



Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date **Friday 20 January 2023**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

Business Part A

Items which are open to the public and press. Members of the public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement and if registered to speak

1. Apologies
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 and the Special meeting held on 20 December 2022 (Pages 3 - 20)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Items from Co-opted Members and other Interested Parties
6. Community Action Team - Update
 - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 21 - 30)
 - b) Presentation by the Team Leader, Community Action Team (Pages 31 - 66)
7. Ecological Emergency - Update - Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 67 - 108)
8. Quarter Two Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2022/23 - Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 109 - 122)
9. Quarter Two 2022/23 Performance Management Report - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 123 - 140)
10. 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
12 January 2023

**To: The Members of the Environment and Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor B Coult (Chair)
Councillor J Elmer (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, P Atkinson, L Brown, J Charlton,
L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, C Kay, C Lines, B McAloon,
I McLean, R Manchester, C Martin, D Nicholls, R Potts,
J Purvis, J Quinn, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend

Co-opted Members

Mr T Cramond and Mr P Walton

Contact: Jill Hogg

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 23 November 2022** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Coult in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Elmer (Vice-Chair), E Adam, P Atkinson, J Blakey (substitute for Councillor A Reed), L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, R Manchester, C Martin, L Mavin (substitute for Councillor L Brown), D Nicholls, J Purvis, J Quinn, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend

Co-opted Members:

Mr P Walton

Also Present:

Councillor J Rowlandson and Councillor M Wilkes

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors L Brown, J Charlton, C Kay and I MacLean.

Apologies were also received from members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor C Hampson and Councillor A Reed

2 Substitute Members

Councillor L Mavin and Councillor J Blakey substituted for Councillors L Brown and A Reed respectively.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors D Nicholls and Councillor J Purvis declared interests in respect of agenda item 8 (Allotment Improvement Update), Councillor Nicholls as a named worker on an allotment and Councillor Purvis, through his role in the management of a town council's Allotment Association.

5 Items from Co-opted Members and other Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members and other interested parties.

6 Fly Tipping - Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an annual update on Durham County Council's work to address flytipping issues (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Ian Hoult, Neighbourhood Protection Manager, introduced the report and delivered a presentation summarising Durham's approach to tackling flytipping and the importance of its contribution towards the ambitions of the Council Plan. The Committee noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic there was an increase in all types of waste generated, however, following the pandemic, the number of flytipping incidents had reduced. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager highlighted that since 2013-14, with the exception of the pandemic period, Durham's rate of flytipping incidents per thousand of the population had reduced, whilst the national rate had increased. A table comparing Durham's performance with regional neighbours showed that over the past two years, only Stockton had a lower flytipping rate, per thousand of the population, than Durham.

The Committee noted that flytipping hotspots were generally within larger conurbations and household waste accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total amount of waste flytipped in County Durham, which reflected the national picture.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager spoke of education and awareness campaigns including 'your waste, your responsibility', to spread the message that the public are responsible for ensuring their waste is disposed of correctly. In addition, public engagement is encouraged through initiatives such as the 'Big Spring Clean' and Neighbourhood Wardens use social media to share information with the public on activity within communities.

Information was provided on the partnership approach with housing associations, town and parish councils, the Environment Agency, County Durham Fire and Rescue Service and the police. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager gave an account of a day in the life of a flytipping officer, who, in a typical day, will work with partners to resolve issues and investigate lines of enquiry. The Committee also received details of CCTV camera deployment and how it was assisting to secure prosecutions. Funding from DEFRA's Flytipping Intervention grant had been used to target flytipping in urban areas and to develop an e-learning course, which followed the successful e-learning course for those caught littering.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager concluded the presentation by outlining areas of focus for the future including social media campaigns, increased targeted surveillance and the development of the e-learning package.

Councillor Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change commented that the work undertaken over the past eighteen months had led to significant positive change. He gave the view that this success was due to the re-organisation of the management structure, changes to the operation of the Neighbourhood Warden service and to the excellent work of officers. Councillor Wilkes was pleased to see the council was publicising positive stories of prosecutions which he believed was making the public rethink their attitude towards the disposal of waste. He highlighted that the number of fines issued in the past financial year amounted to more than those issued in the previous five years combined and he added that he would like to see flytipping fines increased to provide a greater disincentive. Councillor Wilkes also spoke of how having a dedicated team to deal with yards and gardens enabled issues at ground level to be kept in check and helped to prevent wider flytipping problems. He commended the Neighbourhood Protection team whose work was evidenced in the visible improvements he had witnessed. Councillor Wilkes concluded by thanking the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their critical challenge to drive improvements.

Councillor Martin noted the recent increase in income from prosecutions and the number of fixed penalty notices issued and asked how this had been achieved. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager commented that it had been observed recently that courts seemed to be more inclined to impose heavier fines in respect of flytipping and there was a greater emphasis on enforcement. Improvements in technology were assisting and the recruitment of additional Neighbourhood Wardens helped the service to tackle the wider impact and target flytipping hotspots.

Councillor Adam noted the charts in the report showed steady progress since 2013 and expressed the view that the restructure had undoubtedly been a contributing factor. He expressed concern that two-thirds of the total waste flytipped was generated by households and he questioned whether it was, in fact, household waste or whether it was generated by rogue-traders. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager pointed out that flytipping accounts for a small proportion of the overall volume of waste. He explained that in response to the increase in fly-tipping incidents during the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been additional investment in funding for cameras in urban areas. Steps had been taken with regard to raising householders' awareness that they have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to ensure that their waste is being disposed of correctly. In response to a question from Councillor Adam regarding the placement of CCTV cameras, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that cameras are placed to gain a long-view of the high street, to avoid any intrusion of residents' privacy and that more detailed information on specific locations in particular wards could be provided.

Councillor Wilkes emphasised the importance of tackling issues at an early stage and the vital role residents play in providing information to enable the service to stay ahead and deal with issues as and when they occur.

In response to a question from Councillor Atkinson as to enforcement action in the Ferryhill area, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager offered to speak to Councillor Atkinson to provide information in respect of his ward.

In response to a number of questions from Councillor Nicholls, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager provided the following information. With regard to incidents of flytipping in rural areas which are difficult to locate, the service was aware of the issue and regular customer service meetings were held and improvements were being made to the use of the 'what3words' app.

Councillor Nicholls had observed a culture of leaving large items outside houses for long periods of time whilst awaiting collection and he asked if the service could provide a notice for residents to use, which would indicate that an item was awaiting a bulky waste collection. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager highlighted that the public are instructed to place bulky waste outside the night before it is due for collection and he added that Neighbourhood Wardens could help to identify bulky waste. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager informed the Committee that the educational stickers were currently being updated and would be circulated to Members for distribution. Councillor Nicholls commented that it would be helpful if ward Members could be updated prior to a press release relating to enforcement action. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted the comment however he pointed out that there may be time constraints with regard to publication of press releases.

Councillor Stubbs referred to the table showing the deployment of CCTV cameras and the number of incidents caught and he remarked on the increase during 2021-22 and asked for further information. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager clarified that, the reference to the 'number of incidents caught' referred to the number of incidents when a person had been caught flytipping which may then lead to the issue of a fixed penalty notice or prosecution, depending upon the circumstances. He added that cameras were in situ for longer time periods in locations which are known to be flytipping hotspots.

Members asked for information on the engagement work with housing associations and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager gave an example of the sharing of information when a yard or garden job is received. The housing association will often have the benefit of an existing relationship with the tenant and the information provided by the service may also benefit the association by alerting it to possible problems occurring within the property.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Air Quality Management - Update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on air quality across the county, primarily focusing on Durham City, where an Air Quality Management Area had been declared for nitrogen dioxide. The report also provided information on traffic measures to support air quality management (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

David Gribben, Environmental Health Officer introduced the presentation and provided information on the monitoring results of local air quality management across County Durham for January to September 2022. The Committee noted the highest measured levels of nitrogen dioxide across the county were at hotspot locations previously identified at Gilesgate, Church Street and Hallgarth Street at New Elvet and Sutton Street and Colpitts Terrace, Crossgate. Properties at Menceforth Cottages, Chester le Street were found to be at risk of exceeding the air quality objective. The Air Quality Action Status Report 2022 reported the monitoring results obtained in 2021 and DEFRA accepted that it represented the local air quality across the county.

Members noted the Durham City Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was adopted in June 2016 and in line with the guidance that AQAPs should be reviewed every 5 years, a project to review the plan commenced in 2021.

Information was provided on progress on the review of the plan which is being undertaken in three stages, with the first stage, modelling and source identification, being complete. The modelling showed the predicted levels of nitrogen dioxide will not comply with the annual mean air quality objective (40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) by 2024 at 'hotspot' areas across the city, Alexandra Crescent and Sutton Street, Crossgate, Gilesgate, and Church Street and Hallgarth Street, New Elvet. The most significant sources of nitrogen dioxide emissions were found to be light goods vehicles, buses and diesel cars.

The Environmental Health Officer informed the Committee that the first stage of the review demonstrated that there would be no compliance with the annual mean objective by 2024 unless additional actions were implemented to target the sources contributing to air pollution. As a result, during the consultation stage, two additional options were proposed, the first being the micro consolidation of freight deliveries to and from the city to target the impact of light goods vehicles. The second being the introduction of emission based, variable parking charges for Council owned car parks within Durham city, which would take into consideration the polluting potential of vehicles. A key factor to success is to ensure actions are integrated with other strategies, policies and plans such as the Sustainable Transport Plan and the Climate Emergency Response Plan, both of which incorporate actions to benefit air quality. The Committee noted that further consultation with stakeholders was required prior to the options appraisal and completion of the plan.

The Environmental Health Officer gave information on the Government proposal for the introduction of a Population Exposure Reduction Target for fine particulates ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$ – particles that have a diameter less than 2.5 microns). The review of the Air Quality Action Plan showed there are three receptors at which the predicted levels of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ will exceed the proposed air quality limit of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2024 at Gilesgate, close to the roundabout. The sources contributing towards $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ are the same as for nitrogen dioxide, with the addition of petrol cars.

The Head of Transport, Mark Jackson, provided details of measures put forward by traffic management to support the work in relation to air quality management. Measures include additional Park & Ride services, parking tariffs, the implementation of Sunday parking charges, optimisation of traffic signals to reduce queuing and implementation of walking and cycling initiatives. The Committee also heard of the transport and infrastructure traffic considerations such as extending the Park and Ride at Sniperley, walking and cycling improvements at Newton Hall and Framwellgate Peth and a city centre connectivity project. The Head of Transport also described traffic considerations relating to Integrated Passenger Transport including work with commercial bus operators to identify barriers to transferring to zero emission buses and incentives to increase bus usage.

Councillor Wilkes pointed out the danger that air pollution is a silent killer and to put the threat in context he highlighted that in the UK, approximately 1,600 people are killed in road accidents each year, while the number of people dying from the effects of air pollution each year is approximately 36,000.

Councillor Elmer expressed concern that the Government's measure for the designation of an Air Quality Management zone was four times the World Health Organisation's recommended safe level. He recognised the activity to tackle the issues and stated his view that a step-change is required to transition from the use of private vehicles to public and active transport. Councillor Elmer pointed out that measures which have been implemented to improve air quality, such as junction improvements, road widening to enable traffic flow and signal improvements also make for a more comfortable environment for motorists and therefore may lead to induced traffic. He concluded by referring to European cities which are increasing provision for public transport and reducing road-space for cars.

The Head of Transport commented on interventions to encourage active transport and on a positive note he added that younger people are becoming more environmentally conscious. He gave the view that future funding should be targeted at measures which aim to reallocate road space for active and public transport. He commented that during the pandemic many members of the public moved from public transport to use private transport and he spoke of the difficulties in encouraging people to reverse their action and return to public transport. He suggested that success may be achieved gradually, by encouraging people to make small changes to their travel choices.

Councillor Adam recognised improvements had been made, however the impact of the pandemic had undoubtedly changed people's behaviour and he commented that it was difficult to see how those who had changed their method of transport during the pandemic could be encouraged to revert to using public transport, particularly with the lack of funding for public transport and an unreliable service. He expressed the view that urgent action was required and whilst he was pleased to see the suggestions for improvements, he was concerned that the actions would take time to come to fruition.

Councillor Wilkes referred to the amount of good work being done and the need to tackle the wider plans for the county. He added that he hoped that the future would see less road building and more people choosing to use public and active transport. The Head of Transport gave examples of countywide work such as the additional EV charging provision and referred to the expectation that future funding will focus on wider interventions across the national highway network. The Committee commented that work must ensure that measures to tackle air pollution do not result in moving a problem from one area to another.

Clarifying a question from Councillor Quinn, the Head of Transport confirmed that there is currently no Park & Ride provision on Sundays. Councillor Quinn expressed his view that the hospitality sector in Durham thrives on Sundays and he suggested the council should consider a Park & Ride provision on Sundays.

Councillor Nicholls said the lack of reliability of public transport and the age of the fleet was a concern to him and it was difficult to see how the take-up of public transport would improve unless these issues were tackled. He added that it seemed that newer vehicles were being earmarked for city centre routes whilst older vehicles served the rural parts of the county; areas which would particularly benefit from the reliability that newer vehicles would provide. He observed the large amount of home to school transport journeys and he asked whether there had been any work done to reduce the number of journeys.

The Head of Transport explained that buses have a lifespan and therefore the fleet is managed to ensure that older vehicles are upgraded such as improvements to heating and the installation of wifi and air conditioning. In acknowledgement that older vehicles contribute to air quality issues, work was being done to ensure the fleet is as clean as possible. Responding to comments regarding reliability, the Head of Transport highlighted that bus companies were doing their best to disseminate information on cancelled services to the public as soon as possible. He added that many services had been cancelled due to a lack of drivers, however Durham was doing well to address the issue, that the recruitment of drivers had improved and cancellations were reducing. In addition, the bus service improvement plan was looking into the possibility of a cap on the maximum fare for young people.

Mr Walton, Co-opted Member asked various technical questions and due to time constraints, he agreed to email the questions for a response to be prepared by the Environmental Protection Manager. The questions and responses would be circulated to all Members for information.

Councillor Blakey, Chair of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee informed Members that, at a meeting of the General Licensing and Registration Committee held on 17 November, the Committee agreed to recommend to full Council, the adoption of a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which includes improved engine emission standards.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Councillor D Nicholls left the meeting.

8 Allotment Improvement Programme - Update

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on Durham County Council's allotment policy (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Delivering the presentation, the Head of Environment, Oliver Sherratt, presented a progress update since the report of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of its review of the service, which was presented to Cabinet in 2020. The Committee noted a summary of the recommendations which were outlined in full, in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Head of Environment reminded Members of comments in response to the Cabinet report which had been received from allotment holders and Allotment Associations which included that some controls may be too prescriptive and concerns that large animals would not be permitted. Members noted progress on the uncontentious recommendations and the Head of Environment provided information on suggested safeguards.

Concluding the presentation, the Head of Environment outlined the next steps for a further report to Cabinet to implement the recommendations, engaging with Allotment Associations, tenants and town and parish councils.

In response to a request from Councillor Townsend for clarification, the Head of Environment advised views are being sought from town and parish councils with respect to allotments being transferred from the council to town and parish councils.

Councillor Adam congratulated the good work of the team and the progress from 2020 to date. He referred to the allotment site visits undertaken during the review activity and he raised concerns that a number of these were legal allotments, however, businesses were being run from the sites, for allotment rents and he requested an update on the issue. The Head of Environment responded that a considerable amount of work had been done with regard to identifying the sites and as a recommendation of the Committee was a rent review, that there may be scope to address non-allotment sites, in the future, through that review. The Head of Environment confirmed that the council cannot dispose of registered allotments without approval from the Secretary of State.

Councillor Adam said the report acknowledged the demand for allotments and therefore the sites should be used for their primary purpose ie for the growth of vegetables and fruit and as the council is looking at ways of increasing income, these sites should either revert to being used as allotments or they should be considered to be fully rateable sites.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd welcomed the report and expressed the view that that allotments are important to the wider county plans to improve the environment and health and wellbeing and he spoke of local initiatives to encourage allotments and gardening within the community.

Councillor Elmer acknowledged the balance of the report, in particular the contentious issues for example the grazing of animals. He added he would like to see a strategy in place for the establishment of new allotment sites, in compliance with the Allotment Act and re-establishment of sites which are currently not used as allotments and the identification of new plots of land for the purpose of allotments. He recognised the conflicting demands on land and the balance to be achieved. The Head of Environment pointed out that, overall, there is an increase in demand for allotments, however, there are areas where there is a surplus of allotments. The service is endeavouring to provide smaller plots from within the provision wherever possible and returning unused parts of sites to allotment sites. As new sites are the responsibility of town and parish councils in the first instance, the proposal is to support towns and parish councils to increase their capacity. The Committee noted that if a group of residents make a request to the council to provide an allotment, the council has a duty to provide it.

