and tackle climate change (para 1)  Wording changes to collection, disposal and treatment of municipal waste to reflect role in reducing waste, increasing reuse and recycling and improving the quality of recycling through education (para 2)  Figs for waste collection, fly-tips etc updated (para 3)
25-26	Our Environment – Approach	Street lighting project added. Minewater heating schemes added, retrofitting schemes removed. (para 1)  Further detail added re ecological emergency and impact on nationally significant countryside (para 3)
26-27	Our Environment – Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
27-28	Our Environment - Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
29	Priority: Our People	Sentence relating to building on assets in our communities added

29-30	Our People - Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teenage pregnancies figs updated</li> <li>• Bullet around being a high performing areas for transfers of care from hospital removed</li> <li>• Healthy options hot food takeaways scheme added</li> <li>• Stronger Families programme figs updated</li> <li>• 100% of nursery education providers rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted removed</li> <li>• Strong adoption performance bullet added</li> <li>• Latest ILACS inspection result added</li> <li>• Bullet added on integrated commissioning function added</li> <li>• Bullet on falls prevention pilot added</li> <li>• One Touch Health system bullet added</li> <li>• Great North Care record bullet added</li> <li>• Integrated pathways bullet added</li> <li>• Community equipment review bullet added</li> <li>• CQC outstanding inspection results for three of our regulated services bullet added</li> <li>• Finalists in LGC Awards Public Health category added</li> <li>• Bullet added on the creation of the Protecting Health team</li> <li>• Youth Justice Services winning CYP Now Award bullet removed</li> </ul>
31-32	Our People – Issues to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of living crisis bullet added</li> <li>• Smoking prevalence message amended</li> <li>• Breastfeeding figs amended</li> <li>• Combating Drugs and Alcohol Strategy bullet added</li> <li>• Increasing numbers and complexity of SEND cases bullet amended</li> <li>• Increase in complexity of care and court of protection referrals bullet amended</li> <li>• Infectious disease outbreak risk bullet added</li> <li>• messages around life expectancy and healthy life expectancy amended</li> <li>• Bullet around ageing population added</li> <li>• Pressures in social care bullet added</li> <li>• Social care reforms bullet added</li> <li>• Sustaining a robust care market bullet added</li> <li>• Maintaining effective demand management around adult social care bullet added</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring sufficient local placement choice for children in care removed</li> </ul>
32-33	Our People – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figs relating to sport and leisure provision updated</li> <li>• Suicide prevention message added</li> <li>• Para on Care Connect added</li> </ul>
34	Our People – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Durham Together Partnership wording amended</li> </ul>
35-38	Our People – Priority Actions	<p>Action plan rewritten for new planning period with service</p> <p><b>NB The action plan only contains actions for 2023/24 and 2024/25</b></p>
38-40	Our People - Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
41	Priority: Our Communities	No amends
41-42	Our Communities - Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective licencing scheme</li> <li>• Chapter Homes Business Plan</li> <li>• Refurbishment of New Elvet Bridge</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <p>Significant investment in social worker workforce capacity</p> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAP support to community groups figs</li> <li>• Town and village centre regeneration figs</li> </ul>
42	Our Communities – Issues to address	<p>Added:</p> <p>No additional messages</p> <p>Removed:</p> <p>Increased demand and complexity of children’s social care (moved to Our People)</p> <p>Amended:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message changed around house prices and proportion of privately rented accommodation</li> <li>• UK internet retail sales % figure</li> </ul>
42-43	Our Communities – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House completion figs updated (para 2)</li> <li>• Message added about bringing empty homes back into use (para 2)</li> <li>• Rewrites to further emphasise council contribution and accountabilities regarding new homes, existing housing stock etc (para 2)</li> <li>• Community hub supporting residents self-isolating during pandemic removed</li> <li>• Para added on Warm Spaces (para 3)</li> </ul>
43-44	Our Communities – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message on developing a Design Code added (para 5)</li> </ul>
44-46	Our Communities - Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
46-48	Our Communities – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
49-50	Priority: Our Council	<p>Updated message around uncertainties posed by cost of living crisis, exit from EU and catastrophic weather events (para 1)</p> <p>New para on cost of living crisis (para 2)</p> <p>Para around opportunities to develop digital services amended (para 3)</p> <p>Para around partnership working amended (para 4)</p>

50	Our Council – Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIBI programme</li> <li>• Warm Spaces initiative</li> <li>• Carbon emissions from council operations</li> <li>• Investors in the Environment ‘green’ status</li> <li>• Superfast broadband and 5G connectivity for residents</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council apprenticeship figs</li> <li>• Mental health first aiders and time to change champions figs</li> <li>• Community Hub support during pandemic</li> </ul> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative savings fig since 2011/12</li> <li>• Better Health at Work Award</li> <li>• Disability Confident Leader status</li> <li>• Latest Municipal Journal awards won</li> </ul>
51-52	Our Council – Issues to address	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of living and financial pressures for council</li> <li>• Increased borrowing costs</li> <li>• Net zero organisation message</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention problems in VCS</li> </ul> <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK withdrawal from EU</li> <li>• Energy price forecasts</li> <li>• Protecting Health Team (moved to Our People)</li> </ul> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial uncertainty message</li> <li>• Ageing population and workforce</li> <li>• Staff mental wellbeing message</li> <li>• Recruitment problems and skilling workforce for the future</li> <li>• Managing data effectively and appropriately</li> </ul>

52-53	Our Council – Council Contribution	<p>Workforce message amended to emphasise delivery of and commissioning others to provide services (para 1)</p> <p>Training programme message added (para 2)</p> <p>Digital contact figs amended (para 3)</p> <p>Message on how we use customer feedback amended. Examples provided (para 4)</p> <p>Message on how the pension fund is used to support local businesses added (para 5)</p>
53-54	Our Council – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Para on pandemic and redeployment removed</li> <li>• Para added about carbon reduction initiatives within the council (para 4)</li> </ul>
54-55	Our Council - Priority Actions	<p>Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service</p> <p>NB the</p>
55-56	Our Council – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	<p>Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories</p> <p><b>NB the action plan only covers the first three years of the four-year plan period</b></p>
57-59	Glossary of Terms	<p>Removed as these terms no longer feature in the text of the Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brexit</li> <li>• Channel shift</li> <li>• Council Tax Hardship Fund</li> <li>• Deprivation indices</li> <li>• Education and health care plan</li> <li>• Furlough</li> <li>• HMRC</li> <li>• Homes England</li> <li>• R number</li> <li>• SARS-CoV-2</li> <li>• SATs</li> <li>• Signs of Safety</li> <li>• Trusted assessor model</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) initiative</li></ul> <p>ILACS added</p>
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**Durham County Council  
Council Plan  
2023/24 to 2026/27**



## Foreword

Durham County Council is ambitious.

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

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

We are committed to growing our economy, and our new Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out how we are working with businesses and communities to provide the best opportunities for economic growth – leading to more and better jobs for local people across County Durham.

The cost of living crisis has placed significant pressures on families and businesses over the last 12 months. We remain committed to supporting our most vulnerable residents through what are unprecedented times whilst also focusing on the environment and our climate commitments.

Like many of our businesses and local partners, the Council is currently facing significant financial pressures from high inflation, which is impacting on our operating costs and the cost of construction and supply chains. We are actively reviewing several programmes of work to make sure that we have the right balance between achieving things that matter to local people whilst ensuring this can be delivered financially and that we provide value for money. We are continuing our focus on making the council more efficient, support families through the current cost-of-living pressures and maintaining a package of additional support to financially vulnerable households.

We are rightly proud of our county, our heritage, our people and our culture. We want to place our county on the national and international stage – particularly in 2025, which marks the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stockton to Darlington Railway, a route which started in Willington in County Durham! Having been shortlisted to the final four to become UK City of Culture in 2025, we remain committed to delivering a pioneering cultural programme with a lasting legacy. We know that our county has opportunities and issues that need to be addressed. Many of the issues facing our residents cannot be solved by the council alone, so we work in partnership with others across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

In 2019, the council and partners agreed a vision for County Durham for 2035 following extensive consultation with our residents. This is to help create more and better jobs, help people live long and independent lives and support communities to be well connected and supportive of each other. This Plan seeks to deliver and build on these ambitions and sets out the priority actions being taken forward by the council in support of the vision.

We will also continue to support our communities as the country continues to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and we recognise our role, both as a large organisation and as a community leader, in tackling the climate emergency and addressing ecological decline, which is why in the last year we have declared an ecological emergency and recast our carbon reduction targets and actions. We have built on the success of securing our first constituency Levelling Up bid by developing and submitting robust bids for the other five constituency areas across county Durham and await the outcome of those bids.

We will maintain sound management of our resources delivering on these ambitions, maximising the talents of our people and using technology to provide the best services with the resources available.

This plan sets out how the council is contributing to achieving the vision County Durham for 2035 and to ensure that our resources are used in a transparent and effective way, by setting out our priorities to support our economy, our environment, and our communities, and further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the council for everyone's benefit.



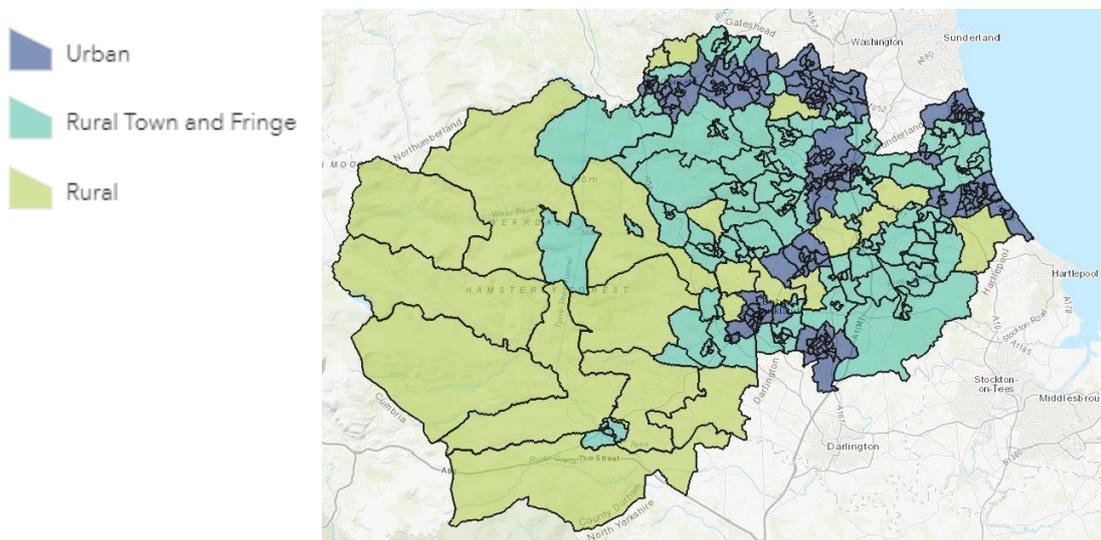
Councillor Amanda Hopgood,  
Leader of the Council



John Hewitt,  
Chief Executive

## Population and Area

County Durham covers an area of 222,606 hectares and has an estimated population of 522,100<sup>1</sup>. The county is largely rural, with around 57% of its area classified as rural in nature and a further 32% classified as rural town and fringe.<sup>2</sup>



Land type	Area of county	population	Population density per hectare
Rural	57%	7%	0.3
Rural Town and Fringe <sup>3</sup>	32%	37%	2.7
Urban	11%	56%	12.1

Durham is a large and diverse county with a highly dispersed settlement pattern which creates specific issues and challenges. The county has over 300 recognised settlements, 23 of which have a population of 5,000 or more. This presents a challenge for the provision of transport and public services. A large proportion of the county, particularly to the west of the A68 is rural and has some of the sparsest population densities in the country. It is important to people that rural communities remain sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics that make them distinctive. The particular challenges of rural communities are referenced throughout

<sup>1</sup> Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Based on the 2011 Rural and Urban Classification (RUC) for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2017 Population Estimates

<sup>3</sup> Landscape interface between town and country / transition between urban and rural where urban and rural use clashes

this Council Plan and rural proofing is embedded as a major consideration in any policies that we develop.

