



Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Monday 27 March 2023
Time 9.30 am
Venue Committee Room 2, 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 20 January 2023 and the Special meeting held on 24 February 2023 (Pages 3 - 22)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Items from Co-opted Members and other Interested Parties
6. Quarter Three 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 23 - 36)
7. 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
17 March 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

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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 **Friday 20 January 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Coult in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Elmer (Vice-Chair), E Adam, L Brown, J Charlton, L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, C Kay, I MacLean, R Manchester, D Nicholls, R Potts, J Purvis, J Quinn, D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend.

Co-opted Members:

Mr P Walton

Also in attendance:

Councillors J Blakey and M Wilkes

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Atkinson, C Martin, T Stubbs and Co-opted Member, Mr Cramond. Apologies were also received from Councillor A Reed, member of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2 Substitute Members

Member of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor J Blakey, was present as substitute for Councillor A Reed.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In relation to matters arising from the meeting held on 23 November, the Chair invited the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Councillor Wilkes, to provide an update. Firstly, Councillor Wilkes thanked Members and officers for their work in respect of the Council's declaration of an ecological emergency.

Councillor Wilkes then referred to the discussion at the last meeting regarding flytipping and he informed the Committee of the removal of the option for those caught flytipping to receive a discount for early repayment of fines. It is hoped this measure will help to continue the reduction of incidents of flytipping which, in the last eighteen months, had fallen by approximately 35%.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members and other Interested Parties

There were no items reported.

6 Community Action Team Update

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on the work of the Community Action Team (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

Jennifer Jones, Team Leader for the Community Action Team and Graydon Martin, Neighbourhood Intervention Manager were in attendance to deliver the report and presentation. The Community Action Team Leader explained that the team is a small team, working alongside key partners and residents to tackle local housing and environmental issues and deliver community action projects. The team, which was launched in 2013, had delivered 41 projects to date, covering 28 locations across County Durham. Project locations are carefully chosen using factors including public health data, levels of deprivation percentage of private lets and the number of empty homes, to identify areas of greatest need. Newly available antisocial behaviour data has been used to inform locations for 2023-24.

The Committee received information on the work carried out during 2021 to 2022 which comprised of 6 eleven-week projects and 9 reviews of previous project areas and during the presentation Members viewed 'before and after' photographs which demonstrated improvements made by the team in response to issues such as the accumulation of waste, flytipping and housing disrepair.

The Team Leader highlighted the multi-agency working which is carried out with bodies such as town and parish councils, Durham Constabulary, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and colleagues in other services, including housing and licensing. The Committee heard that projects begin with an initial meeting at which partners agree their participation and an action plan is put in place for a 7-week period. A review takes place 6 to 12 months after each project is completed. Performance monitoring is undertaken by reviewing casework and gathering feedback from surveys completed by residents and landlords, at the end of each project.

The Team Leader also provided information on funding which is provided through the community protection budget, which also funds the work undertaken by Groundwork North East and Cumbria, to deliver community-based events and activities, such as volunteering and training sessions. Concluding the presentation, the Team Leader highlighted future project locations for 2023-24 including Coundon, Chilton, Deneside Seaham, Annfield Plain and West Ward, Newton Aycliffe. The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Charlton asked if there had been any comparisons done on the cost of delivering the service against the amount of income generated from the payment of fines. Officers responded that they were not aware that an exercise of that nature had been carried out as income generation was not the main objective, however, they assured the Committee that steps are taken with regard to the non-payment of fines, for example through court proceedings and legal charging orders placed on properties. Officers undertook to provide details on income generation for future update reports to the Committee. In response to a question from Councillor Charlton as to how the work of the team can influence wider issues such as problems caused by empty properties, the Team Leader explained that serving legal notices increases the debt on properties which can act as a lever for the intervention of the Empty Homes team.

Councillor Adam asked how success is measured and whether analysis is carried out as to the number of locations which required repeat visits as they had reverted back to their former state when the work of the team concluded. Councillor Adam also asked whether follow-up work is carried out alongside other teams, to embed improvements. In response, the Team Leader explained that during the exit stage, ongoing issues are identified which are followed up at the review stage. In addition to the work of the Community Action Team, the Safer Communities Team also carry out interventions and Neighbourhood Wardens patrol hotspot areas.

Groundwork North East and Cumbria undertake community and education work including litter picks and voluntary clean-ups to embed behavioural change. The Team Leader confirmed that it had been necessary to carry out repeat visits in some areas and she explained the Horden area had benefited from external funding to establish the Horden Together Project. The Neighbourhood Intervention Manager commented that one of the main aspirations of the work is to raise confidence within communities in order that residents can see for themselves that, through their reporting, action will be taken.

In response to a question from Councillor Adam on the scope of the educational work, the Team Leader responded that this includes visits to schools by the Fire and Rescue Service, the Police and the Civic Pride team and the work of Groundwork North East who carry out training sessions and work with youth and community groups. The Team Leader agreed to discuss the plans for the future project at West Auckland with Councillor Adam, following the meeting.

Councillor Potts observed the table comparing percentage change before and after by location and raised concern that some areas had declined following the team's withdrawal and he asked what action could be taken to maintain standards. The Team Leader referred to the outcome for Shildon and explained that the review took place during a Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period and also followed the Christmas break, however action was taken as soon as possible, to address the issues. The Team Leader also spoke of difficulties in obtaining evidence, however, she stressed that when evidence is available, the aim is to ensure those responsible are held to account. In response to a question from Councillor Potts as to how the team collaborates with the Police, the Team Leader replied that the Police are invited to attend planning meetings and their knowledge is important for identifying hotspot areas and to inform on local issues.

Councillor Kay said he was looking forward to welcoming the team to Coundon. He commented on the value of the work in terms of community investment and he added that the work the team carried out in 2016 had stood the test of time. He highlighted the benefit of the networking meetings which bring people together and he emphasised the importance of ensuring the work is inclusive of smaller communities.

Councillor McLean asked whether the work of the team in some locations of the county is, at best, simply managing a decline. He referred to the work done by the former district councils and their ability to react to community issues quickly, such as assisting the elderly with their bins and removing rubbish from yards.

The Team Leader clarified that the team must exercise caution when clearing private properties and she highlighted that community work is carried out to educate residents on their responsibilities. The Chair agreed to pass Councillor McLean's comments to the relevant service.

