



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

**Date**            **Friday 16 June 2023**  
**Time**            **9.30 am**  
**Venue**           **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

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

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2023 (Pages 3 - 14)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Q4 2022-23 RIPA - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 15 - 20)
6. Digital Strategy - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 21 - 76)
7. Q4 2022/23 Performance Management Report - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 77 - 146)
8. Q4 2022/23 Customer Feedback Report - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 147 - 170)
9. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 171 - 192)
10. COSMB Refresh of Work Programme 2023/24 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 193 - 208)

11. Update in relation to Petitions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 209 - 214)
12. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 215 - 224)
13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

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

County Hall  
Durham  
8 June 2023

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

Councillor R Crute (Chair)  
Councillor C Lines (Vice-Chair)

Councillors V Andrews, A Batey, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, S Deinali, J Elmer, K Hawley, P Heaviside, L Hovvells, J Howey, M Johnson, P Jopling, L Maddison, C Marshall, C Martin, J Miller, B Moist, A Reed, K Shaw, M Stead, A Sterling, A Surtees and R Yorke

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**Contact: Jackie Graham**

**Tel: 03000 269 704**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 3 April 2023 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

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

Councillors E Adam, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, B Coult, R Crute, O Gunn, L Hovvels, J Howey, P Jopling, C Lines (Vice-Chair), R Manchester, C Marshall, K Robson, K Shaw, M Stead, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd (Substitute) (substitute for A Jackson) and M Wilson

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, J Elmer, P Heaviside, A Jackson, L Maddison and A Reed

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd for Councillor Jackson

### **3 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the request made by Councillor Crute regarding Councillor Bell, and the letter sent by Councillor Bell to the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the failings within the Council Tax System. To date no response had been received.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **5 Community Engagement (AAP) Review**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services that provided an update on the findings from the independent

consultant on the review of the council's community engagement function and our approach to a public countywide consultation (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Partnership and Community Engagement Services provided background to the report and advised the Board that the consultation period was due to end on 23 April 2023. A report would be presented to Cabinet in June 2023 on the proposed way forward and it was scrutiny's opportunity today to make comments on the findings and proposals from ERS consultants. The full report from ERS was available online and had been discussed at a number of Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe Durham Partnership and some town and parish council meetings.

Chris Barlow, ERS consultants introduced himself to the Board and said that he had been asked to undertake a comprehensive review of the community engagement process delivered by Durham County Council. A steering group had been established with elected members and officers however the brief was operated independently. He had attended board meetings, 1-2-1 sessions, looked at the online surveys and considered desk based information. He gave a detailed presentation which highlighted (full presentation details can be viewed in the file of Minutes):-

- Strengths of the current AAP approach – Durham put a lot of research into the work carried out and the commitment and quality of staff involved were an asset to the authority
- Rationale for revising the current approach – need to operate differently and Durham were a victim of their own success in the management of funding as was too resource intensive. The volume of work around funding was too bureaucratic and staff wanted to get back out in the community.
- Recommended changes – included hyper-local community engagement with the cessation of the current AAPs. Flexible community networks and the streamlining of funding. Strategic grant process to replace area budgets. Increased opportunities for match funding with four year funding cycle, and the introduction of community development small budgets for grass root organisation.

The Chair thanked Mr Barlow for his presentation and asked members to consider how Durham County Council could potentially engage with the community going forward and what could that model look like. He asked members not to ask specific questions on local matters.

Councillor Surtees had a high regard for the AAPs and agreed that the biggest concern was around the bureaucracy of funding but asked why the decision was taken to deconstruct the whole AAP system rather than

replacing the parts that needed improvements and those parts that people had commented upon. In response Mr Barlow commented on how much time it takes to process the current funding arrangements and the help provided to organisations year on year which was resource intensive. The model would introduce a strategic grant that would be co-produced within communities and would allow staff to work on community priorities with an understanding on the ground. Councillor Surtees added that she was concerned that funding would be agreed by the CDSP and those smaller organisations would be affected. Mr Barlow explained that the funding would be co-produced with partners and that it would not be centralised and although funding would still need approval and sign off it would not need to be agreed by AAP boards. This would free up staff time and allow them to communicate more with people.

Councillor Hovvels said that the AAPs had strengths in reaching out to the community but that they also engaged with national and international visitors and asked if their views had been sought on the proposals. She believed that there was diversity within the County and an understanding of what the community was about. She was concerned about gaps for the voluntary sector in these new proposals and the funding streams. Mr Barlow said that international and national visitors had not been approached as this review was about what was best for County Durham. He added that Durham were doing a lot of things that other authorities were not doing but the emphasis of the review was about the people of Durham. With regards to the grass root organisations and the gaps he said that by enabling frontline staff to engage with the community and discuss projects and help take ideas forward would be beneficial. He said that the proposed funding process was included in full within his report.

Councillor Adam was part of the GAMP (Great Aycliffe and Midldridge Partnership) which worked really well so he asked if something was not broke why fix it. He commented with regards to resource pressures and the different types of funding, that assumptions had been made with AAP boards and the small number of individuals involved. With GAMP he advised that the board is representative of the community it served, just as it was for this meeting of COSMB. With regards to the community development workers he asked how much research had been carried out into whether there would be a duplication of this area of work carried out as some of it would already exist. Mr Barlow said that there were lots of organisations who fund people and work on the frontline with their own workloads and agendas, but what he was referring to in his report was a defined role setting out objectives of what needed to be achieved and was a different role to that already in place. With regards to resources he said that he had spoken to staff and understood the need to enable them to work in the community rather than being tied up in the processes. Referring to GAMP he said that it was a well chaired and well managed meeting that was functional and well attended. However, with a

busy agenda it did not leave room to discuss important issues such as social isolation for the older people in smaller villages. Councillor Adam felt that this was a snapshot from one meeting and that the GAMP board was representative of the community it served. Mr Barlow said that from that one meeting it would not attract the younger people in the community to attend.

Councillor Jopling was under the impression that AAPs should interact with the public and bridge the gap between the county and the public. However, in her opinion this had failed over the last 12 years and not all residents had heard of the AAPs or understood what they did. Streamlining the processes for funding she believed would help councillors have more say over their own budgets. She felt that the AAP agendas were full of presentations that had already been seen in another meeting and wasted a lot of time. She agreed that the staff were efficient and helpful but that the processes were a problem and that the proposals were a better option going forward.

Councillor Gunn had a different perspective to that of Councillor Jopling of her AAP and she did not recognise what had been said in the report. She was sceptical of the independence of the review process and the lack of engagement with councillors. She asked how the 1-2-1 sessions had been selected and asked if the session with Cabinet had been neutral. She asked if a comparison had been based with other local authorities when carrying out the desk based review of the policies and practices. She agreed with the comments made by Councillor Hovvels in that our AAPs had been applauded in the strength of our own AAP boards. She asked how many AAP meetings attended had been ineffective. She felt that there was a cross over between the work carried out between the staff and the local councillors and asked if this had been considered within the report. She said that the list of responsibilities for the community engagement workers was what the AAP staff already did. Mr Barlow agreed that this was what the staff currently did however if they were unburdened from the processes they would be able to engage more. He agreed with the point about the role of the elected members and said that it was evident that some were very good at engagement. The political conflict within his report had come up in the 1-2-1 discussions regarding politics and personalities. Good practice from neighbouring authorities had been found with the likes of Stockton who had a much more streamlined process for funding. He confirmed that all councillors had been asked after AAP meetings to contact him with their views. He did receive some telephone calls from people who did not want to contribute at a large event. He referred to the brief and that meetings with the steering group were open and he was not told what the outcome should be. With regards to the Cabinet meetings he advised that each Cabinet member had their own opinions and views but he received no steer from them as to the expected outcome. He confirmed that ERS had carried out an open consultative process.

In response to a question from Councillor Gunn about who was on the steering group the Head of Engagement and Partnerships confirmed that members were selected in consultation with the portfolio holder and was comprised of Councillors Scott, Shield and Martin. There were three key officers involved and support officers.

Councillor Howey said that AAPs do work well and make sure that people are presented however some councillors were not on the AAP boards. She agreed with previous points in that not everyone knew what that AAPs were. She asked how we could ensure that organisations just starting out knew where to seek help and support and how we got the word out. Mr Barlow said that involvement varied across the areas and that the public representative on the AAP also faced the same challenges as councillors in that not everyone was represented. By having more open forums would allow more dialogue and link back to the priorities of the County Durham Partnership. The Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement Services said that over 15,000 were on the broader forum distribution, however it was not know how many of those contacts were active. The service had worked on publicity about the AAPs and had formalised stickers/posters and they did have a social media presence.

In responding to a further question from Councillor Howey about funding, Mr Barlow said that it would be for the council to decide on the rules and what happened next.

Referring to the consultation Councillor Atkinson said that we were the victims of our own success. He believed that we already had the hyper-model that was being proposed as we involved a number of different bodies in the AAP board meeting, including housing, police, fire and senior officers at the Council. He said that in his opinion if something was not broken we should not try to fix it, and he had no idea how this would all work. Mr Barlow said that there was evidence in the report that showed the majority of people did want things to change and evolve however the decision was for the Council to take forward.

Councillor Coult asked how officers felt about the funding process and Mr Barlow explained that officer felt that over time the process had evolved and was now too resource intensive. They would prefer to do more of the work that the enjoyed being out in the community.

Councillor Wilkes joined the meeting at 10.50 a.m.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd said that no organisation should become complacent and the review looked at how to manage things better for our residents. He agreed that AAPs were good in part but that marketing was a major problem and had been from day one. He said that in his opinion the process had

become more important than the project and created so much work for officers. He agreed that to free up more time for officers would benefit the community.

Councillor Robson commented that this was a well written and comprehensive report and he was yet to see an organisation that had been run the same way for 15 years without making any improvements. He said that the change was good, healthy and opened up opportunities and productivity. He asked if a progress report would come back to committee. Mr Barlow confirmed that an assessment would be carried out within 6 months of any changes however this would be dependant on what the Council decided to implement. The Chair explained that it would be for Cabinet to make that decisions and then this committee could scrutinise in future.

Councillor Charlton-Lainé said that as staff had been mentioned a lot in the report it would have been beneficial to see their comments, and that if capacity had been so sparse why had there not been a recommendation to employ more staff. Councillor Charlton-Laine asked why the Labour Group had not been invited to the steering group or invited for comment. Mr Barlow confirmed that they had reached out to Councillor Henig, former Leader of the Council to understand the background and the unique role of the AAPs. He went on to explain that it was not his role to question who was on the steering group but he believed that through the consultation he had kept the process as open as possible with members being invited to events. With regards to the staff comments he would not divulge what individual members of staff had commented. The Head of Community Engagement and Partnerships said that staff had been encouraged to take part in the consultation exercise and that he had arranged a meeting with staff prior to the recommendations being reported to Cabinet. He explained that the steering group membership was a Cabinet decision.

Councillor Marshall said that there was a lot of passion around the council from everyone involved in decision making and that people do have a difference of opinion. As Durham was one of the largest local councils it was different to other local authorities in terms of the rurality, diversity and needed a local structure in order to engage with the Council. He asked if there was numerical data to back up the recommendations within the report and asked how many of the AAPs were 'broken' across the county. He had no problem in making improvements to the AAPs but said that a steering group that was not a true representation across the council was not the best way in which to do it. There was no evidence or steer from the Cabinet and with so many differences of opinion he proposed that Cabinet be recommended to refer consideration of the final report and recommendations to full Council.



Councillor Howey commented that she had not made this debate political and said that all members of the Council had been given the opportunity to take part in the consultation process.

Councillor Crute seconded the motion from Councillor Marshall. He was concerned that the steering group had been formed without a representative from the largest political group on the council and said that engagement should have been made through the 126 councillors not just the 10 Cabinet members.

The Chair asked members to vote on the motion for the AAP decision to be made by full Council:

11 For, 8 Against and therefore the motion was carried.

Councillor Manchester was concerned that there would be a lack of local influence and knowledge within the new funding proposals being made by the CDP board. He said that there was a misconception that delays in funding were down to the AAP staff when this was more of a funding team problem. He said that there was a lack of young people on the AAP boards and there was nothing within the report that suggested an improvement to that. Mr Barlow said that the report referred to locally co-produced plans for strategic grants and this would include councillors. With regards to the delays he agreed that this was due to process and the amount of work teams had to deliver e.g. highways. He commented that some areas were stronger with a youth focus but it was proposed that things were done differently with a dedicated role, which would require resource to make that happen.

Referring to the point made earlier about marketing Councillor Gunn said that the key issue was engagement and getting people involved. She asked why such a traumatic change when small things could be improved and make a huge difference. Mr Barlow explained that the direction was clear on the way forward with some elements continuing with key partners. With regards to the AAPs he said that flexibility would be key in helping to improve meetings, with an option for online and bespoke meetings.

Councillor Lines commented that within the report there was reference to concerns about repeat funding to some organisations and activities to be undertaken to find ways of working with repeat applicants with regards to other methods of funding and longer term viability. The new model would allow new and different projects to take place. He asked if there was any action that addressed the emerging ecological and climate emergencies. Mr Barlow said that the longer term grants would allow time for research into other options available. With regards to the ecological and climate agenda he advised that the Council would provide that level of detail.