## Council Services

Durham County Council plays a crucial role in the lives of all residents delivering a breadth of services across the county. The following examples illustrate the range of services we provide.



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



**148** allotment sites



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



**46** cemeteries and **96** closed church yards



**2** crematorium joint committees



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



Corporate parent to over **1,000** children



**3m** visits annually to our **15** leisure centres



**10** swimming pools



**809,000** sq ft business space managed



**266** schools



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



**5,000** food businesses inspected



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



**8** major events organised



**2,363** miles of highways



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



**57,000** Council Tax Reduction claimants



**39** libraries with over **200,000** members



**9** parks and **12** green flag awards



**82,422** street lights



**£4.2m** subsidy provided to bus operators to run non-profitable routes



Over **150** Warm Spaces supported for people to go to get warm



**2,191** miles of public rights of way



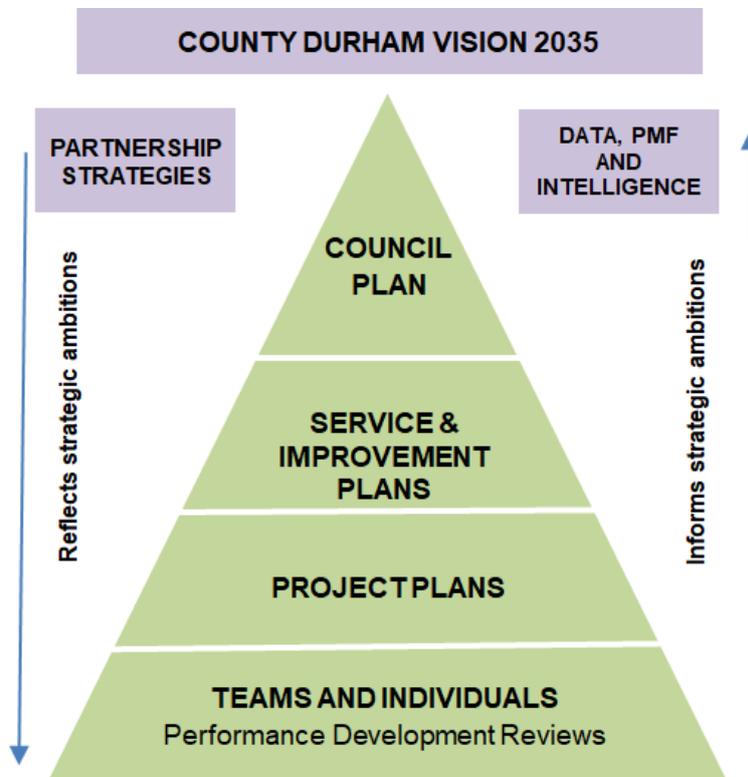
**1 million** bins emptied per month

## Our Planning Framework

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

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

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



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

### OUR ECONOMY

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

- **Delivery of a range of employment sites across the county**
- **A strong, competitive economy where County Durham is a premier place in the North-East to live and do business**
- **A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county**
- **Young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment**
- **Helping all people into rewarding work**
- **Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county**
- We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people\*

### OUR ENVIRONMENT

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

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

### OUR PEOPLE

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

- **Children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing**
- **Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes**
- **All children and young people will have a safe childhood**
- **Promotion of positive behaviours**
- **Better integration of health and social care services**
- **Tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities**
- **People will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more homes to meet the needs of older and disabled people**
- Support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- Protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death

Objectives in **bold** are adopted from the Vision for County Durham 2035

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

## OUR COMMUNITIES

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

- **Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock**
- **Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe**
- **People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities**
- **Communities will be able to come together and support each other**
- **Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents**
- Our rural communities will be sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics which make them distinctive
- Narrow the inequality gap between our communities
- We will build inclusive communities\*

## OUR COUNCIL

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

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

Objectives in **bold** are adopted from the Vision for County Durham 2035

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

## Our Vision

In October 2019, public, private and voluntary sector bodies which make up the County Durham Partnership jointly agreed a [Vision for County Durham 2035](#). This vision was based on a strategic assessment of need using our intelligence platform [Durham Insight](#) and was developed following extensive consultation with the public.

Residents, businesses and specific interest groups such as children and young people and people with a disability, were asked what they would like to see in a new vision for the county and their views were incorporated into our final vision. The vision document which was agreed sets out our strategic direction and what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years and is written around three broad ambitions for the people of County Durham:

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

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

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

**Our Economy:** We want to build an inclusive economy by creating **more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy**, ensuring no one is left behind by supporting businesses emerging from the pandemic back to stability and help to rebuild our economy. We are developing a pipeline of projects and investment plans; our roadmap to help stimulate inclusive economic recovery right across the county. We will create and nurture the major employment sites across the county, cementing our position as a premier place in the region to do business and building on the success of the development of a number of strategic employment sites with exciting opportunities for the development of Aykley Heads and the redevelopment of Front Street in Stanley now in the pipeline. Employability support programmes will be developed to help people back into jobs or to start their own business. We will support businesses to grow, innovate and reduce their environmental impacts and through the County Durham Pound, encourage businesses to work together to support countywide growth. We will ensure that children and young people receive high-quality education, training and support to equip them with the skills they need to progress into the employment opportunities of today and the future. We will support our tourism and hospitality sector to recover as a great visitor destination with a cultural offer which will help stimulate the local economy. This will include our new history centre and registration service, The Story at Mount Oswald, which will open to the public in 2024, the reopening and re-purposing of the former DLI Museum and

Art Gallery as a cultural venue and exhibition space, building on the success of Lumiere 2021 with an exciting festival and innovative cultural programme with a lasting legacy. The development of our visitor offer goes hand-in-hand with the diversification of the economy and making the county more attractive to talented and creative people and businesses.

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

Everyone is justifiably proud of our beautiful countryside and coast. A large part of the county is of significant landscape value including the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (also a designated UNESCO Global Geopark) and the Durham Heritage Coast. Some parts of our county support unique combinations of plant and animal species. Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are critical to our population. They play an important role in providing food, energy, shelter and medicines, sustaining water and soil quality, preventing floods and regulating the climate. Our natural environment also contributes significantly to our wellbeing and quality of life. The Education Service will work to reduce the carbon footprint for all schools in relation to their training needs, by making both real and virtual-live training opportunities of the highest quality readily accessible locally.

**Our People:** We want our residents to **live long and independent lives** and remain in good health for many years to come. We want to protect and improve the health of our residents, tackling leading causes of illness and early death, including the detection, prevention and response to infectious diseases. We want to address some of the inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including mental health challenges. We have a strong track record of health and social care integration in Durham. We want to build on the financial and practical support we have provided to the care sector during the pandemic by ensuring we have a high-quality care market that is sustainable in the future. The Education Service will provide a professional learning programme of high quality to schools and settings that, through its design, supports and sustains them as they prepare young people for success in life and employability. The council has also set out a programme to transform our leisure centre venues to support health and wellbeing outcomes of the wider population and is developing a new physical activity strategy which aims to improve the physical health of our residents.

**Our Communities:** We want our **communities to be well connected and supportive of each other**. As town and village centres reopen, we will help them to be vibrant and accessible places which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will support the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly those who are

isolated or adversely affected financially. At the start of the pandemic, the council established community hubs to fast-track applications for food and other essential services to residents who had to remain in their own home and who had no support. We want to build on what we have learned during this time through an approach to supporting communities called County Durham Together, which will support our ongoing approach to wellbeing through working with communities, involving them in decisions that affect them, and building resilience and cohesion. This involves bringing a range of public sector and voluntary organisations together with communities to identify ambitions, and to develop and deliver plans as a partnership. We have a strong focus on tackling poverty, with significant investment and policy interventions in place to support families, children and individuals who are financially vulnerable. Through our Poverty Action Steering Group and the work of the Advice in County Durham Partnership, we have developed a robust strategy and action plan to ensure there is support to those in crisis but that we also focus on the routes out of poverty.

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

## Our Approach

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

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

**People and Places**

- Empowering communities**  
working with communities to support their development and empowerment
- Being asset focused**  
acknowledging the different needs of communities and the potential of their assets
- Building resilience**  
helping the most disadvantaged and vulnerable and building up their future resilience

**Supporting Systems**

- Working better together**  
working together across sectors to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact
- Sharing decision making**  
designing and developing services and initiatives with the people who need them
- Doing with, not to**  
making our interventions empowering and centred around you as an individual

**Using what works**  
everything we do is supported by evidence informed by local conversations

## Our Financial Plan

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

In 2022/23, the council will receive additional core spending power of £51.6 million from the provisional Local Government Settlement. This will be vital in ensuring that significant ongoing budget pressures can be financed – which total approximately £81 million in 2023/24. Examples include the National Living Wage 9.7% uplift, energy costs which are forecast to increase in 2023/24 by over 80% from current budgeted levels and from the continuing pressures from higher demand in social care services, plus waste disposal and home to school transport budget pressures. The council's low tax base and consequential low tax raising capacity continues to constrain and place pressure on our budgets.

The government has published details of spending power 'per dwelling' for all local authorities, which shows that County Durham is now £167 (c7%) less than the England average. If Durham's Core Spending Power was brought up to the England authority average of £2,360 per dwelling, the council would annually receive additional government grant of £42 million.