Councillor Wilkes referred to interventions available to assist those who need it, such as assistance provided by the Yard Clearance team and Neighbourhood Wardens and he added that whilst the Council provides assistance to those who require it, it also has a duty to promote personal responsibility.

Councillor Quinn asked whether a percentage figure was available for the locations which had remained at the level they were at, when the Community Action Team concluded their work. The Team Leader responded that it would be difficult to quantify as it would require like for like walkabouts to be carried out and variables could not be controlled.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd provided his view that public confidence is gained when tangible evidence exists and he suggested that it may be useful if Members could identify areas for targeted, promotion work to be undertaken. Officers highlighted that Members are invited to engage in the work and specific issues, such as anti-social behaviour are addressed through the work of the Community Safety team.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted and a further update on the Community Action Team be included within the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny work programme for next year.

7. Ecological Emergency - Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided progress on the Ecological Emergency strategy and action plan (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Steve Bhowmick, Environment and Design Manager thanked the Committee, whose recommendation had led to the formal declaration of an ecological emergency for County Durham, by Cabinet at the meeting held on 6 April 2022. At that meeting, Cabinet also requested that an initial plan be produced relating to Council activities in response to the declaration. The initial strategy and action plan was presented to Cabinet on 14 December 2022.

Stuart Priestley, Principal Ecologist, highlighted that the initial plan aims to identify key areas of Council activity required to deliver against the ecological emergency, drawing across all Council services. The initial plan sets out current and proposed areas of activity within the three key themes of Land Management; Engagement, Education and Behaviour Change and Policies and Strategies. He stressed that it was an initial plan and Members were requested to provide their comments.

Councillor Adam questioned the length of time taken to produce the initial strategy and plan, highlighting that the declaration had been made by Cabinet in April 2022, however, the initial strategy and plan was not produced until December 2022. Councillor Adam also expressed concern at the lack of detail with regard to deadlines, targets and key performance indicators and commented that he felt those measures would be key to monitoring performance and he suggested that incremental targets should be set. The Principal Ecologist acknowledged the points and explained the difficulties of setting targets, prior to knowing the scope of work and what resources will be available.

Councillor Wilkes commented on the scale of the task ahead, including the assessment of current provision and the identification of resources, within the current financial constraints, including funding from external sources. Councillor Wilkes also spoke of ensuring that the plan is future-proof.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd suggested that the term ecological opportunity would have been a more appropriate term to use, rather than ecological emergency and he recognised that a great deal of work had already been undertaken which should be developed, with a co-ordinated approach.

Councillor Brown highlighted the need to ensure the Council balances the competing demands of its sites, pointing out that a number of sites are multifunctional and are classed as a recreational, however they also have habitats and wildlife which require protection. Referring to the example of Pow Hill country park, Councillor Brown commented that the location had become increasingly popular with members of public and it had been suggested that this had resulted in the demise of the red squirrel in the area as the population of grey squirrels had increased.

Councillor Potts noted the need to ensure that biodiversity is included in planning obligations when considering development in the county. He provided the example of the Toft Hill bypass and stressed that net gain requirements must be met by developers.

The Principal Ecologist explained that future planning obligations were increasing as local authorities moved towards the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain, later in 2023. In addition, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will include mapping opportunities to deliver for biodiversity.

Councillor Elmer referred to comments made by the UN Secretary General in relation to fossil fuel giants, stating that their business models were incompatible with human survival. Councillor Elmer went on to point out that global oil companies are a strategic partner of the Council through the pension fund and there was a need for wider consideration. He provided the view that some areas were missing from the initial plan, including the need for the Council to review practices with regard to verge planting and landscape schemes to maximise biodiversity and to consider the benefits to biodiversity in relation to land rentals and sales. Councillor Elmer also commented that it was important that the plan is embedded corporately to ensure change is driven forward throughout the Council as a whole. He also highlighted the opportunities for income generation from biodiversity net gain in relation to the amount of land held by the Council and the development of the visitor economy as a result of increased biodiversity.

The Environment and Design Manager commented that the declaration provided a unique opportunity for Members and officers to work together on a core agenda in respect of the ecological environment.

Resolved:

- a) That the report and appendix 2 be noted.
- b) That a further progress update be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.
- c) That the Committee receives progress updates on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the first update scheduled for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 12 May 2023.

8. Quarter Two Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2022/23

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided details of the forecast outturn budget, highlighting major variances, based on the position to the end of the second quarter of the year (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Presenting the report the Finance Manager, Phil Curran, reported a forecast revenue overspend of £0.493 million against a revised budget of £116.138 million. It was noted that the outturn took account of inflation related items including pay awards and energy and fuel costs which were offset by underspends on waste contracts and a higher price for the power generated by the joint stocks landfill site. The report included a breakdown of the revenue position across heads of service areas and reasons for variances were detailed in appendix 3 of the report. It was reported that the cash limit reserve position stood at £0.184 million at 31 March 2023 which provided flexibility to deal with unbudgeted expenditure. The outturn also took account of a contribution to earmarked reserves to fund future service initiatives. The revised capital budget was £77.537 million and expenditure to 30 September was £21.429 million with key areas of spend to date being highways and bridges, environmental schemes and vehicles and plant.

Councillor Adam referred to the use of agency staff within the refuse and recycling service area and observed that this had been discussed at previous meetings. He asked whether there was an expectation that the position would continue and what, if any, action was being taken to reduce the reliance on agency staff. The Finance Manager explained that, following the busy Covid-19 pandemic, it had been necessary to allow staff to carry forward annual leave and this had been one of the reasons for the use of agency staff, however, there was less flexibility for staff to carry forward annual leave as the recovery from the pandemic continued. The physical nature of the duties and the ageing workforce had also impacted sickness absence levels, however, the approach to sickness absence was being strengthened, with increased training for managers and closer investigation into sickness absence on a case by case basis. Councillor Adam requested that the use of agency staff, sickness absence levels and the ageing workforce within the refuse and recycling service be kept under review by the Committee.

In response to a question from the Chair for an explanation of the £219,000 overspend on vehicle work in the refuse and recycling service, the Finance Manager clarified that the age of the vehicles and the number of repairs resulting from accidents were factors.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9. Quarter Two, 2022/23 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which presented an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes. The report covered performance in and to the end of quarter two 2022/23, July to September 2022 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Presenting the report, the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Tom Gorman, commented that the impact of pandemic continued to be seen and he noted that the previous two financial years were not representative, therefore the report contained a comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data. The cost of living crisis continued to be the main challenge during the quarter with high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases, resulting in falling income in real terms, leading to increased demand for support and social care services.