Resolved:

The Sub-Committee:

- (a) Reconfirmed the position on the original ESCOSC policy recommendations, that would in due course result in new tenancy agreement.
- (b) Noted the safeguards which would:
 - (i) Exclude those sites, which although managed by the allotment service are currently used for other purposes.
 - (ii) Provide flexibility for Associations in consultation with the Council to come to bespoke arrangements for their site.
 - (iii) Provide a transition period for tenants, to be detailed in future reports to Cabinet.

- (c) Noted that allotments held by higher tier authorities should transfer to lower tier authorities set up after 2009 and consistent with this with engagement with Parishes where this applies.
- (d) Noted the recent investments in allotments and infrastructure capital grant scheme for which budgetary provision already exists.

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a **Special meeting** of the **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Tuesday 20 December 2022** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Coult in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Elmer (Vice-Chair), E Adam, P Atkinson, G Hutchinson, C Kay, R Manchester, C Martin, D Nicholls, J Purvis, J Quinn, T Stubbs and D Sutton-Lloyd.

Co-opted Members:

Mr P Walton

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors L Brown, J Charlton and S Townsend

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members in attendance.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items from Co-opted Members and other interested parties

No items were raised by Co-opted Members and other interested parties.

5 Library Provision - Overview

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an overview of the public library service and presented the initial findings of the County Durham Libraries Needs Assessment exercise (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Alison Clark, Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism and Sarah Glynn, Strategic Manager for Culture, attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on the current service, including details of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and information on the phased approach to the libraries transformation programme.

The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism explained that the current service comprises of 39 libraries, a mobile library service and a library Headquarters located at Spennymoor, which houses the mobile library vehicles and book stock. A comprehensive library online service is offered, with an online book ordering and renewal service and free access to e-books and e-magazines. The mobile library service provides for the rural areas of the county and the 'Books on Wheels' service enables those with mobility problems to access library services direct to their homes. The 'Book Bus' serves residential homes, sheltered housing schemes and day care centres to deliver services to elderly and disabled persons.

Members learned that during the pandemic, with the closure of public libraries, frontline staff were seconded to support the vulnerable and the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism highlighted that, following the pandemic, libraries had become increasingly important community venues. The fast pace of change in response to the pandemic brought about new ways of working and digital transformation that otherwise may have taken many years to achieve. The service continued to diversify, for example, to offer events and activities, in addition to traditional library services. In recent months, in response to the cost of living crisis, the county's 39 libraries became 'warm spaces' to support residents throughout the winter and this had generated a great deal of public engagement through social media channels.

Following the pandemic, the number of active borrowers (borrowers who have borrowed two or more items in the previous 12 months), had recovered and was now standing at 76% of the last full pre-Covid-19 year and if the trend continued, the number of active borrowers would match pre-Covid-19 levels by the end of the financial year.

Referring to the authority's duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide comprehensive and efficient public libraries, the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism explained that the last extensive consultation on library services took place in 2012 and in May 2020, the Council's Corporate Management Team agreed to undertake a needs assessment of the library service to inform the future development of the service. An external agency was recruited to carry out an engagement exercise as part of the needs assessment. The consultation gathered views of customers, stakeholders and staff and the feedback from the exercise identified nine key elements for change as follows:

1. A strategic review of the existing physical library network;

2. A review of library opening hours;
3. Alignment of library outcomes with Council plans and priorities;
4. Investment in technology and digital content;
5. A library workforce skills review and associated training;
6. A review of communications and marketing;
7. Develop and deliver a compelling and accessible events programme;
8. Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships;
9. A review of current book stock and content policy.

The Committee noted that proposals for a new library offer would be formally consulted on, during a public consultation in spring 2023, with a view to a report being considered by Cabinet in the autumn of 2023.

The Chair thanked officers for the informative presentation and sought comments and questions on the nine key elements for change identified.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd referred to plans for outreach and partnership working and he commended the work carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, adding that he would welcome further development of this work. Councillor Stubbs asked if consideration would be given to the development of partnerships within the private sector, such as Amazon, and the establishment of community links for service delivery, for example through banks and post offices. The Strategic Manager for Culture confirmed that suggestions for outreach and partnership working would be considered.

Councillor Adam commented on the strategic review of the library network and observed a lack of provision in the south west of the county. The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism responded that the ambition is to maximise access to services throughout the county, to enable all customers to access services as close to home as possible. In addition to existing public library buildings, this would include investigating how working with partners in the community and the use of mobile and self-services may increase provision.

In response to a question from Councillor Kay as to why it was deemed necessary to employ a consultancy to carry out the needs assessment exercise, the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism highlighted that due to the size of the service and the scope of the processes involved, it was considered appropriate and cost-effective to procure external expertise.

Councillor Kay spoke anecdotally of reports that customers attending a library for activities other than borrowing books were made to feel unwelcome and the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism advised Councillor Kay that she would investigate the matter.

Councillor Atkinson referred to the importance of libraries, in particular, in smaller town centres such as Ferryhill and he asked whether the transformation programme included plans to close libraries. The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism stated that the aim of the transformation programme was service improvement and this would include a review of assets and buildings to ensure best use, in due course.

In response to a question from Co-opted Member, Mr Walton, as to the library service's links with Durham University library, the Strategic Manager for Culture confirmed that a strong partnership was in place with the University and the first phase of the transformation programme included input from an external reference group of sector specialists including Durham University's Director of Library Services.

Vice-Chair, Councillor Elmer, asked how the service intended to align actions with the Council Plan and its wider priorities. The Strategic Manager for Culture responded that the library review was timely to align with the Council's priorities, for example, by ensuring the delivery of library services will support the Council's sustainability priority through the use of electric vehicles and the availability of digital products. In addition, the support provided through libraries in respect of literacy, skills development and community learning would contribute to the Council's recently adopted Inclusive Economic Strategy.

The Chair commented that she would welcome the development of the activity and events programme which she believed would be a key aspect of public libraries in the future. Referring to the success of the co-location of the library at the Louisa Centre, the Chair asked for information regarding future co-location plans. The Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism replied that work was being carried out to better understand how families use libraries and leisure centres and she acknowledged that every location is unique and therefore co-location may not be appropriate in all areas.

The Chair then invited general questions in relation to the report and presentation.

Councillor Adam referred to the nine elements for change and asked how the elements were identified. The Strategic Manager for Culture explained that the external reference group acted as a critical friend and the elements were identified through key findings of the focus groups and data gathered from surveys completed by both active and non-active borrowers.

In addition, Durham's Youth Council was involved in the consultation and gathered the views of 500 young people. The Strategic Manager highlighted the importance of engaging with non-library users, in order to identify key barriers.

Councillor Adam observed that the report lacked data in respect of the different elements of the mobile library service and how the service provides for children, young people and those who work full-time and may not be able to visit libraries during opening hours. The Strategic Manager for Culture replied that further data relating to the mobile services could be shared with the Committee. She added that some libraries have a children's library section and that Durham Learning Resources delivers a dedicated schools' library service. Councillor Adam also raised concerns regarding literacy standards within schools and asked whether there were plans for a targeted approach to literacy, for parts of the county where literacy standards were low. The Strategic Manager responded that the transformation process aims to explore this issue in greater detail, in particular, the service's role to support literacy within families and referred to forthcoming work to develop literacy skills across the County and provide support to neighbourhoods to encourage the use of public library services.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.

Members at the meeting agreed the following additional recommendations:

- b) That a further report and presentation detailing the proposals for the new library offer be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Members at a future meeting of the Committee to be held during the consultation process.
- c) That comments made by Members in relation to the proposals for the new library offer are formulated into a formal Overview and Scrutiny response, to be shared with the Service Grouping and fed into the ongoing consultation process.

6 Such other business

The Chair reminded Members that a short meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on 27 March 2023 which will be followed by a workshop focusing on the Climate Emergency Response Plan. The workshop will provide an opportunity for Members to work with officers to look at various sections of the CERP, with the comments made by Members during the workshop to be used to further develop the plan. Members would be provided with further information in January. The workshop will be open to all Overview and Scrutiny Members and the Chair encouraged all Members of the Committee to participate.

Concluding the meeting, the Chair, on behalf the Committee, congratulated the Strategic Waste Team on their success at the National Recycling Awards, winning the campaign of the year award for their WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) campaign and requested that the Committee's congratulations be conveyed to the team.



Environment and Sustainable Communities

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 January 2023

Community Action Team Update

Report of Alan Patrickson Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Electoral Division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESC OSC) with a summary of the work of the Community Action Team and to look at future work.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Community Action Team fulfils a valuable role improving the quality of life for residents in deprived communities, where there are a high number of private lets.
- 3 Within each project a large quantity of casework is undertaken, with enforcement powers used when required.
- 4 The team continue to work well with partners and local communities. Intelligence-led enforcement focuses on problem issues, whilst empowering the local community.

Recommendations:

- 5 Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:
 - a) Receive and comment on the report and presentation

- b) For a further update on the Community Action Team to be included within next year's ESCOSC work programme

Background

- 6 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee includes as part of its work programme an update in relation to the Community Action Team.
- 7 This report provides members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny with an update.

Structure of the team

- 8 The Community Action Team is a small and ambitious team responsible for delivering Community Action projects within County Durham. The aim of the Community Action Team is to bring together key partners with specialist skills, as well as local residents, working proactively to tackle local housing and environmental issues.
- 9 The team currently comprise of a Team Leader (0.6 F/T equivalent), Senior Environmental Health Officer (0.6 F/T equivalent), 3 Community Action Officers (1 F/T and 2 x 0.6 equivalent) and a Public Protection Officer (F/T).
- 10 It is part of the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Directorate, Community Protection Service, Neighbourhood Interventions Division.

Background to the team

- 11 Following a successful pilot in 2012, the CAT began operating in 2013. Since 2013, it has carried out 41 projects covering 28 locations in degraded communities across County Durham.
- 12 Each project is divided into three phases:
- Engagement, Intelligence gathering and Priority setting,
 - Action, and
 - Review, Exit and Feedback.
- 13 There are opportunities for the community to get involved through residents' engagement events, resident surgeries, and mid-action activities such as litter picks and walkabouts. Partners meet during the engagement period, carry out a walkabout of the area and, following input from the community, prioritise 3-4 issues. A strategy is put in place to carry out targeted interventions in the action period. Partners carry out a variety of interventions including weekly walkabouts of the area,

litter clearance, waste carrier licence checks, and talks to local schools. At the end of each project, an exit strategy is put in place with partners. Residents and community groups receive a feedback letter outlining the action that took place, the exit strategy, ways to contact the council and partner agencies, and a survey inviting project feedback.

- 14 Time is also allocated within each programme to review previous projects.

How the areas are identified within the County

- 15 Project locations are chosen by combining and scrutinising our Civica public health complaint data with a dataset of deprivation, empty homes, median house price and percentage private rented in receipt of housing benefit. This allows us to establish locations with greatest need.
- 16 The 2023-24 locations also included newly available antisocial behaviour data.
- 17 Some locations continue to rank highly in terms of these indicators.

The type of work undertaken with examples

- 18 The CAT carried out 6 eleven-week projects in 2021 and 2022, as well as 9 reviews of previous project areas.
- 19 In 2021 the team visited Shildon, South Moor, Dean Bank and reviewed previous projects in Crook, Eldon & Dene Valley, Ferryhill Station and Grange Villa.
- 20 In 2022 the team visited Easington Colliery, Spennymoor, Wheatley Hill and reviewed previous projects in Blackhall Colliery, Dean Bank, Horden, Shildon and South Moor. Although the review of the Horden project did not include walkabouts and casework due to the Horden Together team being in place there.
- 21 Core casework related to common issues such as rubbish accumulations and defective drainage, with open to access properties, pest issues, fly tipping, dog fouling, nuisance properties and housing disrepair also investigated.
- 22 The team carried out a total of 2145 pieces of casework in 2021 and 2022, which included follow-up and review work in previous project locations. There were a total of 1009 legal Notices served and 170 works in default required where there was non-compliance with Notices.

Table 1.1 – Types of casework in CAT project areas in 2021 and 2022

	2021	2022	Grand Total
Type of Casework			
C01 Accumulation - Agricultural		1	1
C02 Accumulation - Commercial	2	5	7
C03 Accumulation - Domestic	575	575	1150
C04 Accumulation - Advice	2	2	4
C11 Drain / Sewer Blockage / Sewerage Overflow	6	28	34
C12 Drain / Sewer / Rainwater Defect	55	72	127
C14 Drainage - Surface Water	6		6
C16 Drainage - Advice		2	2
C21 Filthy / Verminous Premises	4	6	10
C22 Pests - Rodents (NOT request for service)	10	33	43
C24 Pests - Pigeons / Other Birds	5	4	9
C31 Detrimental to the Amenity	6		6
C33 Public Health - Other	234	268	502
C34 Public Health - advice enquiry	4	3	7
H01 HHSRS	2		2
H05 Home Safety / Security	9	1	10
H11 Empty Property - Notification	10	18	28
H12 Empty Property - Open To Unauthorised Access	18	56	74
H13 Empty Property - Unsafe	1		1
H15 Empty Property - Other	26	13	39
H21 Defective / Nuisance Property	26	18	44
H23 Dangerous Structure	4	8	12
H27 Housing Other	8	1	9
H32 Advice and Guidance - Private Sector Initiatives Only		1	1
H36 Housing - Info / Advice Enquiry - Env Health Only		2	2
H40 Disrepair - Private Sector Initiatives Only	1		1
H44 Partnership Working	11		11
H46 CAT Team Housing Disrepair Proactive		1	1
X08 Referred To Other Service	2		2
Grand Total	1027	1118	2145

- 23 The largest category of casework continues to be rubbish accumulations in private yards, followed by drainage concerns.

- 24 The 'Public Health Other' category covers survey work, as well as a mixture of issues brought to our attention by residents and through walkabouts.
- 25 During each project partners work on a variety of issues found during the engagement period at the start of the project, through community information and identified through walkabouts.
- 26 Each project has an action plan with assigned actions. These are dependent on the project priorities, but have included bin marking, extra littering/dog fouling/ASB patrols, community litter picks, 'no dumping' posters, untidy site clearance, door knocking 'confidence' surveys, proactive property inspections, survey work, traffic surveys, Speedwatch, Public Health initiatives such as wellbeing walks and mini health checks.

How the team works with partners and other service within DCC

- 27 The team work alongside other Durham County Council teams such as Planning Officers, Private Sector Housing Officers, Selective Licensing, Neighbourhood Wardens, Clean & Green, Civic Pride, Regeneration and other Community Safety teams. External partners include the Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Teams and Housing Associations. As well as local Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Resident groups and local communities. The aim of the CAT is to bring together key partners with specialist skills, as well as local residents, working proactively to tackle local housing, environmental and antisocial behaviour issues
- 28 Before each project starts, CAT officers make contact with partners and other services to get their input into the project planning and agree their participation in the project.
- 29 At the start of each project partners are invited to an initial meeting, where partner intelligence is shared and an initial walkabout where partners can view the issues of concern and start to problem solve multi-agency solutions. A partner walkabout also takes place.
- 30 Following the community engagement period, partners meet again. The findings from the engagement period are reviewed and project priorities put in place, along with an action plan for the 7-week action period. All partners are encouraged to participate in the action plan.
- 31 During the action period, partners are tasked to work on specific actions. Weekly walkabouts take place to focus on the priority issues. Resident surgeries are held to update residents on the work of the team.

- 32 A mid-action update is requested from each partner and circulated to the partner group.
- 33 At the end of the project partners come together for an exit meeting where the project is reviewed, and an exit strategy is put in place. The exit strategy tasks partners continuing to work in the area to continue to focus on the project priorities and any hot spot issues.
- 34 Approximately 6-12 months after each project is completed a review takes place. Low-key walkabouts of the focus area take place and the exit strategy is reviewed. Partners are requested to provide updates on the exit strategy actions. The findings from the review are circulated to partners.
- 35 We have continued to work with Groundwork North East and Cumbria. They are contracted to work with us during the project, then carry out 20 weeks sustainability at the end of each project. Groundwork deliver community-based events and activities, such as volunteering and training sessions. This engages local people, schools and community groups and embeds the CAT project priority topics. Previous activities have included litter picks, healthy eating sessions, bin marking, volunteer clean ups, improvement of green spaces, and youth provision. They also usually attract match funding into the area as well.