The council faces a forecast £25.5 million funding shortfall in 2023/24. To address this shortfall savings of £12.7 million are proposed with a use of the MTFP Support Reserve of circa £12.8 million to balance the budget.

Despite a very challenging financial period and the significant base budget pressures faced by the council the 2023/24 budget included some very positive outcomes for the people of County Durham, including:

- continued support to protect working age households in receipt of low incomes through the continuation of the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme, where they will continue to be entitled to up to 100% relief against their council tax payments and where those left with a bill will receive up to £75 of additional support next year;
- ongoing work with health partners to ensure that health and social care funds are maximised for the benefit of vulnerable people through the services we provide;
- significant investment in capital expenditure, including investment in school provision, in our town centres and infrastructure, new transport schemes and maintenance of our highways and pavements. In total, additional capital investment of £121.8 million was agreed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, with the Council committed to a Capital Programme of £778 million. – the most ambitious and significant level of investment the Council has ever agreed.

A key risk for the Council in 2023/24 and potentially beyond is the cost of living crisis. Rising fuel and energy costs are driving consumer price inflation, which is impacting on residents' household budgets, particularly those on lower incomes. This is

affecting demand for council services in a number of ways. Pay and price inflation is also a material consideration for council finances. The 2023/24 budget includes significant additional budget uplifts in our energy budgets and prudent assumptions in terms of other inflationary pressures, but inflation, particularly energy inflation is increasing.

## **Monitoring**

This Plan sets out key measures which we will use to determine whether we are delivering on outcomes for the people of County Durham. In some instances, we have set out what good looks like against these key measures to aid the reader and these remain aspirations for the council.

The Plan also sets out our council service performance indicators where we have identified the services we provide which are major contributors to achieving our outcomes. In some instances, we will use targets against these indicators to manage performance

We will monitor council performance against these key measures and council service performance indicators and report to Cabinet and scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis. The plan will be subject to an annual review process

## Priority: Our Economy

We will continue to support growth, helping people to access more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. We will support businesses to grow in the county, adopt low carbon technologies, and cut their energy use. We will work with all schools, businesses and academies to ensure that the highest educational standards are in place to support a broad and balanced 21st century curriculum aligned to local economic opportunities.

Our county has some of the most beautiful countryside and coastal landscapes in Britain, a fascinating history, a wealth of attractions and a regular events programme. Consultation with local residents, young people and businesses highlighted the opportunity to develop the county as a visitor destination as well as for the benefit of local residents. We have made great strides to improve our visitor offer and our new Inclusive Economic Strategy will support an improved year-round visitor economy with investments in our visitor and cultural and creative infrastructure, assets, and facilities. Our aim is for County Durham to be widely recognized as a leading centre for culture and the arts, with a range of experiences that match and exceed the best offered in the country.

Through conversations with our residents, businesses, young people and community groups, we understand the challenges that we face together and will work in partnership to tackle different forms of exclusion. This includes harnessing the opportunities of the digital economy and ensuring as many local people as possible have the infrastructure, equipment, and training needed to access local services, jobs, and education. We will use our resources and investment where we can to secure support from other investors, businesses, social enterprises, and charities to tackle local challenges and promote untapped local opportunities across the county whilst protecting and enhancing our habitats and historic assets.



## Achievements

- Positive discussions have taken place with other neighbouring authorities and the government to reach a provisional deal to unlock billions of pounds of investment and see additional powers transferred from Whitehall to the North East.
- £25 million investment and completion of phase 1 of Jade Business Park. Creating seven new units totalling more than 14,000 sqm of industrial space to accommodate 250 jobs.
- £75 million of private sector investment in new industrial and warehousing at Connect at Integra 61 creating 640,000 sq ft

- of new industrial and warehousing space and contributing to the 4,000 jobs that will be accommodated on Integra 61.
- £271 million invested in one of Europe's leading technology parks at NETPark delivered and managed by Business Durham, with 16,000 sqm of office and laboratory space supporting 650 jobs.
- Planning approval to bring forward over 800,000 sq ft of development at Forrest Park in Aycliffe to potentially build 8 factory units.
- Developed an Inclusive Economic Strategy for the County to support future economic growth
- Investment Plans submitted for UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Multiple Programme and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, bringing in £37.1m to support Durham's economic growth over the next three years.
- Planning consent secured for over 400,000 sq ft of office space at Aykley Heads site with the potential to create 4,000 jobs.
- Secured £20million Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for the Bishop Auckland Constituency Proposal. Also developed 5 proposals for the remaining constituencies as part of Round 2 of the LUF
- Delivered a successful festivals and events programme including the Bishop Auckland and Seaham food festivals, Durham Book Festival and BRASS which were attended by over 95,000 people in 2022.
- Our Post 16 outcomes have improved steadily over time with average grades at A level above national averages from 2018.
- Over 13,500 children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are supported to achieve good outcomes in our schools and colleges. Almost 85% of these are supported in their local mainstream nursery, school or college
- The Percentage of our children and young people attending an Ofsted judged 'Good or Better' school is 91.2% at Nursery and Primary, 76.9% at secondary and 96.3% at special schools.

### Issues to address

- The employment rate has been relatively stable at around 71.5% for the last two years despite the difficult economic conditions but we need to continue to attract more and better jobs in order to catch-up with the national average.
- The economic recovery from Covid-19 has been set-back by the escalating cost of living crisis, whereby substantial price rises are affecting all parts of the economy.
- Income levels are low in County Durham. The county is the 42<sup>nd</sup> most income-deprived out of 151 local authorities nationally. Gross disposable household income per head of population in County Durham is just over 76% of the national average.
- The gap between the employment rate for people with a disability compared with those who are not disabled stands

at 34.7 percentage points (March 2022) which is one of the highest differences in the country.

- In 2022, 90.2% of 16-17-year-olds within County Durham were participating in education, employment or training.
- GCSE results as measured through the average attainment 8 score for the county are below the national average.
- 84.5% of pupils attend a school judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' (as at October 2022).
- Child poverty is increasing, by autumn 2022 around 30% of school children are claiming free school meals increasing by around a fifth in the last two years.

- According to the latest figures (2020), an estimated 14.7% of households are in fuel poverty. This is defined as where the householder is living in a property with a fuel energy efficiency rating of band D or below; and after paying fuel costs, would be left with a disposable income which is below the poverty line.
- Day visitors to our county spend an average of £22.97 in the local economy per day, whilst overnight visitors will spend an average of £209.61 per trip. Only 9% of visitors will stop overnight within the county.

## Council Contribution

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

We have committed to £58 million to progress the development of the third phase extension of NETPark (The North-East Technology Park) Business Park in Sedgfield and are currently procuring the developer, which could generate up to 1,250 skilled jobs and be worth up to £625 million to the County Durham economy. Phase three is expected to be completed in 2024.

In 2023 phase 2 of Jade Business Park will be built to provide seven new industrial premises following the success of the seven units built during phase 1. This will help to address the overall shortage of modern business premises in the county and strong demand.

Through Business Durham we work with businesses to promote enterprise, foster the environment for new businesses to start up, and enable businesses in the county to develop and grow. Through the creation and delivery of high-profile innovation programmes, we help businesses develop new products, services and processes and transition to a higher value economy. We are supporting businesses across the County many different ways and through the County Durham Pound are encouraging local businesses to work together and buy from and supply one another.

We have a substantial and varied property portfolio across County Durham, providing space for over 300 businesses employing 1,600 people, including offices, workshops, the Durham Dales Centre and we manage the region's only science park, NETPark. Through initiatives such as the Durham City Incubator we are working with Durham University and New College Durham to give intensive support to enterprising people with unique products and services that will grow and diversify our local economy.

Working with all schools, academies and trusts the Education Service will support parents and carers in driving improved attendance and school engagement for all pupil groups and minimise the degree of pupil mobility, suspensions and exclusions across all key stages ensuring that Durham young people have equal or better access to high quality teaching and provision. We will also support maintained schools to ensure outcomes and Ofsted inspections across all phases, compare favourably, against national and regional averages. Additionally, the SEND Green Paper ("right support, right place, right time") will require additional work with school leaders across the system to integrate more children with SEND into mainstream settings

To increase employment, we offer help and support to develop skills, get people into work or start their own business through such initiatives as Durham Employment and Skills, Employability Durham, Durham Enable and Durham Works. Employability Durham provides a range of schemes to those aged 25 and over who are unemployed and during 2021/22, supported 503 people into employment and 43 into education and training. Durham Works is a dedicated programme for young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training. The council is itself a major employer committed to a comprehensive apprentice programme, open and fair recruitment and being a good employer. To improve our employment programmes for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities, we have recently employed three mental health employment support workers who will offer specialist support to those whose conditions may be a barrier to obtaining good jobs.

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

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

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

The council has developed a Poverty Strategy and associated action plan together with a range of partners. This approach includes ensuring residents get what they are entitled to through income maximisation and benefits take up. We are improving our support schemes such as the council tax reduction scheme, welfare assistance and discretionary housing payments. We are also working to ensure that it is easier for residents to access all of the help on offer. We are also working with charities and community groups to provide a collaborative approach to poverty alleviation on initiatives such as Warm Spaces.

## Approach

Increasing employment in the county has a significant multiplier effect in terms of its contribution to a range of other quality of life issues, such as improving mental and physical health and reducing crime. We are working to support employers and voluntary and community organisations to address health issues in the workplace through a range of initiatives. Our ambition is to create more jobs for our residents. Wage levels in the county lag behind the national average and the gap is widening. We need to address this by attracting high-quality jobs to the area. We want to create the ideal environment for businesses to thrive in the county, through ensuring that our workforce and our young people entering the jobs market are equipped with the necessary skills to access the jobs of today and the future.

We have a strong pipeline of investment projects across the county and we want to deliver our strategic employment sites and support key business sectors and innovation opportunities. We will continue to deliver a range of programmes to help people, who are finding it difficult to access the jobs market, into rewarding work including reskilling our labour force. Our plans will support rural growth whilst preserving and enhancing the quality of what makes our towns, villages and landscapes distinctive. Our county has a rich historic and cultural heritage, some enviable world-class attractions and beautiful countryside. We want to continue to develop our visitor economy offer for tourists, local residents, and to improve the overall promotion of the County to investors, learners, and new residents.