Councillor Adam said that he welcomed any change for the better but believed this had gone too far in terms of the changes required. He said that we should focus on the positives within the report and streamline the funding process.

Councillor Stead said that the report was very positive and credible and that we should never stop looking at improvements and making things more efficient. He agrees with the flexible approach to funding and he welcomed the input from staff into the consultation process. He believed that the Labour Group did not want to be involved in the process.

The Chair thanked Mr Barlow for his report and presentation and the members for the contribution to the debate. He said that there was still an opportunity to get involved in the countywide consultation and asked members to agree to the recommendations.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the findings and recommendations of ERS consultants' final report be noted;
- (ii) That the approach to the countywide consultation and consider what views it may wish to submit to the consultation be noted;
- (iii) That the opportunity for all elected members to submit individual views via the online survey be noted; and
- (iv) That the COSMB recommend to Cabinet that consideration of the final Community Engagement (AAP) Review report and recommendations be referred to full Council.

## **6 Customer Feedback Q3 Update report**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which provided an overview of the wide range of information collected from our customers that describe their experiences of using our services, covering performance in quarter three 2022/23 for the period October to December 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager advised that demand had increased, equating to 62,000 extra contacts which was mainly driven by the cost of living crisis. More contact was now through digital channels and face to face contact had fallen by half. He reported that the majority of complaints continued to be about missed bin collections. Regarding complaints, 98 statutory complaints had been received for Adult and Health Services and 44 for Children and Young People's Services. Two of the 20 decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman had been upheld. Paragraph 44 onwards of the report referred to recent developments including the introduction of Chatbot and Eckoh systems.

Members were advised that future reports would combine the customer feedback and quarterly performance reports.

Councillor Adam referred to the missed bin collections and the fact that 785 of complaints were upheld and asked what action would be taken to ensure we delivered an efficient service. He had concerns around the introduction of Chatbot if it included AI and asked if we should be promoting this. With regards to Eckoh he asked that regional dialect would be picked up and if this system would be efficient. In response, the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager said that investigations were carried out into the missed bin collections and the data did not point to the same areas however he would feed the comments back to the service. He confirmed that Chatbot did not include artificial intelligence and was a rules based system that picked up on key words used. With regards to the accents for Eckoh he would feed back this concern to the service.

Councillor Coult referred to the 'what three words' scheme and asked if this could be used across all service areas. In response she was advised that there would be no reason not to roll this out as the capacity is available and would pass these comments back to the service.

Referring to paragraphs 39-42 of the report Councillor Gunn expressed concerns about the number of statutory complaints and asked this was being improved. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager would report this back to the service.

In relation to the introduction of Chatbot Councillor Lines asked if there was any data available to show a reduction in contact points and response times. In response he was advised that this data would be included in subsequent reports.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **7 Q3 Resources Budget Outturn**

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

The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration highlighted the quarter three forecast position forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.094 million against a revised budget of £25.943 million. He went on to advise that the Resources Cash Limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2023 was

forecast to be circa £0.544 million, and that other earmarked reserves under the direct control of Resources Management Team were forecast to total £15.520 million at 31 March 2023. The revised Resources capital budget was £4.275 million for 2022/23, with a total expenditure to 31 December 2022 of £2.481 million.

Councillor Adam expressed concerns about the under achieved budget, for example for Revenue and Benefits and Digital Services. The Finance Manager explained that there had been some lost income for digital services with the academisation of schools but assured him that Heads of Services were actively looking at the budget and would take into account any income received. With regards to Revenue and Benefits he advised that again this budget was being monitored closely and there should be some improvements seen by year end.

**Resolved:**

That the forecast of outturn position be noted.

## **8 Update in relation to Petitions**

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

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

Since the last update four new e-petitions had been submitted. Two were ongoing and two were rejected as other procedures applied. One new paper petition had been submitted and had completed. The schedule provided a list of those petitions that were active, and those that were to be closed which would be removed from the list prior to the next update.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **9 Notice of Key Decisions**

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

The Democratic Services Manager advised that new to the plan was the following:

- Medium Term Financial Plan and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**16 June 2023**



**Report on the Council's use of powers  
under the Regulation of Investigatory  
Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2022/23**

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

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 01 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 (quarter 4) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Executive summary**

2. This report provides an update of the activity for quarter 4 of 2022/23 for Durham County Council in exercising its use of powers under RIPA for Directed Surveillance (DS) and Covert Human Intelligence Surveillance (CHIS).
3. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during quarter 4 is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Recommendation**

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

## **Background**

5. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed.
6. Directed surveillance is covert surveillance that is not intrusive and is carried out in relation to a specific investigation or operation in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about any person (other than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances such that it is not reasonably practicable to seek authorisation under the 2000 Act).
7. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
8. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the quarter 4.

## **Quarter 4 Activity**

- 9 During quarter 4 there was one application for directed surveillance and one CHIS application presented to the Court.
- 10 The directed surveillance was part of an operation relating to underage sales of alcohol and tobacco. The surveillance authorisation covered a total of 36 premises, of which 24 were inspected during the authorisation period.
- 11 Out of the 24 premises inspected as part of the operation, a total of 10 premises had made underage sales of tobacco, of which 9 of the 10 premises had sold vapes/ e-cigs and one premises had sold cigarettes.
- 12 Officers have since visited the premises of those who made the underage sales during the operation and advice and guidance has been given to them. Officers are also in the process of interviewing the owners and/or sellers to assess the circumstances of the underage sales and to determine whether further action is required, which could range from a formal caution to a licence review of those premises which are licensed.
- 13 The CHIS application is an operation relating to illicit tobacco products. The investigation is ongoing and the outcome will be reported at a future meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- 14 For comparison, in quarter 4 in 2021/22, there were no applications for RIPA directed surveillance and no CHIS applications.

## **Background papers**



- None.

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## **Appendix 1 - Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Finance**

Not applicable.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

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

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**16 June 2023**

**Digital Strategy for County Durham**



**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital,  
Customer Services and Procurement**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present to members the proposed new and updated Digital Strategy for the county.

**Executive summary**

2. In 2019 the council adopted a digital strategy. Since that time a significant digital transformation has taken place. The council has achieved a range of successes and is continuing to deliver an ambitious programme of transformation.
3. The updated Digital Strategy set out in this report (the strategy) builds upon the existing strong foundations and provides the opportunity to further develop and build upon our digital principles, whilst adapting to the changing environment we work and live in and the developing needs of our communities.
4. The new strategy has been developed through consultation with key groups and a wide range of stakeholders across the county.
5. The new five-year strategy is an important step forward in our commitment to connect our communities and meet our 2035 vision as a County.

6. The updated digital strategy is structured around five digital themes:
  - (a) Digital Customer;
  - (b) Digital Council; and
  - (c) Digital Community;These themes being supported by two enabling themes:
  - (d) Digital Collaboration; and
  - (e) Digital Inclusion
7. The two enabling themes are critical to ensuring that we are delivering in the right way and when progressed together, which will enable us to further achieve our vision of a digital county.
8. The strategy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to align with the County Durham Vision and Corporate Plan.
9. The strategy will be supported by a delivery plan which is currently being developed and will be finalised by September 2023.
10. The updated strategy will be designed and published as web content, in line with best practice and accessibility legislation.

### **Recommendation(s)**

11. Members are recommended to note the information in the report and support the adoption of the new strategy.

## Background

12. For most people, digital technology is an essential part of modern daily life. We all live in an increasingly connected world and the internet has given us access to a world of information and on demand and accessible entertainment. We can shop, bank, and transact with public services on a 24/7 basis. We can all share our thoughts, opinions and photographs with the world instantly through social media. Global communication is readily available and instantaneous.
13. These connections and the Covid-19 pandemic have changed the way people expect to interact with the council to request, access and receive our services.
14. To meet these changing expectations, the council continues to enhance and expand its digital offer. This means getting the most out of technology to increase choice and improve quality, finding innovative solutions that allow us to work in better and smarter ways and helping our communities to thrive in a digital world.
15. In 2019 the council adopted a digital strategy with three core themes:
  - a) Digital Customer
  - b) Digital Organisation
  - c) Digital Communities
16. Since that time, and through the delivery of the digital strategy, the council's digital offer to its customer has seen dramatic improvement.
17. Successes achieved over recent years include:
  - (a) We have worked to digitise our contact and improve our online offer, with over 140 services now available online;
  - (b) Online services are increasingly becoming our customers preferred channel of choice, with on line transactions more than doubled since 2019 resulting in almost 390,000 fewer telephone calls per year, enabling us to be more efficient and to provide greater assistance to those who need it;
  - (c) We have worked in partnership to provide superfast broadband coverage across the county, with 97% of all households and businesses now covered. This work has seen <sup>1</sup>superfast broadband availability in County Durham increased from 65% to 97% and gigabit speed coverage rise from 3%, when

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<sup>1</sup> <https://labs2.thinkbroadband.com/local/E06000047>

Government first announced its gigabit ambitions in November 2019, to 155% currently;

- (d) The way we work as an organisation has also changed dramatically, with over 8000 employees now using Microsoft 365 to improve teamwork and collaboration and to facilitate more flexible and hybrid ways of working;
- (e) The way that we deliver services has also changed, with mobile digital devices now being routinely used in frontline service delivery, harnessing the power of digital and data to provide a better customer experience;
- (f) A research and baselining exercise on the status of Digital Inclusion in County Durham has led to the creation of a working group under the County Durham Partnership. There is already a broad range of activities taking place in this field to help people get online, and the aim of the group is to facilitate a more co-ordinated approach to digital inclusion, greater collaborative working between organisations (public, VCS and private sector) and improved marketing and communication of available initiatives. We have several long-standing digital inclusion related initiatives which include:
  - (a) Free computer access and public wi-fi in our libraries, alongside support;
  - (b) Durham Learn digital skills courses;
  - (c) Reboot scheme provides registered charities and social enterprises with access to low-cost recycled computer equipment;
  - (d) Computer and connectivity provision for eligible job seekers as part of Employability Durham support; and
  - (e) Information and advice on the available support on the Digital Durham website – a signposting tool is in development which will direct people to local support

18. The updated strategy has been developed to expand on this strong foundation to ensure that we continue to bring the benefits of technology to communities, businesses and partners in Durham, to make it convenient and easy for our customers to interact with the council.



## **An Updated Digital Strategy for County Durham**

19. The updated strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with residents, businesses, partners and employees through surveys, workshops and various focus groups including the youth council and disability partnership. It sets out the council's ambitions for the County over the next five years and provides a framework on how these can be delivered. This five-year strategy is an important step forward in our commitment to connect our communities and meet our 2035 vision as a County supporting existing core strategies.

### **Digital Strategy Themes**

20. The updated digital strategy is structured around five digital themes. The five digital themes; three of which are delivery themes (Digital Customer, Digital Council and Digital Community) and two are enabling themes (Digital Collaboration and Digital Inclusion), will ensure that we are delivering in the right way and when progressed together, will enable us to further achieve our vision of a digital county.

#### ***Theme one: Digital Customer***

21. This theme considers how we can improve people's experience of interacting with the council and enable the council's customers to access the information and services they need online. However, it is important to remember that this is about improving access and not restricting contact to online methods only.
22. Headline commitments in the Digital Customer theme include:
- (a) Updating our website and online offer so it is always up to date and accessible;
  - (b) Making it easier for citizens and customers to self-serve online for themselves and on behalf of friends and family with more and more services available online;
  - (c) Using artificial intelligence to understand customer needs and shape our services;
  - (d) Ensuring all our online services are accessible and co-designed where possible with our customers;
  - (e) Redesigning our processes to improve communication and engagement with customers;

### ***Theme two: Digital Council***

23. This theme relates to how we have used digital within the council to improve service delivery and operate more efficiently and deliver positive outcomes by equipping staff with the digital skills and technology required to deliver these services effectively and efficiently.
24. Headline commitments in the Digital Council theme include:
- Reviewing our systems architecture and applications to rationalise where possible;
  - Exploring the use of artificial intelligence to improve automation, productivity, efficiency, and decision making;
  - Developing a corporate digital roadmap to support the outcomes of the digital strategy, the council plan, wider plans, and other partner strategies; and
  - Ensuring employees have the right digital skills and tools to work effectively and efficiently

### ***Theme three: Digital Community***

25. This theme focuses on improving digital infrastructure and connectivity, providing people and businesses with the skills and technology needed to enhance their lives.
26. Headline commitments in the Digital Community theme include:
- In partnership, making the most of available investment, working with national teams, partners, and other local authorities on joint initiatives;
  - Ensuring that digital is embedded in all our strategies, particularly around social care and tackling the climate crisis;
  - Working with communities, businesses, and citizens to support access to hardware and training and make the most of the technical solutions developed in the community;
  - Facilitating and supporting digital initiatives, whilst ensuring that information can be shared between partner organisations and adhering to rigorous information governance; and
  - Encouraging residents and businesses to make use of national and regional funding opportunities to further our digital objectives.

#### ***Theme four: Digital Collaboration***

27. This supporting theme relates to working digitally in partnership to seamlessly tackle complex issues.
28. There are no commitments under this cross-cutting theme as they have already been factored into other elements.