The success of the team and how performance/success is monitored

- 36 Each project has an action plan and the quantity of casework, notices and work in default is monitored. See Table 1.2.
- 37 Feedback surveys are sent to residents and landlords at the end of each project. The results are reviewed regularly.
- 38 After each project the location is revisited 6-12 months afterwards. Low key walkabouts are carried out, as well as a review of the exit strategy. The quantity of casework picked up during the reviews is usually lower than on the original project, however in some areas there is still a significant amount of casework found. See Table 1.3.
- 39 Partners continue to give positive feedback at the end of each project about the multi-agency work which has taken place, as well as suggestions for improving future projects.

Table 1.2 – Quantity of casework and legal notices in CAT project areas in 2021 and 2022

Location	Casework	Notices	Work in Default
Shildon	184	48	8
South Moor	279	94	15
Dean Bank	306	84	11
Reviews(4)/Other	258	145	31
TOTAL – 2021	1027	371	65
Easington Colliery	335	216	29
Spennymoor	188	82	13
Wheatley Hill	202	84	15
Reviews(4)/Other	393	256	48
TOTAL – 2022	1118	638	102

Table 1.3 – Comparison of casework found on the original project walkabout compared to the review walkabout and the % change by location

Review Location	Original Project Total Casework	Original Project 1 st Walkabout	Review walkabout	% Change
2021				
Crook	95	40	28	-30%
Eldon and Dene Valley	257	168	116	-31%
Ferryhill Station	207	120	31	-74%
Grange Villa	197	90	58	-36%
2022				
Blackhall Colliery	175	116	88	-24%
Dean Bank	306	126	109	-13%
Shildon	184	90	107	+19%
South Moor	279	124	62	-50%

How the work of the team is funded and levels of funding

- 40 The funding for the CAT team is part of the overall budget for Community Protection and has a small operational revenue budget which is used for promotional, educational and engagement activities. Community Protection also funds the works undertaken by Groundwork

which is designed to leave legacy improvements. The work undertaken by partner agencies will be funded by each individual service area.

Future work plans and Next Steps

- 41 The Community Action Team are due to begin their next project in Coundon from 23rd January – 9th April 2023. A new programme of locations will begin after that date.
- 42 The partnership with Groundwork North East and Cumbria has been extended into 2024, with an option to extend for a further 12 months.

Authors:

Jennifer Jones

Team Leader – Community Action Team

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable

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Community Action Team (CAT) Update

20 January 2023



Purpose and Objectives

Purpose – to provide an update on the 2021-22 work and to look at future work.

Objectives:

1. Explain the structure and background to the CAT
2. Describe how the areas are identified within the county
3. Provide examples of the type of work undertaken
4. Outline how the team works with partners and other service within DCC
5. Review the success of the team and how performance/success is monitored
6. Clarify how the work of the team is funded and levels of funding
7. Summarise future work plans

Background

- Small ambitious team working with key partners and local communities
- Proactively tackle local housing and environmental issues

- Currently 6 team members, 4.4 person equivalent
- Part of the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Directorate, Community Protection Service, Neighbourhood Interventions Division

- 11 week projects
- 3 phases:
 - **Engagement, Intelligence gathering, Priority setting**
 - **Action**
 - **Review, Exit and Feedback**

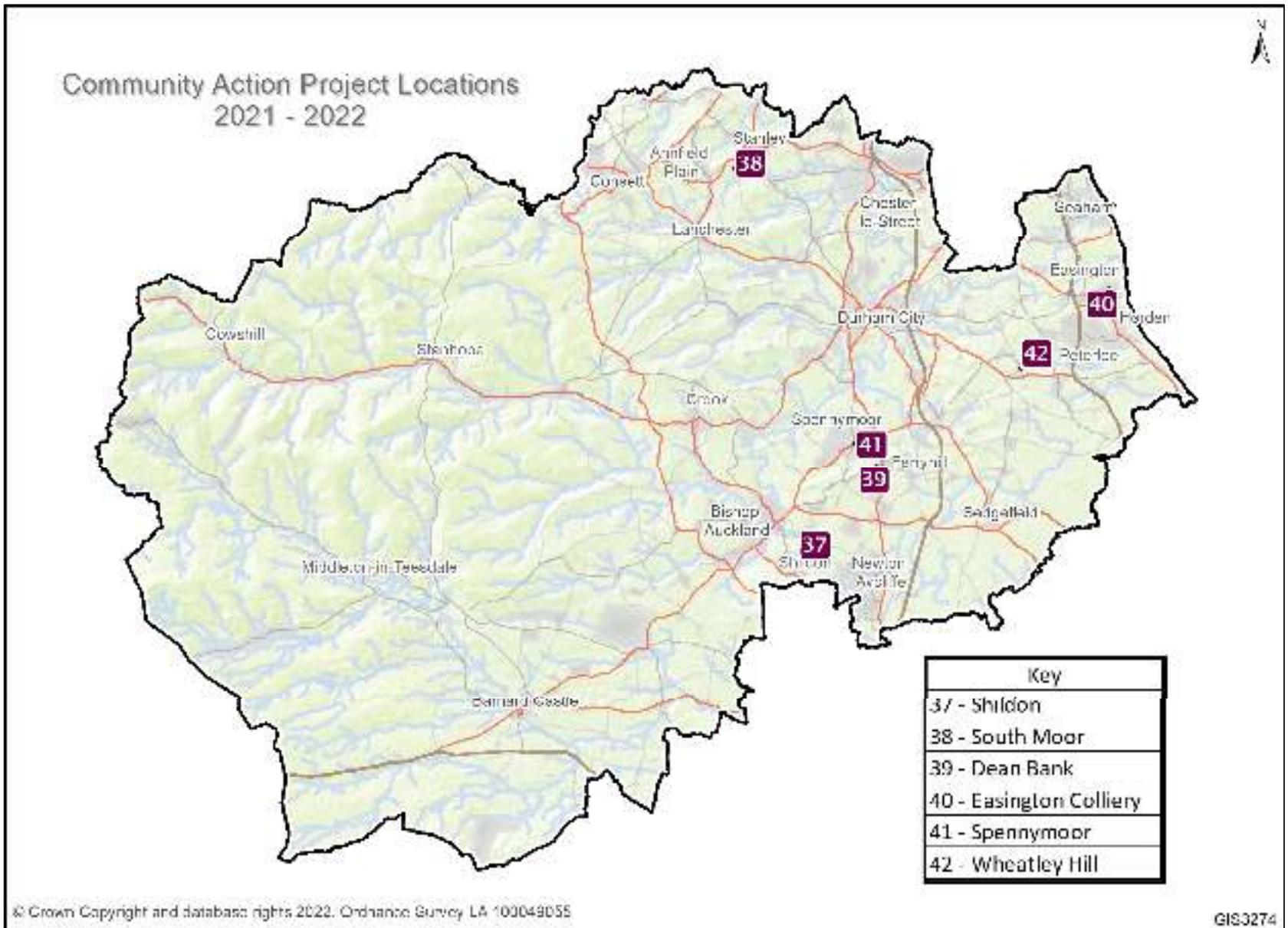


Resident Engagement



How the areas are identified within the County

- Project locations are chosen by combining and scrutinising our Civica public health complaint data with a dataset of deprivation, empty homes, median house price and percentage private rented in receipt of housing benefit. This allows us to establish locations with greatest need.
- The 2023-24 locations also included newly available antisocial behaviour data. Some locations continue to rank highly in terms of these indicators.



The type of work undertaken with examples

- In 2021 and 2022 6 eleven-week projects took place, as well as 9 reviews of previous project areas.
- Casework related to: rubbish accumulations, defective drainage, open to access properties, pest issues, fly tipping, dog fouling, nuisance properties and housing disrepair.
- The team carried out a total of **2145** pieces of casework, which included follow-up and review work in previous project locations.
- There were a total of **1009** legal Notices served and **170** works in default required where there was non-compliance with Notices.



CAT Shildon - 2021



CAT South Moor - 2021



CAT Dean Bank - 2021



CAT Easington Colliery - 2022



CAT Spennymoor - 2022



CAT Wheatley Hill - 2022



Partner activities

- Each project has an action plan with assigned actions
- These are dependent on the project priorities, but have included bin marking, extra littering/dog fouling/ASB patrols, community litter picks, 'no dumping' posters, untidy site clearance, door knocking 'confidence' surveys, proactive property inspections, survey work, traffic surveys, Speedwatch, Public Health initiatives such as wellbeing walks and mini health checks.

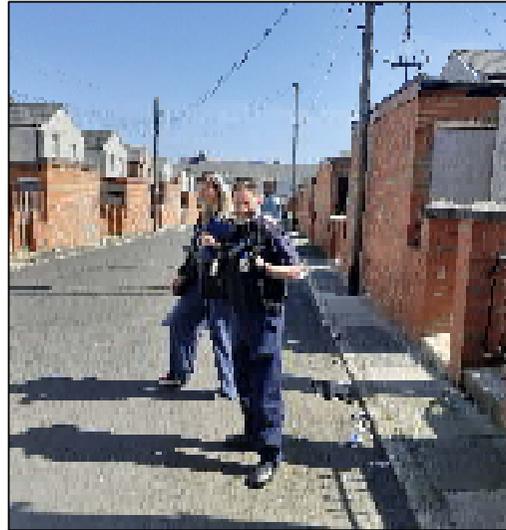


How the team works with partners and other DCC Services

- Work with wide variety of DCC teams, as well as local Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Resident groups and local communities
- External partners, include the Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Teams, Housing Associations and Groundwork North East & Cumbria.
- Partners invited to input into planning.
- 3 partner meetings:
 - initial meeting, strategy meeting and exit meeting
- Initial partner walkabout, focused walkabouts in the action weeks
- Mid-action updates are requested and circulated
- Reviews take place 6-12months after the original project



Partnership Working



The success of the team/Performance monitoring

- Progress of project action plan monitored
- The quantity of casework, notices and work in default is monitored
- Feedback surveys sent to residents and landlords at project end. Results are reviewed regularly.
- Project reviews compare quantity of casework in the review compared to the initial walkabout.
- Partners continue to give positive feedback at project end about multi-agency work, as well as suggestions for improving future projects

Comparison of casework found on the original project walkabout compared to the review walkabout and the % change by location

Review Location	Original Project Total Casework	Original Project 1 st Walkabout	Review walkabout	% Change
2021				
Crook	95	40	28	-30%
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Blackhall Colliery	175	116	88	-24%
Dean Bank	306	126	109	-13%
Sildon	184	90	107	+19%
South Moor	279	124	62	-50%

How the team is funded

- Part of the overall budget for Community Protection
- Small operational revenue budget used for promotional, educational and engagement activities.
- Community Protection also funds the works undertaken by Groundwork which is designed to leave legacy improvements.
- The work undertaken by partner agencies will be funded by each individual service area.

Future works plans and Next Steps

- Next project in Coundon from 23rd January – 9th April 2023
- The partnership with Groundwork North East and Cumbria has been extended into 2024, with an option to extend for a further 12 months.
- Future projects have been planned until the end of 2024

Future CAT project areas 2023-24

- New locations:
 - Chilton
 - Deneside, Seaham
 - Annfield Plain
 - West ward, Newton Aycliffe

- Re-visit locations:
 - Cockton Hill East
 - Deaf Hill, Trimdon Station

QUESTIONS

Community Action Team (CAT) Update – part 2

20 January 2023



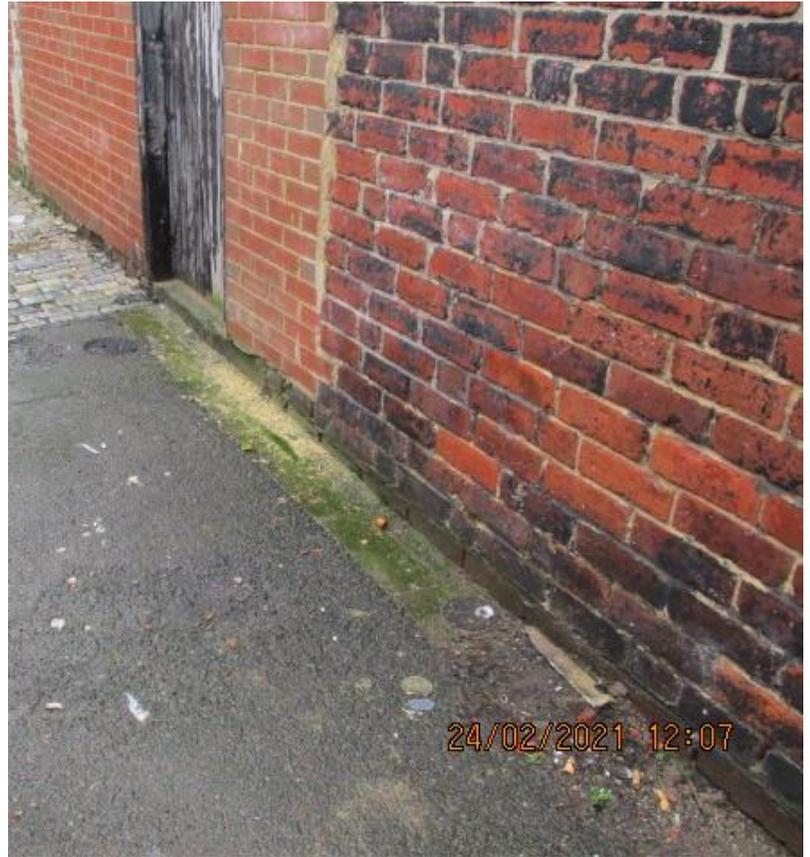
The banner features a circular logo on the left with the text "Community Action Team" inside. A large green arrow points from the logo towards the center text. The center text reads "Making a difference in our county" in red. To the right, there is a Durham County Council logo and the website address "www.durham.gov.uk/CAT".