## Priority Actions<sup>4</sup>

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- 2023/24
- Bring forward key locations for business attraction and growth *including Forrest Park, Jade Business Park*
  - **Carry out public consultation and a governance review for the devolution deal for LA7 area covering County Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Northumberland**
  - **Assure the delivery of and secure tenants for the Milburngate redevelopment project in Durham**
  - **Bring together the history and heritage of the county into ‘The Story’ (Durham History Centre)**
  - Develop the Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plans for the County that integrate with national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies
  - Development and delivery of a pipeline of major transport infrastructure projects to support employment sites *including Jade Business Park Infrastructure, Integra Phase 2 and Toft Hill Bypass*
  - Delivery of the Tourism Strategic Framework, including the refreshed Durham Destination Management Plan
  - Ensure the delivery of employability programmes that assist residents to access and sustain job opportunities
  - Deliver our Education Operational Plan
    - Maintained schools are given appropriate and proportionate support to ensure outcomes and Ofsted inspections across all phases, compare favourably, against national and regional averages.
    - Working with all schools, academies and trusts to support parents and carers in driving improved attendance and school engagement for all pupil groups.
    - To minimise the degree of pupil mobility, suspensions and exclusions across all key stages ensuring that Durham young people have equal or better access to high quality educational provision.
    - To work with all schools, academies and trusts to ensure sufficiency of places across all Durham, early years setting’s, primary and secondary Schools in line with changing demographics and school performance related factors.
    - To support schools and settings to improve the quality of teaching, ensuring professional learning networks are offered to educational professionals at all levels, drawing explicit focus to areas of local and national priority.

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<sup>4</sup> Those in bold are identified as major projects and are monitored by CMT Major Initiatives Board

- Deliver DurhamWorks Programme for Schools to ensure young people at greater risk of becoming NEET have access to careers education, information, advice, guidance and support to enable them to make a positive progression into post-16 education, employment and training
- Support more young people with vulnerable characteristics into employment, including young people who have SEND, children looked after, care experienced young people, young people supervised by the Youth Justice Service, young parents, young carers, young people who are elective home educated.
- Review the Employment & Skills Strategy through the Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plans
- Implement our [Poverty Strategy and Action Plan](#) to help protect residents most at risk of poverty and exclusion, increase equality of opportunity and ensure fewer people are affected by poverty and deprivation
- Develop the 'Better Business for All' initiative to help reduce the burden of regulation on local businesses, improve business compliance and promote local economic growth

- 
- 2024/25
- **Refurbish and reopen the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery and grounds as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds**
  - Support delivery of the new visitor product across County Durham
  - Deliver a range of initiatives to alleviate poverty *including working with registered providers and providing advice and signposting to people who are struggling with housing costs*
  - Working in partnership deliver the Regional Destination Development Partnership pilot

- 
- 2025/26
- **Deliver sites within Durham County Council's remit and enhance Property Portfolio *including Aykley Heads, NETPark Phase 3, Merchant Park, Jade Business Park and South Church Enterprise Park***
  - Review of events and festivals offer and preparation for NPO submissions for 2026-2029

- 
- 2026/27
- **Deliver 'The Story' (Durham History Centre) Heritage Lottery Fund Programme Plan**
  - **Deliver the legacy of the City of Culture bid through the Culture County Programme**
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## Key Measures

- Increase the amount of employment land approved and delivered by 300 hectares by 2035 (against 2016 baseline)
- Grow the number of private sector business and private sector employments per 10,000 head of population within County Durham to close the gap with the national average by 2035
- Increase the level of GVA per filled job to close the gap with the national average by 2035
- Increase the employment rate for 16-64 year olds to close the gap with the national average by 2035
- Increase the proportion of residents with higher level skills to close the gap with the national average by 2035
- Increase the number of organisations involved in the Better Health at Work Award (to improve health and wellbeing interventions at work)
- Increase the disability employment rate to close the gap between the employment rates for residents with a disability and those who are not disabled
- Increase the number of visitors to the County to pre-Covid levels by 2025
- Increase the value of the visitor economy profile in County Durham (Number of jobs supported, amount (£m) generated)
- Increase the proportion of visitor attractions which are served by public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Reduce the number of heritage assets 'at risk' that are categorised as 'Priority A and/or in 'very bad condition' (against 2021 baseline)
- Increase the proportion of children and young people with EHC plans attending a mainstream school
- Proportion of children living in low-income families
- Percentage of schools Ofsted judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school

## Council Service Performance Indicators

- Percentage of office and industrial floorspace occupied
- Number of jobs created or safeguarded by Business Durham
- GVA from jobs created or safeguarded by Business Durham
- % of jobs created by Business Durham which are high level jobs
- Number of jobs created or safeguarded through regeneration projects
- Amount (£) of investments secured by companies
- Number of Inward Investments secured

- Number/£ investment through Finance Durham Fund
- Number of businesses supported by Business Durham (engagements)
- Number of businesses intensively assisted
- Number of new businesses supported by Community Economic Development Team
- Number of registrations to employability programmes
- Number of participants on employability programmes progressed into employment / education or training
- Number of tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham
- Average % occupancy of screenings/performances during the quarter (BATH, Gala and Empire)
- Average % yield of screenings/performances during the quarter (BATH, Gala and Empire)
- Number of people attending Council owned cultural venues
- Number of people attending Culture, Sport & Tourism ran and commissioned cultural events
- Number of active library borrowers
- Number of heritage assets in County Durham identified as being at risk on the Heritage Asset Register
- Number of Council owned heritage assets “at risk”
- Number of Council non-designated heritage assets “at risk”
- Increase the proportion of 16–17-year-olds in education, employment and training to narrow the gap with regional and national levels
- School Attendance
- Elective Home education
- Percentage of eligible disadvantaged 2-year-old children registered for 15hr entitlement
- Primary and Secondary Ofsted ratings
- Free school meals eligibility and take-up

## Priority: Our Environment

One of the biggest issues facing the planet is the climate emergency. Scientific evidence shows that increased rates of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, through the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, intensive livestock farming and other industrial practices have led to an increase in global average temperatures, droughts, flooding events and more unpredictability in weather patterns. Whilst this is a global issue, there is a lot that can be done locally. Durham County Council has declared a climate emergency and is looking to reduce carbon emissions from its own operations and change some of its land practices such as peat restoration and tree planting.



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

We have some beautiful countryside in County Durham boasting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a UNESCO designated Geopark, a heritage coast and many Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are many benefits to valuing nature, and we need to conserve and sustain this for future generations and not allow our biodiversity to deteriorate. To this end, the council is committed to showing leadership in taking action to address the decline of habitats and species across the county by declaring an Ecological Emergency for County Durham, to be accompanied by an action plan that enables a positive response across council services.

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

### Achievements

- Carbon emissions across the county have reduced by 57% from the 1990 baseline.
- Securing significant funding from Government for decarbonisation projects, from building retrofits to EV charging infrastructure

- 16,000 hectares of blanket bog have been restored in County Durham, avoiding 192,000 tonnes of carbon from being emitted each year.
- We are pursuing three bids to improve sustainable transport through the reopening of rail lines at Consett, Stillington and Weardale.
- Scaling On Street Charging Initiative (SOSCI) project has installed 153 EV charge points sockets, 10 of which are rapid charge, the other 143 being 7-22 kWh fast charging, in towns, libraries, leisure centres and community centres.
- County Durham Fuel Poverty Partnership has enabled residents in County Durham to have the 4th highest uptake of energy efficiency grants nationally, working with landlords to improve quality and energy efficiency of buildings and supporting low carbon retrofit for off-gas homes.

### Issues to address

- The council is committed to exploring more sustainable transport choices and we are pursuing three bids for rail connections from Ferryhill to Teesside, Consett to Tyne and Darlington to Weardale to help realise environmental, social and economic benefits in County Durham and the wider region.
- Countywide contracts in place for waste disposal services are coming to an end.
- An Air Quality Management Area where national standards for levels of pollutants has been declared in parts of Durham City, with an action plan to improve air quality.
- The Environment Act 2021 will give the council more powers and responsibilities regarding air quality, nature conservation, waste and use of resources.
- The council is committed to examining the decline of habitats and species has declared an ecological emergency in County Durham, to be accompanied by an action plan that enables a positive response to be delivered across council services.
- We want to encourage and enable greater participation in cycling and walking across all demographic groups.
- The government's Waste and Resources Strategy may have implications for the council such as the introduction of a separate food waste collection, free garden waste collection services, standardising domestic collection services across the country and introducing recycling targets.
- We will continue to work with our partners, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency to carry out work to

reduce the risk of flooding and its impacts on residents and businesses.

- The tonnage of domestic household waste collected has increased significantly during the pandemic, which is affecting the proportion of waste recycled and being

diverted to landfill and increased contamination issues in our recycling collections.

- The percentage of waste going to landfill has increased during the pandemic from less than 5% to nearly 10%.

## Council Contribution

Climate change poses one of the greatest threats to civilisation and has the potential to cause catastrophic problems for generations to come. The council has recognised the severity of this threat and has declared a climate emergency. Whilst the council itself generates carbon emissions from its operations such as from its buildings, vehicles and street lighting, it is calculated that these emissions make up only 3% of those emitted in total from the county. This is why we have developed a twofold action plan to address this, the first part being to reduce our own carbon emissions as an organisation and the second, how we can work with partners and the public to achieve a carbon neutral county by 2045.

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

Responsible for the collection, disposal, and treatment of all municipal solid waste within its area, the council has a major role to play in reducing waste, increasing reuse and recycling and improving the quality of recycling material through education. Our in-house teams carry out regular and reliable collection services to around 250,000 households and 3,200 businesses, as well as providing 13 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

In addition to the scheduled services during 2021/22, we completed 31,000 bulky household waste collections and cleared up 5,700 fly-tips. Our work amassed 272,484 tonnes of municipal waste, including 1,592 tonnes of fly-tipped waste. 38% of our total

municipal solid waste collected by the Authority was re-used, recycled or composted. Of the waste sent for disposal, 90% was diverted from landfill and was converted to energy.

## Approach

The council declared a climate emergency for County Durham in 2019 and has developed two costed action plans, one for the council's carbon reduction target and another for the countywide target. We have been upgrading our streetlights with new LED light fittings. We have a substantial programme of tree planting planned. We also continue to provide support to businesses with their carbon footprint through the Business Energy Efficiency Project and have set up a community investment fund to assist community groups in reducing their carbon impact. We also have a programme to install more vehicle charging points in locations across the county and are exploring the potential for mine-water heat at a number of sites across the County including Seaham and Horden.

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

The county boasts some beautiful and nationally significant countryside. The North Pennine uplands and the Durham Coast and associated Magnesian Limestone grasslands, in particular, support rare and threatened species and both have been the subject of considerable conservation effort, however these often fragile habitats are increasingly under threat from a range of pressures and in response to this, we have declared an ecological emergency for the county. Following on from this commitment the council is now taking forward a comprehensive action plan to help tackle this decline.