#### ***Theme five: Digital Inclusion***

29. This supporting theme relates to ensuring people have access to connectivity and devices and the skills and confidence to flourish.
30. There are no commitments under this cross-cutting theme as they have already been factored into other elements.
31. Whilst the new strategy is ambitious in its scope, it is also important to set digital development within a context of providing more choice to customers and not less. In this respect the council will maintain the position of ensuring that access to services is not wholly dependent on digital access and that other alternatives, through telephone and face to face services, will continue to be available to those who prefer or need them, and that digital assistance will be available to those that require it.

#### **Final Digital Strategy document**

32. For the first time, the digital strategy will be designed and published as web content in line with best practice and accessibility guidelines. Paper based copies will be available upon request and these will also be available in easy read and large text if required.
33. The web content design breaks down the content into bitesize areas, therefore making the content more manageable and easier to digest for all readers.
34. It is recognised that the digital strategy is a detailed document and as such it is proposed that a video setting out the key points of the strategy, will also be produced following approval of the digital strategy to reach all stakeholders.
35. A static form of the document is presented as Appendix 2 of this report for completeness.

## **Impact Assessment**

36. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is presented in Appendix 3.
37. The assessment identifies that the digital strategy will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics of widening choice of access and communication channels. National evidence shows however, that residents who are older, experience social or financial disadvantage, have lower educational attainment levels, have poorer health, or English as a second language, are more likely to experience digital exclusion. This has a disproportionate effect across protected characteristics. Mitigations are planned to address these impacts, with provision of a range of support planned to assist citizens in the use of digital channels. Alongside this, work is planned through the County Durham Together Board to address digital exclusion issues across the county.

## **Delivery of the strategy**

38. The new strategy sets out an ambitious direction for the county and will support existing core strategies and plans.
39. The next steps are to develop a detailed delivery plan and further shape our monitoring framework. This will also be supported by a specific delivery plan and monitoring framework.
40. The use of a Delivery Plan approach throughout the 5-year period of the strategy will enable regular reviews, which will include workshops with the youth forum and disability partnership, to respond to changes and allow priorities to be reassessed and recalibrated; and actions to be refined based on whether outcomes are being achieved. This will ensure the Digital strategy remains a relevant and live document throughout its lifespan.

## **Conclusion**

41. The adoption of the new strategy provides a framework within which these ambitions can be delivered, and aligns to our other key strategies, such as the County Durham Vision and Corporate Plan, and our wider partnership work and collaboration.
42. Since 2019 a significant digital transformation has taken place, and the council is continuing to deliver an ambitious programme of transformation and has achieved a range of successes.
43. The updated strategy builds upon these strong foundations and provides the opportunity to further develop and build upon our digital principles, whilst adapting to the changing environment we work and live in and the developing needs of our communities.

## **Background papers**

- None

## **Other useful documents**

- None

## **Contacts**

Marion Ingleby, (Interim) Head of Digital Services - Tel: 03000 264 966

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Digital Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the council's digital ambitions. Delivery within this framework will be managed within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual legal, contractual, and regulatory positions.

### **Finance**

The Digital Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the council's digital ambitions. There are no direct financial implications arising from the adopt of the updated strategy, but delivery of the ambitions will require prioritisation and investment. Any financial implications will be managed through the MTFP process and within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual financing provision, monitoring and control.

### **Consultation**

A public consultation exercise has been undertaken and the results of this have been used to define the position taken in this strategy document.

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

An equality impact assessment has been completed and is attached as appendix 3. The assessment identifies that the digital strategy will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics of widening choice of access and communication channels. National evidence shows however, that residents who are older, experience social or financial disadvantage, have lower educational attainment levels, have poorer health, or English as a second language, are more likely to experience digital exclusion. This has a disproportionate effect across protected characteristics. Mitigations are planned to address these impacts, with provision of a range of support planned in assist citizens in the use of digital channels. Alongside this, work is planned through the County Durham Together Board to address digital exclusion issues across the county.

## **Climate Change**

The development of the digital strategy and the associated projects that will be developed as part of the delivery roadmap, may have a direct/indirect positive impact on climate through the provision of more online services, new technology, a reduction in travelling, improved infrastructure. Benefits of each project will be identified as part of the benefits identification process for each agreed project.

## **Human Rights**

n/a

## **Crime and Disorder**

n/a

## **Staffing**

The Digital Strategy will result in activity ensure that staff have access to the right training and digital skills required to effectively conduct their roles and support customers.

## **Accommodation**

n/a

## **Risk**

Any risk linked to delivery plans will be managed and exiting risk assessment/logs will be in place for the service.

## **Procurement**

None directly

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## **Appendix 2: Digital Strategy**

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Attached as a separate document.



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## Appendix 3: Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

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**NB:** The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

### Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Digital Engagement
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Cheryl Duggan
<b>Title</b>	Digital Strategy
<b>MFTP Reference (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	12 July 2023
<b>Start Date</b>	November 2022
<b>Review Date</b>	January 2024

### Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

Digital Services has developed a refreshed digital strategy, with the aim of adapting us to the changing environment we work in and developing the needs of our communities.

Our proposed digital approach is centred around five digital themes, which will ensuring we deliver our services in the right way.

Three of these digital themes are delivery themes; Digital Customer, Digital Council and Digital Communities and the remaining two are enabling themes; collaboration and inclusion.

The Digital Collaboration and Digital Inclusion themes run throughout the strategy ensuring that we work in partnership and in an inclusive way as we

implement the activities in our Digital Customer, Digital Council, and Digital Community.

The strategy has been informed from significant consultation with the public, customers, businesses and partners, and by the previous successful and ongoing digital work as part of the previous digital strategy.

The strategy is a five year document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to align with the County Durham Vision and Corporate Plan.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

- General public: County Durham residents, businesses, visitors and landowners
- Employees and Elected Members
- Prescribed bodies including neighbouring authorities
- North East Combined Authority
- Town and Parish Councils
- Area Action Partnerships
- Groups with protected characteristics

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	?	Y
Disability	?	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	N

Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	?	Y
Sexual orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The Digital Strategy will not include plans to make any services available online only as this could have a direct or indirect negative impact for some, in particular, people with disabilities and older people.

Our availability through traditional contact methods for example telephone and face-to-face will continue to be available but by providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them will allow us more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

Strategy outcomes will assist advancing equality of opportunity for all. The aim of the strategy is to make use of and maximise the potential of digital transformation, making more services and processes available online to those who prefer, whilst freeing up officer time to support those customers who are most in need.

It will aim to harness a 'digital culture' which provides a focus on innovation, using customer insight, reviewing the way we handle data and investigating the potential of tools like automation to improve processes across all contact channels.

It will benefit anyone who is able to access the internet, with particular benefit for customers who:

- may find it difficult to access the Council offices during usual working hours  
i.e. working age people and carers
- want more choice on how and when to transact with the Council
- have physical access, mobility difficulties or sensory impairments
- want choice over the communications channel(s) they prefer i.e. mobile telephone, PC, tablet etc
- use or want to learn about the free internet services in customer access points, libraries and other customer facing council locations

It is understood that not all individuals or communities will have access to the internet and digital inclusion will form part of the 'Digital Strategy' as well as continued provision of services by telephone, correspondence and face to face.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our duty under the Equality Act 2010.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The following evidence sources, along with public consultation feedback has been used in the development of the strategy and informed our equality analysis in section two of this assessment:

- Existing customer services data – which includes metrics (how, when, why etc) and satisfaction
- Consultation feedback, Customer feedback, complaints and comments to Ombudsman level
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- National statistics confirming the take up and demand of digital services

### Current Usage

We currently offer more than 140 services online. Online services are quickly becoming our customers preferred channel of choice, which have more than doubled since 2019 resulting in almost 390,000 fewer calls per year, enabling us to be more efficient and to provide greater assistance to those who need it.

### Research and data sources

Since 2011, when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began recording annual usage data, internet use in the UK has steadily increased.

Research undertaken by Ofcom in June 2017: 'The real digital divide? Understanding the demographics of non-users and limited users of the internet: an analysis of Ofcom data' (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/research-publications/real-digital-divide>) identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion: - Residents aged 75 years and over - Disadvantaged residents - Residents who left school without qualifications - Residents who are chronically ill - Residents on a low income.

There are 15.2 million people in the UK who are either non-users, or limited users of the internet. An estimated 7.8 million people (14.9%) do not currently use the internet in the UK. A further 7.4 million people (14.3%) in the UK are 'limited users' of the internet, giving a total population of 15.2 million people who are not using the internet to its full potential. 90% of non-users can be classed as disadvantaged. This takes into account the most common indicators - social class DE and being disabled, as well as leaving education at 16 or under.

Although age is a factor in defining non and limited users, it isn't the only one: 18.9% of under 65s are non or limited users of the internet; a population of approximately 7.5m people. Nearly half (48.9%) of non or limited users of the internet are under the age of 65. The most pronounced indicators of non and limited use include age, disability, social class, income and the age at which people leave education: 64.4% of non-users are aged 65 or over: 25.3% aged 65-74; and 39.1% aged (Information taken from: <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/researchpublications/real-digital-divide>)

Statistics indicate 14.2% of County Durham residents are non internet users, ranking the local authority as 12th highest in the UK. For comparison, South Teesside has the next highest regional ranking at 26th and 12%. Whilst this figure is likely to have reduced marginally due to the pandemic pushing some to utilise the Internet, it is unlikely to have reduced the gap significantly.

Research undertaken by Ofcom in June 2017: 'The real digital divide? Understanding the demographics of non-users and limited users of the internet: an analysis of Ofcom data' (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/researchpublications/real-digital-divide>) identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion: - Residents aged 75 years and over - Disadvantaged residents - Residents who left school without qualifications - Residents who are chronically ill - Residents on a low income There are 15.2 million people in the UK who are either non-users, or limited users of the internet. An estimated 7.8 million people (14.9%) do not currently use the internet in the UK. A further 7.4 million people (14.3%) in the UK are 'limited users' of the internet, giving a total population of 15.2 million people who are not using the internet to its full potential. 90% of non-users can be classed as disadvantaged. This takes into account the most common indicators - social class DE and being disabled, as well as leaving education at 16 or under.

Although age is a factor in defining non and limited users, it isn't the only one: 18.9% of under 65s are non or limited users of the internet; a population of approximately 7.5m people. Nearly half (48.9%) of non or limited users of the internet are under the age of 65. The most pronounced indicators of non and limited use include age, disability, social class, income and the age at which people leave education: 64.4% of non-users are aged 65 or over: 25.3% aged 65-74; and 39.1% aged (Information taken from: <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/researchpublications/real-digital-divide>)

### **Population data available at Durham Insight**

<https://www.durhaminsight.info>

### **Being Disabled in Britain, a journey less equal (EHRC)**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/being-disabled-britain-journey-less-equal>

## **Government Guidance on encouraging use of digital take up**

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/communications/increasing-digital-takeup.htm>

### **Consultation Approach**

#### Phased consultation

- Phase 1 – Assess digital maturity of DCC, ambitions and vision for future, residents needs and challenges (8 weeks)<sup>2</sup>
- Phase 2 – acid test outcomes from Phase 1 (2 weeks)
- Phase 3 – draft strategy for comment (2 weeks)

#### Stakeholders

Are wide-ranging and have a different set of needs / outcomes so survey questions / info will be adapted by audience.

General public, businesses, Partners including CDP, Economic Partnership, Better Together Forum, AAPs and others, Youth Council, Elected Members and employees (digital and non-digital)

Plan to reach groups more likely to have some form of digital exclusion via selected AAPs and also work with Disability Partnership and Age UK.

#### Consultation Methods

- Online info and survey – website and staff intranet
- Structured conversations with target groups
- Presentations at AAPs
- Focus sessions or presentations for Youth Council, Age UK and Disability Partnership
- Emails to partner networks including Better Together Forum, Econ Partnership, Advice in County Durham
- F2F with public in a Durham town – location TBC
- F2F with targeted frontline staff
- Email briefing and survey for members
- Target businesses via Business Durham

#### Consultation communication approach

- Targeted emails across partnership network
- Social media / digital signposts
- Press release
- Digital signage for public buildings

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<sup>2</sup> [Have your say on digital services - Durham County Council](#)

- Members briefing

### Consultation Feedback

Consultation feedback has been used to help inform the key themes, high level principles and commitments contained within the strategy.

The percentage of respondents, in terms of protected characteristics, is as follows:

Total number of responses: 205

Gender:

Male – 113

Female – 79

Prefer not to say – 5

Prefer to self-describe – 1 (Agender/non-binary)

Age:

Under 18 – 1

18-24 – 8

25-34 – 14

35-44 – 48

45-54 – 71

55-64 – 51

65-74 – 1

Prefer not to say – 4

Ethnic origin:

White British – 191

Mixed race – 3

Prefer not to say – 4



Considered a disabled person:

Yes – 22

No – 165

Prefer not to say – 11

### **Ongoing and Future Stakeholder Engagement**

Moving forward we will endeavour to engage with specific groups, where appropriate, to support the development of solutions as part of the digital strategy roadmap.

There will also be initiatives, activities and projects, which will be developed following approval of this strategy, to address the digital divide for those groups who currently struggle to access the intranet.