Community Action Team

**Making a difference
in our county**

Durham County Council

www.durham.gov.uk/CAT



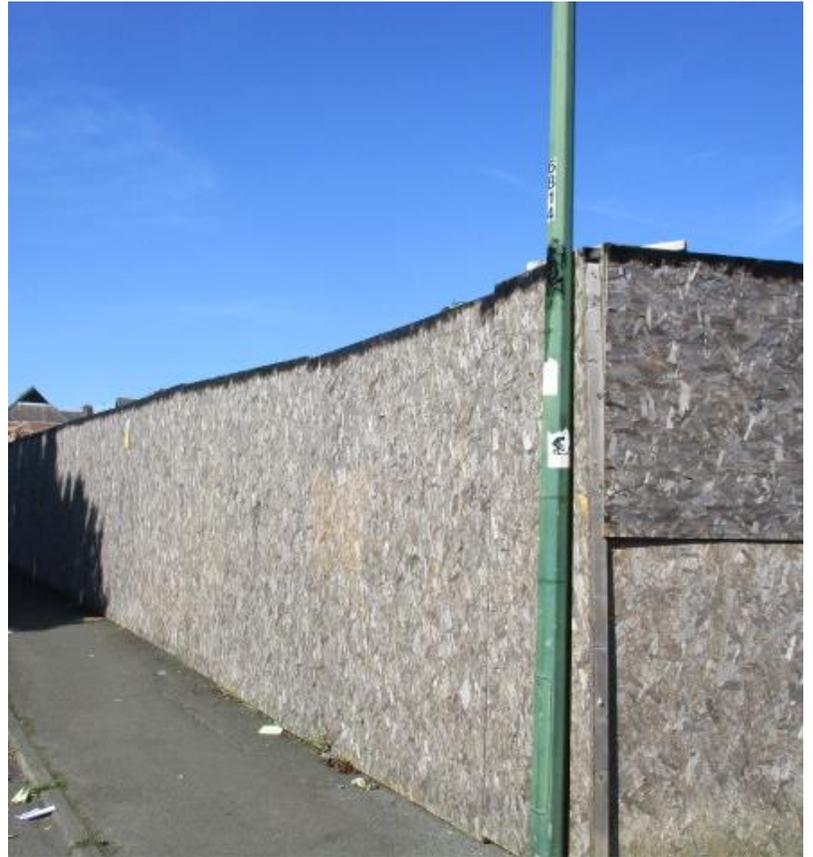
Before and After – Fly tipping

Before and After

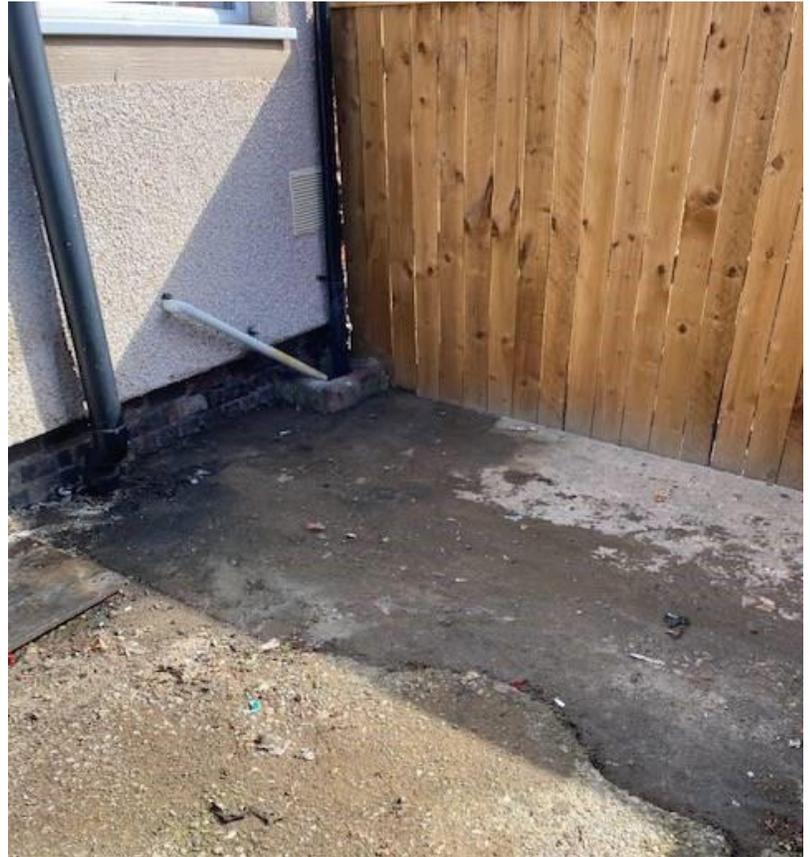


Before and After





Before and After



Before and After



Before and After



Before and After, Bin warning letters



Before and After



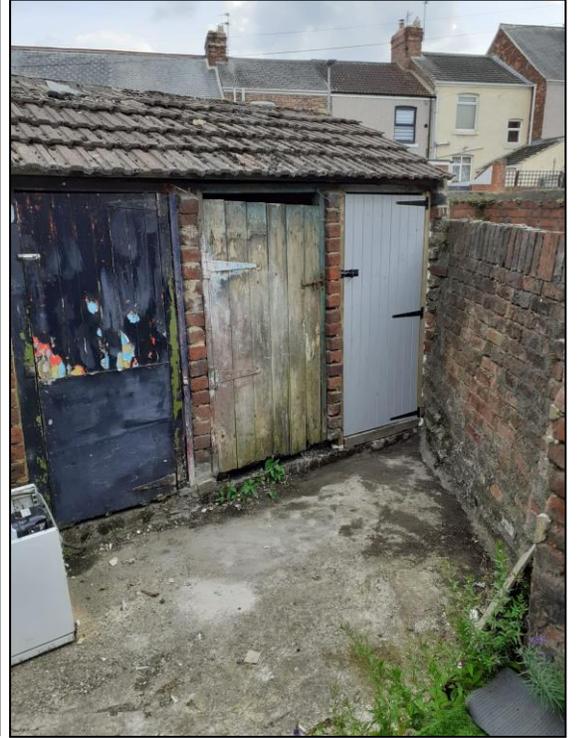
Before and After



Before and After



Before and After



Before and After

QUESTIONS

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

20 January 2023

**Ecological Emergency
Update**



**Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate
Change**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Environment and Sustainable Communities (ESCOSC) with a progress update regarding the Ecological Emergency strategy and action plan.

Executive summary

- 2 Following a request from Cabinet at its meeting on 13 October 2021 the ESCOSC undertook two Special meetings to consider if Durham County Council (DCC) should declare an ecological emergency.
- 3 The committee agreed at its special meeting on the 14 February 2022, having considered detailed information from the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping and from key partners on the biodiversity decline in various habitats and species across the county, to recommend, that DCC declare an ecological emergency.
- 4 In addition, members of the committee agreed that the following additional recommendations would be made to Cabinet:
 - a) That Durham County Council develops an Ecological Emergency Response Plan to address both how the council will revise its own practices, and also how it will work with the wider community to tackle the ecological emergency. Producing the Ecological Emergency Response Plan will involve conducting a fully detailed cross service review to identify actions (with associated costs) and targets to be undertaken by DCC with relevant partners (a similar process was

undertaken in relation to the development of the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)).

- b) That the Ecological Emergency Response Plan is a standalone plan initially, and then over time as it develops, is merged with the Climate Emergency Response Plan.
 - c) To progress the development of the plan, Cabinet ensures that best ecological practice is integrated across all Council services and in doing so considers the inclusion of ecology in the implications sheet that accompanies all DCC committee reports.
 - d) When declaring an ecological emergency, the need for engagement and consultation should be articulated and request that the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change:
 - i. Raise awareness of biodiversity decline in County Durham and promote various educational activities undertaken by DCC, partners and community groups to tackle this issue.
 - ii. Ensure engagement with community and special interest groups and interested individuals, as part of any consultation arrangements and in relation to the future development and delivery of the action plan.
 - e) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives regular updates on the progression of the plan and once developed, monitors progress against the actions and targets contained in the plan, on a regular basis.
 - f) That the review of the progress made against the recommendations contained in this report will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet.
- 5 It was recognised by Members that work was ongoing in relation to the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and that the committee would need to be kept updated on its progress.
- 6 At its meeting on 14 December 2022 Cabinet received an initial Strategy and Action Plan for Council activities in response to the declaration of an ecological emergency by Cabinet and the additional recommendations included in the ESCOSC report considered by Cabinet at the meeting on the 6 April 2022.
- 7 The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on the 14 December 2022 is attached as appendix 2 for members consideration.

Recommendations

- 8 That Members of ESCOSC:

- a) Receive the report and the attached Cabinet report at appendix 2 and provide comment on the progress made on the strategy and action plan.
- b) That a further progress update is scheduled to come to a future meeting of the committee.
- c) That the committee also receives progress updates on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the first update scheduled for the ESCOSC on the 12 May 2023.

Background

- 9 Cabinet at its meeting on the 13 October 2021, considered a report on the international and national declines in natural habitats and species. The report requested that scrutiny undertake a review and that an initial report came back to Cabinet within six months, making a recommendation in relation to a declaration of an ecological emergency.
- 10 The ESC OSC agreed at its meeting on the 24 November 2021 to add this review activity to its current work programme and that two special meetings of the committee would be held where members would be provided with evidence of biodiversity decline at an international, national, regional and local level.
- 11 At the special meeting of the ESC OSC held on the 14 February having considered the information provided in the detailed report and supporting presentation from the Service Grouping, together with the additional detail provided in presentations from key partners, members were asked to consider their recommendation to Cabinet concerning declaration.
- 12 The ESCOSC recognised the natural assets and accomplishments, but utilising evidence such as condition of designated semi-natural habitats in County Durham, data from Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Water Framework Directive (WFD), data on surface waters as well as atlases produced by relevant specialists, concluded that many of our habitats and species are in decline, mirroring international and national trends.
- 13 Members of the ESC OSC agreed at the meeting held on the 14 February 2022 to recommend that DCC declare an Ecological Emergency and that further additional recommendations be made to Cabinet as outlined in paragraph four above.
- 14 At the meeting of Cabinet on 6 April 2022 having considered the report from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and

Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that an Ecological Emergency for County Durham would be declared, and it was requested that an initial action plan on Council activities in response to the declaration and the further additional recommendations be provided within six months. The report attached at appendix 2 responds to that request and was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2022.

Conclusion

- 15 The report and initial action plan at appendix two addresses key areas of County Council activity required to deliver against an ecological emergency drawing across all Council services that impact and can influence the state of our environment.

Background papers

- [Consideration of an Ecological Emergency in County Durham Cabinet 13 October 2021](#)
- [Declaration of an Ecological Emergency Cabinet 6 April 2022](#)
- [Appendix 2: ESCOSC Consideration of an Ecological Emergency Cabinet 6 April 2022](#)
- [Ecological Emergency: Outline Strategy and Action Plan Cabinet 14 December 2022](#)

Contact:	Stuart Priestley	03000 267135
	Diane Close	03000 268141

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

This is a key issue addressed in the report.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable

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Cabinet

14 December 2022

Ecological Emergency: Outline Strategy and Action Plan



Key Decision No. NCC/04/22

Report of Corporate Management Team

Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Councillor Mark Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To outline an initial strategy and action plan for Council activities in response to the declaration of an ecological emergency made by Cabinet on 6 April 2022.
- 2 To note that further iterations of these plans will be integrated into a wider Local Nature Recovery Strategy for County Durham, as well as future Climate Change Emergency Response Plans.

Executive summary

- 3 County Durham has a rich tapestry of habitats – from its upland peatland and moorland, to the Wear and Tees lowlands with semi-natural ancient woodland, meadows and wetlands, to the magnesian limestone plateau with its species rich pasture and Heritage Coast. This represents not only a valuable resource for biodiversity and a store for carbon, but an incredible asset for recreation and wellbeing. The Council, working with partners, has done considerable work in enhancing these assets, for example in several landscape scale initiatives, habitat restoration and creation, including tree planting and the management of nature reserves.
- 4 The overall trend internationally, nationally and locally is one of biodiversity and habitat decline. This was examined in detail by the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny

Committee (ESCOSC) and responded to by Cabinet with the declaration of an Ecological Emergency on 6 April 2022. Cabinet asked for an initial action plan on Council activities in response to this declaration be provided within six months. This report fulfils this request.

- 5 The Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) is a corporately derived and cross-Council action plan which responds to the ecological emergency through activity across three proposed key themes: 'Land Management', 'Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change', 'Policies and Strategies'. New investment, announced as part of the MTFP 22-26, provides further impetus for this work through the appointment of two nature reserve officers, and staff to promote education/awareness, volunteer investment and a post of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officer. Most are now in post and have commenced their work.
- 6 In recognition of the tight financial climate, the action plan focusses on what can be achieved using existing resources, as well as potential income from the planning system. This is an important first step, with any additional requirements in future plans, being subject to the usual Medium Term Financial Plan processes. Most of the actions are therefore centred around the potential to streamline and improve existing work programmes, such as biodiversity interventions on open space, or by expanding existing programmes, such as awareness around climate change to further include the ecological emergency.
- 7 Actions are also proposed that will improve biodiversity delivery within new built development and ensure that Council land holdings can benefit from biodiversity-focused financial contributions arising through the planning system.
- 8 Systems are also proposed to ensure that procurement and decision making within the Council considers the impact on biodiversity in a similar manner to the processes in place for responding to the climate emergency.

Recommendation

- 9 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) approve the Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) as set out in the report.

Background

- 10 County Durham has a rich tapestry of habitats – from its upland peatland and moorland, to the Wear and Tees lowlands with semi-natural ancient woodland, meadows and wetlands, to the magnesian limestone plateau with its species rich pasture and Heritage Coast. Working with partners, the Council has a strong track record of conserving and enhancing these assets, for example in several landscape scale initiatives, habitat restoration and creation, including tree planting and the management of nature reserves.
- 11 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) recognised these natural assets and accomplishments, but utilising evidence such as condition of designated semi-natural habitats in County Durham, data from Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Water Framework Directive (WFD), data on surface waters as well as atlases produced by relevant specialists, concluded that many of our habitats and species are in decline, mirroring international and national trends.
- 12 The meeting of Cabinet on 6 April 2022 considered the report from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed to declare an Ecological Emergency for County Durham; requesting that an initial action plan on Council activities in response to the declaration be provided within six months. This report responds to that request.

Ecological Emergency; Strategy and Scope of Action Plan

- 13 A copy of the subsequent Draft EEAP is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 14 The Ecological Emergency is focussed on the initial actions of the Council and the EEAP aims to identify key areas of Council activity which is required to deliver against the emergency. A wider ecological strategy, a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), for the county will be produced by the County Durham Partnership, specifically the Ecological Emergency workstream of the Environment & Climate Change Partnership.
- 15 The Environment Act places a duty on the Council to publish 'biodiversity reports' which summarise actions the Authority has taken plans to take to be compliant with the 'general biodiversity objective' of the act which is centred on the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through the exercise of the Authority's functions. The actions within the umbrella of the Ecological Emergency will therefore feed into these future biodiversity reports.

- 16 The EEAP was developed within certain parameters; these incorporate recent staffing investments, such as nature reserve wardens and education officers however delivery of the plan at this stage would focus on the benefits of being more joined up in our approach (across several Council services) as well as doing things differently rather than new additional resources. The attached draft plan therefore sets out current (already underway) and proposed areas of activity within three key themes as summarised below:
- 17 **Land Management** is regarded as the main area within which the Council should deliver for biodiversity. Land use change and alterations in the way land is managed are key drivers of changes in biodiversity at global, national and local scales. These drivers are cited as one of the major reasons for biodiversity losses, especially in the UK which is one of the most biologically impoverished countries in the world.
- 18 Actions held within the action plan aim to result in significant improvements in the management of the estate for biodiversity. In order to achieve this, various objectives will need to be set, including: gaining a clear understanding of the Council's landholdings, the potential for these landholdings to be used to deliver for biodiversity and the development of mechanisms to deliver against that potential.

The plans incorporate the following headline measures:

- A programme of re-wilding undertaken by Clean and Green services for central reservations and selected open spaces with reduced or no grass cutting in these areas;
 - A programme of environmental condition survey and improved management of the Councils nature reserves;
 - An on-going programme for improvements to the Council's woodland estate, as well as utilising opportunities through Durham woodland Revival and Great North Forest for tree planting in appropriate locations.
- 19 **Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change** is essential for the sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity and its conservation. A lack of awareness of biodiversity and its importance through the ecosystem services it provides to our wellbeing and quality of life is a common occurrence. The future of biodiversity will depend on the collective action of an educated society and a key challenge will be to draw attention to the importance and urgency of the biodiversity emergency to the residents of County Durham.
- 20 Actions within the action plan therefore aim to raise awareness of the issues surrounding our biological resource enabling individuals to

develop a deeper understanding and knowledge to make informed and responsible decisions.

The plans incorporate the following headline measures:

- Continue important education programmes such as the Trees for Children scheme, and environmental education activities based from the Council Parks and bolstered by recent investments;
- Improve site signage and community awareness to explain changes in land management (for instance reduced cutting frequencies);
- In recognition of the strong links to climate change, the incorporation of ecological aspects in all appropriate marketing initiatives.

- 21 **Policies and Strategies** shall require further development to ensure there is rational decision making with regards to biodiversity, whilst strategy documents are likely to be needed to achieve specific aims or objectives. These policies and strategies could be used to guide development and our approach to procurement and land management. The action plan sets out to identify any policies and strategies required to deliver against the Ecological Emergency.

The plans incorporate the following headline measures:

- Producing supplementary relating to ecological matters/species protection to guide sustainable development;
- Build ecological emergency into procurement processes including maximising opportunities in social value contributions;
- Consideration of Ecological Emergency as an implication for all Council reports (similar to that of Climate Change currently).

- 22 The Council continues to react proactively to new legislative requirements pertaining to the environment; most recently the need for most developments within the catchment of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area (SAC) to be nutrient neutral. The SAC is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, because of these regulations and European case law, Natural England has advised that projects and plans should only go ahead if they will not cause additional nutrient pollution to the protected site. This means that, for example, new residential development can only happen if the nutrient load created through additional wastewater from the development is mitigated. The Council is working with partners, including Natural England, Northumbrian Water, Environment

Agency and Durham Wildlife Trust to develop mitigation strategies to enable development to proceed without negatively affecting the protected site.

Conclusion

- 23 The proposed EEAP, outlined above and set out as a draft plan for approval in Appendix 2, is intended to provide an initial response to cabinet's declaration of an Ecological Emergency in April 2022 by means of a delivery plan within 6 months of the declaration being made.
- 24 Following approval, officers from across key services listed in the report will commence delivery against the plan's objectives and monitor and report progress going forward. A progress update will be provided to cabinet members twelve months hence.

Background Papers

- Cabinet 6 April 2022 Ecological Emergency Declaration

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The EEAP is to operate within existing legal provisions.

Finance

The plans include recent investments made as part of MTFP 22-2r including nature reserve officers, woodland creation, community/education and Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officers.