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

## Priority Actions<sup>5</sup>

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|---------|---|
| 2023/24 | ▪ <b>Adopt a Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document to ensure a ready supply of minerals and to maximise the recycling and reuse of waste</b> |
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<sup>5</sup> Those in bold are identified as major projects and are monitored by CMT Major Initiatives Board

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop policies and plans to tackle the ecological emergency within County Durham <i>including preparing an Ecology Supplementary Planning Document</i></li> <li>▪ Manage the council’s tree and woodland resource <i>including preparing a Trees, Woodlands and Hedges Supplementary Planning Document</i></li> <li>▪ Review our local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Surface Water Management Plan and deliver flood prevention schemes</li> <li>▪ Co-ordinate the implementation of the local Air Quality Action Plan with the aim of improving air quality within Durham City to meet the standards set within the National Air Quality Strategy</li> </ul>
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<p>2024/25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Implementation and monitoring of Climate Emergency Response Plan 2</b> <i>including preparation of a solar energy Supplementary Planning Document, reviewing key operations that impact on the natural environment and raising awareness of the issues with our communities.</i></li> <li>▪ Increase the use of active travel to encourage physical activity (including walking and cycling) to reduce traffic emissions related to respiratory illness and carbon emissions <i>including Transforming Cities programme, LUF and Towns and Villages Walking and Cycling improvements, Sedgfield to Wynyard Active Mode Scheme and LCWIP Interventions</i></li> <li>▪ Delivery of transport infrastructure projects to encourage more sustainable transport choices <i>including Framwellgate Waterside, Transforming Cities programme, Restoring Your Railways schemes and green infrastructure at transport hubs</i></li> </ul>
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<p>2025/26</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of the Nature Recovery Network Strategy for County Durham in partnership with the Environment and Climate Change Partnership Ecological Emergency workstream</li> </ul>
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<p>2026/27</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Procure, build, commission and operate, a 450,000 tonne Energy Recovery Facility with heat off take and carbon capture capability, with six regional local authority partners</b></li> <li>▪ Support and deliver Local Nature and Landscape Partnership programmes <i>including Land of Oak and Iron Legacy; Seascapes; Durham Woodland Revival; Brightwater; North East Community Forest; Heritage Coast and the Woodland Creation Programme for the planting of new trees and woodland</i></li> </ul>
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<p>Post 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development and delivery of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)</li> <li>▪ Implement the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy (RAWS) for England 2018 proposals and prepare for future policy and legislation changes</li> </ul>
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## Key Measures

- Increase the proportion of waste diverted from landfill to at least 90%
- County Durham to become carbon neutral by 2045
- Raise cycling and walking levels in County Durham in line with national levels by 2035
- Work towards Durham City Air Quality Management Area NO2 levels being below the government threshold of 40µg/m3
- Plant a minimum of 140,000 trees by 2024

## Council Service Performance Indicators

- Overall satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities
- Linear kilometres of appropriate design standards for Active Mode Routes
- Park and Ride Patronage
- % of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted
- Contamination rate of household recycling

## Priority: Our People

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



## Achievements

- Under 18 years conceptions rate has reduced from 41.3 in 2011 to 17.4 in 2021 and continues to show a positive direction of travel.
- We have helped 3,000 people to access support for drug and alcohol issues and are now above the national average for those successfully completing treatment.
- We have excellent levels of satisfaction from clients in receipt of adult social care services compared to national figures.
- We have developed a public health driven planning policy to address the proliferation in hot food takeaways that is contributing towards levels of obesity in children and adults, and we are rolling out a healthy options takeaway scheme that will be provided free of charge to hot food takeaways across County Durham.
- To date (Dec 2022), we have achieved significant and sustained outcomes with 6,143 families and an additional 849 have maintained continuous employment – giving a combined total of 6,992 families turned around through our Stronger Families Programme since 2015.
- Durham County Council was highly commended in the Municipal Journal Digital Transformation Award for 2021, which recognised the introduction of the Health Call Digital Care Home system, allowing care workers to digitally share the results of their resident observations, such as blood pressure and heart rates, with health professionals.

- Durham County Council won the Local Government Chronicle Children's Services Supportive Employer Award for 2022
- Durham County Council has improved and expanded services to children since its last ILACS inspection from Ofsted and is now rated as 'Good' overall effectiveness and 'Outstanding' for leadership and management.
- Strong local offer for our care leavers which was confirmed by young people responding to a national benchmarking exercise. We have also opened the new care leavers hub.
- Strong adoption performance
- Integrated Strategic Commissioning Team function for the county created, to ensure most effective use of resources, joint contract monitoring and improved quality of service provision.
- County Durham Care Academy created by the council to support and promote careers in social care, offering a range of courses from entry level right through to senior leadership and management qualifications.
- The Supporting the Provider Market programme piloted falls prevention interventions and supported wider rollout and mainstreaming of successful initiatives.
- One Touch Health system successfully rolled out to over 300 staff in County Durham Care and Support, ensuring that our care records are more secure and data are readily accessible and reportable.
- Great North Care Record delivered, for sharing of health and social care data between professionals and patients.
- Integrated pathways established with adult social care and primary and secondary care.
- Community equipment review completed, with revised and improved commissioning arrangements in place for people living in the community and care homes.
- Three of our regulated services rated by Care Quality Commission: Hawthorn House and Shared Lives are 'Outstanding' and Extra Care is 'Good'
- Finalists in the LGC 2022 Awards Public Health category for the County Durham Workplace Health Programme.
- Created the Protecting Health team to protect our residents through planning, prevention and management of infectious diseases and outbreaks, maximising uptake of vaccination and immunisations and preparing and planning for seasonal risks and public health emergencies. The Protecting Health team also leads the Public Health approach to vulnerabilities, and the emerging sustainability and climate change agenda.
- We administrated the £150 council tax energy rebate payment scheme which almost 93% of residential properties were eligible to receive

## Issues to address

- The impact of the pandemic is a factor that has led to male life expectancy falling by seven months and female life expectancy by six months.
- The cost-of-living crisis is disproportionately impacting people and families who are living in, or at risk of poverty.
- Smoking remains a significant cause of health inequalities and prevalence is to be reduced to 5% by 2030, meaning 49,600 must quit.
- Just under one in four children are overweight in reception year, rising to over one in three at Year 6 and to two in three in adulthood. These figures are above national levels.
- Levels of women who are still smoking in pregnancy in County Durham is significantly higher than the national average.
- Breastfeeding prevalence rates amongst new mothers remain nearly 17 percentage points behind national figures.
- Need to deliver on the Combating Drugs and Alcohol Strategy agenda to reduce harms from substances within local communities
- The numbers of children requiring the support of a social worker due to complex needs, which have increased during COVID-19. This is a national trend. It means ensuring sufficient local placement choice for our Children in Care and expanding capacity for short breaks is challenging
- The increasing numbers and complexity of children with SEND requiring wider support.
- An increase in the complexity of care and court of protection referrals.
- Increased responsibilities, changing needs and reducing government funding are placing greater pressure on our ability to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Mental health is a priority. Indicators are high for hospital admissions for self-harm, suicide rates and patients registered with depression.
- The risk of an outbreak of an infectious disease could have major health impacts on people (particularly those who are vulnerable).
- Life expectancy at birth is 1.7 years lower for males and 1.9 years for females in County Durham compared with the average for England.
- Healthy life expectancy, the number of years a person lives in good health, is around five years lower than national figures and there is a 10-year difference in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities in County Durham.
- A quarter of the population in the county will be aged 65+ by 2032.

- We need to diversify the range of older persons' housing provision to meet growing demand from an ageing population and free up larger family accommodation.
- Alleviating a pressured social care and health environment following the pandemic, with challenges associated with workforce (recruitment and retention), service demands and a challenging economic environment.
- Implementing social care reforms, including Liberty Protection Safeguards; greater integration with the NHS; developing effective system working with the Integrated Care Board; Care Quality Commission regulation of local authority adult social care delivery; a new national performance dataset; charging reforms (delayed until 2025).
- Sustaining a diverse and robust care market, to meet a broad range of social care needs.
- Maintaining effective demand management, delivery standards and risk management, which includes areas of high demand or risk, such as hospital discharge, Mental Health Act assessments and safeguarding.
- Strengthening the voice of people with lived experience, by improving approaches to user engagement and co-designing strategies when developing services / practice.

## Council Contribution

As we transition from a post-pandemic world, we are focused on helping ease the immediate hardship caused by the cost-of-living crisis and preparing for the longer-term impacts. Our teams across Customer Services, Discretionary Benefits and Welfare Rights are experiencing high demand for support services and we continue to work with partners to deliver the various initiatives supported by the Government's Household Support Fund.

During the last financial year, we supported almost 55,000 residents (38% of whom are pensioners) directly through our Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and paid a total of £4 million in LCTRS top-up payments. We also administered housing benefit payments totalling £114 million and made £1.2 million of Discretionary Housing Payments to off-set shortfalls in housing rental costs. We used more than £600,000 of Welfare Assistance Scheme funding to help in crisis with daily living expenses.

The council also continues to identify programmes to support our more vulnerable households as part of the Poverty Strategy, utilising Welfare Assistance Reserve funding. This includes working with The Bread and Butter Thing, a charity which re-distributes stocks of surplus food via designated community hubs, expanding the Fun and Food Programme for children from low-income households to include half term school holidays, supporting community groups to create a network of more than 150 warm hubs to

help residents cope with soaring energy costs, and providing grant funding for new boilers and home insulation measures to help reduce fuel costs.

The council is continuing to encourage all residents to make healthy lifestyle choices. We own 148 allotment sites across the county which 3,500 people use to grow their own food, reaping the associated benefits to their physical and mental health. Our 15 leisure centres offer a range of facilities which promote physical activity and, across these centres, we have over 20,000 gym or swim members and around 5,000 members on our swimming lessons programme.

Across our communities, we continue to offer free walking, running and cycling activities. From April 2022 to September 2022, there were over 6,000 attendances for our Walk Durham programme, 327 people joined one of our Run Durham 'get into running' courses and 22 people accessed one of our Cycle Durham 'get into cycling' courses. We also provide a wide range of inclusive and accessible community-based wellbeing activities and, from April to September 2022, we delivered 370 sessions with around 1,900 attendances.

We are also continuing to work with schools through the Active 30 Durham programme, with 80 signed up, and a communications plan will be delivered during 2023 to increase engagement. Furthermore, we will continue to actively promote and deliver the Health and Wellbeing Framework for Schools.

The council also supports service users and carers across a range of services, promoting good public mental health and the prevention of suicide, and helping people with their mental health and wellbeing, physical disability, sensory impairment and learning disabilities. At any one time, the council supports around 20,000 adults with a care package and 3,900 children through its social care functions and there are over 1,000 children in care and 450 children on a child protection plan. The council also supports a further 1,200 in early help services, as well as over 14,000 children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities.