### **Screening Summary**

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Y
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	N

### **Sign Off**

Lead officer sign off: Cheryl Duggan, Digital Engagement Strategic Manager	Date: 5 May 2023
Service equality representative sign off:	Date:

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact for the Countywide population, although this impact will vary for differing age groups.</p> <p>Improving digital access and widening the choice of channels for those that wish</p>	<p>Between 2001 and 2011 the population of County Durham increased from 493,678 to 513,242</p> <p>The 2016 mid-year population estimate for County Durham shows a population of 521,800, which is an increase of 4,027 people since mid-2014 and a 5.9%</p>	<p>The Digital Strategy will not include any plans to make any services available online only.</p> <p>Our availability through traditional contact methods</p>

<p>to use them, allows us to spend more time with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.</p> <p>Impact could be particularly beneficial for younger people who are more likely to have good digital skills and rely more on digital technology. Evidence suggests that 99% of people aged 16 – 44 years use the internet.</p> <p>With more council services, communications and consultation taking place online, younger people who may not have previously interacted with the council may find it easier to do so.</p> <p>This is also supported by the increase in social media engagements relating to</p>	<p>increase since 2001.</p> <p>County Durham has experienced a higher rate of growth than the north east region (3.3% over the period 2001-2015), but a considerably lower rate of growth when compared to England as a whole (10.8% from 2001-2015).</p> <p>2014 based population projections for County Durham indicate that from 2016 to 2035 the county's population aged 65 or over will increase from 105,200 to 146,300 (a 39% increase) and those aged 75 and over will increase from 45,00 to 75,700 (a 65.6% increase).</p> <p>This age group is projected to increase more than any other age group in the county.</p> <p>Since 2011, when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began recording annual usage data, internet use in the UK has steadily increased.</p>	<p>for example telephone and face-to-face will not change and by providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them provides us with more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.</p>
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<p>community projects and how public services are provided.</p> <p>Increased levels of digital access will prove beneficial for working residents (predominately 18-67 years old) who will be able to access/request/book certain services 24/7.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that some older people may be less likely to use the internet, this can be linked to factors like not having used a computer at work and not learning about IT in school.</p> <p>The proposed strategy increases the various digital ways to engage with and access council services meaning all current access and communication channels are also retained.</p>	<p>It currently sits at 90% for the adult population (age 16 and over). For people aged 16 – 44, it has reached 99%.</p> <p>Internet use by older people is still lower than by younger people, and decreases with age: of those aged 65 – 74, 80% have ‘recently’ (within the last 3 months) used the internet, while only 44% of those aged 75+ have.</p> <p>Ofcom research identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents aged 75 years and over</li> <li>- Disadvantaged residents - Residents who left school without qualifications</li> <li>- Residents who are chronically ill</li> <li>- Residents on a low</li> </ul>	
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<p>This will benefit those people unable to access services digitally as alternative routes of access such as telephone and face-to-face will still be available.</p>	<p>Income</p> <p>Ofcom data shows that over a third of the non-digital user population are aged 75 and older. This equates to an estimated population of approximately 100,000 people in County Durham</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>For many disabled people improved digital technology will increase access to services and this is positive.</p> <p>Baseline population data</p> <p>County Durham shows has a higher percentage of permanently sick and disabled people than the North East average, representing 22.4% of the overall population (Census 2021).</p>	<p>County Durham has a higher percentage of permanently sick and disabled people than the North East average, representing 22.4% of the overall population (Census 2021).</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate.</p> <p>Increased life expectancy is leading to an increase in the number of years adults may live with poor health. (Source: Durham Insight)</p>	<p>Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our duty under the quality act 2010.</p>

<p>Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff, where appropriate, to ensure our people with disabilities to remain independent and people will be able to access more council services from home without the need to travel, particularly those with mobility and hearing impairments.</p> <p>Social contact can be increased through digital technologies, especially for people with conditions like Agoraphobia.</p> <p>However, it is worth noting that physical social contact may reduce through increased digital interaction, which may impact on mental health conditions.</p> <p>Some people rely on personal contact with public services to maintain positive mental, and sometimes physical, health (by getting</p>	<p>Research from Equality and Human Rights report 'Being Disabled in Britain', 2017, states that disabled people were less likely than non-disabled people to have accessed the internet (63.6% compared with 89.5% in 2013).</p> <p>ONS data tell us that 22% of disabled adults have never used the internet (compared to 9% for the adult population as a whole). Ofcom data shows that 47.7% of the 'non-user' population said that they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. This represents an estimated population of 3.7m people in the UK and indicates that disabled people are more likely to experience digital exclusion.</p>	
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out of the house). Equally, people with conditions such as Alzheimer's can benefit from using technology to support memory loss, for example, calendar reminders for appointments.

Although the strategy is likely to have a positive impact for many disabled people there are some complex conditions that mean that some disabled people may never be able to use the internet (for example people with severe learning disabilities).

Some disabled people may not have access to the internet or sufficient IT skills. Some conditions may require additional support to process information to help make decisions. People with memory loss and dementia are at particular risk if they don't already have IT skills.

As part of ongoing improvements we will co-design our online services to ensure they are accessible. This will involve contributions from users with a disability/sensory impairment.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Improved digital technology will increase access to services and this is likely to be positive for most pregnant women and new mothers.</p> <p>By making services available online, the council can support women who may have reduced mobility due to pregnancy related health problems.</p>	No specific consultation feedback was received in relation to this protected characteristic.	As above (for age)

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race (ethnicity)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Equal access regardless of race.</p> <p>Providing information digitally enables people to use online translation services.</p>	In County Durham BAME communities are a relatively small number of the population. According to the 2011 Census, 98.1% of Durham's population is white British. 1.9% is 'other ethnic group', the largest component of this being mixed race and Asian.	Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available



Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available, where necessary, as is current policy.	We also have a significant population of Gypsies and Travellers who are either migrant or settled in the County.  (Source: Durham Insight)	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex (gender)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact for the Countywide population, although impact could vary for men and women</p> <p>Evidence suggests that older women are less likely to access the internet.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that disadvantaged residents and those on a low income are more likely to experience digital exclusion.</p>	<p>Internet use is similar for men and women in younger and middle age groups. Among those aged 65 – 74, men are a little more likely to use the internet than women, but there is a marked difference in the oldest age group as 51% of men aged 75+ have recently used it compared to 38% of women. (Source: ONS)</p>	As above (for age)

<p>As women are more likely to experience financial disadvantage compared to men there could be a disproportionate impact.</p> <p>However, men are more likely to experience disadvantage such as homelessness and addiction problems and this is likely to lead to digital exclusion.</p>		
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Transgender</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact		

### Section Three: Conclusion and Review

#### Summary

<p>Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.</p>
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The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics in terms of widening choice of access and communication channels.

Availability through traditional contact methods, for example telephone and face-to-face, will continue to be available but by providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them, this will allow us more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.

Evidence demonstrates that younger age groups are more likely to have good digital skills and rely more on digital technology and are therefore likely to receive the greatest benefit from the strategy. Digital solutions can also improve access for a lot of disabled people although it is recognised that some solutions may worsen access.

In response, multiple access channels and tailored access solutions (reasonable adjustments) will remain available as part of DCC's digital approach.

Evidence shows that residents who are older, disadvantaged, left school without qualifications, are chronically ill or on a low income are more likely to experience digital exclusion. This has disproportionate impact across the protected characteristics in terms of age (older), disability and gender (both men and women).

Mitigation includes provision of support in use of digital channels e.g. support in CAPs, alternative access channels and reasonable adjustments.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

With more council services, communications and consultation taking place online, people who may not have previously interacted with the council may find it easier to do so. This is also supported by the increase in social media engagements relating to community projects and how public services are provided.

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff, where appropriate and in line with our duty under the Equality Act 2010	Customer Services	Ongoing	
Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available, where necessary, as is current policy	Customer Services	Ongoing	

## Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	Individual assessments on specific pieces of digital work will be undertaken where relevant
When will this assessment be reviewed?  Please also insert this date at the front of the template	January 2024

## Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:  Cheryl Duggan, Digital Engagement Strategic Manager	Date:  5 May 2023
Service equality representative sign off:  M C Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date:  5 May 2023

Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)



# Digital Strategy

Durham County Council 2023 - 2028

# Contents

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- Introduction
- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- Our vision
- Our digital principles
- How are we going to get there?



# Introduction

Digital technology is an essential part of everyday life for all of us and we live in a rapidly changing world that is more interconnected than ever. The public, our businesses, our communities, our partners and our employees expect our digital offer to meet their needs whether they live, work or visit Durham. In addition, the Council is facing significant financial challenges. To meet these expectations and provide value for money, we must be a modern Council. We need to empower and connect our communities, create more efficient processes, and improve services. This is more important than ever to ensure we can tackle today's challenges such as economic challenges, the climate crisis, an aging population, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and digital inclusion.

As a Council, we are committed to providing our customers with the benefits of digital technology and have made significant progress over the period of our last strategy for our customers, communities and organisation. We will continue to meet our previous digital strategy and new challenges and priorities that may arise.

## Our Vision

**Digital Durham: innovative technology, customer focused, empowered communities.**

## Our Ambition

To be a modern digital Council, by putting technology and information at the heart of everything we do, understanding the community we serve and supporting the achievement of Council Priorities.

# Why Digital?

We know we can use digital technology where appropriate, to deliver convenient services, for example through using online portals and offering self-service options, which reduce the need for in person visits or phone calls. Digital technology can also help us to make our everyday operations more effective and efficient, for example by digitalising our processes where possible, so that we can save time and money and allowing us to allocate resources more effectively to where customers need it. In addition, digitalisation is changing the way that many of our partners work and allowing for all of our services to be connected in new and exciting ways. An example of this being the growing use of assistive technology in the health care sector.

Digital technology also allows us to engage with our communities in new and innovative ways, for example through social media, using Artificial Intelligence (AI), or using apps to provide opportunities for residents to give us feedback, obtain services, and connect with their local representatives. It also helps us to be more transparent and accountable, using open data and online reporting to give our communities great insight into our decision-making processes and performance.

New and innovative technology continues to develop the opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our services. By embracing digital technology, reusing where we can, being innovative and working in collaboration with our communities and partners, we will be able to meet the changing and growing expectations of residents, improve processes, and deliver better services.

# Business context and strategic refresh

As part of our ongoing commitment to developing our strategies and ensuring that they are up to date, we have reviewed our previous strategy, the current business context, and the lessons we've learned through delivering digital change over the past five years.

We know that the demand for our services is growing from both our internal and external customers and are mindful of ensuring we provide the best value for money in all that we do, to ensure wider financial considerations are taken into account. Partnership working is increasingly important across the business and with external partners to enable us to tackle pressing issues such as climate crisis, an aging population, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and digital inclusion.

We have conducted a large-scale analysis of our digital position, looking at our digital maturity, our vision for the future, our technical landscape, and consulted with our staff, Councillors, partners, businesses, and the wider public. All of the information gathered through this process has helped to inform our digital strategy and our digital delivery programme.

We found through this work that the top priority areas for our customers are making our website easier to use and find information, expanding our 'DoItOnline' portal for Council records, and more applications to connect with and inform customers.

# Our Customers

We provide digital services to a diverse group of customers with a range of needs, preferences and expectations. This includes:

- Working with residents to digitally enhance our services such as our website, our online portal, leisure, and social care;
- Supporting our staff to better deliver services and develop their digital skills and capabilities;
- Providing digital services and support to our local schools and teachers and pupils to enhance their access to digital tools and learning.
- Our commercial service offer to schools, emergency services, health providers and a vast range of external businesses and organisations to share our expertise and add value to these services
- Working with local businesses to support economic development and growth, developing digital connectivity and providing a forum for digital innovation through our 'Digital Durham' website;
- Using digital information and guides to promote Durham as a destination with attractions for visitors and tourists.



We also work closely with our partner organisations locally and nationally, such as police, fire, and NHS colleagues to make the most of new digital tools, align our digital offers, and ensure our customers have the best digital experience possible across all the services they receive.

We work across Durham to ensure that all our customers have the services and connectivity they need close at hand, and that no one is excluded due to where they live.

# Why Digital?

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This five-year strategy is a document that is intended to adapt to the changing environment we work in and the developing needs of our communities.

We will review the strategy regularly to ensure that it continues to align with the County Durham Vision and our Corporate Plan.

This strategy has been informed from significant consultation with the public, customers, businesses and partners, and by the previous successful and ongoing digital work as part of the previous digital strategy.

This work focused on building our digital platforms and infrastructure, providing access to fibre broadband, developing the offer around digital skills for customers and staff, support modern way of working, increasing self serve options and supporting the digital economy.

Expanding on this strong foundation, we will continue to bring the benefits of technology to communities, businesses and partners in Durham, to make it convenient and easy for our customers to interact with the Council. This five-year strategy is an important step forward in our commitment to connect our communities and meet our 2035 vision as a County.



# Where are we now? – Overview

From our previous digital strategy we are proud to have won awards for digital successes.

We have worked to digitise our contact and improve our online offer, with over 140 services now available online.

Online services are quickly becoming our customers preferred channel of choice, which have more than doubled since 2019 resulting in almost 390,000 fewer calls per year, enabling us to be more efficient and to provide greater assistance to those who need it.

We have worked in partnership to provide superfast broadband coverage across the County, with 96% now covered.