Areas going well included sustainable transport initiatives and carbon emissions which had seen a 57% reduction from the 1990 baseline, however, emissions from transport remained a challenge. The Council had achieved green accreditation status from the Investors in Environment, in recognition of the work done to make County Durham a greener place to live and work. Areas of concern included the increase in waste tonnage and the high rate of contamination of kerbside recycling. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager informed the Committee that the selective licensing scheme which came into effect in April had seen a low percentage of eligible properties fully registering for the scheme and therefore this area required attention.

Diane Close, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, informed the Committee that a joint scrutiny meeting will be held on 6 March, hosted by Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to which members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities and Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be invited. This will provide further information relating to empty homes and social housing provision.

Councillor Adam pointed out the 6% increase in waste tonnage which the report attributed to behavioural change and home working and he asked whether this was based on empirical evidence.

Councillor Adam raised concern at the impact on the energy to waste scheme and the increase in waste diverted to landfill. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager referred to the explanation provided by the Strategic Waste Contracts Manager at the previous meeting, that as the waste generated by workplaces contributed to commercial waste and that generated at home was domestic waste, the increase in home working had led to the increase in the amount of domestic waste produced. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager stated that he would investigate the matter with colleagues in the Strategic Waste Team, for further information to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Adam queried why the latest performance data for highways dated from 2020. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager responded that there was a delay with the figures contained in the report, however, he would seek the up to date figures to circulate to the Committee.

Councillor Elmer referred to the difficulty of tackling transport related carbon emissions and he pointed out that a modal shift from private vehicle ownership to public transport would take time. He was pleased to see that the government direction was now turning towards reallocating road space for public and active transport and he urged Members to empower officers within the relevant teams to continue to move in this direction, in order to reduce transport related carbon and nitrogen dioxide emissions.

The Chair referred to the library of resources being prepared by the Strategic Waste team and informed the Committee that it is hoped that information will be available to circulate to Members in the spring.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a **Special Meeting** of the **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 24 February 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Coult (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Elmer (Vice-Chair), E Adam, J Charlton, G Hutchinson, R Manchester, D Nicholls, R Potts, J Purvis, J Quinn, A Simpson (substitute for Councillor L Brown), D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend.

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Cramond

Also present:

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

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Brown, L Fenwick, C Kay, I McLean, C Martin, T Stubbs and Mr P Walton.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor A Simpson substituted for Councillor L Brown.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Charlton declared an interest in respect of Item 5, as a member of Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee.

4 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

5 Bereavement Services – Update

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided information relating to the work of Bereavement Services (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Chair welcomed Ian Hault, Neighbourhood Protection Manager and Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager to the meeting.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager introduced the presentation which provided an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, funeral poverty, burial space, the carbon agenda and future developments. Information was provided on the remit of the bereavement service which is responsible for two crematoria, Mountsett Crematorium located at Dipton and Durham Crematorium in central Durham. The service is also responsible for 46 open cemeteries, 98 closed churchyards and a woodland burial site. Following a review of the service in 2014, elements of the service transferred to the Clean and Green team and Business Support. Clean and Green undertake all grounds maintenance operations associated with the service whilst Business Support deal with aspects such as funeral arrangements, headstone installation and customer services.

In line with the Council's statutory duty to make arrangements for the funerals of people who die or are found dead and no funeral arrangements have been made, the service also carries out public health funerals. To address the growing issue of funeral poverty, the crematoria have introduced reduced cost timeslots and there is also an option for direct cremation.

Members heard that the service implemented a national standard for all new headstones which provides greater foundations and improved stability and the measure is supported by regular testing. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager recalled a question raised by a member of the public at a scrutiny meeting in 2020 regarding the use of weedkiller around headstones and whether this was a cause of headstone instability. Following the meeting, the Council reviewed its approach, resulting in areas within cemeteries being identified for strimming as an alternative to spraying. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager pointed out that strimming has also led to complaints regarding detritus being strewn across memorials and headstones. It was clarified that headstones may be affected by a range of factors, including ground maintenance regimes, animals and tree roots, however, the future will see the potential to install more concrete rafts which provide a stable base for headstones. In the future, the service will also continue to adjust its approach to maintenance within cemeteries to reflect climate and ecological commitments.

The Committee noted that woodland burials have become a popular alternative to traditional burials and an area of land close to Durham crematorium is a dedicated woodland burial site. Several existing cemeteries are now full and for most sites there are alternatives within 4 miles. The Council continues to investigate areas which could be extended to create new burial grounds, however, this is subject to Environment Agency approval in respect of groundwater pollution.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained the crematoria have joint committee arrangements managed through Durham County Council, Central Durham being a partnership with Spennymoor Town Council and Mountsett a partnership with Gateshead Borough Council. The crematoria provide a variety of services including webcasting, memorialisation and recycling of metals. Both sites have solar panels, EV charging points and heat generated from the cremation process is used to heat the buildings. The Committee received information on the recycling of metals resulting from cremation which is carried out with the consent of bereaved families. The proceeds from this had resulted in almost £300,000 being raised for local death related charities.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager paid tribute to staff and highlighted that their ability to carry out their duties with sensitivity at all times is a skill which should not be underestimated.

The Committee noted an important future development as the service is part of a national working party to consider resomation, a water-based, carbon-friendly alternative to burial and cremation.

The Committee noted that key challenges for the future include the increase in the amount of people suffering from funeral poverty and the demand for burial space.

The Chair thanked officers for the informative presentation and requested comments and questions from the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Quinn on the number of woodland burial sites in the county, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager clarified there is one such site at present, however other sites may be suitable and he pointed out that woodland burial sites also require maintenance. Councillor Quinn requested further information on the resomation process and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained the body is placed in a water chamber with a water and alkali-based solution and this process changes the body to ash. Councillor Quinn also asked whether the reuse of burial plots had been considered. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager replied that legislation applies only to London burial authorities at the present time. The current approach Durham is taking to address the increasing demand for burial space includes investigating whether it is possible to extend sites, however, strict Environment Agency regulations regarding the suitability of land must be met.