The council also delivers a 24/7 community alarm service, Care Connect, to meet the needs of older people and those with additional support needs within our communities, supporting them to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. We also deliver disabled facilities grants to assist with the adaptation of homes to meet the needs of disabled and vulnerable residents.

## Approach

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

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

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

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

## Priority Actions<sup>6</sup>

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- 2023/24
- Work with a range of partners to increase physical activity by promoting Active 30 in schools
  - Supporting the Provider Market programme, to help care providers through the changing, complex health and social care system
  - Ensure that people have access to reliable and timely advice and information, to support them to live healthy and independent lives in their communities, to prevent and/or delay the need for formal service provision
  - Review the approach to care home commissioning, taking into account changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and building on the results of detailed demand-modelling carried out in 2022, with the aim of ensuring a sustainable and high-quality care market. This is likely to require different commissioning approaches in future years.
  - Work in partnership with external providers to develop and shape the market, to ensure that the most appropriate, local and value for money placements are available which meet the needs of our children and young people who are looked after delivered through the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-2024
    - Grow our number of inhouse foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so
    - Increase the number of adopters
    - Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so
    - Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers
    - Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times
    - Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families
  - Deliver Actions from the Growing up in County Durham Strategy 2023-25, including
    - Working with the strengths and opportunities in local communities to develop a network of family hubs which can support the delivery of a range of local community support and services to children, young people and families
  - Deliver our Children's Social Care Improvement Plan, to ensure that we provide high quality social care services to children, young people and their families who need social care support

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<sup>6</sup> Those in bold are identified as major projects and are monitored by CMT Major Initiatives Board

- Continue to promote the role and responsibility of the council as a corporate parent, ensuring that we are committed and ambitious for all of our children in care and care leavers
- Continue to recruit, develop and support a skilled, experienced and confident social care workforce and become an employer of choice
- Development of a contextualised safeguarding framework to reduce the risk of harm for Durham's young people
- Development of strategies to support children to remain safely at home with their families and prevent them coming into the care of the Council
- Deliver the SEND Strategy Action Plan against its six key aims;
  - Where possible, for all children and young people to attend their local school which understands them and is able to meet their needs
  - To work closely with families to develop resilience and feel confident that needs are understood and met, and will continue to be met through transition
  - To listen to what children and young people are telling us when supporting them and to develop their resilience and independence
  - To identify needs in a timely way and have the right support available to meet needs at the right time
  - For all education settings and their workforce to be confident in identifying and meeting needs, and to promote good health and wellbeing and inclusion
  - To have a joined-up offer of support available proportionate to assessed needs
- Deliver priorities from the Education Operational Plan
  - To provide attendance support for schools to ensure that the most deprived and vulnerable learners are given appropriate and proportionate support to attend school and engage with lifelong learning
  - The majority of EY settings have accessed high quality speech and language training to enhance provision and outcomes for children.
  - Ensuring all educational professional support available to Durham schools, is current, relevant, and evidence-based, informed by partnerships with some of the foremost national educational research organisations.
  - The extension of the role of the Virtual School to promote good practice and achieve better outcomes for all children with a Social Worker 0 to 18.
- Refresh the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-25 to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce health inequalities
- Develop and launch the 'Moving Together in County Durham' strategy to improve levels of movement and physical activity among those who live and work in County Durham.
- Review our approaches to achieving a healthy weight in County Durham and address identified need.

- Develop a sexual health strategy for County Durham, to ensure equitable access to services and focus on good contraceptive health
- Improve health protection for children and young people and reduce inequality by increasing immunisation levels (for example, flu vaccine uptake)
- Continue to develop and increase engagement with the Mental Health Framework for Schools.
- Develop population level approaches to improve children's oral health through the development and implementation of the County Durham Oral Health Promotion Strategy and supporting action plan.
- Publish action plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Adults Mental Health Partnership
- Support women to achieve a smoke-free pregnancy through whole system change and tackling tobacco dependency in pregnancy as an addiction, not a lifestyle choice
- Increase the percentage of women who initiate breastfeeding and continue at 6-8 weeks, through the County Durham 'Call to Action', and collaboration with the County Durham Family Hubs model, our communities and stakeholders to change the culture of breastfeeding in the county
- To support the ambition to reduce smoking in County Durham to 5% by 2030, ensure that the redesigned Stop Smoking Service is effectively reaching people in our local communities, and participate in the delivery of regional tobacco control campaigns to support these ambitions.
- Encourage people to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink, through targeted campaigns for council staff and our local communities and by promoting and supporting Dry January and National Alcohol Awareness Week
- Work with partners and providers to reduce the incidence of falls and fractures in older people, through training and assistive / digital technologies
- Engage with stakeholders to develop, test and deliver future provider / partner / service user portals for better information-sharing and to streamline processes
- Target our resources on those young people committing the most offences
- Complete County Durham Care and Support Transforming Care capital projects for the Positive Journeys service and a new Hawthorn House Short Break Respite Care scheme
- Engage with users of our service, people with lived experience of health and social care, care providers and our partners to improve and shape our future service delivery, aligned to central government reform

- Continue with the Integration Programme of 11 Workstreams, prioritising Discharge Pathways, Quality Strategy, Enhanced Health in Care Homes, and Urgent Community Response
- Enable the delivery of homes to meet the needs of older people within our communities and support people to live independently for as long as possible *including through preparation of a Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document*
- Deliver initiatives that support and sustain vulnerable people into accommodation
- Implementation of the new Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Strategy.
- Development of new services for Drug and Alcohol Recovery funded through Dame Carol Black funding to support further improvements in care within the criminal justice setting, housing, domestic abuse, and in-patient detoxification.
- Ageing Well Strategy delivered using a system-wide approach.
- Develop the role of local anchor organisations to increase good employment opportunities.

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 2024/25

- Adopt a new Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy
- Deliver a range of risk based, targeted interventions which aim to ensure that all food which is produced, sold, stored, distributed, or consumed in County Durham is safe and presents no health risks to the consumer
- Development, learning and outcomes evaluated to inform the exit strategy for the uplift given to drug and alcohol recovery services funded by Dame Carol Black funding.
- Review and potential to recommissioning of well-being services.
- Review the 0-25 family health service delivery model to ensure the needs of children and families are being met.
- Map the County Durham food system and develop the County Durham Food Strategy.
- Further develop the role and remit of the County Durham Together service.
- Review Healthy Weight Development Plan

## Key Measures

- School Attendance including attendance vulnerable children

- Reduce the number of mothers smoking at time of delivery
- Number of Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes
- Create a smoke-free environment, with over 95% of residents not smoking (national target by 2025) and with the aim that pregnant women and mothers will not smoke
- Reduce the gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and the national average
- Increase the percentage of children aged 4-5 in both reception and Year 6 who are of a healthy weight
- Improve healthy life expectancy and reduce the gap within County Durham and between County Durham and England
- Reduce the suicide rate
- Number of admissions under the Mental Health Act
- Increase satisfaction rates with people's experience of adult social care
- Percentage of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services / percentage hospital discharges receiving reablement
- Increased healthy life expectancy at 65
- Ensure all new housing developments deliver at least 10% of their total units that are suitable for older persons
- Ensure all new housing developments deliver at least 66% of their total units to meet accessible and adaptable standards (Building Regulations requirements M4(2))
- Increase the average age whereby people are able to remain living independently in their own home
- Increase the percentage of people aged 65+ with aids and assistive technologies in their homes
- Domestic violence rates
- Child sexual exploitation rates
- Counter-terrorism self-assessment score

### **Council Service Performance Indicators**

- Number of Children Looked After per 10,000 population
- Number of Children in Need per 10,000 population
- Number of children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 population

- Number of children open to One Point
- Number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Number of children and young people receiving SEN Support
- Number of requests for an EHCP Assessment
- Number and % of our children in care who live in a family setting
- Statutory referral rate for children's social care
- % children's social care re-referrals
- % of social work vacancies
- Total number of connections on Care Connect service
- Total number of customers on Care Connect service
- Percentage of Care Connect calls answered within 1 minute
- Percentage of Care Connect calls arriving at the property within 45 minutes
- Number of Chapter Homes houses built which are for Older Persons
- Number of Chapter Homes houses built which meet M4(2) standard
- Number of Council houses built which are for Older Persons
- Number of Council houses which meet M4(2) standard
- % of households where homelessness has been prevented or relieved
- % of households where there has been an acceptance of the main homeless duty
- Number of successful move-ons from CLDA properties
- Number of applicants that were successfully housed via Durham Key Options
- Number of adaptations delivered through DFGs
- Number of visits to Leisure Centres
- Number of Leisure memberships
- Successful drug and alcohol treatment outcomes

## Priority: Our Communities

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

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

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



## Achievements

- The council leads on Digital Durham, a £35 million initiative to transform broadband speeds for residents and business across the North-East – and has already provided access to fibre broadband to over 105,000 properties.
- A new adult social care case management system has been implemented which will help manage customer demand more effectively.
- Since 2016, the council in collaboration with a range of partner organisations, continues to play its part in the UK’s commitment to support some of the world’s most vulnerable refugees.
- Roll out of programmes and training to support increased awareness of mental health issues by staff and schools.
- Implemented a Selective Licensing Scheme that covers 42% of the private rented sector across the county; approximately 29,000 properties. The scheme aims to ensure privately rented properties in a designated area are well managed and in good condition.
- Durham County Council is the only local authorities to maintain the ISO 55001 Asset Management Accreditation for Highways.
- Our refurbishment of New Elvet Bridge has been recognised within numerous national and regional awards including winning ‘Most Innovative Project’ at the Institution

of Structural Engineer's Northern Counties Structural Awards 2021 as well as receiving a special commendation in the Large Projects category.

- In 2022/23 the council invested £3.47 million on town centre regeneration. This included purchasing derelict buildings and land and environmental improvements.

- 67 properties delivered at Oakerside Drive, Peterlee as part of the Chapter Homes Business Plan
- Through the work of our AAPs the council has allocated £59.5 million to over 10,000 community-based projects, leveraging £69.7 million of external matched funding

### Issues to address

- There has been increased demand for services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations, just as the sector loses a significant proportion of its revenue.
- House prices have increased in recent years and there has been a drop in the number of properties in the private rented sector.
- The national issue of high street decline, with the growth of online shopping and major retailers closing stores, has affected our town centres.
- Internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales have risen nationally, from 2.5% in December 2006 to 30.2% in

November 2022, posing increasing competition to high street shops and leading to major changes in our high streets and town centres.

- The highly dispersed settlement pattern in County Durham with over 300 recognised settlements, 21 of which have a population of 5,000 or more, presents a challenge for the provision of transport and public services, particularly in rural areas.
- The county has good north-south transport links with the A1(M) and East Coast Mainline but there are opportunities to improve east-west links.