There are no additional budgetary requirements associated with the plan as these are focussed more on joining up the work across services as well as doing some things differently (for instance grass cutting).

If additional resources are required through future iterations of the plan these will be considered through the MTFP planning processes.

Consultation

Members of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been consulted throughout on preparations for declaring the Ecological Emergency and EEAP.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None identified.

Human Rights

None identified.

Climate Change

This is a key issue addressed throughout the report.

Crime and Disorder

None identified.

Staffing

Delivery of the EEAP is to be met from within existing staffing resources.

Accommodation

None identified.

Risk

If the EEAP is not adhered to, then the commitment to respond to the ecological emergency will not be met.

Procurement

Provisions for the procurement of Council goods and services that benefit nature and natural habitats are integral to the EEAP.

Appendix 2: Ecological Emergency – Action Plan

**ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY – AN INITIAL PLAN FOR
COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

October 2022



Note from Portfolio holder

The Council has been doing a lot to support biodiversity, habitats, and landscapes, not just for the benefit of wildlife, but for people and communities as we are all enriched by contact with the natural world. Our activities range from a host of landscape wide initiatives, through to the management of nature reserves and community conservation and education projects.

It is evident however that more work needs to be done , as we have not been immune to national trends of biodiversity decline. This report focuses initially on what the Council can do through a more joined up approach and doing some things differently. In due course our Local Nature Recovery Plan will examine what more can be achieved working with partners on a countywide scale, and this initial plan will put the Council in good shape to play an active exemplar role in this important work.

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Purpose

- 1 To outline an initial Ecological Emergency Action Plan for Council activities in response to the declaration of an ecological emergency made by Cabinet on 6 April 2022.
- 2 The Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) is focussed on the actions of the council and aims to identify key areas of Council activity which is required to deliver against the emergency. It is a corporate approach drawing across all Council services that impact and can influence the state of our environment.
- 3 The EEAP is structured around key areas or themes which will deliver the most benefit, these being: 'Policies and Strategies', 'Land Management', 'Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change'
- 4 A wider ecological strategy, a statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), for the county will be produced by the County Durham Partnership, specifically the Ecological Emergency workstream of the Environment & Climate Change Partnership. The timescales for production of this document will be an estimated 12 to 24 months but this dependant on the detailed requirements set out in Government guidance which is currently not yet available.

Background

- 5 In the Cabinet meeting on 13 October 2021, national and international declines in natural habitats and species were recognised and a working group was established to examine if this was also reflected in the evidence-base for biodiversity within County Durham. On 14 February 2022 a summary of available information and trends for habitats, species and conservation management was presented for consideration by the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6 The report concluded that in common with patterns country-wide, data for our terrestrial and aquatic habitats clearly shows that semi-natural habitats in County Durham are failing to meet their condition assessments and targets: 85% of SSSIs are in unfavourable condition, 70% of LWS compartments are failing condition assessments and 90.6% of surface waters are failing to meet the required ecological standards.

- 7 As habitats are in poor condition and being gradually lost due to a lack of, or inappropriate, management, then it follows that our species are also being negatively impacted upon.
- 8 Some of our most iconic species have suffered declines or are declining, water voles were lost from 90% of their range by the late 1990's and further survey work showed a further loss of 30% percent between 2006 and 2015. The red squirrel was lost from the east of the County by the early 2000's and although some species, such as otter, have bounced back from historical declines the picture is one of further reductions or local extinctions. The dingy skipper butterfly has been lost from around 30% of its known sites and many of our reptile species are showing evidence of declines with coastal populations of slow worm under threat from extinction.
- 9 The report stated that although local species data does not allow trends to be produced over the same time periods as used by the national audit of species and habitats: 'the State of Nature Report', all the local evidence, across the species groups points to the conclusion that the local declines are comparable with the global and national picture.
- 10 The national picture of declines in Priority Species is echoed at a local level across all species atlases whilst more recent anecdotal and survey evidence supports the interpretation provided by these publications. Consequently, at a special meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 February 2022, Members agreed that an interim report be sent to cabinet recommending that Durham County Council declares an ecological emergency.
- 11 The meeting of Cabinet on 6 April 2022 considered the report from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed to declare an Ecological Emergency for County Durham; requesting that an initial action plan on Council activities in response to the declaration be provided within six months.

Resources

- 12 The EEAP focuses on how more can be achieved by through a joined up Corporate approach to the challenge, and where appropriate (for instance in land management) by doing some things differently. It builds in the additional investments from 22/23 announced as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan for instance staffing for Local Nature

Recovery Strategy, Rangers and Environmental education staff in Countryside services, as well as support for woodland creation.

- 13 The Council is already making use of new funding streams and opportunities to diversify biodiversity on selected areas of amenity green space, for instance successful rounds on Urban tree Challenge Fund, as well as a recently awarded Parks Levelling up Grant.
- 14 External funding streams can be used to deliver action held within the EEAP, most notably developer contributions for biodiversity net gain (BNG) to deliver habitat enhancement on Council land. These developer contributions can be used to restore habitats back to good condition.
- 15 The forthcoming Environmental Land Management (ELMs) scheme, which will replace current agri-environment schemes, should provide a mechanism to fund positive land management for biodiversity on parts of the Councils rural landholdings.

Summary of Current activity in support of an Ecological Emergency

i Policies and Strategies

- 16 A raft of policies supporting the wider protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the county is held within the County Durham Local Plan. Specific policies include:
 - Policy 41. Trees, Woodlands and Hedges;
 - Policy 42. Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
 - Policy 43. Internationally Designated Sites;
 - Policy 44. Protected Species & Nationally and Locally Protected Sites;
- 17 All relevant policies within the local plan aim to protect and enhance our biological resource and be cognisant of the level of protection afforded to designated sites. Amongst other relevant policies include a Tree Management Policy which sets out a corporate approach towards tree management; inspections, maintenance, and replanting.
- 18 The Council continues to react proactively to new legislative requirements pertaining to the environment; most recently the need for most developments within the catchment of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area to be nutrient neutral. The Council is working with partners, including Natural England, Northumbrian Water, Environment Agency and Durham Wildlife Trust to

develop mitigation strategies to enable development to proceed without negatively affecting the protected areas.

- 19 The Council's Environmental Statement also references the Ecological Emergency and states that the Council will seek to protect and enhance natural capital across its estate, highways, woodlands and green and blue spaces. It commits through its decision-making to ensure that net gains in biodiversity are achieved through the adoption of the most environmentally beneficial management regimes and that pollution is prevented.
- 20 The County Durham Vision 2035, which was developed together with partner organisations and the public, sets out what we would want the county to look like in 15 years' time. This vision is structured around three ambitions which are: More and better jobs, People live long and independent lives and Connected Communities. Biodiversity is referenced under the More and better jobs ambition where the vision states that "we will protect and enhance our core heritage and natural assets". Other references to biodiversity and the natural environment come under People live long and independent lives where the vision says that "we will maximise the quality of our local environment".
- 21 The Climate Emergency Response Plan recognises that the county's natural environment has a vital role to play in tackling climate change and includes key measures to work towards including the protection and restoration our coastal and marine habitats, protection our existing semi-natural habitats and the utilisation and targeting of nature-based solutions.

ii Land Management

- 22 **Parks and Countryside.** The services with a major, active land management role within the Council are Parks and Countryside, Clean and Green and services involved with the woodland estate (CPAL and Landscape).
- 23 Parks and Countryside have been delivering for biodiversity through active land management of the Countryside Estate for over 40 years. Although variable in approach and extent due to levels of resource, there is a clear ethos of considering biodiversity in all their activities.
- 24 The countryside estate is approximately 1300 ha, comprising a suite of sites from the highest local, regional, and international wildlife designations to recreational assets such as the railway path network. The estate covers land across the county, with a bias towards central and eastern areas. All sites contribute to the biodiversity of County

Durham and receive some intervention depending on site characteristics and available resource.

- 25 Much of the work on the countryside estate is carried out by the professional members of the Parks and Countryside service. Further to this, volunteers play a huge role in assisting with the delivery of management aims and have contributed work valued at many millions of pounds.
- 26 With the reductions over a number of years of site-based staff, more emphasis has been placed on the use of contractors to deliver larger targeted actions on sites, particularly those that have Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) support payments from DEFRA agreements. These works are covered by the payments received and have minimal financial impact on core Council budgets. Parks and Countryside are awaiting confirmation of Defra review of the HLS regime and what this means for financial support of high value site management moving forward.
- 27 Recent investments in Parks and Countryside staff, do allow for a re-focus of activity to address DCC's Climate and Ecological Emergency declarations.
- 28 With regards to land management, the new staff roles will allow the team to direct resources onto Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) currently held within the countryside estate. These sites will require survey effort to establish a baseline condition assessment which will then be monitored regularly to check progress against agreed targets. Where appropriate, the sites team will engage and support community and education outreach staff to provide a holistic approach to land management.
- 29 The Parks and Countryside Service have identified barriers to biodiversity delivery including a lack of baseline ecological data and condition assessments, a decline in available management resources over the last 20 years and larger scale restoration requirements beyond current provisions. Given the specialist knowledge held within the service and the size of the estate, there is potential to deliver significant biodiversity benefits through the restoration and creation of wildlife habitats should resources be found.
- 30 Both the Ecology and Parks and Countryside services are currently working on a system to tap into Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements through the planning system; a financial mechanism to deliver certain habitat enhancement works within the estate which is likely to lever in some additional necessary resource.

- 31 The wider Clean and Green team are responsible for providing a variety of services including grounds maintenance of parks, open spaces, school grounds, cemeteries, and closed churchyards.
- 32 The Clean and Green Service has implemented a suite of biodiversity enhancements on open spaces ranging from habitat creation to changes in cutting regimes. The largest of the habitat creation projects has been the seeding of a hectare of open space in Durham to create a species rich grassland supporting a range of wildlife. Other interventions include overseeding grasslands with wildflowers at the Durham Coast and reducing cutting regimes on amenity grasslands across the county to allow wildflowers to set seed and spread. The service has also planted scrub woodland and installs and maintains all the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) sites, with around 800 trees being planted per year under this scheme.
- 33 The Clean and Green Service currently maintains 37 areas of meadow and wildflowers with a further 28 sites identified for potential future biodiversity interventions. These sites will be subject to consultation and detailed design work to ensure any interventions are appropriate to the location. A recent report by Clean & Green, 'Rewilding, July 2022' showcases these potential sites and is an example of how Clean and Green are currently approaching biodiversity interventions on open spaces.
- 34 Other notable achievements include the continual reduction in the use of fungicides, pesticides and herbicides and investigations into further reductions in herbicide use are planned. The reduction in peat use is now well advanced with trials on several peat free composts for the annual bedding and Morrison Busty nursery on-going. The service has committed to be peat-free by 2025.
- 35 Clean and Green are continuing to roll out biodiversity interventions across all sites and are developing a strategic document to improve the rate that sites can be brought under more wildlife friendly management in conjunction with input from Ecology.
- 36 Once the approach has been defined and potential sites agreed in principle, the Ecology Service intend to assess potentially funding the interventions via BNG.
- 37 The Ecology and Clean and Green services both acknowledge that there are constraints to the delivery of biodiversity interventions, including staff time to develop the site plans, undertaking consultations, and delivering the required interventions within the appropriate seasonal windows. These constraints and practical solutions will be explored

further within the more strategic approach towards interventions under development.

- 38 **Tree Initiatives.** Since 2000, the Council with partners, has planted nearly a million trees on over 500ha of land as well as planting or restoring nearly 200 miles of hedgerow. Several more recent improvements and initiatives that are continuing to build on this work including: Durham Woodland Revival (DWR), the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf), the Durham Woodland Creation (DWC) programme, a comprehensive management of Council-owned woodland and the recently launched North East Community Forest (NECF).
- 39 The DWR programme is led by the Council and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other partners with the aim of restoring and reconnecting woodlands in County Durham. The programme is to run for a further 18 months with a dedicated team who are giving landowners and communities opportunities to learn about, enjoy and re-imagine a purpose for their woodlands. It is also establishing 60ha of new woodland across three major sites; planting is complete at 2 sites and a final 32ha will be planted in 2023/4.
- 40 All of the woodlands owned by the Council have Forestry Commission approved management plans which can tap into a Woodland Improvement Grant Scheme, a DEFRA grant of almost £1 million for approved schemes. A member of staff has been recruited to manage this five-year work programme which will help to bring neglected woodlands back into management and improve the condition of ancient woodland. The Council was also successful in attracting UTCf over its three funding rounds to date with almost £850,000 being awarded.
- 41 Resources from the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP) are now supporting a four-year countywide woodland creation programme (DWC) to establish 10,000 trees across the county's 14 AAPs. A Trees for Children initiative has also been introduced to plant a tree for each of the county's 69,000 school children to help tackle climate change, engaging support from the OASES service (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists), who are enabling school planting activities over the period of the DWC programme.
- 42 A new Community Forest has been established; the North East Community Forest (NECF), which Newcastle City Council is leading in conjunction with the County Council as well as South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland Councils. A national funding pot, 'Trees for Climate' has been secured to fund an initial 5-year planting programme at a rate of £17k/ha. Durham County Council will benefit from this resource to meet a commitment of planting up 300 ha of trees over the next 4 years on both private and Council owned land.

- 43 The Durham Hedgerow Partnership has been giving grants to landowners to plant and restore hedgerows for over twenty years and transformed many areas throughout the county with these traditional, naturalistic boundary treatments. To date this restoration and planting is equivalent in length to the distance between Durham and Leeds, and the programme is ongoing.
- 44 **Landscape Scale Partnerships.** The Council is directly involved with various landscape scale delivery providers these include SeaScapes, North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NPAONB), Land of Oak and Iron and the Durham Heritage Coast.
- 45 SeaScapes is hosted by the Council and consists of a consortium of partners united in their collective mission to influence support for, and increase the protection of our sea and coastline. Its focus and main geographical area of work is the England Coast Path along the shore and cliff tops from the Tyne to the Tees, covering an area up to six nautical miles out to sea. Funding has been awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and partner contributions for a four year engagement programme to reveal the hidden heritage of this unique seascape and engage its communities in the stewardship of this unique coastline.
- 46 SeaScapes is delivering sustainable land management through close working with the National Trust at White Lea Farm (Easington) to create and restore a valuable coastal habitat for species such as the Durham Argus Butterfly, a subspecies unique to the Magnesian Limestone cliffs. This is largely being done through volunteer days. A section of beach at Seaton Carew has also been more actively managed for migratory little terns, with over 80 chicks fledging in 2022; noted as a resounding success.
- 47 Designated as an area of national habitat significance is the Durham Heritage Coast and a key purpose of the DHC area is to connect, protect, and expand natural and semi natural habitats from the Ryhope Dene in the north to the boundary of Hartlepool headland in the south.
- 48 Works to protect valuable habitats have included the closure of the capillary of paths through the dunes system at Crimdon, protecting Sites of Scientific Interest and areas designated as both Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Impacts on habitats are currently being managed by fencing coastal meadow areas protecting them from being used as ad hoc car parks.
- 49 Easington Local Nature Reserve has received Area Action Partnership (AAP) funding to improve paths and further funding has been received

to enhance the site through tree planting and limit access by illegal users. The site is an alternative to visitors using the protected coastal areas and so acts to reduce impacts on sensitive coastal habitats and bird populations.

- 50 Further AAP funding has been received by the Heritage Coast to improve signage from Horden station to the village and to the English Coastal Path National Trail; this encourages the use of Public Rights of Way and directs people away from more sensitive areas.
- 51 The Durham Heritage Coast is also working with Sunderland City Council's Coast project to monitor both habitat quality and food availability as well as recreational usage of the SAC and SPA. The Heritage Coast also supports and funds Newcastle University for Blue Carbon research into help for its carbon and biodiversity benefits.
- 52 The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NPAONB) Partnership team delivers directly on work to address the biodiversity crisis, and convenes, supports and enables others to do so.
- 53 The team is into its 17th year of direct delivery on peatland restoration, addressing the blocking of moorland drains and the restoration of bare and eroded peat. The team is directly responsible for over 42,000ha of restoration, an area three times the size of Newcastle. As well as its biodiversity benefits, this has avoided carbon loss benefits of the emissions from over 1m UK homes or the equivalent of taking 7000 cars off the road.
- 54 The NPOANB team is directly involved in increasing the area of tree and scrub cover across the AONB. This includes direct delivery through programmes such as Tees Swale – Naturally Connected, and the Heart of the Pennines Forest project, supporting landowners to increase tree cover through our woodland officers, or providing grant aid, crucially to support tree establishment following the principles of the 'right tree, in the right place, for the right reason'.
- 55 Hay meadow restoration has been a focus of the team for many years, with thousands of meadows surveyed and the species richness of around 500 hectares restored.
- 56 The management of rivers and wetlands includes work with the coal authority on minewater pollution remediation to support biodiversity. The team is currently engaged in the creation of a series of scrapes and small wetlands across farmland. The team is continuing to work with the Environment Agency and Wear Rivers Trust on natural flood management in Weardale. Species-specific work has included a focus on curlew, water voles and waders; the team is represented in the

national Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group, as many other fora and partnerships aimed at recovering biodiversity.