Councillor Adam pointed out that some town and parish councils also provide cemeteries and he asked whether their provision could be utilised. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager replied that customer choice is a factor and he added that some town and parish councils provide only accommodate those living within their boundary.

Councillor Adam stated that it was his understanding that some parish councils will provide a service to those who live outside the parish boundary, for a slightly higher fee and he gave the view that collaboration could lead to solutions in the future. Referring to resomation, Councillor Adam asked what environmental concerns related to the process. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained that the fluid is subject to a water treatment process and energy is required in order to heat the water used. Resomation is a comparatively slow process, therefore fewer resomations can be carried out on a daily basis. He clarified that resomation is not available at this point, however it is an important development for the Council to consider in future.

Councillor Adam commented on the maintenance of memorials and headstones recalling previous public concern regarding the erosion of soil. He suggested the solution may be to cease strimming and using herbicides and revert to families tending gravesides. He asked whether this had been considered. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that it would prove difficult as individuals have different views on how gravesides should be maintained. However, the issue of stability of memorials and headstones was being addressed through the implementation of national standards and the installation of rafts to improve stability.

Councillor Charlton asked whether liaison is carried out with funeral directors regarding the various rules which apply as to how cemeteries are cared for so that families are made aware of the arrangements prior to making a decision to purchase a burial plot. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager clarified that information is provided to families when they visit to select a plot and information is also provided in the deeds, when a plot is purchased. Councillor Charlton referred to a specific memorial garden and explained that when permission was granted for the garden, there was a condition that there was to be no marking of plots and she expressed disappointment this was not being adhered to and she questioned whether such conditions are communicated effectively. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager assured Members that information is disseminated, however, it was possible that the information may be overlooked given the difficult circumstances families are in at that time. He added that he would consider the comments to identify how communication may be improved.

In response to a question from Councillor Potts as to whether there are more woodland burial sites in the pipeline, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager replied that there are plans to liaise with the Corporate Property and Land service in this regard. Councillor Potts then asked whether the fluid from the resomation process could be used on land in woodland burial sites and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that he would investigate the question, for a response to be provided to the Committee.

Councillor Elmer referred to carbon emissions resulting from cremations and he asked whether the service had considered requesting that families make a carbon offset payment, the proceeds from which could be used to plant trees.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager responded that he was not aware that this suggestion had ever been considered.

In response to a question from Councillor Elmer regarding cemeteries in the county which are being weakened by coal mining subsidence, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager stated that he was aware of the issue at Brandon cemetery and he was not aware of any other cemeteries in the county where this was an issue.

Councillor Quinn asked how cost effective resomation will be and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained that the cost of a resomator is approximately the same as the cost of a cremator and resomator running costs are lower. However, fewer resomations can be completed on a daily basis as the resomation process takes more time than cremation. In terms of a future business case, other factors needed to be considered including location and the implications of attracting more business into crematoria which are already dealing with a busy workload. Councillor Quinn spoke of advances in technology and he asked if there were any other alternative methods to cremation and resomation on the horizon. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager highlighted the development of electric cremation and he added that technology will undoubtedly continue to develop in this field.

Councillor Adam observed that last year's figures relating to burial and cremation fees were included in the report and he asked for up-to-date information. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager pointed out that cremation fees are set by the joint committees and burial fees are set through the Council's budget setting process. Fees consider market pressures and how best to support residents and this had led to initiatives such as discounted rates and direct cremation. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager agreed to provide up-to-date figures.

Councillor Charlton asked whether the crematoria have the facilities to offer both cremations and resomations and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager confirmed that both locations have sufficient space, however, the challenges of increasing workloads must be considered.

In response to a question from Councillor Elmer on how the Council approaches the funeral rites of minority religions, officers informed the Committee that the site at South Road, Durham caters for Islamic burials and at present Durham has no dedicated facility for the Sikh faith.

Councillor Coult referred to the rafts at Moorside cemetery and asked whether rafts are installed in other cemeteries. The Bereavement Services Manager explained that rafts are installed in sections and Sacriston and Stanley cemeteries have sections with rafts.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

6. Management of DCC Land for Biodiversity – Overview

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided information on the role of the Parks and Countryside team, together with colleagues within the Clean and Green team, to deliver management of nature reserves and green spaces across Durham County Council owned land (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Committee welcomed Geoff Knight, Technical and Service Development Manager and Darryl Cox, Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger, to the meeting. Introducing the presentation, the Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger outlined the three main objectives of the team which are access for all, the maintenance and conservation of landscape, wildlife and historical features and the strengthening of community links and participation.

The Committee heard that the estate comprises of 63 sites including two major parks, Hardwick Park and Wharton Park and includes 75 miles of railway path network. A team of countryside rangers are responsible for the parks whilst assistant rangers deliver activities. All sites have a management plan and some of the sites benefit from Defra stewardship schemes and receive financial support.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic a comprehensive volunteering programme had been re-established and work is undertaken with private companies to support them to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities. Engagement with schools is carried out and other activities include volunteering, guided walks, community engagement and partnership projects. Partnerships with agencies such as the Bright Water Landscape Partnership and the Seascapes and Heritage Coast are key in order to share good practice on regional and national developments. In addition, engagement work is also undertaken with multi-agency partnerships relating to matters such as accessibility and public health.

Outlining recent challenges for the service, the Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger commented on the impact of austerity measures and how this had forced a refocus within the service. More recent challenges included shifting government priorities and issues arising from Brexit. Natural capital accounting requires the Council to consider how the value of its assets is measured, and as survey monitoring requires intensive resources, a phased approach is being undertaken as part of the Ecological Emergency Action Plan and the initial focus is on local wildlife sites. Condition assessments will be commissioned in due course.

Opportunities for the future include the use of satellite technology which it is hoped will assist to identify long-term trends. Public engagement is becoming increasingly important and Bioblitz events encourage public participation to identify and record different species and this is being extended across the estate. Whilst the pandemic highlighted the importance of nature and outdoor space to health and wellbeing, the recent cost of living crisis was having an impact on income streams. Recent investment in staff had enabled a refocus of activity to help to address the climate and ecological emergency declarations. Biodiversity net gain, which requires developers to contribute to biodiversity as part of the planning process, provides new opportunities and work is underway to identify appropriate land.