### Council Contribution

The council is investing heavily in our town centres. New masterplans have been developed for a number of our towns and villages, free public wi-fi is being rolled out and investment in leisure venues. We are also undertaking actions and campaigns which focus on environmental improvements, better quality housing, road safety and water safety.

Priority: Our Communities

Not only are we facilitating the building of new high-quality accessible homes to meet needs, but we are also using our powers to improve standards across existing housing stock. During 2021/22, 1,671 new homes were built in the county of which 536 fall within the government's definition of affordable housing. We also used a range of tools to help owners improve, adapt or bringing back into use 3,496 properties, 155 of which were empty. Our new selective licensing scheme gives us powers to regulate landlords and managing agents of private rented properties in areas which suffer from low housing demand and/or high levels of anti-social behaviour and/or deprivation. The scheme covers over 29,000 properties, which equates to around 42% of the private rental stock. We are also working with communities most affected by empty properties, including working with property owners and landlords, to bring empty properties back into use wherever possible.

We have also provided grant funding through the County Durham Community Foundation to community groups to establish a network of Warms Spaces to help people throughout the winter by providing places where they can get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company.

## Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Priority Actions<sup>7</sup>

- 
- 2023/24
- **Deliver a programme of regeneration within town centres and wider towns and villages** *by encouraging footfall, supporting new town centre business, facilitating the reoccupation / re-use or clearance of vacant and vulnerable property*
  - Develop the care academy for children's residential services to support the recruitment and retention of staff in our children's homes.
  - Invest and implement a new SEND electronic casework system to enhance service delivery and outcomes for children and young people
  - Construction of a new bus station for Durham City
  - **Implement the County Durham Together Transformation Programme**
  - Extend the wellbeing approach across the council and within commissioned services

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<sup>7</sup> Those in bold are identified as major projects and are monitored by CMT Major Initiatives Board

- Complete Supplementary Planning Documents to support the County Durham Plan including Parking and Accessibility, County Durham Design Code and Developer Contributions
- Develop an ASB Action Plan to deliver the Safe Durham Partnership's ASB Strategy and key outcomes
- Raise standards across the private rented sector through continuous engagement with landlords, through the implementation of the Durham Rental Standard and the Selective Licensing Scheme
- Deliver a range of targeted interventions to improve housing and living standards including through Targeted Delivery Plans
- Through the Community Action Team we will deliver in collaboration with partners a programme of area based initiatives to improve local environments and community safety
- Provision of road safety measures along the A690 through the Safer Roads Fund
- Develop and deliver a theory of change programme for the Horden Together Partnership aimed at supporting People and improving Places
- Build community resilience and recovery to economic and social challenges and emerging neighbourhood issues by developing local priority projects linked to Area Action Partnership funding streams *including welfare reform, social isolation, Fun and Food Programme and regeneration of towns and villages*
- Co-ordinate the Council's activities to mark the Coronation of His Majesty the King
- Review the County Durham Vision 2035 to ensure it reflects the needs of communities and partners.

- 
- 2024/25
- Refresh the Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2023-25 providing strategic direction to community safety activities and support to victims
  - Develop a County Durham Connectivity Strategy to support delivery of the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy
  - Development and delivery of major transport infrastructure projects to improve connectivity across the County *including A19/A1018 Seaton Lane Junction and Junction 60 capacity improvements*
  - Continue to deliver the current Housing Strategy (including Targeted Business Plans) whilst developing a new Housing Strategy
  - Support the delivery of community housing schemes and neighbourhood plans
  - Deliver the Chapter Homes Business Plan
  - In partnership with regional stakeholders deliver the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) through the establishment of an Enhanced Partnership and support schemes
-

- Implement the Government's CONTEST Strategy review which aims to reduce the risk from terrorism and extremism, particularly in relation to Prevent and Protect elements

- 
- 2025/26
- **Review and transform library services**
  - **Review and seek to transform leisure facilities**
  - Delivery of transport infrastructure projects to improve rural transport links across the County *including walking and cycling schemes, and Bridge Repairs at Hedleyhope*
  - **Implement the next phase of Government's Humanitarian support programme.**
  - **Deliver the Council Homes Programme**

- 
- 2026/27
- **Deliver the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone, Future High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund** *including the Eastern Sustainable Access Corridor, Bishop Auckland Bus Station, surface car park and Newgate Multi-store car park*

- 
- Post 2027
- Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme
- 

## Key Measures

- Crime and ASB rates (inc. hate crime and alcohol related crime and ASB)
- First time entrants to youth justice system
- Reoffending rate
- Road casualty rates
- Percentage of Harbour clients feeling (a) more confident in themselves (b) their quality of life has improved on case closure
- Percentage of children and young people completing an intervention with Harbour and reporting feeling safer
- Reduce the number of empty homes in the County by 26% by 2035
- Reduce the average vacancy rate of our town centres to below the national average by 2035
- 85% of County Durham properties to have access to gigabit-capable broadband by March 2026
- Fly tips per 1,000 population

Priority: Our Communities

- Maintain the percentage of land at below 12%, which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness in relation to detritus; in relation to litter to below 6%; in relation to dog fouling to below 1%
- Increase the % of County Durham residents who can access employment sites by public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Increase the percentage of households (within a 5-mile or 15-mile radius) which can access key service locations using public transport (against 2021 baseline)
- Maintain levels of satisfaction with bus operators at a minimum of 92%
- Maintain a downward trend in the amount of Highways Maintenance Backlog
- Maintain levels of public satisfaction with highways maintenance above the national average.
- Maintain the percentage of respondents who agree that police and local authorities are dealing with ASB and crime issues in the local area above 2021/22 levels
- Increase net delivery of new housing each year by 1,308 houses
- Aim to increase net delivery of affordable homes to contribute to meeting identified need of 12,540 by 2035
- Achieve 100% licensing of private rented sector properties covered by the Selective Licensing Scheme by 2027
- Reduce ASB rates within the Selective Licensing Scheme areas by 10% (against the 2021 baseline)

### **Council Service Performance Indicators**

- Number of businesses supported as a result of regeneration projects
- Number of properties improved or brought back into use
- Number of properties inspected in the private rented sector (including properties licenced under Selective Licensing Scheme)
- Number of council houses built
- Number of Chapter Homes properties sold
- Number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents – Number of fatalities
- Number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents – Number of seriously injured
- Number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents – Number of fatalities
- Number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accident – Number of seriously injured
- Percentage of timetabled bus services that are on time at scheduled timing points – service no more than 5 minutes late or 1 minute early
- Public satisfaction with ease of access

- Percentage increase in public transport patronage
- Percentage of 'A' road network where structural maintenance should be considered
- Percentage of 'B' road network where structural maintenance should be considered
- Percentage of 'C' road network where structural maintenance should be considered
- Percentage of 'Unclassified Roads' where structural maintenance should be considered
- Percentage of 'footways' structurally unsound
- Condition of structures on the principal road network
- Condition of structures on the non-principal road network
- Percentage of recorded Category 1 highway defects repaired within 24 hours
- Percentage of recorded Category 2.1 highway defects repaired within 14 days
- Percentage of recorded Category 2.2 highway defects repaired within 3 months
- Square metres of footway maintained and repaired over and above the core programme (against the 2021/22 baseline)
- No of ASB incidents

## Priority: Our Council

Financial uncertainty and unprecedented reductions in public spending have impacted the council over recent years. This is alongside challenges posed by a pandemic, the decision to leave the European Union, a series of severe storms and more recently a cost-of-living crisis.

However, the most pressing challenge for our residents, local businesses and the council is the current cost of living crisis which has steadily worsened over the last 12 months. Increases in inflation, currently running at 10.7%<sup>8</sup>, seeing it peak at its highest rate for 40 years. This has largely been driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by geopolitical events, including the war in Ukraine.



The cost-of-living crisis potentially has a triple impact on the council:

- It has impacted on our residents. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases so income is falling in real terms, and the stark reality for many low-income households is that they no longer have enough money to live on. This is driving demand for services which help those facing financial hardship or who are in crisis, as well as services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.
- It has increased the council's operating costs. Premises and transport costs have increased in line with rises in energy costs and fuel prices, as has the cost of supplies and services provided by suppliers which face similar issues themselves.
- It impacts the council's income. As users of council services seek to save money, we expect income from discretionary services such as leisure centres and cinemas to fall.

The council is required to set a balanced budget so in times when spending exceeds funding, we may have to use our reserves or cut costs. Within our operating environment, the way we work has been developing at pace. The pandemic accelerated existing trends in remote working and automation, with more residents expecting digital services available 24/7. This required us to rethink the way in which many of our services are delivered, the culture of our organisation and the skills we need for the future.

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<sup>8</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to November 2022, Office for National Statistics

There is a history of good partnership working in County Durham. Limited resource means it is even more important that organisations work collaboratively, focusing their efforts on the right things and working seamlessly across organisational boundaries. Our residents remain at the heart of our ambitions and their involvement in service design and delivery is pivotal to our success. We will continue to equip ourselves with the skills to be able to achieve these things and develop a workforce for the future. Delivering existing services in different ways and developing new services for the benefit of our residents will allow us to stand out as an excellent council.

## Achievements

- We have delivered £250 million overall savings from 2011/12 to 2022/23
- Over 100 council services are available digitally and more than half of residents access our services this way.
- We have started a major project to join together data from 18 of our major IT systems and lay the foundations for the council to become a more data driven organisation which will help deliver better outcomes for our residents.
- We have achieved the 'Maintaining Excellence' status in the Better Health at Work Award, helping employers regionally to address health issues within their workforce. 75 organisations are now signed up to the award programme.
- We have maintained the Disability Confident Leader status awarded by the Department for Work and Pensions, due to our commitment to being a good employer of people with a disability and support local businesses to become Disability Confident.
- We have, in partnership, developed a network of more than 150 'Warm Spaces' where people worried about their heating bills can go to get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company.
- We have reduced carbon emissions from council operations by 57% since 2008-09.
- We continue to receive accreditations and awards for our work. For example, for our new mobile repairs app (APSE) and our E-Learning course for those issued with a littering fixed penalty notice.
- We have achieved the highest level of 'green' in the Investors in the Environment accreditation scheme. The award recognises our environmental management system, which is helping us to achieve year on year efficiencies and a pathway to net zero. We have also won overall Outstanding Achiever award from the Investors in the Environment Programme.
- We have carried out the second in a series of planned 'working well' employee engagement surveys to assess organisational health and wellbeing as part of our workforce strategy.