Over 8000 employees now use Microsoft 365 to improve team work and collaboration supported by Digital Champions working as a community to improve digital adoption.

Finally, we have had over 1,100 customers who have volunteered to help shape our services and over 1600 customer satisfaction surveys are completed each month to give our managers a better insight into our performance and ensure we hear our customers' voices.

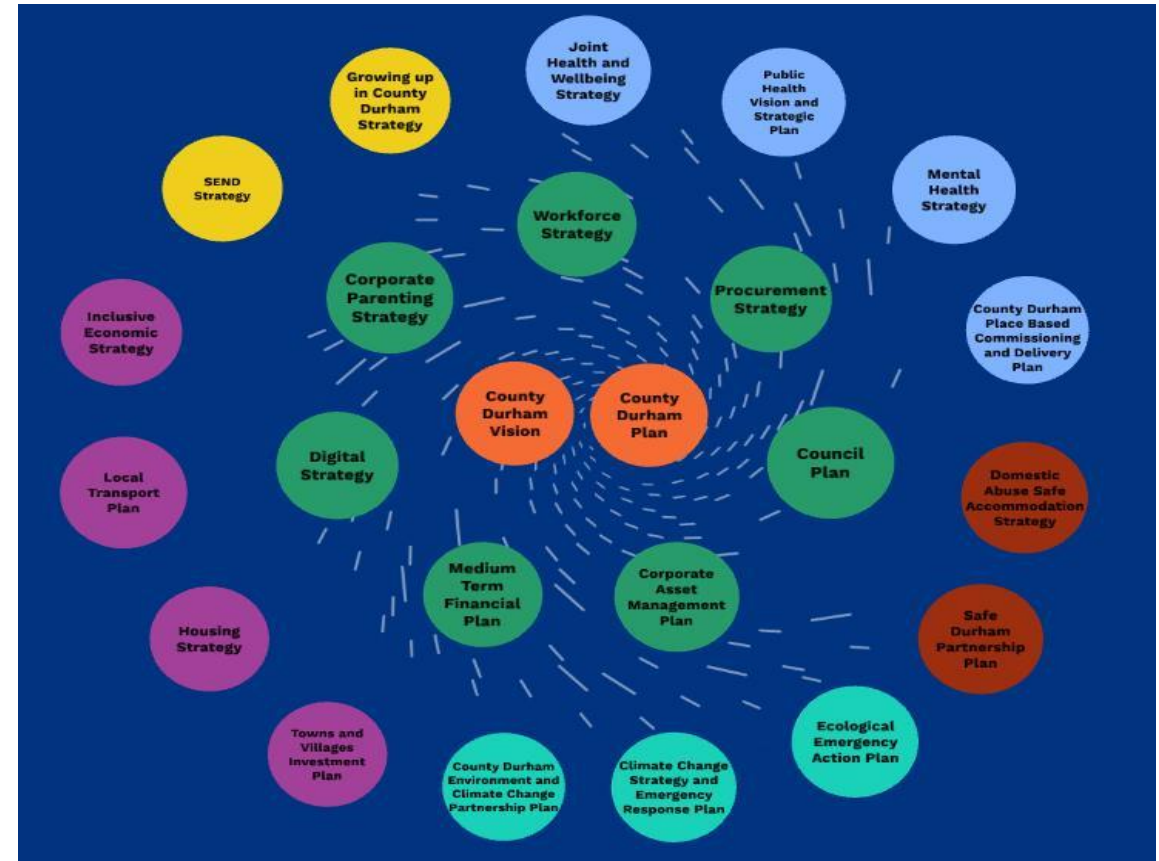
# Where are we now? - Links to other strategies

The digital strategy links to our other key strategies and our wider partnership work and collaboration. As digital is an enabler for much of the work that we do, the strategy supports all of our strategies in some way, such as the County Durham Vision and Corporate Plan.

Other key strategies supported by the Digital Strategy include our Integrated Care Strategy, our Procurement Strategy, our Inclusive Economic Strategy, our Climate Change Strategy, and our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The County Durham Vision 2035 is a document developed with partners to provide a shared understanding of what everyone wants our county to look like in 15's year time.

The County Durham Vision 2035 was written together with partner organisations and the public and sets out the shared long-term ambitions for the county. It provides strategic direction and enables us to work together more closely, removing organisational boundaries and co-delivering services for the benefit of our residents.



This diagram shows where our Digital Strategy sits in the wider strategic context of the Council and our partnerships.

# Working in Partnership

Collaboration and partnership working is a supporting principle throughout our Council Plan and Digital Strategy. We want communities to be well connected and supportive of each other. In our Council Plan, we have pledged to:

- Work with communities to support their development and empowerment;
- Be asset focused by acknowledging the different needs of communities and the potential of their assets
- Build resilience by helping the most disadvantages and vulnerable.

We are committed to working with communities rather than doing to them, and want to make sure that everything we do is supported by evidence and informed by our conversations with residents – known as our approach to wellbeing.

To design and develop the supporting systems in our approach to wellbeing, we have pledged in our Council Plan to:

- Work together across sectors to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact
- Share decision making by designing and developing services and initiatives with the people who need them
- Doing with, not to - making our interventions empowering and centred around individuals  
empowering and centred around individuals;
- And using what works, with everything that we do being supported by evidence and informed by local conversations.



# Where do we want to be? - Working Together



Working together in partnership is essential to our services being the best they can be, and we know that there are many issues that can only be resolved jointly by working with our partners and communities.

Tackling these complex issues, such as the climate crisis, an aging population, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and digital inclusion, requires us to pool our resources and our data to develop solutions that work locally.

We know that customers want a seamless journey when they deal with public sector organisations, and that only by working together, can we deliver this.

An important part of working with our partners and communities is to ensure that we use data effectively to improve services and customer experience.

We are committed to managing, communicating, and securely sharing data where appropriate in order to improve the lives of customers and this is a key theme 'Working better together' of our Council Plan.

# Where do we want to be? - Our vision

## Our Vision

**Digital Durham: innovative technology, improved services, empowered communities.**

To achieve our vision in a way that aligns with our values and principles, we are committed to getting the foundations right to enable future digital development and innovation.

This means that we continue to test our digital activity against our vision and values and ensure that the digital change we introduce has a strong rationale and is inclusive for our customers and communities.



# Our Digital Principles?

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## Our principles

We have developed a series of digital principles to guide our strategy and decision-making processes. These principles will shape the way we develop our digital roadmap and manage the changing digital environment through the life of the digital programme. They are intended to ensure that Durham is a place with 'more and better jobs', 'long and independent lives' and 'connected communities'.

- 1 Use digital where it adds value
- 2 Be data led and insight driven
- 3 Involve people in the design and development of services
- 4 Be open and transparent to build digital trust
- 5 Be agile, and design sustainable and adaptable systems
- 6 Develop efficient and innovative processes
- 7 Collaborate with our communities and partners
- 8 Exploit innovation, share best practice and reuse
- 9 Data use is secure by design

# How are we going to get there?

To deliver our strategic aims and to support our digital delivery, we have identified five digital themes.

The five digital themes – of which three are delivery themes (Digital Customer, Digital Council, and Digital Community), and two are enabling themes (Digital Collaboration, and Digital Inclusion), will ensure we are delivering in the right way.

## Delivery themes:

- Customer - Enabling Durham's Customers to access the information and services they need online
- Council - Equipping staff with the digital skills and technology required to deliver services effectively and efficiently
- Community - Improving digital infrastructure and connectivity, providing people and businesses with the skills and technology needed to enhance their lives

## Enabling themes:

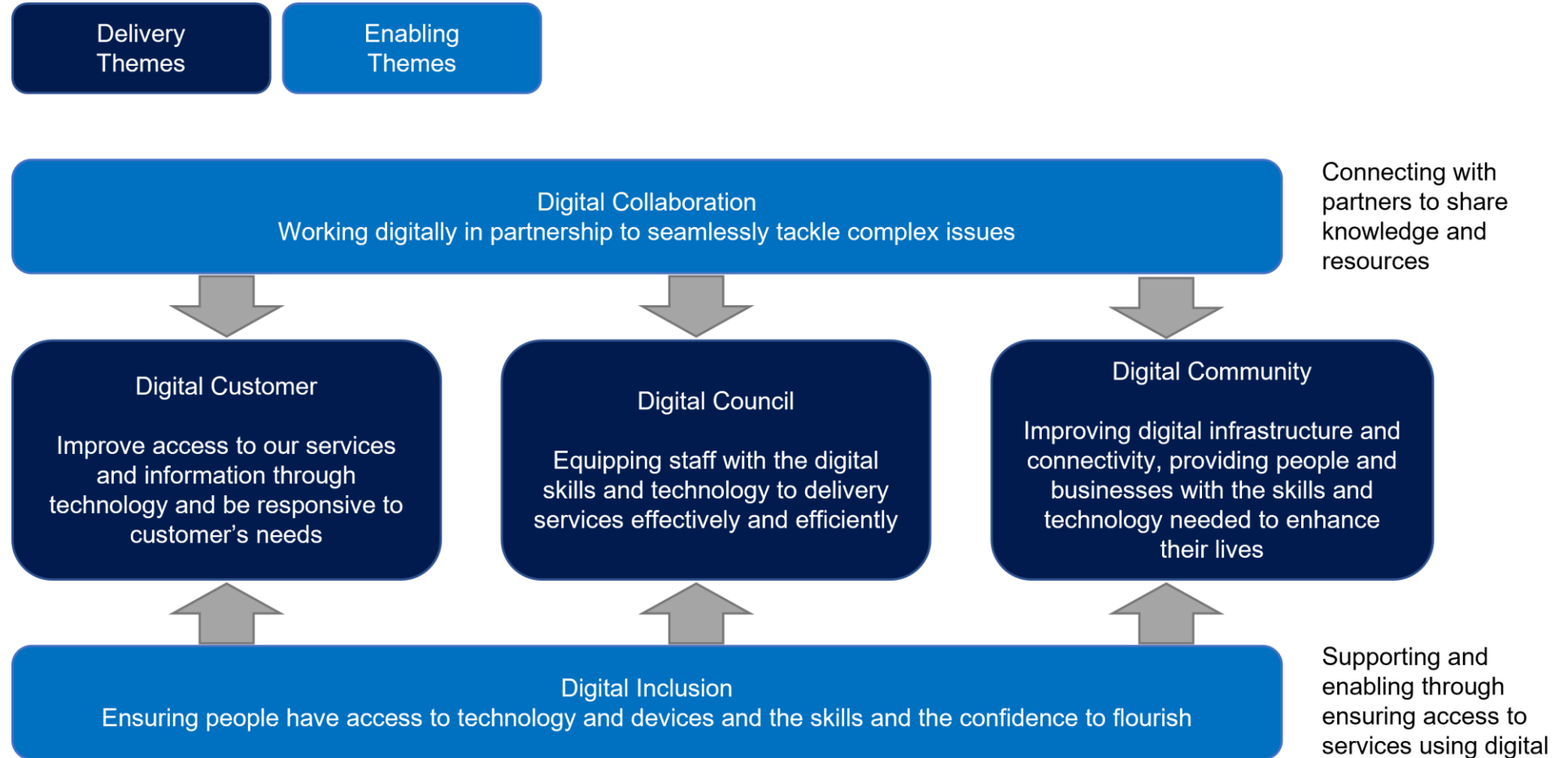
- Collaboration - Working digitally in partnership to seamlessly tackle complex issues
- Inclusion - Ensuring people have access to connectivity and devices and the skills and confidence to flourish

# How are we going to get there?

The Digital Collaboration and Digital Inclusion themes run throughout the strategy ensuring that we work in partnership and in an inclusive way as we implement the activities in our Digital Customer, Digital Council, and Digital Community themes.

Under our three delivery themes we have developed a set of commitments.

These have been developed from our previous learning, as well as consultations with our partners, customers, businesses, and staff.



# How are we going to get there? – Digital Customer

Page 0

## Digital Customer

Improve access to our services and information through technology and be responsive to customer needs

### Delivery Themes

Ensure our website, online services and local information directories are easy to use, with up to date, relevant information that is accessible by all.

Expand our online services to ensure that are quick, simple and secure; ensuring they become our customers channel of choice.

Expand the use of existing technology and introduce new technology that uses artificial intelligence and automation capability to improve customer experience and reduce demand e.g., voice enabled services to help direct calls more efficiently, or an improved search function to help customers find the content they're looking for quickly and easily.

Expand assistive digital arrangements to our customers for those that need a little more help using digital technology e.g., supporting the use of wearable technology

Develop our use of social media and other channels and proactive notifications to cascade real-time alerts and notifications to customers.

### Enabling Themes

Use authorised data gathered during transaction processes to improve reporting of and access to information and services.