The Technical and Service Development Manager, Geoff Knight, then provided information on the Clean and Green Service which is responsible for providing grounds maintenance in areas such as schools, cemeteries and parks and open spaces. In its approach, the service aims to balance the promotion of biodiversity whilst maintaining public amenities and the Manager spoke of the plans for future biodiversity interventions and the development of a strategy with the Ecology team for habitat and meadow creation which will follow national mapping of the commonly used pollinator corridors across the country.

The Committee heard that the Clean and Green team are seeking to change the management of currently mown grassed areas in order to encourage wildlife. In order to encourage biodiversity along highway verges, routine maintenance will change and all verges will be reduced to one cut per year, to a maximum depth of 15cm, however this will exclude sightlines in order that road safety is not compromised.

The Committee also received information on the review of the use of herbicides in public spaces and the consideration of alternatives to glyphosate and trials of pelargonic and acetic acids. The Committee noted the appendix to the report which was a study by Cardiff Council, found glyphosate was the most effective and cheapest option. The Technical and Service Development Manager also explained that the service is undertaking a mini-wilding approach and trialing the ceasing of herbicide use on green spaces around trees and hedges to allow natural species to grow.

The Chair thanked officers for the detailed presentation. The Committee made comments and asked questions as follows.

Councillor Elmer commended the work and thanked the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, for his work in driving the actions forward. He welcomed the opportunity for biodiversity net gain and acknowledged that a full audit of land in Council ownership was required to understand the level of income that could be generated.

Councillor Elmer referred to the advantage that local authorities have in their power, to create local nature reserves and the value they bring, not only to biodiversity but also for health and wellbeing and public engagement opportunities. He added that he would like to see the return of a programme of local nature reserve declaration. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change cautioned that the declaration of a local nature reserve can be a very lengthy and complicated process.

Councillor Elmer also commented that he was pleased to see the new plans for grass maintenance and he stressed the importance of engaging with the public to ensure they understand that the Council is not merely 'letting the grass grow'. Councillor Elmer stated that he would also like residents' feedback to be gathered to acquire a clear understanding of the amount of support and opposition. The Service Development Manager highlighted that a consultation process was in progress which will include the consideration of mail-drops and door-knocks within the immediate vicinities. Referring to biodiversity net gain, the service is working towards having survey sites identified by November, to align with the statutory requirements under the Environment Act 2021, for all planning permissions granted to deliver biodiversity net gain.

Councillor Townsend referred to recent correspondence from the service on the plans to increase the number of spaces which are allowed to grow wild and she asked what the next steps in the process will be. The Service Development Manager explained that local members will be engaged to agree actions and the actions will vary from site to site.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd said he was encouraged by the work and the recent additional funding and he highlighted the importance of including the smaller towns and villages in the work. He added that he would like to see further joint working, particularly with schools. Councillor Sutton-Lloyd gave the view that the term ecological opportunity would be more appropriate than ecological emergency, as it was clear that the amount work involved in the process will take time.

Councillor Quinn asked what impact the recent capital investment and increase in the number of staff had on the service. The Service Development Manager responded that it will be of great benefit to support the delivery of the Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

At 11 am, attendees stood to observe a national minute's silence to mark the one year anniversary of the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Councillor Potts queried whether there was more work to be done to engage with parish and town councils and the farming community.

The Service Development Manager highlighted that service level agreements are in place with some local councils. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger added that the Low Carbon Team recently conducted an online seminar for parish and town councils on how to manage green spaces for biodiversity and he suggested that it may be useful to repeat the work.

Councillor Adam referred to biodiversity net gain and asked how much work had been done with the planning team thus far and what metric was being used. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger replied that some baseline surveys had been carried out and the metric is based on an agreed system whereby the land loss through development is measured, which must be replicated elsewhere in terms of biodiversity units gained.

Councillor Adam observed a focus on grass and wildflower meadows and he asked whether hedgerows were part of the process. He drew attention to paragraph 38 of the report which referred to the potential to deliver benefits through restoration and creation of wildlife habitats, if resources were allocated. He questioned whether there was a lack of resources available for hedgerows due to resources being targeted elsewhere. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger clarified that the comment in the report related to previous funding cuts. He added that there is not a great deal of traditional hedgerow within the county and that, where it does exist, it is managed to ensure it does not interfere with access. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger provided an example of traditional hedgerow management which is carried out at Aykley Heads where hedgerows are laid using a traditional technique to increase growth and offer protection for wildlife.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change highlighted that on 8 February, Cabinet considered the Developer Viability, Affordable Housing and Financial Contributions, Housing Needs, Design Code and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges Supplementary Planning Documents and suggested that Members may wish to feed into the consultation which runs until 11 April 2023. The Chair agreed to circulate the link to the consultation to all Overview and Scrutiny Members.

Councillor Charlton spoke of the benefit the additional countryside ranger had brought to the Causey Arch site. She referred to the site identified in her division for the wilding project and she gave her view that the marshland in the area would be a better location. Councillor Charlton also asked for more information on Bioblitz and engagement with schools. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger informed the Committee that the most recent Bioblitz event took place at Wharton Park where the public and experts carried out survey monitoring in a joint effort, to identify different species. He added that schools are engaged in activities mainly through the destination parks and whilst outreach work with schools is increasing following the Covid-19 pandemic, traditionally, secondary schools are more difficult to engage with.

Mr Cramond referred to biodiversity net gain and observed that the Environment Act suggests that net gain should be provided on site, whereas with a county wide perspective, it is likely that there will be more benefit for it to be outsourced beyond the site of the planning application. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger clarified that there will be a county wide approach. In a further question, Mr Cramond referred to the sites identified to date and the requirement that compensation is provided like for like and he asked whether there was a range of habitats available, such as aquatic habitats which are difficult for developers to secure. The Principal Parks and Countryside Ranger responded that whilst there will be potential for this in the future, at present, the majority of sites are grassland sites.

In response to a question from Councillor Elmer as to whether the Durham Hedge Grant, administered by Durham Hedgerow Partnership is still available, officers confirmed that it is available and the scheme provides financial assistance for the renovation and planting of hedges.