- 57 The team is actively engaged in delivering the LNRS across 3 counties and is helping to lead the work in County Durham through Chairing the Ecological Emergency Board of the County Durham Environment Partnership.
- 58 The Land of Oak and Iron is a National Lottery funded landscape scale partnership extending over 177 square miles in and around the Derwent Valley, part of which is in County Durham with the remainder in Gateshead and Northumberland. In 2016 the three authorities joined forces with Groundwork NE to successfully bid for Lottery funding to develop a four-year programme worth over £5 million to promote and improve the areas rich natural and cultural heritage; ranging from woodland regeneration to restoring historic early industrial structures and a state of the art visitor centre.
- 59 Now in a legacy phase, there is a trust in place to manage and maintain the programme going forward which includes the founding lead partners including the Council. Amongst recent achievements are arrangements for extension of contract to summer 2023 for a dedicated woodland manager working on woodland regeneration and community projects within the area.
- 60 Discover Brightwater began as a £3.3 million Landscape Partnership programme with the aim to 'reveal, restore and celebrate life around the River Skerne' in County Durham. Largely funded initially by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£2.7 million) it covers a 200 sq km area of the Tees Lowlands from the Trimdons in the north east to Shildon in the west and Darlington in the south. The concept was created by the Local Nature Partnership and is led by Durham Wildlife Trust working in close partnership with a wide range of partners.
- 61 Discover Brightwater has already delivered approximately 20km of improved in-river and riverbank (riparian) habitats, through the use of natural techniques including flow deflectors and using brash bundles to encourage the river to re-meander to improve oxygenation in low-flow sections of the river.
- 62 Delivery is currently focussed on approximately 80 ha of restored wetland which will be completed before the programme ends in March 2024. One location, Bishop's Fen, centres on an area of DCC land which has been leased to Durham Wildlife Trust to create a wetland nature reserve between Hardwick Park and Bishop Middleham.
- 63 Discover Brightwater has also successfully leveraged in an additional £1.1million (from Veolia Environmental Trust, the Environment Agency,

DCC, National Highways and Northumbrian Water) to help with habitat and climate mitigation projects, including the purchase of Ricknall Carrs near Newton Aycliffe as an additional site for wetland creation. The river and wetland projects will deliver extensive benefits to wildlife and help to restore natural processes in the Skerne catchment.

- 64 Discover Brightwater's legacy includes the development of proposals for the creation of the Great North Fen, a vision for a 500ha patchwork of wet grasslands, carrs, fens and ponds at the centre of the Skerne catchment. Large projects of this type can provide both significant nature restoration and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The benefits this might generate for key national infrastructure, such as the East Coast Mainline and the A1M, which bisect the project area, is one of the elements that will be examined. The potential for using integrated wetlands to remove excess nutrients from the Skerne is another topic for consideration and an assessment of all the services the catchment can provide - carbon capture, nutrient removal, biodiversity net gain - will be at the centre of the Great North Fen legacy plan.

iii Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change

- 65 Parks and Countryside and Children & Young Peoples Services (CYPS) are the services with a defined remit under this theme.
- 66 A core function of the Parks and Countryside service is to promote the Council's countryside estate, ensuring work is delivered with value to communities by having high quality outdoor space nearby. A Parks and Countryside programming team are delivering biodiversity/climate change themes through school education events and activities, as well as through a programme of guided walks. The service also supports a range of initiative and projects through partnership working across the county.
- 67 Members have recently agreed to resources and provisions for two new staff members as Parks and Countryside Awareness and Community Engagement Officers who are focussing on site-based nature recovery activities with local communities across the countryside estate. This will provide valuable additional resources for engaging the community in the Ecological Emergency response going forward.
- 68 New investment in the Parks and Countryside area has allowed for further community outreach. Specialist community projects and volunteering opportunities will connect the ecological emergency to communities on a more personal level. The projects aim to develop a greater sense of ownership by giving people the opportunity to see the

direct local impact of negative environmental behaviours and increase their understanding of the biodiversity value of countryside sites in their own neighbourhoods, whilst promoting awareness of wider nature recovery strategies and climate change impact. The new investment will also support continuing environmental education programmes.

- 69 The promotion of the eco-emergency is interlaced throughout the outdoor learning programme, incorporating climate change issues during all workshops including KS1/2/3, encouraging positive and sustainable changes to reduce our individual impact. New workshops have been designed that explore the eco-emergency in our locality including activities focused on biodiversity, ecology, food, energy and weather/ landscape changes. Older students will be engaged through the John Muir Award which encourages a responsibility for our environment and promotes individual well-being.
- 70 In 2012, CYPS engaged in a formal partnership with the charity Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists (OASES) which has led to a wide range of education projects and programmes that have benefitted schools across the county over the years. These have been delivered through a range of funding streams – some national, including organisations such as Learning Through Landscapes, the National Lottery or more local funders such as AAPs' and Members' budgets.
- 71 Current nature-based projects delivered through this partnership working include:
- The Trees for Children initiative (referred to in paragraph 39) – funded by the CERP – working with 70 schools over 3 years to plant over 10,000 trees and collect and plant tree seeds in collaboration with the Woodland Creation Team and Education;
 - OASES bringing the Forest Schools programme to County Durham in 2003. A hugely successful initiative, it has trained hundreds of teachers/ Early Years practitioners in woodland activities and enabled many of them to become accredited Forest School Leaders;
 - Forest Bathing – an accredited programme to bring the wellbeing benefits of woodlands and trees to teachers and young people;
 - Accredited Active Learning - supporting schools to take their learning outside to use the local environment as a learning resource;
 - Beach Schools – encouraging schools to explore coastal environments;

- A learning licence for Hamsterley Forest to support education visits;
 - Work with Seascapes and the Heritage Coast Partnership across Durham and Sunderland to engage schools with the coastal environment.
- 72 CYPs has an appetite for new initiatives and opportunities to engage schools and young people but these need to be resourced appropriately. Key drivers have been identified that could provide additional impetus for the expansion of the environmental education portfolio should further resources be identified. These could potentially include the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, a National Education Nature Park and a new Natural History GCSE to be launched in 2025.
- 73 Raising awareness and engagement is a key part of the Climate Emergency response plan and although there is no specific reference to an ecological emergency within the current programme, there are obvious synergies between the two emergencies given the interdependence between climate change and biodiversity, with negative consequences for human health and wellbeing should this continue to be harmed.
- 74 Biodiversity through the ecosystem services therefore provides an important contribution to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. A nature, adaptation and land theme within the CERP's climate change marketing strategy highlights the important role biodiversity can play in tackling climate change with actions to promote the issue.
- 75 SeaScapes delivers under this theme and in the first year of the project 3,754 people were involved in 230 different learning, events and participation activities. This includes 113 beach cleans, clearing over 1300 bin bags of rubbish and bulky items such as tyres and shopping trolleys from our beaches.
- 76 Volunteer Beach Clean Leaders are also trained in the impact of micro plastics on the marine environment. Durham Wildlife Trust has established a Citizen Science project to train volunteers to survey coastal habitats, reporting results to the Environmental Records Information Centre for the North East of England. Data paucity was recognised as an issue in protection of the marine environment; by training volunteers we can better address the lack of protection particularly beyond the intertidal zone. A regular group of young people – 'Beach Rangers' have produced a short film highlighting concerns about climate change on the coast and learned how to record sounds of rockpools to better understand these habitats. Beach Tots sessions for

pre-school children and their parents are very popular, running weekly in the summer.

- 77 Pupils in primary and secondary schools are given opportunities to join SeaScapes on the beach, or even in the sea. The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has a contract to deliver its 'Green-Blue' sailing programme for secondary school pupils, resulting in basic sailing skills with an overarching theme of environmental awareness. Presentations have been made to college students about the impact of human behaviour on the marine environment, for example flushing wet wipes down the toilet. Many of these students have also joined us on beach cleans so they can see the impact for themselves.
- 78 The NPOANB recognises the importance of education, awareness and communication; the team's work on citizen science has delivered over 300 training events for the public and generated over 50,000 new wildlife records.
- 79 'Farming in Protected Landscapes', a national programme co-designed by a group including the AONB Partnership Director, is delivering £2.7m of support on farms in the North Pennines over 3 years as part of a £52m package from Defra. This is enabling woodland and hedgerow creation, grassland restoration and support for nature-friendly farming practices. Work more generally with the farming community is partly focused on developing farmer clusters and encouraging large-scale work across multiple-holdings.
- 80 The Durham Heritage Coast aims to encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate the Durham coast. AAP funding is being used to deliver interpretation and engagement materials at the Dunes café at Crimdon with delivery in conjunction with SeaScapes.
- 81 The partnership is working in conjunction with SeaScapes on a Towns and Villages AAP application for 'Connecting the Coast' to improve considerate access to the coast. It is also involved with access rationalisation around Castle Eden Dene mouth and encouraging understanding by local people of their environment.
- 82 It plays a key coordination role in areas such as acting as Secretariat for NE England Coastal Path National Trail (South Shields to Stockton) and administer funds via Natural England, and engaging with the destination management organisations for sustainable tourism along the DHC area.

Future Development of the Ecological Emergency Action Plan

- 83 This current iteration of the EEAP was written within the parameters of existing budgets and external funding streams. It is acknowledged that expansion of the EEAP will be dependent on taking opportunities that arise from any new funding streams and new resources being potentially made available.
- 84 The development of the strategies within the current EEAP will start to bring into focus the potential for Council land holdings to deliver for biodiversity and may lead to proposals for more in depth work in future iterations of the EEAP. Understanding the amount, type and location of Council land available for biodiversity enhancements will enable efficient use of developer contributions and agri-environment schemes.
- 85 Developing a strategic approach to biodiversity interventions on open spaces that delivers on a County-wide basis allows Clean and Green to not only maximise delivery in the short term; but also identify constraints to the long-term expansion of the programme and any resources required to alleviate the situation.
- 86 The directing of resources to the assessment of Local Wildlife Sites by Parks and Countryside service areas will provide clarity on the condition of designated site within the estate. An understanding of the management required to maintain or enhance these sites will inform future resource and funding requirements and bring into focus the financial implications of any further enhancements across the wider Parks and Countryside estate.
- 87 CYPS and other services delivering education and awareness raising will continue to explore available funding streams and develop new programmes were possible. New drivers for the expansion of the environmental education portfolio may result in innovative project proposals that could be developed either through the provision of new resources or any additional funding streams.
- 88 The LNRS will provide a county wide strategic approach to nature conservation and will highlight the habitats and species of concern and provide a guide as to where resources should be directed. The EEAP will need to be mindful of the recommendations of the LNRS especially in relation to land management and the enhancement and creation of semi-natural habitats.

- 89 Integrating the CERP and EEAP should be considered in future, given the linkages between the Climate and Ecological Emergencies and that nature-based solutions are a fundamental mechanism for addressing climate change (and delivering wider social and economic benefits).
- 90 The current iteration of the EEAP identifies the development of strategies that will streamline our activities leading to improvements in our delivery; for example, those around the use of Biodiversity Net Gain funding, Clean and Green's management of open spaces and CPaL's work on land allocations and availability. These will provide the baseline information, evidence and learning to support the development of an Ecological Emergency Strategy that will further focus and improve our approach to biodiversity.
- 91 Not with standing this, the current EEAP will help the Council focus its resources to improve the state of nature within County Durham. As the Council refines its approach to the Ecological Emergency future editions of the EEAP will improve upon and refine the current actions using the learning from the actions to target extant resources and requests for further resources to the most beneficial areas.

Further activity in support of an Ecological Emergency

This section sets out what further action can be taken, and which area of service is responsible for delivery.

i Policies and Strategies

Service	Action	Potential Outcomes	Lead	Timescales
Environmental Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce an overarching Ecological Emergency Strategy: co-ordinating all the policy and strategy outcomes of the EEAP at a corporate level. 	Provide a framework for more co-ordinated and effective action around the EEAP themes.	Head of Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2023
Environmental Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to the continuous development and engagement with partners and stakeholders in the delivery of landscape scale programmes. 	Tangible improvements to biodiversity at a landscape scale.	Head of Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going

<p>Environmental Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the County Durham Partnership 	<p>The LNRS; a strategic document guiding nature conservation in County Durham.</p>	<p>The County Durham Partnership; The Ecological Emergency Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going
<p>Ecology / Spatial Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), concentrating on delivery of biodiversity within urban and industrial developments. • Produced Contributions SPD, which clarifies the process and options available to developers to deliver biodiversity net gains. 	<p>Delivery for biodiversity through the planning process is enhanced.</p>	<p>Principal Ecologist and Senior Policy Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023 • November 2022

<p>Ecology, Countryside, Clean and Green & Corporate Property and Land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a methodology that enables developer contributions for BNG to be delivered, where appropriate, on currently available Council land. <p>The methodology will concentrate on directing financial contributions towards restoring priority habitats and designated sites to good condition.</p>	<p>Enables the funding of biodiversity enhancements on available Council land from BNG.</p>	<p>Principal Ecologist and Senior Asset Strategy Officer</p>	<p>March 2023</p>
<p>Corporate Property and Land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the need for and the potential to develop or change systems and policies so that the system for identifying and allocating land for biodiversity purposes is optimised. <p>This action should be cognisant of other objectives (such as development requirements) and aim to provide a balanced approach to land allocation which is aware of the need to deliver against an ecological emergency.</p>	<p>The need for any changes to internal systems are identified.</p>	<p>Senior Asset Strategy Officer</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce systems in relation to an Ecological Emergency using the model employed by the Climate Emergency. • Options include a PASS/FAIL system, detailing specifications, and standards for procured services. 	Ensures that the Council's procurement seeks to avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.	Chief Procurement Officer	March 2023
Legal and Democratic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the potential to include ecological impact implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and Council reports. 	Ensures that the Council's decision making does not result in negative impacts on biodiversity.	Democratic Services Manager	September 2023
Clean and Green / Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a strategy document to define the approach to biodiversity interventions on public open spaces managed by Clean & Green and identify constraints to delivery as the programme continues to be rolled out across the county. 	Delivery of biodiversity interventions will be optimised within current resource availability.	Technical & Service Development Manager and Principal Ecologist	March 2023

Development Planning / Spatial Planning / CPAL / Ecology / Drainage & Coastal Protection Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with partners, especially Natural England, to assist in developing a strategic solution for Nutrient Neutrality.	Legal obligations under Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 are met and nitrogen pollution into the SPA is reduced.	Planning Development Manager	On-going
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ii Land Management

Service	Action	Potential Outcomes	Lead	Timescales
Parks and Countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake condition assessments of designated sites (i.e., Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites) within the estate. Instigate appropriate long-term management to restore designated sites to good condition when resources are made available. 	All designated sites within the Parks and Countryside Estate will be managed appropriately.	Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger	2023 – 2028 (a rolling programme of condition assessments)
Clean and Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run trials on reduced cutting regimes on amenity grassland with a view to reducing cutting and encouraging a greater floral diversity on sites where ceasing management or a single annual cut is not a viable option. Run trials on non-herbicide use in conjunction with Councillors who have expressed an interest in this subject. 	<p>Grass cutting regimes on sensitive sites are balanced between amenity and biodiversity.</p> <p>The extent to which herbicide use can be reduced across the county will be understood.</p>	Clean and Green Manager	December 2023

Trees and Woodland Management (Cross-Service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidate and build on current activity to ensure Council woodlands assets are managed and maintained through current project development with a view to robust legacy and renewal provisions being in place following existing projects	Legacy planning and resources sought and secured from key funding partners & stakeholders: e.g., North East Community Forest, Forestry Commission and National Lottery	Environment & Design Manager	On-going
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iii Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change

Service	Action	Potential Outcomes	Lead	Timescales
Climate Change & Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce and promote the Ecological Emergency within the CERP Marketing Plan under the theme Nature, Adaptation and Land. • Determine the extent to which relevant articles relating to the Ecological Emergency can be hosted on the Climate Change website. • Investigate the potential to include an Ecological Emergency icon and relevant links within the Intranet page. 	Greater awareness of the Ecological Emergency.	Communications & Engagement Strategy Officer and Sustainability Education Development Advisor	On-going
CYPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ecological improvement opportunities for County Durham schools and settings through the Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy • Monitor available funding opportunities with a view to taking advantage of any new funding streams that become available. 	<p>Enhancement of school grounds for nature and learning</p> <p>Greater delivery of environmental education programmes when new funding opportunities arise.</p>	Sustainability Education Development Advisor	On-going

Clean and Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop standard site signage to use when undertaking biodiversity interventions on public open space	Greater awareness of the Ecological Emergency within local communities.	Clean and Green Manager	March 2023
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**Environment & Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



20 January 2023

**Neighbourhoods & Climate Change –
Quarter 2: Forecast of Revenue and
Capital Outturn 2022/23**

Report of Corporate Directors

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods & Climate
Change**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details of the forecast outturn budget for this service area highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget, based on the position to the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2022).