Utilise customer data to create business intelligence and use it to improve services by informing decision-making, service planning and policy development

Expand on digital ways to involve customers in service design

Secure and protect data and make sure it is used correctly

Make it easier for citizens to manage services on behalf of friends and family

Ensure all our online services are fully accessible

Redesign our processes to pre-empt resident and business requests

Ensure that citizens and businesses only have to share information with us once

Measure our performance and publish our results on how we're delivering against targets

# How we are going to achieve our ambition – Digital Customer

## Digital Customer

Improve access to our services and information through technology and be responsive to customer needs

What you've told us	What we are going to do	What this means for you
Ensure our website, online services and local information directories are easy to use, with up to date, relevant information that is accessible by all.	Update our web and online offer so it is up to date and accessible	You can access our services on a mobile or desktop and find the services or information you need quickly
Expand our online services to ensure that are quick, simple and secure; ensuring they become our customers' channel of choice.	Make it easier for citizens and customers self service online for themselves and on behalf of friends and family with more available online.	You will be able to do more online
Expand the use of existing technology and introduce new technology that uses artificial intelligence and automation capability to improve customer experience and reduce demand e.g., voice enabled services to help direct calls more efficiently, or an improved search function to help customers find the content they're looking for quickly and easily.	Use artificial intelligence to understand customer needs and shape our services.	Your customer experience and journeys will be improved
Expand assistive digital arrangements to our customers for those that need a little more help using digital technology e.g., supporting the use of wearable technology	Ensure all our online services are fully accessible and co-designed where possible with our customers	You will be able to use our online facilities without the need to adapt them.
Develop our use of social media and other channels and proactive notifications to cascade real-time alerts and notifications to customers.	Redesign our processes to improve communication with customers	You will receive more digital proactive communications for services

# How are we going to get there? – Digital Council

Delivery Themes	Enabling Themes
Equipping staff with the digital skills and technology required to deliver services effectively and efficiently. Ensure staff have the right devices to support service delivery.	Ensure digital communications, engagement and collaboration is maximised across the authority to increase productivity and enable staff to work smarter
Ensure staff have the right skills to utilise technology effectively	Increase automation across the organisation through the use of digital solutions and technologies.
A robust and efficient ICT infrastructure that supports customer and organisational requirements	Ensure IT and software systems are able to exchange data, are scalable and able to adapt to change
Transition to a SaaS and cloud hosted model where appropriate to enhance resilience and flexibility delivering value for money with secure solutions	Continue to use digital practices to mobilise our workforce and support agile working in order to provide a more flexible, responsive workforce.
Implement lean and efficient business processes based on data and learning	Have reliable, secure technology that is cost effective and minimises our carbon footprint
Continue to remain secure and adapt to future legislation	Pilot new and innovative technology
Maximise the use of our investment in technology to change the way we work	Integration – open data standards
Ensure systems are appropriately resilient, and robust arrangements and procedures are in place to ensure service continuity in the event of systems' failure.	Maintain our systems so they are suitable, safe and secure



# How we are going to achieve our ambition – Digital Council

## Digital Council

Equipping staff with the digital skills and technology to delivery services effectively and efficiently

What you've told us	What we are going to do	What this means for the Organisation/Employees
Equip staff with the digital skills, technology, and devices required to deliver services effectively and efficiently.	Ensure effective digital communications, engagement collaboration and training is in place to work smarter	Our staff will have the skills and technology to deliver our services and meet customer needs
Ensure a robust and efficient cloud-based ICT infrastructure that supports customer and organisational requirements, enhances resilience and flexibility and delivers value for money.	Develop cloud infrastructure and encourage automation across the organisation using digital solutions and technologies that give value for money and enhance our resilience	Our systems can adapt to new requirements and demands quickly and make the best use of our resources, so our services can change with your needs
Implement lean and efficient business processes based on data and learning	Review our processes to ensure they are efficient, fit for purpose and leverages digital technology to deliver more with less.	Our services will be efficient and developed based on how you interact with us, allowing us to better understand how to help you
Maximise the use of our investment in technology to change the way we work	Pilot new and innovative technology and use digital practices to support a more flexible, agile and responsive workforce.	We will use new technology to optimise the services that we offer and give our workforce the flexibility to deliver these services to you in the best way possible
Ensure systems are appropriately secure, compliant, and resilient, and that robust arrangements and procedures are in place to ensure service continuity in the event of systems' failure.	Have reliable, safe, and secure technology that is cost effective and minimises our carbon footprint	You can rely on our services to be secure and robust whilst tackling the climate crisis

# How we are going to achieve our ambition – Digital Council

What you've told us	What we are going to do	What this means for the Organisation/Employees
Reduce the number of applications and where possible reuse technology across the organisation	Review our architecture and applications to rationalise where possible	Increased efficiency, improved security, improved support and maintenance, reduced complexity and costs
Use artificial intelligence to improve processes	Explore the use of artificial intelligence to improve automation, productivity, efficiency and decision making	Delivery of more cost-effective services
Have a clear corporate digital programme with robust governance that incorporates corporate, service and partner priorities	Develop a corporate digital roadmap to support the outcomes of the digital strategy, the Council plan and wider plans and other partner strategies	A clear plan with joined up delivery and resources where progress can easily be monitored

# How are we going to get there? – Digital Community

## Digital Community

Improving digital infrastructure and connectivity, providing people and businesses with the skills and technology needed to enhance their lives

### Delivery Themes

Demonstrate digital leadership locally, regionally and nationally

Ensuring digital is a key focus in our strategies and is used support the delivery of the Council's aims and objectives.

Supporting Digital adoption across the county in the community, education and the private sector

Working with Partners and VCS to facilitate and support a programme of digital inclusion initiatives for residents to gain digital skills, confidence and motivation to unlock the benefits of being digitally connected and reduce isolation

Facilitating and contributing to private sector investment in internet connectivity in the County.

### Enabling Themes

Encourage SMEs to make use of national and regional funding opportunities to further our economic objectives

In partnership, making the most of available investment, working with national teams, partners and other LAs on joint initiatives

Supporting Access to hardware

Carbon, Environment, Sustainability & Social Value

Ensuring information can be meaningfully shared between partner organisations, adhering to rigorous information governance policies and procedures

Work with communities, businesses and citizens to make the most of the technical solutions developed in the community

# How we are going to achieve our ambition – Digital Community

## Digital Community

Improving digital infrastructure and connectivity, providing people and businesses with the skills and technology needed to enhance their lives

What you've told us	What we are going to do	What this means for you
Demonstrate digital leadership regionally and nationally	In partnership, making the most of available investment, working with national teams, partners and other LAs on joint initiatives	We will lead regionally and nationally to develop improved and innovative digital services
Ensure digital is a key focus in all our strategies and is used support the delivery of the Council's outcomes.	Ensure that digital is embedded in all our strategies, particularly around social care and tackling the climate crisis	Our strategies will be clear on how we are using technology to meet our goals
Support Digital adoption across the county in the community, education and the private sector	Work with communities, businesses and citizens to support access to hardware and training and make the most of the technical solutions developed in the community	We will offer you support to access devices and skills to take advantage of new technologies developed with the community.
Work with Partners and VCS to facilitate and support digital initiatives, and particularly digital inclusion initiatives for residents to become more digitally connected and reduce isolation	Facilitate and support digital initiatives, whilst ensuring that information can be shared between partner organisations and adhering to rigorous information governance	We will work with our partners and the voluntary and community sector to offer you opportunities to become more digitally connected
Facilitate and contribute to central government and private sector investment in internet connectivity in the County.	Encourage residents and businesses to make use of national and regional funding opportunities to further our digital objectives	We will work with the private sector to further improve the connection access and strength in the County

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

16 June 2023

Quarter Four, 2022/23

Performance Management Report

Ordinary Decision



### Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Councillor Amanda Hoggood, Leader of the Council

**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 four, 2022/23, January to March 2023.

### Executive Summary

- 3 This report is structured around a performance framework which reflects our current [Council Plan](#) (2022-2026), and its format has been developed to provide greater focus on how the council is contributing to achieving the people's vision.
- 4 The performance report is structured around 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 on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. It is broken down into national, regional and local picture, things that are going well, areas which require attention and other areas to note.
- 6 The [Council Plan](#) has undergone its annual refresh and the plan for 2023-2027 was approved by Council on 22 February. The performance framework

is now being adjusted accordingly and will form the structure of this performance report from quarter one, 2023/24.

## Context

7 2022/23 continues to be a challenging period and this report sets out the council's continued strong performance. COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have all impacted on our residents, our businesses and the council. The current cost-of-living crisis has steadily worsened over the last 12 months. High inflation, currently at 10.1%<sup>1</sup>, has largely been 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. This is having a triple impact.

- (a) Impact on our residents. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases, so income is falling in real terms. This is driving demand for services which support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis, as well as services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.

We are receiving more contact from households seeking financial assistance, with a continuing high volume of applications for Welfare Assistance. Both elements of our scheme increased during 2022/23, although the increase in claims for Daily Living Expenses<sup>2</sup> was more significant (10,812 this year, compared to 4,875 last year) than the increase in claims for Settlement Grants<sup>3</sup> (1,576 claims this year, compared to 1,310 last year). We are continuing to support residents through the crisis with various initiatives and funds, including our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, food and fun initiatives, food surplus activity and 'cutting the cost of the school day' initiative.

- (b) Increased costs for the council. Premises and transport increased in line with higher energy costs and fuel prices, most noticeably across service areas such as waste and Home to School Transport. Contract prices were also affected, and more contracts reflected changes in demand.

We created a £10 million Budget Support Reserve to assist with inflationary pressures within 2022/23.

- (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. We estimate that during 2022/23 our income will be under budget by £1.858 million.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to March 2023. Indicative [modelled consumer price inflation estimates](#) suggest that the CPI rate would have last been higher in October 1981, where the estimate for the annual inflation rate was 11.2%.

<sup>2</sup> helps people whose circumstances change unexpectedly and who do not have access to money. It provides help with daily living expenses (for up to seven days) – includes food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).

<sup>3</sup> helps people stay in their home, or move back into housing, after living in supported or unsettled accommodation, e.g., when leaving care of having been made homeless. It includes help towards beds and/or bedding, furniture, white goods (for example, cooker, fridge, washing machine), kitchen equipment, floor coverings, curtains, removal costs.

- 8 The council's low tax raising capacity continues to place pressure on our budgets. If core spending power 'per dwelling' across the county was raised to the England average of £2,360 (+£167), the council would receive an additional £42 million each year.
- 9 Budget pressures of around £79 million are expected during 2023/24. This is due to factors such as the 9.7% uplift in the National Living Wage, energy costs, pay awards, high levels of inflation and higher demand across social care services.
- 10 Pressures will be partly financed by the additional £57 million received from the Local Government Settlement and from council tax and tax base increases, with the remainder split £12 million from savings and by utilising £10 million from the MTFP Support Reserve.
- 11 Despite this challenging financial environment, the 2023/24 budget includes:
  - support for low-income households through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme
  - maximisation of health and social care funds for the benefit of our vulnerable clients
  - significant investment in capital expenditure with a £770 million capital programme, the most ambitious the council has ever agreed.

## **Recommendation**

- 12 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes:
  - (a) the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance;
  - (b) the continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and cost-of-living on the council's performance; and
  - (c) the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic and other external factors.

## **Analysis of the Performance Report**

- 13 The areas identified in this section are contributory indicators linked to the priorities of the Council Plan. Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026.

### **Our Economy**

- 14 The aim of this priority is to create an inclusive economy with more and better jobs, major employment sites which cement our position as a premier place in the region to do business, a good tourism base and cultural offer, and employability support programmes which help people back into jobs or to start their own business. Our children and young people will receive the education and training required to access opportunities.

#### **Going Well**

- 15 We have an extensive business property rental portfolio, those which are managed by Business Durham continue to operate successfully above target (85%) with occupancy at 90%. During quarter four, an additional 50,000 square feet of floor space was added to the portfolio.
- 16 Engagements with businesses (261) by Business Durham exceeded target this quarter (250). As did the number of jobs created or safeguarded with 647 against a target of 375; bringing the total for 2022/23 to 1,986 against a target of 1,500.
- 17 94% of major planning applications were determined within the 13 week target, and 87% of planning applications within their deadline. This places us in the top quartile nationally.
- 18 75 organisations are signed up to the Better Health at Work Award, the main conduit for supporting workplace health across County Durham. During quarter four, 35 new Health Advocates were trained taking our total to 180, significantly higher than all other regional local authorities.
- 19 Average ticket sales per screening/performance<sup>4</sup> were higher than the same period last year (61 compared to 56), as were actual ticket sales (+5,204). 95% of survey respondents rated their 'whole experience' at the theatre or cinema as 'good' or 'very good'.

#### **Areas which require attention**

- 20 Registrations onto our employability programmes reduced by 43% (-98)<sup>5</sup> on the previous period due to our delivery partners experiencing staff shortages affecting their delivery capacity. These have now been rectified and we have also realigned additional staff to the project. Reduced registrations has impacted on the number of participants moving into employment (103 which

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<sup>4</sup> For screenings/performances held during the quarter - Gala and Empire only

<sup>5</sup> October-December 2022



is 19 fewer than quarter three) and those moving into education and/or training (nine which is 20 fewer than last reporting period). Employability programmes provide advice and support to help participants overcome their barriers preventing them from re-entering the labour market.

## **Our environment**

- 21 The aim of this priority is to protect our natural environment, including biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. In 2019, the council declared a climate emergency with a commitment to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and contribute towards a carbon neutral county by 2045. In April 2022, the council declared an ecological emergency and committed to address ecological decline wherever possible. Our county is of significant landscape value and supports unique combinations of plant and animal species.