Councillor Nicholls thanked the officers for their work and he remarked on the amount of public interest that exists with regard to trees in residential areas. He asked whether local residents are consulted when tree planting occurs. The Service Development Manager clarified that existing trees are covered by a strict tree policy and the policy is due to be reviewed in the spring. A dedicated officer, Sue Mullinger, Landscape Delivery Manager, is responsible for overseeing the planting of new trees and he suggested the Committee may wish to request further information from the specific team. Members of the Committee echoed Councillor Nicholls' comments regarding the difficulties residents face with regard to trees which cause nuisance or damage to properties. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change highlighted that, in the Cabinet report he previously referred to, there are plans for improvements. He also referred to the amount of good work done in the wake of Storm Arwen.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked all the staff for their good work, not forgetting the countryside rangers and volunteers.

The Committee **Resolved** that:

- a) the report and presentation be received;
- b) arrangements are made for the Committee to visit DCC parks and open spaces within the 2022/2023 work programme.

7. Such other business

The Chair reminded the Committee, that following a short meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 27 March 2023, a CERP workshop will be held to which all Overview and Scrutiny Members are welcome to attend.

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



27 March 2023

**Neighbourhoods & Climate Change –
Quarter 3: 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 3 (31 December 2022).

Executive summary

- 2 This report provides an overview of the updated forecast of outturn, based on the Neighbourhoods & Climate Change (NCC) position at Quarter 3 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 (including Culture, Sport & Tourism which is in Regeneration rather than NCC) 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 for NCC of £0.543 million, against a revised budget of £116.184 million. The quarter two forecast showed a cash limit overspend of £0.493 million for the year. Culture & Sport is in a breakeven position.
- 4 The service is forecast to require funding of £2.702 million to support budgets (Culture & Sport require an additional £1.25 million) 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 £57.915 million with expenditure to 31 December of £32.926 million. Culture & Sport's revised capital budget is £19.684 million with expenditure of £12.696 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) NCC Revenue Budget - £116.184 million (original £112.985 million)
 - (b) NCC Capital Programme – £57.915 million (original £79.173 million)
 - (c) Culture, Sport & Tourism Revenue Budget – £15.796 million
 - (d) Culture, Sport & Tourism Capital Budget - £19.684 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 **£0.543 million** against a revised budget of **£116.184 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
Culture, Sport & Tourism	15,796	24,861	9,065	(737)	(7,072)	(1,248)	8
NCC							
Environmental Services	59,323	60,777	1,454	0	(136)	(1,317)	1
Technical Services	12,961	13,120	159	0	1,561	(590)	1,130
Community Protection	6,171	5,613	(558)	0	629	(288)	(218)
Partnerships & Comm Engagement	6,341	2,597	(3,744)	0	3,710	(137)	(172)
NCC Central Costs	31,387	31,560	172	0	0	(370)	(198)
NCC Total	116,184	113,667	(2,517)	0	5,763	(2,702)	543

- 12 The NCC cash limit overspend of £0.543 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 in a breakeven position. There is £0.514 million additional agency cover required in Refuse and Recycling due to high sickness levels and additional annual leave carried forward from last year, along with a £0.166 million overspend on bin purchases due to costs increasing by 22%. There is also £0.255 million underachievement of income on Clean & Green school SLAs and ad-hoc work. These overspends have been offset by £0.300 million increased income relating to trade and commercial waste collections, £0.236 million overachieved income for garden waste income, and £0.396 million underspend on staffing due to vacancies and pending restructures;
 - b) Highways is forecast to be overspent by £1.130 million. The main reasons for this are an overspend on the trading areas of £0.715 million due to lower than anticipated levels of subcontractor activity, along with an overspend £1.286 million on Highways Revenue maintenance work, including cyclic works, drainage, bridges, and emergency action works. This is offset by additional income within Strategic Highways relating to enforcement and inspections, Section 38 supervision income, road closures, and fixed penalty notices;
 - c) Community Protection is forecast to underspend by £0.218 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 £0.172 million, mainly due savings from vacancies across the AAP teams and the Civil Contingencies Unit, along with some overachievement of income across the service;
 - e) The central contingencies budget within NCC is underspent by £0.198 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;
 - f) Culture, Sport and Tourism is forecast to overspend by £8,000 against budget. The main reasons are a reduction in fine and reservation income in libraries (£83,000) and an unrealised MTFP saving of £0.190 million pending the full year effect of the current service restructure. A one-off benefit arising from the agreement to

take full control of the gym facilities at 7 of our leisure centres is offset by a projected overspend at the Gala Theatre and Consett Leisure Centre.

- 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; energy (net underspend of £0.725 million), transport prices (overspend of £0.803 million) and waste contract costs (net underspend £0.284 million). The 2022/23 pay award of £2.908 million has also been excluded from the cash limit outturn position.
- 15 A net £5.762 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) £0.779 million contribution to a new Highways Permit Scheme reserve;
 - (b) £3.718 million contribution to PACE reserves mainly in relation to Humanitarian Support Grant;
 - (c) £0.800 million contribution to the Members Priority Reserve in relation to Highways;
 - (d) £0.629 million contribution to the Community Protection Workforce Development reserve.
- 16 In Culture, Sport & Tourism there was a net drawdown from reserves of £7.1 million which mainly relates to the buy out of the Competition Line contracts.
- 17 The forecast Cash Limit Reserve position for NCC at 31 March 2023 is £0.134 million after taking the latest outturn position into account.

Capital Programme

- 18 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 £57.915 million.

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

Service	Revised Annual Budget 2022/23 £000	Actual Spend to 31 Dec £000	Remaining Budget 2022/23 £000
Culture, Sport & Tourism	19,684	12,696	6,988
NCC			
Community Protection	14	0	14
Environmental Services	18,794	9,936	8,858
Highways	37,293	21,919	15,374
Partnerships & Community Engagement	1,814	1,071	743
NCC Total	57,915	32,926	24,989

20 Officers continue to carefully monitor capital expenditure on a monthly basis. Actual spend for the first 9 months amounts to **£32.926 million** for NCC, and **£12.696 million** for Culture, Sport & Tourism. **Appendix 4** provides a more detailed breakdown of spend across the major projects contained within the capital programme.