Executive summary

- 2 This report provides an overview of the updated forecast of outturn, based on the position at Quarter 2 for 2022/23. It provides an analysis of the budgets and forecast outturn for the service areas falling under the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and complements the reports considered and agreed by Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- 3 The updated position is that there is a forecast cash limit overspend of £0.493 million, against a revised budget of £116.138 million. The quarter one forecast showed a cash limit overspend of £0.311 million for the year.
- 4 The service is forecast to require funding of £0.081 million to support budgets where expenditure is higher due to the impact of inflation. This is the net position after also taking account of higher income in some areas resulting from the impact of inflation.

- 5 The revised service capital budget is £77.537 million with expenditure to 30 September of £21.429 million.
- 6 Details of the reasons for under and overspending against relevant budget heads are disclosed in the report.

Recommendation(s)

- 7 Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

Background

- 8 County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2022/23 at its meeting on 23 February 2022. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for changes in grant (additions/reductions), budget transfers between service groupings and budget re-profiling between years (in terms of capital). This report covers the financial position for the following budgets of the services within the scope of this committee;
 - (a) Revenue Budget - £116.138 million (original £112.985 million)
 - (b) Capital Programme – £77.537 million (original £79.173 million)
- 9 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2022/23 and show: -
 - (a) The approved annual budget;
 - (b) The forecast income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
 - (c) The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
 - (d) For the revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit (outside of the Service's control) to take into account such items as capital charges and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

Forecast Revenue Outturn 2022/23

- 10 The service is reporting a cash limit overspend of **£0.493 million** against a revised budget of **£116.138 million**.

- 11 The table below compares the forecast outturn with the budget by Head of Service. A further table is shown at Appendix 2 analysing the position by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense).

Analysis by Head of Service £'000

	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Earmarked Reserves	Net Inflation adjustment	Cash Limit Variance
Head of Service	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Environmental Services	59,323	58,166	(1,157)	0	(97)	1,212	(42)
Technical Services	12,961	14,790	1,829	0	0	(715)	1,114
Community Protection	6,171	6,090	(81)	0	8	(144)	(217)
Partnerships & Comm Engagement	6,207	3,127	(3,080)	0	3,086	(76)	(71)
NCC Central Costs	31,476	31,544	68	0	0	(358)	(290)
Total	116,138	113,716	(2,422)	0	2,998	(81)	493

- 12 The cash limit overspend of £0.493 million takes into account adjustments for sums outside the cash limit such as redundancy costs that are met from corporate reserves and use of / contributions to earmarked reserves.
- 13 The main reasons accounting for the outturn position are as follows:
- (a) Environmental Services is forecast to be £42,000 underspent to the year end. In Refuse and Recycling, additional agency cover of £0.340 million has been required due to high sickness levels and additional annual leave carried forward from last year, along with a £0.335 million overspend on vehicle repairs in Refuse and Clean & Green. Additionally, there is £0.144 million of underachieved income on soil imports which have ceased due to capping of the Joint Stocks site. These overspends have been offset by £0.149 million increased income relating to trade and commercial waste collections, and £0.236 million overachieved income for garden waste income. There is also an underspend of £0.503 million due to vacancies and pending restructures. It should be noted that there is forecast to be increased power

generation income of £1.610 million from the Joint Stocks landfill site, but this is being offset against corporate inflationary factors, and is outside the cash limit for NCC;

- (b) Highways is forecast to be overspent by £1.114 million. The main reasons for this are an overspend on the trading areas of £0.713m due to lower than anticipated levels of work, along with an overspend £0.715 million on Highways Revenue maintenance work, including cyclic works, drainage, bridges and emergency action works which is offset by additional income within Strategic Highways relating to enforcement and inspections, road closures, and fixed penalty notices;
 - (c) Community Protection is forecast to underspend by £0.217 million. The main reason for this is the net effect of having a number of vacant posts in some areas of the service, while having to be over establishment in other areas to facilitate succession planning,
 - (d) Partnerships & Community Engagement is forecast to underspend by £71,000, mainly due savings from vacancies and some overachievement of income across the service
 - (e) The central contingencies budget within NCC is underspent by £0.290 million. This budget has been created to fund any cross cutting service pressures within NCC that may arise during the financial year. This budget will be kept under review as the year progresses and transfers may also be made to Heads of Service areas if the need arises
- 14 In arriving at the forecast outturn position, the service is estimating outside the cash limit inflation related pressures which are in the main associated with; Pay (£1.260 million), Energy (£1.179 million), and Fuel (£0.965 million), with these pressures offset by the benefits of increased power generation income of £1.610 million from the Joint Stocks landfill site and waste contracts underspend of £1.7 million (largely due to inflation impact on value of plastics).
- 15 A net £2.997 million relating to movement on reserves, cash limits and contingencies has also been excluded from the outturn. **Appendix 3** provides a more detailed breakdown of variance explanations at Head of Service level, but the major items are:
- (a) £97,000 drawdown from reserves relating to Climate Change, and Waste issues Climate Change, and Environmental issues;

- (b) £3.086 million contribution to PACE reserves mainly in relation to Syrian Refugees Settlement Grant;
- (c) £12,000 drawdown from contingencies relating to Platinum Jubilee costs.

16 The forecast Cash Limit Reserve position at 31 March 2023 is £0.184 million after taking the latest outturn position into account.

Capital Programme

17 The Neighbourhoods & Climate Change capital programme was revised at year-end for budget re-phased from 2021/22. This increased the 2022/23 original budget to a level of £79.173 million. Since then, reports to the MOWG have detailed further revisions, for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget re-profiling into later years. The revised budget now stands at £77.537 million.

18 Summary financial performance for 2022/23 is shown below.

Service	Revised Annual Budget 2022/23 £000	Actual Spend to 30 Sept £000	Remaining Budget 2022/23 £000
Community Protection	14	0	14
Environmental Services	25,828	8,462	17,366
Highways	46,382	12,369	34,013
Partnerships & Community Engagement	5,313	598	4,715
Total	77,537	21,429	56,108

19 Officers continue to carefully monitor capital expenditure on a monthly basis. Actual spend for the first 6 months amounts to **£21.429 million**. **Appendix 4** provides a more detailed breakdown of spend across the major projects contained within the capital programme.

20 The key areas of spend during the year to date are on Highways and Bridges (£12.639 million), Environmental Schemes (£5.600 million) and Vehicles & Plant (£1.544 million). Other areas of the programme are profiled to be implemented during the remainder of the year and at year

end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

Background papers

- Cabinet Report (16 November 2022) – Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 30 September 2022.

Contact: Phil Curran

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

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

Finance

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital outturn position alongside details of balance sheet items such as earmarked reserves held by the service grouping to support its priorities.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Climate Change

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

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

Procurement

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

Appendix 2: NEIGHBOURHOODS & CLIMATE CHANGE Forecast Outturn at Q2 – Subjective Analysis

NCC Subjective Analysis	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Earmarked Reserves	Net Inflation adjustment	NCC Cash Limit Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employees	64,260	64,526	266	0	0	(1,260)	(994)
Premises	9,082	10,485	1,403	0	0	(1,179)	224
Transport	19,338	22,279	2,941	0	0	(965)	1,976
Supplies & Services	21,165	23,087	1,922	0	0	0	1,922
Third Party Payments	52,014	44,037	(7,977)	0	0	1,712	(6,265)
Transfer Payments	1,894	2,750	856	0	0	0	856
Capital	23,108	23,108	0	0	0	0	0
Central Costs	10,439	10,600	161	0	2,998	0	3,158
Direct Rev Funding	1,309	1,309	0	0	0	0	0
Gross Expenditure	202,609	202,181	(428)	0	2,998	(1,692)	877
Grant	(3,418)	(7,800)	(4,382)	0	0	0	(4,382)
Contributions	(822)	(1,236)	(414)	0	0	0	(414)
Sales	(624)	(631)	(7)	0	0	0	(7)
Charges	(12,976)	(15,191)	(2,215)	0	0	1,610	(605)
Rents	(94)	(86)	8	0	0	0	8
Recharges	(67,111)	(61,427)	5,684	0	0	0	5,684
Other Income	(1,426)	(2,094)	(668)	0	0	0	(668)
Gross Income	(86,471)	(88,465)	(1,994)	0	0	(1,610)	(384)
Total	116,138	113,716	(2,422)	0	2,998	(82)	493

Appendix 3: Head of Service Analysis – Environmental Services

	Variance	Explanation
Head of Environment	0	No Variance
Refuse & Recycling	544	£340k overspend on staffing due to high levels of sickness in the service and additional holidays carried forward from last year which need covering £219k overspend on vehicle daywork repairs £100k overspend on bin purchases where each bin cost has risen from £17.90 to £21.90 (£115k) overachieved income on trade waste collections
Strategic Waste	(236)	£144k under achieved income on Soil Imports which have ceased due to capping of site (£236k) overachieved income on garden waste income (£132k) underspend on staffing due to vacancies and turnover £17k overspend on business rates at Joint Stocks following revaluation (£29k) over achieved income on commercial waste disposal
Clean & Green	116	£116k overspend mainly relating to additional vehicle hires and repairs
Neighbourhood Protection	(253)	(£124k) underspend on Neighbourhood Wardens, mainly staffing until restructure is complete and staff reach the top of their grades (£129k) underspend on Allotments, mainly staffing until new team was fully appointed mid-year
Fleet	(222)	(£118k) underspend on staffing due to management vacancies pending a restructure (£63k) underspend on tyres (£41k) overachieved income on dayworks
Depots	7	Minor variance
North Pennines AONB	0	No Variance
Environment & Design	1	Minor variance
TOTAL	(43)	

Appendix 3: Heads Of Service Analysis – Partnerships & Community Engagement

Service	Over / (Under) £000s	Reason for Variance
Head of Service	(7)	(£7k) from unspent Other Pay budget
CCU & Corporate policy	(80)	Corporate Policy - (£27k) Additional income from unrecovered 21/22 agency costs (£12k) receipting correction from previous year CCU - (£26k) Employee saving - Temporary vacancy Civil Contingencies (£18k) over achievement of income on CCU £3k minor overspends on Supplies and Services £10k unbudgeted Jubilee spend covered from contingencies
Humanitarian Support Scheme	0	(£3.173m) Underspend - £568k Employees, (£10k) Premises, (£10k) Transport, £475k Supplies, (£4.206m) Income Balance to reserve at year-end.
Partnerships Team	(7)	Partnerships Team - (£2k) Employee saving - Maternity cover at lower SCP Underspends of (£1k) Transport and (£4k) under on Supplies and Services
Strategic Partnerships	2	£2k Employee costs - efficiency saving not met in Strategic Manager partnerships cost centre. Draw down of £4k from TCA Reserve to cover expected additional spend in County Durham partnership management. Partnerships & Consultation Team - Draw down of £50k to cover anticipated spend on Sam Scotchbrook and E Dodd. Covid Wardens - Estimated cost £1k covered by reserve draw down.
Funding Team & Other AAPs	(0)	£44k overspend on Employee costs - £44k to met from AAP Reserve. (£24k) contribution back to reserve for Towns and Villages reserve.
AAPs South & East	4	£7k Employee costs - Mainly not achieving efficiency offset by vacancies in East Durham AAP and Spennymoor AAP. (£3k) minor underspends.
AAPs North & east	16	£18k Employee costs - Mainly not achieving efficiency offset by seconded member of staff in management. Now covered by Peter Garrod. (£2k) minor underspends.
GRAND TOTAL	(71)	

Appendix 3: Head of Service Analysis – Highways

Service	£000s	Reason for Variance
Head of Highways	6	Overspend on Employees £2k and S&S of £4k
Highways Services Trading	713	Trading £862k overspend - Street Lighting (£218k), Commercial Group (£98k), Countywide £1.177m. Includes assumptions on the pay award of £1,925 being agreed, with rate increases taken effect in December to recoup the increase. Management & Admin underspend of (£149k) - Driven by (£93k) underspend on employees from vacancies less minor variances on premises and S&S
Highways Services Non-Trading	715	Overspend of £715k on Highways Revenue maintenance work, including cyclic works, drainage, bridges and emergency action works. Overspend of £41k on employees - CW and not meeting efficiency saving Overspend of £10k on Transport and S&S - Minor variances. Overspend of £588k on Agency. Mainly gullies, PAT and street lighting cable testing spend. Under achievement of Income £84k. Stores underspend of (£8k) S&S saving Winter Maintenance - Forecast based on budget figure bottom line.
Strategic Highways	(£320)	Street Lighting - Underspend of (£32k) Underspend of (£8k) on employees - Vacant post for first 3 months Inflation pressure on Electricity budget of £945k on Premises - Covered from central reserve, net nil Underspend of (£1k) on Transport and (£12k) on S&S Overachievement of income (£11k)
		Technical Team - Underspend of (£70k) Underspend of (£42k) on employees - vacancies in team in year Overspend of £12k on Transport Overspend of £44k on S&S - Advertising Over achieved Income of (£84k) - Road Closure and TRO's
		Asset Management - Underspend of (£161k) Underspend of (£62k) on employees - Vacancies Overspend of £21k on agency Overspend of £7k - Minor variances on Premises, transport, Supplies Over achieved Income of (£127k) - Roundabout Sponsorship arrears
		Drainage & Coast Protection - Overspend of £58k Underspend of (£35k) on employees - Reduction in hours Overspend on transport of £2k - Short term spot hire of vehicles Overspend on agency of £91k - Drainage contract payments line
		Structures - Overspend of £25k Overspend of £45k on employees - 2 x apprentices (1 degree, 1 level 3) Overspend of £3k on Transport for short term hire of vehicle. Minor variances £2k on S&S and agency. Additional income of (£25k) re capital for missing Q4 for 2021/22
		Public Right of Way - Overspend of £89k Overspend of £101k on employees - Definitive Map Officers x 2, plus Walking/Cycling Route Development Officer part funded. Over achievement of income (£12k) on under achieved income net off with contributions for officer
		Enforcement & Inspections - Underspend of (£233k) Underspend of (£23k) on employees - Vacancy Underspend of (£8k) on Transport and (£4k) on S&S Over achieved Income of (£198k) - Over-recovered income Fixed Penalty notices and Section74 over-runs, 5 quarters of sample inspections to include Q4 of 2021/22
GRAND TOTAL	1,114	

Appendix 3: Heads of Service Analysis – Community Protection

Service	Over / (Under) £000s	Reason for Variance
Head of CP	£31	Overspend on transport 25k due to 3 additional vehicles for staff use instead of pool cars and supplies and services over by £6k
Consumer Protection	(£147)	(£162k) underspend on staffing due to vacancies, overspend £15k on supplies and services
Health Protection	£38	(£31k) underspend on staffing on vacancies and career graded posts £5k minor overspends (£12k) over achievement of income from enforcement associated with the Food Information
Strategic Regulation	£35	£12k small overspend due to staff efficiency savings not being met £3k spend on REAMs (£50k) recharge to capital for Jenny Swainston costs.
Environmental Protection	(£81)	(£88k) Underspend from staff vacancies and career graded posts Minor variances from Transport and Supplies and Services £7k
Neighbourhood Interventions	£41	£23k overspend on Anti Social Behaviour staffing H Henderson above base, NAT team minor overspend on staffing £4k, CAT team overspend £13k on staffing due to staffing above base. Minor overspend £1k on Supplies and Services
Safer Communities	£13	Mainly £46k GRT team staff over budget, offset by vacancies in Information and Intelligence (£13k) and Community Safety Operations (£17k). Information and Intelligence £3k overspend on portals. Community Safety Operations received grant funding offsetting expenditure, net effect (£5k) as spend comes within budget.
GRAND TOTAL	(£217)	

Appendix 4: Neighbourhoods & Climate Change Capital 2022/23

NCC	Revised Annual Budget 2022/23	Profiled Budget 2022/23	Actual Spend 30/09/22	Remaining Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Community Protection				
Community Protection	-	-	-	-
AAP Schemes-EHCP	14	-	-	14
Community Protection Total	14	-	-	14
Environmental Services				
AAP Schemes - REAL-Environmental Services	224	7	19	205
Street Scene	1,929	-	440	1,489
Vehicle and Plant	3,049	-	1,544	1,505
Crematorium	240	-	12	228
Environment & Design	16,100	-	5,600	10,500
NCC - Depots	2,663	-	804	1,859
Waste Infrastructure Capital	1,623	-	43	1,580
Environmental Services Total	25,828	7	8,462	17,366
Highways				
Highway Operations	134	21	2	132
Strategic Highways	39,878	17,642	11,590	28,288
Strategic Highways Bridges	6,370	1,342	777	5,593
Highways Total	46,382	19,005	12,369	34,013
Members Neighbourhood Fund				
Members Neighbourhood Fund	3,804	-	403	3,401
Members Neighbourhood Fund Total	3,804	-	403	3,401
Community Buildings				
Community Buildings	708	-	-	708
NCC - West Rainton Community Centre	112	-	-	112
Community Buildings Total	820	-	-	820
AAP Capital Budgets				
AAP Capital Budgets	617	-	194	423
AAP Capital Budgets Total	617	-	194	423
AAP Initiatives				
AAP Initiatives Other	11	-	1	10
AAP Initiatives Total	11	-	1	10
Consett Comm Facilities				
Consett Comm Facilities	61	-	-	61
Consett Comm Facilities Total	61	-	-	61
NCC Total	77,537	19,012	21,429	56,108

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**Environment and Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny Board**

20 January 2023

Quarter Two, 2022/23

Performance Management Report



Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter two 2022/23, July to September 2022.