### **Going Well**

- 22 All carbon reduction works, including the solar farm, at Morrison Busty Depot to enable it to become the council's first low carbon depot are now complete. Decarbonisation works including heating and lighting improvements are nearing completion at Comeleon House and there are ongoing at three leisure centres (Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe and Teesdale).
- 23 We were successful with a bid for £389,000 in the latest round of the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to install a heat pump at Meadowfield Depot, we are identifying projects for the next bidding round which is expected to open in autumn 2023 with decisions expected early 2024.
- 24 The Business Energy Efficiency Programme 2 (BEEP2) funded through the European Regional Development Fund has closed, having supported 470 companies and awarded grants to 101 businesses in line with the anticipated outputs of the programme. It is expected that once all carbon savings have been submitted, 1,692 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have been saved. 110 additional businesses are awaiting energy audits which will be picked up through BEEP3 which launched 1 April.
- 25 Following targeted action through our contamination campaign launched in the summer, we have seen the quarterly rate of contamination fall from 38.3% (June 2022) to 34.63% (December 2022). However, due to how the annual indicator is calculated on a rolling 12 month period and higher rates earlier in the year, the contamination rate for the period January-December 2022 (35.2%) has increased by 1.8pp on the previous year. We anticipate that the ongoing impact of our contamination campaign will continue to deliver sustained performance improvement in 2023.

### **Areas which require attention**

- 26 In the 12 months to the end of December 2022, 89.6% of municipal waste was diverted from landfill, a decrease of 3.6pp on the previous reporting period (93.2%) and static against the previous 12 months (89.4%). This was

driven by capacity issues at energy from waste facilities due to planned maintenance, renovation works and unplanned maintenance.

## **Our people**

- 27 The aim of this priority is to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and will invest in a multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

### **Going Well**

- 28 Referral rates per 10,000 0-17 year olds have reduced slightly and remain below benchmarks. Improved practice over the last few years has led to better performance in key areas such as our re-referral rate, which has reduced from 28% (and in the top 20 highest in the country in 2019/20) to 17% in 2022/23 and this is now consistently below our national (22%), regional (21%) and statistical neighbours (20%).
- 29 Between April 2022 and March 2023, 1,384 families were turned around through the Stronger Families programme, 1,286 attained significant and sustained outcomes, and 98 maintained continuous employment. Performance surpassed our annual national target of 760 families turned around.
- 30 Focussed recruitment activity to build our long-term social work capacity is producing very positive outcomes, the new Social Work Trainee programme has exceeded all expectations, with 41,859 advert views, 564 people booked onto/attended briefings and 420 applications.
- 31 The introduction of the £2000 welcome payment for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in March 2023 made our offer more competitive in the region, and increased the number of applicants for roles. This year 32 applications were received (approximately double the number we received in a similar recruitment process the previous year). Overall, there are 15 NQSWs due to start this in the Autumn to support capacity building again approximately double the in-take from last year
- 32 During 2022/23, 24,437 referrals were received by the Adult Social Care service. Referral numbers have largely been stable since June 2021; whilst a reduction was experienced in quarter three, latest data for quarter four demonstrates that referral numbers have returned to the level seen previously and are in line with expectations.
- 33 The percentage of older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services (88.3% in the latest quarter) remains high. While this is a slight reduction on the same period last year (88.7%), current performance remains above target (84.0%) and regional and national benchmarking at 81.6% and 81.5% respectively.

- 34 Admissions under the Mental Health Act for assessment (Section 2) or treatment (Section 3) continue to be higher than pre-pandemic levels, with 155 detentions in quarter four 2019/20 compared to 194 detentions in the latest quarter. However, there is an overall reduction over the last 12 months.

### **Areas which require attention**

- 35 Over the last year, approximately 500 Care Act assessments have been completed by the Adult Social Care service each quarter. During this period, timeliness of completion has reduced (from 53.8% in quarter one to 51.1% in quarter four). Latest data on timeliness also shows a reduction on the same period last year (57.8%). A roll-out of new mobile IT equipment will support staff to ensure that completed assessments are updated on the system in a more timely manner going forward.
- 36 In quarter four, the rate of adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care has exceeded the Better Care Fund (BCF) target for the first time in three years. The latest rate of 685.6 per 100,000 is the highest seen since 2019/20 (pre-COVID) when the rate was 757.3 per 100,000. This remains lower than the latest provisional regional benchmarks (738.6) but higher than national levels (538.5). We are undertaking a data quality review to enable a greater understanding of the number of people entering permanent care to better understand these changes.
- 37 Latest data for the proportion of adult social care service users receiving a review within 12 months of their previous review or assessment continues to remain low at 60.4%. While performance has increased slightly across the last 12 months, the latest quarterly performance is a reduction from the same period last year (65.0%). New reviewing teams have been established to enable all service users to receive an appropriate review of their care needs.
- 38 The percentage of individuals achieving their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process has decreased over the last 12 months and, in quarter four, currently stands at 91.8%. This is lower than both the regional (97.5%) and England (95.4%) averages for 2021/22. An ongoing review of data and data quality is being undertaken, as well as a wider review of governance. This is focusing on areas of concern and good practice, as well as delivering systems training or practice improvement to ensure that risk is well managed across the service.
- 39 Our caseload policy (for children and young people) states that a full time equivalent (FTE) social worker should have no more than 22 cases, and we regard 25 cases as being very high. Although fewer children are requiring statutory children's social care support, staff vacancies across the service means that more than one in three social workers has more than 25 cases.
- 40 Caseload pressures arise from an increasing number of vacancies for children's social work practitioners. This is a national issue with most English councils struggling to recruit and retain their workforce. In Durham there were

12 FTE fewer case holders this quarter compared to the same period last year, and at the end of March, 62 social work vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 18.3%, the highest recorded since monitoring began in 2018, lower than the latest national vacancy rate of 20%, also the highest recorded. We are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect to will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months but caseloads are likely to remain a challenge in this period.

- 41 Increases in children in care (currently 1,071), and changes to the composition of children entering care, continue to cause placement pressures. Our rates of children in care (105 per 10,000 children population) remain higher than national averages (70) but below our regional (110) and statistical neighbours (107). Our transformation plans aim to increase capacity within our in-house children's homes, recruiting more foster carers and working with children and their families to prevent them entering care.
- 42 In Special Education Needs and Disability Services (SEND), we continue to see sustained growth in requests for EHCP assessments, with significant increases over the last few years which are also evidenced nationally. In 2022/23, the service received 948 requests for an EHCP, 14% higher than in 2021/22 and 71% higher than the same period last year, and more than prior to COVID (554 in 2019/20).
- 43 Pressure is compounded by high levels of demand in partner organisations, such as health who are a key part of the assessment process. We have invested in and restructured our SEND Casework Teams and Educational Psychologists, however, there are national shortages for this specialist role. More requests for EHCP assessments is affecting our ability to meet the 20-week statutory timescale, with none completed within timescale in the year to date. The service has 602 open assessments, 194 of which are already outside of the 20-week timescale. Work has begun to investigate this further and establish where the delays are occurring in the system.
- 44 Despite leisure centre visitor numbers increasing this quarter, gym and swim memberships were below target by 17% (-3,084) and 5% (-75), respectively, impacted by the financial climate, increased competition from private sector gyms and continued transformation works at Abbey Leisure Centre, Peterlee and Seaham.
- 45 The proportion of women smoking at time of delivery has reduced over the last six months to 12.7%, which is lower than the same period last year. However, the rate is higher than both the regional and national averages and remains a cause for concern. An incentive scheme supporting pregnant women to stop smoking was launched in February 2023. The scheme offered vouchers, alongside behavioural support.

## **Our communities**

- 46 The aim of this priority is to ensure our communities are well connected and supportive of each other, with vibrant and accessible towns and villages

which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will support our most vulnerable residents, particularly those isolated or financially vulnerable. We will maintain a strong focus on tackling poverty throughout the cost-of-living crisis.

### **Going Well**

- 47 The council and its partners continue to take action on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), with the latest data showing a 15% fall in ASB. During quarter three, increases were identified across specific ASB types which were being masked by larger falls elsewhere. These areas were the focus during quarter four, and data shows that over the last quarter deliberate fires reduced by 67% and criminal damage by 4%. During quarter four, Durham Police was selected to participate in a [two-year trailblazer project aimed at delivering the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour \(ASB\) Action Plan](#). Further detail will be included in future reports.
- 48 1,250 net homes have been completed during 2022/23. This compares to a target of 1,308 included in the Local Plan and Housing Strategy. A number of large sites have just been recently completed but have yet to be recorded.
- 49 208 empty properties were brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention at the year end, exceeding the annual target of 200.
- 50 28% of properties covered by our selective licensing scheme (launched 1 April 2022) are fully licenced, and a further 5% have submitted applications.
- 51 During 2022/23, regeneration projects supported 95 businesses and created 166 FTEs exceeding the target of 58 and 94, respectively. 1,690m<sup>2</sup> of business space was brought back into use in Bishop Auckland via the Property Reuse Scheme as part of Future Highstreet Fund.
- 52 The latest fly-tipping data shows that 5,614 incidents were resolved during 2022/23. This is the lowest volume in our history and around a third lower than a few years ago, driven by proactive action against perpetrators. In response, we carried out 20 prosecutions, seized five vehicles, issued 46 fixed penalty notices and undertook 2,615 further investigations. Benchmarking data for 2021/22 against the rate of fly-tipping per 1,000 population shows that through our continued education and enforcement activity County Durham's rate (10.94) is performing strongly against all our comparator groups (England 19.07; North East 26.53; nearest neighbours 15.82).

### **Areas which require attention**

- 53 In our latest cleanliness survey 1.6% of surveyed areas did not meet the standard in relation to dog fouling, the target for dog fouling cleanliness is less than 1%. Over each year there are 3 surveys undertaken across different areas of the county the average of the 2022/23 surveys was 1.18%. Hot spot areas for dog fouling are recreation areas and other highways. We are responding with targeted patrols in the known problem areas and the revising of The Public Space Protection Order for dog ownership which is expected to come into force at the end of May 2023.

## **Our council**

- 54 The aim of this priority is to be an excellent council with effective governance arrangements, a good grip on our performance and finances, a workforce fit for the future making best use of the latest technology to provide an effective service and that listens to the views of our residents and service users.

### **Going Well**

- 55 The latest sickness absence rate of 11.43 days per full-time equivalent (FTE) is slightly lower (-0.16 days) than the same period last year. Eight percent of recorded sickness was COVID-related, and this has added 0.93 days per FTE to our overall rate. In addition, days lost to 'mental health and fatigue' was 5% higher than the pre-pandemic level.
- 56 During quarter four, we analysed the responses to our well-being survey, which collected the views of our staff on workplace well-being issues including mental health, engagement, and communications. Initial findings<sup>6</sup> are broadly positive: 91% know what was expected of them in their role, 83% have sufficient information to work effectively, 81% have had access to training and development opportunities at work, 70% feel free to express their views to managers, and 73% would speak highly of the council outside of work.
- 57 The survey also included a set of 35 questions recommended by the Health and Safety Executive around workforce mental health and well-being. These questions were grouped into seven areas which are comparable with other organisations. The council was assessed as being in the top 20% for six areas: demands, manager support, peer support, relationships, role, and change. The final area, control, was assessed as above average.
- 58 Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to our learning and development offer and more than 1,500 employees have benefited from it to date. 4.1% of employees are currently enrolled on an apprenticeship (compared to 2.3% last year) – 296 are staff new to the organisation (+40 compared to last year) and 324 are existing staff upskilling (+72 compared to last year). During quarter four, our apprenticeship retention rate increased to 73% (was previously static at 71%) and recruitment of a new intake of 55 apprentices was launched with activity promoting apprenticeship opportunities across the council.
- 59 However, we have been unable to use all our levy funds within the mandatory 24 months of being deposited in our account so just over £1.2 million of our fund has expired (almost 11%). We have put in place an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Policy, to increase apprenticeship uptake across local businesses,

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<sup>6</sup> Undertaken between 10 October and 7 November 2022. 3,052 responses were received which represents almost 36% of employees

and since 1 April (when it went live) we have received seven levy transfer with a combined cost of £136,500.

- 60 Customer contacts through our reported channels<sup>7</sup> continue to be skewed by the transfer of telephone lines to our automated call distribution system. However, we estimate there has been a 'true' increase in customer contact of around 5%, with an additional 55,000 calls, mainly been driven by increases across council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 61 The increase in digital contact from 15% of all contact before the pandemic to 21% has largely been driven by behavioural change due to process changes implemented during the pandemic (the introduction of service requests through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This is broadly in line with the situation at quarter three.
- 62 In addition, more customers are signing up to digital accounts. Compared to pre-pandemic: an extra 44,000 have do-it-online accounts (up 34%), an additional 55,941 have open portal system accounts (up 165%) and a further 47,724 receive council tax bills via e-mail (up 132%).
- 63 As we have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through our digital work, face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has been declining and is now around two-thirds of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs<sup>8</sup>. This is subject to a MTFP(13) saving proposal that was factored into the budget forecasts for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 64 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery<sup>9</sup> which is in line with previous reports. The following are examples of services which attained an overall satisfaction rating of more than 94%: birth, death or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).