## Issues to address

- The council is facing significant financial pressures due to the present high levels of inflation, greater service demand, increasing costs to deliver council services and decreasing income from discretionary services
- The cost-of-living crisis has led to more households experiencing financial difficulties which is driving demand for support services to residents.
- Continuing uncertainty in terms of future funding settlements for local government and how this will be shared between local authorities makes financial planning extremely problematic.
- An increase in interest rates will lead to future increased costs of borrowing.
- Superfast broadband and the national rollout of 5G networks will enable greater digital connectivity for our residents and offer opportunities for new digital services.
- Durham County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Our targets are to achieve net zero as an organisation by 2030 (from a 2008/09 baseline) through offsetting and further reductions in emissions and to contribute towards and work with others to achieve a carbon neutral county by 2045.
- Workforce instability is increasing across the council, with local and national skills shortages increasing competition within the jobs market.
- Our partners, especially the Voluntary and Community Sector and some commissioned services, are also experiencing issues with recruitment and retention.
- The council has an ageing workforce. 43% of its staff are over the age of 50, which has an impact on sickness absence rates and requires effective workforce planning. In addition, an ageing population across the county is reducing the pool of young people from which we can recruit
- The most reported reason for employee sickness absence within the council is mental ill-health and fatigue.
- Society is experiencing a technological revolution where progress is accelerating and innovations can be identified and rapidly deployed but we are finding it difficult to recruit staff with the right skill set to keep pace
- We, together with its partners, should seek to maximise the value of every pound spent and seek to deliver social value outcomes. We will deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes for our local communities by adopting a strategic approach during its commissioning, procurement, development and planning of projects.
- We recognise the need to manage the customer data we hold more efficiently to better understand service users, generating benefits such as predicting and managing demand, providing the services residents want and supporting better decision-making. We also need to

ensure residents are confident we will look after their data appropriately

## Council Contribution

The council both delivers and commissions a wide range of services. It directly employs nearly 8,000 people and supports many others through its commissioning function. However, to remain relevant and meet the needs and expectations of its residents and communities, we need to continually adapt, investing in both technology and the skills of our workforce.

We have an extensive training programme in place to refresh, update and develop skills across our workforce. Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to both workforce development and addressing current and future skills needs. Around 2.6% of our workforce is currently enrolled in the programme (both new employees and existing employees upskilling), the £10 million invested to date has supported almost 1,400 employees to participate (half of participating employees were new to the council and half were existing staff upskilling). In addition, 72 new apprentices joined our workforce in 2022. The retention rate for apprentices is 71%.

We provide a range of contact channels and have invested heavily in new digital technology in recent years. Although almost 75% of the 1.8 million contacts received through our reported channels each year is by telephone, more customers interacting with us digitally. Digital contact now makes up 22% of all contact, compared to 15% pre-pandemic. This shift is particularly noticeable across service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management system - 73% are now logged digitally compared to 62% in 2020 – and almost 235,000 residents across 169,500 unique properties now have an online account. In addition, just over 71,000 customers (around 30%) receive their council tax bill via email, and more than 76,000 residents use the revenues and benefits open portal to view their council tax account. Our new webchat service, available across more than 30 web pages, is now used by more than 600 customers each month.

Feedback continues to be important to us and we have increased the number of ways customers can let us know what they think of the services we deliver. We automatically e-mail satisfaction surveys to customers on closure of services requested through our CRM (available across 117 service request types, compared to 25 in October 2017), and after performances at our theatres and events. Users requesting services online are asked to rate and comment on the process, and we continue to review all complaints and suggestions. The pandemic impacted on our service delivery, ways of working and employees. It is the driver behind increasing both the demand and complexity of specific services, it has accelerated organisational change and changed the expectations of both customers and employees. The council continues to deal with its legacy. The council supports both the

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

We continue to collaborate with local partners, to deliver social value outcomes across the county by the strategic use of procurement (the County Durham Pound project.) The project will maximise the value of every pound spent in the county and help to retain money within in the local economy, recirculating, creating employment opportunities and stronger more sustainable communities within the County.

The Durham Pension Fund has committed £18m funding to cornerstone the launch of the North East Regional Investment Fund, supporting SMEs across all sectors with headquarters or significant operations in the North East. The Fund will support economic growth and deliver a positive social and economic impact across the region, creating high-quality, local jobs.

Around 3% of the overall carbon emissions of County Durham originated from the council's operations. In 2021/22 Council emission equated to 45,704 tonnes of carbon; 48% from heating, 31% from electricity and 21% from transport. We continue to examine carbon emissions arising from our operational infrastructure, fleet, land use and behaviours and consider the climate emergency in all our decisions to further reduce our environmental impact.

## Approach

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

We want our workforce to be fit for any future challenges and so we need to ensure that our future plans recognise and address any risks such as skills shortages, ageing workforce, recruitment difficulties and changes in service user behaviour and demand.

The health and welfare of our workforce is important, and we have a range of actions we plan to implement to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of employees and ensure that we have an inclusive staff culture.

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

The council declared a climate emergency for County Durham in 2019 and has developed two costed action plans, one for the council's carbon reduction target and another for the countywide target. The council is investing in renewable energy such as a 3MW solar farm and battery storage project to power our Morrison Busty Depot at Annfield Plain. New council buildings are being built to high energy efficiency standards, with charging points for electric vehicles. Existing buildings are being retrofitted with more efficient heating systems, better insulation and low energy LED lighting. We are replacing all our pool cars with electric vehicles and have plans for the electrification of our service fleet.

## Priority Actions<sup>9</sup>

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- 2023/24
- Extend the mental health workforce development programme across the council, to increase awareness and support available for staff
  - **Develop a digital skills programme and invest in smarter working**
  - **Increase self-service of management and performance data by developing a range of business intelligence products**
  - **Implement the Council's response to the Community Engagement and Funding processes review**
  - Review the assistive technologies offer for adult care and develop a new Technology Enabled Care Strategy

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<sup>9</sup> Those in bold are identified as major projects and are monitored by CMT Major Initiatives Board

- Continue to deliver the digital transformation programme at a service level
- Maximise the use of existing technology and trial new technologies to improve efficiency
- Expand automation and self-service to employees
- Develop local action plans at a team level to address findings from the 'working well' employee engagement survey
- Develop an ultra-low carbon council depot at the Morrison Busty site at Annfield Plain

- 
- 2024/25
- Undertake a corporate peer challenge with the Local Government Association to help us identify strengths and areas for improvement within the council
  - Implement the Investors in the Environment Standard, aiming to maintain the current Green Level of accreditation
  - Strengthening our quality assurance and performance approaches in adult social care

- 
- 2025/26
- Ensure effective delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund

### Council Service Performance Indicators

- Days/shifts lost to sickness absence per full-time equivalent employee
- 90% of all requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations to be responded to within 20 working days
- Number of data breaches reported to the Information Commissioner's Office
- Service Access Requests received and responded to within 30 days
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions by 80% by 2030
- Percentage council tax collected
- Percentage business rates collected
- Average time to process new benefit claims (housing benefit claims/new council tax reduction scheme) (days)
- Average time to process changes in circumstances (housing benefit claims/council tax reduction scheme) (days)
- Percentage undisputed supplier invoices paid within 30 days
- MTFP targets achieved
- Unqualified audit opinion
- Percentage employed on an apprenticeship (new/upskilling)

- Percentage of employees aged over 50 years old
- Employee turnover
- Percentage of CRM service requests which are self-serve
- Percentage of respondents satisfied with overall service delivery (services requested through CRM)
- % of major planning applications determined with 13 weeks

## Glossary of Terms

5G	Fifth generation or latest iteration of telecommunications networks which is designed to greatly increase the speed and responsiveness of wireless networks
Attainment 8 score	A measure of the average attainment of pupils in up to eight qualifications at KS4
Better Health at Work Award	An award recognising the efforts of employers in the North-East and Cumbria in addressing health issues within the workplace
Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone	A regeneration area in Bishop Auckland's conservation area which has been agreed by Historic England and has been created to improve the town's historic centre and bring it back to be a vibrant market town for both locals and visitors
County Durham Together	A virtual hub developed to help support people to stay in their own home and protect them from contracting the coronavirus by putting them in touch with people who can support with access to food and essential supplies, medicines, financial help and social interaction for those experiencing loneliness and isolation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019, the respiratory disease caused by the new strain of the coronavirus
Disability Confident	A government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. Level 3 or highest level of the Disability Confident scheme which recognises the commitment towards disabled staff and acting as a champion for Disability Confident within local and business communities
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
Great North Care Record	An initiative to allow healthcare practitioners (from emergency departments, mental health, 111 services, ambulance and out of hours services) to access information from a patient's GP record

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Hate crime	A range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity
Healthy life expectancy	The proportion of life spent in good health or free from a limiting illness or disability
ILACS	Inspecting local authority children's services which is the framework and guidance used by Ofsted to inspect local authority services for children in help and protection children in care and care leavers.
Levelling up	A government policy which aims to reduce, mainly economic, imbalances between geographical areas and social groups in the United Kingdom.
MTFP	Medium-Term Financial Plan. This is a three-year plan which sets out the council's funding outlook, spending priorities and planned efficiencies over the medium-term
Ofsted	The Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. The organisation responsible for inspecting services providing education and skills for learners of all ages and inspection and regulation of services which care for children and young people
Ofsted rating	The rating scale Ofsted uses in its inspections of education providers, such as schools and children's social care providers (for example, the council). There are four grades: 1. Outstanding; 2. Good; 3. Requires Improvement; 4. Inadequate
Reablement	Services for people with poor physical or mental health to help them accommodate their illness by learning or re-learning the skills necessary for daily living
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
Welfare Assistance Scheme	Short-term support for people in crisis. There are two types: daily living expenses for up to seven days when your circumstances change unexpectedly; and settlement grants to help you stay at home or move back into housing

Wi-Fi

A wireless network allowing computers, tablets, smartphones and other devices to connect to the Internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within an area

## Strategic Planning Framework

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



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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



**23 January 2023**

**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 8 February 2023. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 31 May 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**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>	<b>Scrutiny Involvement</b>
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 Tel: 03000 261946	Scrutiny members have input into the formulation of the MTFP through COSMB meetings and comments made at the meeting on 23 January will be reflected in the report to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 . Scrutiny members have also had the opportunity to participate in identifying MTFP savings.
CORP/R/22/04	08/02/23	Council Plan 2023-24 to 2026-27		Leader of the Council		Andy Palmer, Head of Transformation, Planning and Performance Tel: 03000 268551	COSMB members have the opportunity to comment on the refreshed Council Plan at the meeting on 23 January prior to submission to Cabinet on 8 February 2023.

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

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
CYPS/01/2023	08/02/23	School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2024-25		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services		Graeme Plews, Education Provision Lead Officer Tel: 03000 265777

**SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
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**SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH**

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

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