Executive Summary

- 3 A new [Council Plan](#) for 2022-2026 was approved by Council on 22 June. This set out a new performance framework for the Council. Corporate Management Team committed to the development of a new quarterly performance report format, providing greater focus on these issues. This is the second report for the new reporting period to follow this format.
- 4 The performance report is structured around the two main components.
 - (a) State of the County indicators to highlight areas of strategic importance and reflected in both the [County Durham Vision 2035](#) and the [Council Plan](#).
 - (b) Performance of council services and progress against major initiatives as set out in the [Council Plan](#).
- 5 Performance is reported against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council.
- 6 Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages under each of the thematic Council Plan areas being broken down into national,

regional and local picture, things that are going well, areas which require attention and other areas to note.

- 7 We are continuing our transition into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 can still be seen in our performance reporting. The last two financial years are not representative for many areas of performance and will be an unfair comparison due to pandemic impacts.
- 8 We have therefore, wherever possible, tried to make the comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data. Whilst COVID-19 continues to impact on certain performance metrics, there is evidence of some areas returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- 9 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II died on 8 September and the county council were involved together with the Lord Lieutenant in the arrangements to mark this passing and the proclamation of the accession of King Charles III within the county. The official period of mourning and the additional national bank holiday for the date of the State Funeral on 19 September also resulted in several events being cancelled and the closure of public buildings.
- 10 However, the largest challenge for our residents, local businesses and the council is the current cost of living crisis. Inflation is currently running at 10.1%¹ with the Bank of England expecting to remain above 10% for a few months before starting to drop². The inflationary increase is largely driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by world events, including the war in Ukraine, and currency markets.
- 11 The cost-of-living crisis has a triple impact on the council.
 - (a) It impacts on our residents. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases so income is falling in real terms. This will result in increased demand for services to help support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis and services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.
 - (b) Increased costs for the council. Our premises and transport costs have increased because of the rise in energy costs and fuel prices, and, also the cost of other supplies and services where prices have increased as suppliers face similar issues themselves. It is also anticipated that employee costs will increase by more than in previous years when the pay settlement is negotiated to accommodate inflation.

¹ UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to September 2022

² [Bank of England](#)

- (c) Reduced income for the council. Users of council services may seek to save money resulting in a fall in income from discretionary services such as leisure centres and theatres.
- 12 Other areas which require attention relate to the amount of waste going to landfill and high levels of contamination of household kerbside recycling.

Recommendation

- 13 That Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance, the continuing impact of COVID-19 and the increased cost of living on the council's performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic.

Analysis of the Performance Report

Going well

Our environment

- 14 Latest data shows a 57% reduction in carbon emissions from the 1990 baseline, but emissions from transport remains a significant challenge.
- 15 We have made improvements to the National Cycle Network through the use of £1.2 million funding with a two-kilometre stretch between the A19 and Dawdon; the boardwalk at Pesspool Wood; a section of the route between the A182 at South Hetton to Pesspool Lane; and the stretch from the new Jade development at Seaham to the old coke works at South Hetton.
- 16 £1.25 million of funding will allow us to create 100 new electric vehicle (EV) charging points, mainly across rural areas where there is less infrastructure and in areas where residents do not have access to off-street parking.

Areas which require attention

Our environment

- 17 6% more waste tonnage was collected and disposed of during the latest 12 months compared to pre-pandemic. This increase has continued as a legacy from the pandemic and in the main is believed to be due to public behaviour change with people continuing to perform a level of home working, which means waste enters the domestic waste stream managed by the council, rather than through the workplace and into private trade waste streams.
- 18 The recycling rate is broadly the same as it was last year but remains well below pre-pandemic levels of performance. Contamination of household kerbside recycling remains an issue with around a third of waste collected for recycling not being recyclable. This is being tackled through a new countywide contamination campaign.
- 19 Higher levels of local authority waste is a regional issue causing capacity issues at the energy from waste plant, with DCC inputting the highest single local authority input into the plant. The proportion of waste diverted from landfill therefore remains below target.

Our communities

- 20 Although our selective licensing scheme came into effect on 1 April 2022, only 17% of eligible properties are fully licenced. A further 9% of properties have submitted applications.

Other areas of note

Our environment

- 21 We have submitted a strategic outline business case to create a passenger rail service running between Weardale and Darlington.

Our communities

- 22 The introduction of a Durham Rental Standard has been further delayed to December while we await legal advice on the proposal to provide funding to landlords to become accredited with the National Residential Landlords Association.

Our council

- 23 Accreditations and awards during quarter two include: 'Green' status in the Investors in the Environment accreditation scheme, and our e-learning awareness course for those issued a fixed penalty notice for littering was shortlisted for a 'StreetScene Innovation' award from APSE.

Performance Indicators – Summary

- 24 We are now transitioning into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 can still be seen in our performance reporting. The last two financial years are not representative for many areas of performance and will be an unfair comparison due to pandemic impacts.
- 25 We have therefore, wherever possible, tried to make the comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data.

Risk Management

- 26 Effective risk management is a vital component of the council's agenda. The council's risk management process sits alongside our change programme and is incorporated into all significant change and improvement projects. The latest report can be found [here](#).

Background papers

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>

Other useful documents

- Council Plan 2022 to 2026 (current plan)
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=56529>
- Quarter Four, 2021/22 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s157533/Year%20End%20performance%20report%202021-22.pdf>

- Quarter Three, 2021/22 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s152742/Performance%20Report%202021-22%20003.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2021/22 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s149087/Q2%20Performance%20Report%202021-22%20-%20Cabinet.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2021/22 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s144872/Q1%20Performance%20Report%202021-22.pdf>

Author

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

Climate Change

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

Staffing

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

Procurement

Not applicable.



Durham County Council Performance Management Report Quarter Two, 2022/23



1.0 Our Economy

1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

Visits to council owned museums during quarter two

- 1 There were almost 48,000 visits.
 - Killhope Lead Mining Museum: 6,880 visitors - more than quarter one, following a busy summer programme, the café and gift shop continue to be popular.
 - DLI Collection at Sevenhills: 11,063 visitors - an increase on quarter one. Numbers include visitors to the DLI gallery and medal viewing, people engaged through formal/informal learning, visitors to Sevenhills, research enquiries and online visitors to our temporary exhibitions.
 - Durham Town Hall: 6,589 visitors - significant increase on quarter one (1,270) due to Durham Fringe Festival.
 - Bishop Auckland Town Hall: 23,336 visitors – lower than quarter one but income is up. The café remains popular with an increased income this quarter. Room bookings continue to increase.

1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

Theatres: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire

- 2 Theatre performances were well attended during quarter two, but cinema screenings had low audience numbers.
- 3 Theatres were impacted by the death of Her Majesty the Queen with two theatre performances and all cinema screenings over two days cancelled due to her funeral.
- 4 Overall, across the three venues, respondents to our survey³ rated the following as 'good' or 'very good':
 - Ticket booking experience: 95%
 - Staff welcome: 95%
 - Food and drink facilities: 70%
 - Quality of event: 97%
 - Value for money: 96%

³ January to October 2022. After every performance, the survey is sent to attendees for which we have an e-mail address

- Whole experience: 97%

5 The most frequent causes for complaint in relation to food and drink facilities with long queues and slow service being cited as issues.

2.0 Our Environment: National, Regional & Local Picture

6 The carbon emission rate across the county is four tonnes per person (the Northeast is 4.7 and England is 4.3).

2.1 Council Activity: Going Well

Carbon Reduction

- 7 Latest data shows a 57% reduction in carbon emissions from the 1990 baseline, with emissions from transport remaining a challenge.
- 8 £1.25 million of funding from the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) pilot scheme will create 100 new EV charge points, mainly across rural areas where there is less infrastructure and in areas where residents do not have access to off-street parking.
- 9 A 'try before you buy' scheme to encourage businesses to use electric vehicles has saved over 3,300kg in carbon emissions since April 2022.
- 10 Using £1.24 million of funding we have made significant improvements to the National Cycle Network: a two-kilometre stretch between the A19 and Dawdon; the boardwalk at Pesspool Wood; a section of the route between the A182 at South Hetton to Pesspool Lane; and the stretch from the new Jade development at Seaham to the old coke works at South Hetton.

2.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

Waste

- 11 6% more waste tonnage was collected and disposed of during the latest 12 months compared to pre-pandemic. This increase has continued as a legacy from the pandemic and in the main is believed to be due to public behaviour change, with people continuing to perform a level of home working which means waste enters the domestic waste stream managed by the council, rather than through the workplace and into private trade waste streams.

- 12 Higher levels of local authority waste are a regional issue causing capacity issues at the energy from waste plant, with DCC inputting the highest single local authority input into the plant. The proportion of waste diverted from landfill therefore remains below target.
- 13 The recycling rate is broadly the same as it was last year but remains well below pre-pandemic levels of performance. This is due to factors such as legislative changes relating to the recycling of carpets resulting in more carpets having to be managed as residual waste and the high levels of contamination in the recycling collected from households.
- 14 Contamination of household kerbside recycling is being tackled through a new countywide contamination campaign. The initial task of renewing bin stickers showing which items can be placed in each bin has been rolled out and this is starting to have an impact on public attitude towards contaminated bins.

2.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note

Restoring Your Railway Programme

- 15 We have submitted a strategic outline business case to create a passenger rail service running between Darlington and Weardale.

3.0 Our Communities

3.1 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

Selective Licensing

- 16 Our selective licensing scheme came into effect on 1 April 2022. 4,844 private sector properties are now fully licenced, equating to an estimated 17% of all properties covered by the scheme. A further 2,581 applications are in the system, which equates to a further 9% of properties.

3.2 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note

County Durham Rental Standard⁴

- 17 The Durham Rental Standard has been further delayed to December while we await legal advice on the proposal to provide funding to landlords to become accredited with the National Residential Landlords Association.

4.0 Our Council

4.1 Council Activity: Going Well

Accreditations and Awards

- 18 'Green' status in the Investors in the Environment accreditation scheme has been achieved.
- 19 Our e-learning awareness course for those issued a fixed penalty notice for littering has been shortlisted for a 'StreetScene Innovation' award from APSE.

4.2 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note

Carbon Emissions

- 20 The slight increase in carbon emissions from council operations is due to working practices returning to normal post-pandemic.
- 21 Projects underway which will help meet the council's net zero commitment by 2030 include a solar farm with battery storage at Morrison Busty Depot, and further works including heating, lighting and solar PV installations which are underway at Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, and Abbey Leisure Centres, Comeleon House and Meadowfield Depot.
- 22 Having a pool car fleet of electric vehicles has reduced CO₂ emissions by more than 8,000 kg since April 2022. This equates to 1.6% of business travel.

⁴ a Regency accreditation scheme for landlords

5.0 Data Tables

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups		Direction of Travel	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east	↑	higher than comparable period
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east	→	static against comparable period
×	more than 2% behind			↓	lower than comparable period

NB: oldest data in left column

Key to Symbols

Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

National Benchmarking (N)

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

North East Benchmarking (NE)

The North East comparator is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Attract 11.96 million visitors to the county in 2021 (5% increase on 2020)	15.77m (2021)	11.96m ✓	11.39m ✓	11.39m ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Increase the proportion of visitor attractions which are served by public transport (against 2021 baseline)	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	10,063 (2021)	8,153 ✓	6,794 ✓	6,794 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	£826.6m (2021)	£608.40m ✓	£506.75m ✓	£506.75m ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
No of tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham	236 (2021)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
No. of people attending cultural events/programme events	185,312 (2021)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Average number of tickets sold per cinema and theatre screening/performance during the quarter	41 (Jul-Sep 22)	TBC	16.68 ✓	74 x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
No. of people attending Council owned museums (Killhope, DLI & town halls)	47,868 (Jul-Sep 22)	Tracker -	-	-	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	↓	Yes

Our Environment

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Increase the proportion of waste diverted from landfill to at least 95%	91.3% (Jul 21–Jun 22)	95% ✘	90.1% ✓	97.8% ✘			↓	→	→	↑	Yes
County Durham to become net zero by 2045	57 (2020)	Tracker -	54 ✓	54 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↑	Yes
Raise cycling and walking levels in County Durham in line with national levels by 2035	67.7% (2020/21)	Tracker -	68% ○	68% ○			↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Work towards Durham City Air Quality Management Area NO2 levels being below the govt threshold of 40µg/m3	96% (2020)	100% ✘	54% ✓	96% ○	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Plant a minimum of 140,000 trees by 2024	40,414 (2021/22)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	38.1% (Jul 21-Jun 22)	Tracker -	38.2% ○	41.1% ✘			→	↓	↑	→	Yes
Contamination rate (%)	33.5% (Jul 21-Jun 22)	Tracker -	34.96% ✓	29.95% ✘	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of contamination notices issued	7,762 (Oct 21-Sep 22)	Tracker -	7,795 ✘	17,017 ✘	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	Yes
Overall satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities (%)	54% (2021)	Tracker -	50% ✓	-			↑	↓	↓	↑	No

Our Communities

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Return the number of fly-tipping incidents to at least pre-COVID levels by 2035	5,298 (Oct 21-Sep 22)	6,548 ✓	7,382 ✓	6,548 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - detritus	7.9% (Apr-Jun 22)	12% ✓	12.1% ✓	13.4% ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↓	No
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - litter	4.3% (Apr-Jun 22)	6% ✓	6% ✓	6.6% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	No
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - dog fouling	0.6% (Apr-Jun 22)	1% ✓	0.8% ✓	1.6% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	No
Achieve 100% licensing of private rented sector properties covered by the Selective Licensing Scheme by 2027	17% (Sep 22)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	n/a	Yes
Reduce ASB rates within the Selective Licensing Scheme areas by 10% (against the 2021 baseline)	data Q3	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
No. of fully licensed private rented sector properties in the selective licensed areas	4,844 (Sep 22)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	n/a	Yes

Our Council

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 (reduction from 1990 baseline)	57% (2021/22)	Tracker -	58% x	51% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes

Other relevant indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
% of A roads where maintenance is recommended	3.1% (2020)	Tracker -	3.0% ○	3.0% ○			↓	→	↑	↑	No
% of B roads where maintenance is recommended	3.0% (2020)	Tracker -	3.3% ✓	3.3% ✓			↓	→	↓	↓	No
% of C roads where maintenance is recommended	2.6% (2020)	Tracker -	2.3% x	2.3% x			↓	→	↓	↑	No
% of unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	22.5% (2020)	Tracker -	21.3% x	21.3% x			→	↑	↑	↑	No

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