21 The key areas of spend during the year to date are on Highways and Bridges (£21.919 million), Environmental Schemes (£6.032 million), Vehicles & Plant (£1.884 million), and Culture & Museums (£9.3 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 (15 March 2023) – Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 31 December 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 Q3 – 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	64,261	65,510	1,249	0	0	(2,908)	(1,659)
Premises	9,082	10,013	931	0	0	(785)	146
Transport	19,338	23,658	4,320	0	0	(803)	3,517
Supplies & Services	21,231	23,228	1,997	0	0	0	1,997
Third Party Payments	52,014	49,599	(2,415)	0	0	284	(2,131)
Transfer Payments	1,894	3,472	1,578	0	0	0	1,578
Capital	23,108	23,108	0	0	0	0	0
Central Costs	10,439	11,157	718	0	5,762	0	6,480
Direct Rev Funding	1,309	627	(682)	0	0	0	(682)
Gross Expenditure	202,676	210,372	7,696	0	5,762	(4,212)	9,246
Grant	(3,418)	(9,579)	(6,161)	0	0	0	(6,161)
Contributions	(802)	(1,671)	(869)	0	0	0	(869)
Sales	(624)	(598)	26	0	0	0	26
Charges	(12,976)	(16,920)	(3,944)	0	0	1,510	(2,434)
Rents	(94)	(92)	2	0	0	0	2
Recharges	(67,152)	(65,535)	1,617	0	0	0	1,617
Other Income	(1,426)	(2,310)	(884)	0	0	0	(884)
Gross Income	(86,492)	(96,705)	(10,213)	0	0	1,510	(8,703)
Total	116,184	113,667	(2,517)	0	5,762	(2,702)	543

Appendix 3: Head of Service Analysis – Environmental Services

	Variance	Explanation
Head of Environment	(4)	Minor variance
Refuse & Recycling	776	£514k overspend on staffing due to high levels of sickness (£395k), additional holidays carried forward from last year which need covering (£115k), unbudgeted regrading of loaders (£86k), offset partly by management and admin vacancies throughout the year of £82k £335k overspend on vehicle daywork repairs and lease extensions £166k overspend on bin purchases which have risen from £17.90 to £21.90 and also a bulk purchase of garden waste bins (£220k) overachieved income on trade waste collections (£42k) underspend on equipment and supplies £22k overspend mainly relating to installation of new weighbridge weight indicator system at the sites
Strategic Waste	(255)	£144k under achieved income on Soil Imports which have ceased due to capping of site (£236k) overachieved income on garden waste income (£155k) underspend on staffing due to vacancies and turnover £17k overspend on business rates at Joint Stocks following revaluation £105k overspend on power generation engine maintenance and repairs £20k overspend due to backdated water bill at landfill site (£70k) underspend on waste contract professional advice (£80k) over achieved income on commercial waste disposal
Clean & Green	173	(£280k) underspend on staffing vacancies in advance of planned MTFP savings £198k overspend on vehicle daywork repairs, vehicle hires and lease extensions £255k underachieved income on school SLAs and ad-hoc work
Neighbourhood Protection	(302)	(£138k) underspend on Neighbourhood Wardens, mainly staffing until staff reach the top of their grades and vacancies while restructure was being implemented (£164k) underspend on Allotments, mainly staffing vacancies while new staff were appointed mid-year and also vacant posts in advance of planned MTFP savings
Fleet	(388)	(£111k) underspend on staffing due to management vacancies pending a restructure (£177k) overachieved income on daywork repairs due to older vehicles awaiting replacement and vehicle damages (£100k) underspend on tyres due to lower replacements during the year
Depots	8	Minor variance
North Penines AONB	0	No Variance
Environment & Design	(7)	Minor variance
TOTAL	1	

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

Partnerships & Community Engagement Outturn 2022/23 - Variances		
Service	Over / (Under) £000s	Reason for Variance
Head of Service	(7)	(£7k) from unspent Other Pay budget
CCU & Corporate policy	(119)	Corporate Policy - (£27k) Additional income from unrecovered 21/22 agency costs, £7k overspend in staffing (£12k) receipting correction from previous year (£3k) under on Supplies and Services CCU - (£48k) Employee saving - Temporary vacancy Civil Contingencies (£6k) under on Supplies and Services (£31k) over achievement of income on CCU
Humanitarian Support Scheme	(1)	(£4.476m) anticipated surplus - £2.154m spend, (£6.559m) Income less core budget of (£72k) Balance to reserve at year-end.
Partnerships Team	(13)	Partnerships Team - (£3k) Employee saving mainly training budget unused and Maternity cover at lower SCP Underspends of (£1k) Transport and (£10k) under on Supplies and Services £1k overspend on Venue and Refreshments
Strategic Partnerships	2	£2k Employee costs - efficiency saving not met in Strategic Manager partnerships cost centre. Draw down in reserves for remaining cost centres
Funding Team & Other AAPs	(0)	Net nil, as mainly all reserve funding
AAPs South & East	(54)	(£27k) Employee underspend due to vacancies in Spennymoor and Management. (£3k) minor underspend on Transport and (£2k) on Premises. (£9k) under on Supplies and Services. (£13k) contribution from Humanitarian Support for Jane Jack.
AAPs North & east	20	£25k Employee costs - Mainly not achieving efficiency as well as maternity cover costs. (£5k) minor underspends on Transport and Supplies and Services.
GRAND TOTAL	(172)	

Appendix 3: Head of Service Analysis – Highways

Highways Outturn 2022/23 - Reasons for Variances - Quarter 3		
Service	Over / (Under) £000s	Reason for Variance
Head of Highways	5	Overspend on Employees £2k and S&S of £5k due to Bloom advertising costs for HoS post initially offset by transport savings (£2k)
Highways Services Trading	715	Trading £992k overspend - Street Lighting (£238k), Commercial Group (£10k), Countywide £1.241m. Overspend on Countywide due to underachievement of targeted sales margin. Management & Admin underspend of (£227k) - Driven by (£159k) underspend on employees from vacancies not filled including Estimating manager. Paternity leave for programmes manager (3 months). Premises underspend of (£5k) due to not spending general repairs budget. Large underspend on staffing travelling (£23k) and Supplies and Services (£52k) plus income contribution (£38k)
Highways Services Non-Trading	1,286	Overspend of £1.294k on Highways Revenue maintenance work, including cyclic works, drainage, bridges and emergency action works. Overspend of £13k on Transport and S&S £17k over Overspend of £1.251k on Agency. Mainly gullies, PAT and street lighting cable testing spend. Under achievement of Income £21k. Winter Maintenance - Forecasted £18k draw down of reserve.
Strategic Highways	(£876)	Street Lighting - Underspend of (£71k) Underspend of (£9k) on employees - Vacant post for first 3 months Inflation pressure on Street Lighting electricity budget of £310k on Premises - Covered from central finance, net nil. Underspend of (£20k) on S&S mainly due to consultancy coming under budget Underspend of (£25k) on Agency due to column testing not being done this year in full Overachievement of income (£15k)
		Highways Permit Scheme - (£19k) underspend due to non-controllable budgets now paid for from the permit scheme although still funded through DCC. Surplus anticipated from Permit fees of £159k in 2022/23. Nil outturn reflects transfer of any surplus into a new reserve (3 years to manage fee levels with surpluses). Previous surpluses were put to Receipts in Advance in error. A new reserve has been established and the £619k prior year surpluses are being transferred into the reserve - this has been recorded in the Enforcement Team to keep recording separate.
		Asset Management - Underspend of (£445k) Underspend of (£90k) on employees - Vacancies in team Overspend of £21k on agency - Tree works and systems. Overspend of £11k - Minor variances on Premises, transport, Supplies and Agency Over achieved Income of (£386k) - Roundabout Sponsorship arrears 6 months from last year, 18 months in year (£109k). (£264k) from Section 38 supervision fees above budget. Other income over achieved (£14k)
		Enforcement & Inspections - Underspend of (£342k) Underspend of (£32k) on employees - Vacancy Underspend of (£20k) on Transport - Fuel, fleet management and car allowances Underspend of (£6k) on S&S Over achieved Income of (£256k) - Over-recovered income Fixed Penalty notices and Section74 over-runs, 5 quarters of sample inspections to include Q4 of 2021/22 Permit Scheme prior year non-controllable budgets funded by DCC released as noted as paid as part of the Permit Scheme (£28k)
GRAND TOTAL	1,130	

Appendix 3: Heads of Service Analysis – Community Protection

Community Protection Q3 Outturn - Reasons for Variances		
Service	Over / (Under) £000s	Reason for Variance
Head of CP	£316	Underspend on unallocated 2022/23 growth of (£275k). Small underspend on staffing of (£2k). Overspend on transport 15k due to 3 additional vehicles for staff use instead of pool cars ceased in August and supplies and services over by £6k. Small overachievement of income (£2k). Contribution to net contribution to reserve of £536k made up £574k (unspent growth allocated back to Workforce Development Reserve) (£38k) (Community Protection Training Unit costs)
Consumer Protection	(£251)	Underspend due to staff vacancies (273k) offset mostly by over in supplies 17k additional legal costs and printing & postage. Plus additional cost for enforcement for Claypath £9k. Over on premises - water and rates £3k offset by savings on car pool, car allowances budget (£7k)
Health Protection	£18	ERVR costs of 139k creating staffing overspend of 50k offset by allocated growth funding in excess of costs mainly accounting for underspend on staff (89k). Projected underspends in all areas (£19k) - (£4k) saving on car allowances and transport, (£6k) saving in Supplies and Services, (£9k) saving in agency as reduction in vet fees, as well as over achievement of income (£13k) due to new burdens grant for Natasha's Law.
Strategic Regulation	£119	Underspend due to vacancies in team and new growth allocation (£122k) - which is (£69k) staffing underspend, reduced by capital contribution for overestablishment post (£53k). Offset by small overspend in Supplies and Services £3k
Environmental Protection	(£164)	Large underspend from staff vacancies and new growth (£173k) offset by overspends in Supplies and Services of £8k mainly due additional consultancy fees plus overspend in transport on staff travelling £2k plus small overachievement of income (£1k)
Neighbourhood Interventions	£34	£6k overspend on Anti Social Behaviour staffing Henderson who was above base budget £16k offset by savings in transport (£5k) and supplies and services (£5k), NAT team underspend of (£26k) due to staffing underspends against career graded posts and part time employees (£19k) plus savings on car allowances of (£7k). CAT team underspend of (£14k) due to staffing above base (£15k). Minor overspend £1k on Supplies and Services
Safer Communities	£16	Mainly £38k GRT team overspend with staff over budgeted level £45k minus underspends on Supplies and Services and transport of (£5k) and (£2k) respectively. Offset by vacancies in Information and Intelligence (£27k). Community Safety Operations overspend of £5k made up of £6k overspend on staffing due to not meeting efficiency target, savings from income funding offsetting expenditure net effect (£5k) as spend comes within budget then £4k over on site accommodation due to portaloos for sites with no budget.
GRAND TOTAL	(£218)	

Appendix 4: Neighbourhoods & Climate Change Capital 2022/23			
NCC	Revised Budget 2022/23 £000	Actual Spend 31/12/22 £000	Remaining Budget £000
Community Protection			
AAP Schemes-Community Protection	14	-	14
Community Protection Total	14	-	14
Environmental Services			
AAP Schemes - Environmental Services	298	19	279
Street Scene	1,292	684	608
Vehicle and Plant	2,799	1,884	915
Crematorium	65	12	53
Environment & Design	12,475	6,032	6,443
Depots	1,764	1,230	534
Waste Infrastructure Capital	101	75	26
Environmental Services Total	18,794	9,936	8,858
Highways			
Highway Operations	124	2	122
Strategic Highways	34,246	20,722	13,524
Strategic Highways Bridges	2,923	1,195	1,728
Highways Total	37,293	21,919	15,374
Members Neighbourhood Fund			
Members Neighbourhood Fund	1,206	764	442
Members Neighbourhood Fund Total	1,206	764	442
Community Buildings			
Community Buildings	40	-	40
Community Buildings Total	40	-	40
AAP Capital Budgets			
AAP Capital Budgets	501	305	196
AAP Capital Budgets Total	501	305	196
AAP Initiatives			
AAP Initiatives Other	6	2	4
AAP Initiatives Total	6	2	4
Consett Comm Facilities			
Consett Comm Facilities	61	-	61
Consett Comm Facilities Total	61	-	61
NCC Total	57,915	32,926	24,989
Culture, Sport & Tourism			
AAP Schemes	5	5	-
Culture & Museums	12,927	9,373	3,554
Leisure Centres	6,718	3,318	3,400
Outdoor Sports & Leisure Facilities	34	-	34
Culture, Sport & Tourism Total	19,684	12,696	6,988

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