### **Areas which require attention**

- 65 Recruitment and retention remain challenging, which reflects the national picture, and we continue to focus on improving this area. During quarter four, 22% of all advertised vacancies were a 're-ad', and 24% of leavers had less than two years' service<sup>10</sup>.
- 66 The gender gap in relation to the mean hourly rate of pay is improving (although the median is deteriorating). We continue to work to reduce the barriers faced by women in the workforce with family friendly policies and flexible working. Our workforce strategy sets out further action to drive improvement, including attracting more women into traditionally male

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<sup>7</sup> contacts received through the ACD, face to face through our CAPs, do-it-online, webchat, social media and email.

<sup>8</sup> Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley

<sup>9</sup> Services requested through the CRM

<sup>10</sup> No comparable data as this is a new KPI

dominated roles, staff networks and coaching frameworks. The 2022 pay award (awarded after the analysis), which was a flat rate payment for all employees, will further help improve the gender pay gap.

- 67 Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) continue to be an integral part of manager-employee engagement alongside one-to-ones, supervisions, and team meetings. 103 leaders (100%) have completed the current cycle in line with deadlines.
- 68 40% of service request types (78 of 196), equating to around 68% of service requests, can be assessed against a performance standard. Although 80% met the performance standard, 21 service areas (equating to 10,816 service requests received during quarter four) did not in more than half of cases.
- 69 81% of respondents to our CRM satisfaction survey were satisfied with service delivery, but some service areas attained lower rates, e.g., complaints (47%), tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%), generic enquiries (63%).
- 70 The main drivers for dissatisfaction remain timeliness, insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned. Dissatisfaction with progress updates related to three specific areas: returning for a missed bin, complaints, and actions following a missed bulky waste collection.

## Performance Indicators – Summary

- 71 A summary table of the performance indicators in the report is included here:

		Direction of Travel (12 months previous)				Direction of Travel (pre-COVID)			
		Not available	Improving	Static	Deteriorating	Not available	Improving	Static	Deteriorating
Performance to Target	No target set - tracker	36	42	18	23	52	32	12	23
	Meeting or exceeding target	2	16	4	5	2	19	3	3
	Within 2% of target	1		1		1		1	
	More than 2% behind target	3	5		9	3	3	2	9

## Risk Management

- 72 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://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2022-2026/pdf/CouncilPlan2022-2026.pdf?m=63796952367360000>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s171720/Item%205%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q3%202022-23.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s161902/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q1%202022-23%20Revised.pdf>
- Quarter Four, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s157533/Year%20End%20performance%20report%202021-22.pdf>

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **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 Four, 2022/23



## 1.0 Our Economy: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 1 Latest data (December 2022) shows a decrease in the employment rate to 72.2% from 74.3% but it is not statistically significant. County Durham is statistically similar to the North East rate (70.5%) and the national rate (75.8%).
- 2 We continue to take positive action to support people with disabilities back into work through our Employability Programmes, specifically Durham Enable; and as an employer through our corporate working group 'Supporting People with Disabilities'. The employment rate across County Durham for those with a disability is almost 42%, much lower than the employment rate for those without a disability (83%), and the England average of 57%.
- 3 The unemployment rate remained statistically similar against the previous quarter at 4.6%; and also compared to the regional (4.7%) and national rates (3.87%).
- 4 As at March 2023, of the 15 main visitor attractions<sup>11</sup> across County Durham, 10 are accessible by public transport<sup>12</sup>. This is in line with the 2019 baseline. Of those which are not accessible, three do not have a Sunday service (Diggerland, Raby Castle and Ushaw Historic House and Gardens), reaching Hardwick Park requires a one mile walk from Sedgefield and Killhope has no public transport service.

## 1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

### Business Durham Floor Space

- 5 90% of floor space is occupied, which is above the target of 85%. During quarter four, an additional 50,000 square feet of floor space was added to the portfolio with the new units at Station Place.

### Business Durham: activity during quarter four

- 6 261 businesses were engaged including 130 intensively assisted with the NE Space Conference bringing engagements with businesses particularly involved with innovation. Business engagements were above target (250).
- 7 647 jobs were created / safeguarded during quarter four (488 created and 159 safeguarded), which is more than the period target of 375. Although, the number created / safeguarded is 49% fewer than the same period last year, this is due to

<sup>11</sup> 15 Main visitor attractions: Auckland Castle, Beamish Museum, Botanic Gardens, Oriental Museum, Palace Green Library, Bowes Museum, Locomotion, Chester-le-Street Cricket Ground, The 'Story', Seaham Sea Front, Diggerland, Raby Castle and Ushaw Historic House and Gardens, Hardwick Park and Killhope

<sup>12</sup> Including a walk of  $\leq 0.5$  miles

elevated figures for 2021/22 as a result of COVID Business Recovery Grants. The cumulative figure for 2022/23 is 1,986 which is higher than the annual target of 1,500.

## Planning Applications

- 8 During quarter four, 16 of 17 major planning applications were determined within 13 weeks (94%). This places us within the top quartile nationally for this indicator.
- 9 405 of 465 all planning applications were determined within deadline (87%). Although, this is below both the 93% target and the 90% achieved during quarter three, we remain in the top quartile nationally. Performance was impacted by staffing issues across the team which affected all areas of work in the first half of the year.
- 10 The latest benchmarking data (at September 2022) shows our performance to be better than both the North East and England averages.

	September 2022			
	County Durham	England	Statistical Neighbours	North East
major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	89%	86%	90%	81%
planning applications determined within deadline	91%	84%	80%	84%

## Better Health at Work Award

- 11 75 County Durham organisations are signatories to the award. The council is both a signatory and a facilitator of the award to external workplaces.
- 12 Recruitment of new organisations remains a priority and quarter four was particularly busy with events and workshops. A recruitment event was held in partnership with the North East England Chamber of Commerce and attended by 45 organisations.
- 13 During quarter four, 35 new Health Advocates were trained taking our total 180, significantly higher than all other regional local authorities.

## Theatres: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire<sup>13</sup>

- 14 Average ticket sales per screening/performance<sup>14</sup> were higher than the same period last year (61 compared to 56), as were actual ticket sales (+5,204). Although ticket sales were down by 45% (-33,238) compared to quarter three (39,934 compared to 73,172). The decrease was expected following a successful Panto season and maintenance work at the Gala halting live performances for two weeks. During quarter four, we trialled a new cinema offer with special events, senior screenings for 60+ and parent and baby screenings.

<sup>13</sup> Ticket sales are Gala Theatre and Empire Theatre only

<sup>14</sup> For screenings/performances held during the quarter

15 Across the three venues, respondents rated the following as 'good' or 'very good':

	Overall	Gala	Bishop Auckland	Empire
Ticket booking experience	95%	95%	94%	94%
Staff welcome	94%	94%	97%	94%
Food and drink facilities	69%	66%	87%	79%
Quality of event	95%	95%	94%	96%
Value for money	96%	96%	94%	96%
Whole Experience	95%	95%	97%	95%

16 High levels of satisfaction were experienced in all venues, across all areas except food and drink facilities. This is consistent with previous reports.

17 There are planned improvements to café facilities at Abbey, Peterlee and other transformed leisure centres. These facilities will be the 'Thrive Kitchen' with its own look at feel. The menu, pricing and facilities are being developed as attractive places with affordable, quality, healthy choices in line with our wellbeing values.

18 We have also worked closely with procurement to secure local suppliers The café training will include cooking demonstrations to ensure that each plate is presented in a high quality and consistent way, and operations managers will undergo commercial hospitality training to support the business plan for each site.

### **Visits to council owned cultural venues during quarter four**

19 There were 35,231 visits to our cultural venues during quarter four. There is currently no comparable data for this indicator however work is ongoing to develop more robust mechanism for future monitoring.

### **Energy efficiency advice and support**

20 During quarter four, 70 households were helped to save an average of £171 (through Managing Money Better), including one-off savings totalling £9,196. Fuel switching advice continues to reduce due to the current market. However, more residents are contacting us about fuel debt and other financial issues. We continue to provide advice to help reduce fuel bills and fuel debt and are referring residents to welfare assistance.

21 Funding for a Managing Money Better post ended in February, and we are currently exploring other further funding options.

## **1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention**

### **Employability Programmes**

- 22 Latest data (October to December 2022) shows registrations onto our employability programmes reduced by 43% compared to July to September 2022 (226 compared to 324). The decrease relates to the LINKCD programme, with staff shortages affecting delivery capacity of our partners. The issue has now been resolved and the position should improve going forward. Fewer registrations impacted participants moving into employment and/or education/training, with 103 (-19) and nine (-20) respectively.

## **1.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note**

### **Investments during quarter four**

- 23 The County Durham Growth Fund considered eight applications totalling a grant value of £884,000. Now in its final six months of delivery, the £8.9 million grant fund is fully committed. Throughout 2022/23, £1.65 million was awarded in grants to 34 companies.
- 24 The Finance Durham Fund made one investment; a £100,000 investment in iPac, a manufacturer of food packaging, for additional capacity at a factory in Tanfield Lea. Total investment for 2022/23 was £2.5 million into nine businesses.

### **Funding**

- 25 We have met representatives of Cities for Local Growth Unit to discuss Levelling Up Round 2 bid feedback. Further clarity is expected from the government on the process and deadlines for Round 3. Further bids will be considered for submission when funding criteria is published.

## **2.0 Our Environment: National, Regional & Local Picture**

- 26 The carbon emission rate across the county is four tonnes per person (the Northeast is 4.7 and England is 4.3).
- 27 Since 2014, renewable electricity capacity across the county has increased by around 18%. Wind power is the largest contributor (almost 59%).

## **2.1 Council Activity: Going Well**

### **Carbon Reduction**

- 28 All carbon reduction works, including the solar farm, at Morrison Busty Depot to enable it to become the council's first low carbon depot are now complete.

Decarbonisation works including heating and lighting improvements are nearing completion at Comeleon House and are ongoing at three leisure centres (Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe and Teesdale).

- 29 We were successful with one bid for £389,000 in the latest round of the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to install a heat pump at Meadowfield Depot, we are identifying projects for the next bidding round which is expected to open in autumn 2023 with decisions expected early 2024.
- 30 The Business Energy Efficiency Programme 2 (BEEP2) funded through the European Regional Development Fund has closed, having supported 470 companies and awarded grants to 101 businesses. 110 additional businesses are awaiting energy audits which will be picked up through BEEP3 which launched 1 April. It is expected that once all carbon savings have been submitted, 1,692 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have been saved.

### **Energy Efficiency Property Improvements**

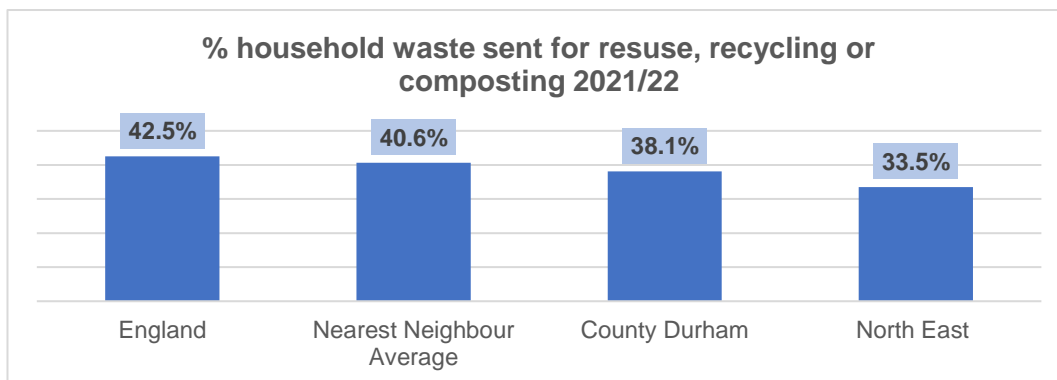
- 31 During quarter four, 633 properties benefited from an energy efficiency measure, 87 more than quarter three (+14%) and 27 fewer than the same period last year (-4%). 596 properties were via Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme and 37 via Energy Company Obligations (ECO4) Scheme.
- 32 Although ongoing schemes are drawing to a close, we continue to work with registered providers (using Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy funding) to improve the Energy Performance Certificate rating of 1,200 social housing properties. To date, work has been completed on 1,086 properties. We also continue to offer boiler repair and servicing via Warm and Healthy Homes.

### **Recycling, Re-use or Composting**

- 33 During the 12 months ending December 2022, 37.5% of household waste was recycled. This is consistent with both the previous reporting period (37.7%) and the same period last year (38%).
- 34 However, it is lower than the pre-COVID level of 41.1%. The decrease followed the legislative change relating to the recycling of carpets (resulting in more carpets being managed as residual waste) and high levels of contamination.
- 35 We continue to promote recycling and re-use through:
- Small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection campaign. More than 140 collection points has collected 21 tonnes of small WEEE to date
  - Garden waste collections. Having re-commenced on 28 March the scheme now includes the Teesdale area
  - On street recycling. Further trials are underway within Durham City.



36 The latest benchmarking data (2021/22) shows our performance in relation to the proportion of household waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting was stronger than our regional neighbours but weaker than our statistical neighbours and the England average.



37 The increased volume of waste throughout the pandemic, combined with changes to legislation and the recyclates markets, have affected our performance. The impact on each local authority was dependent upon a combination of factors including contractual arrangements, and their waste policies and priorities.

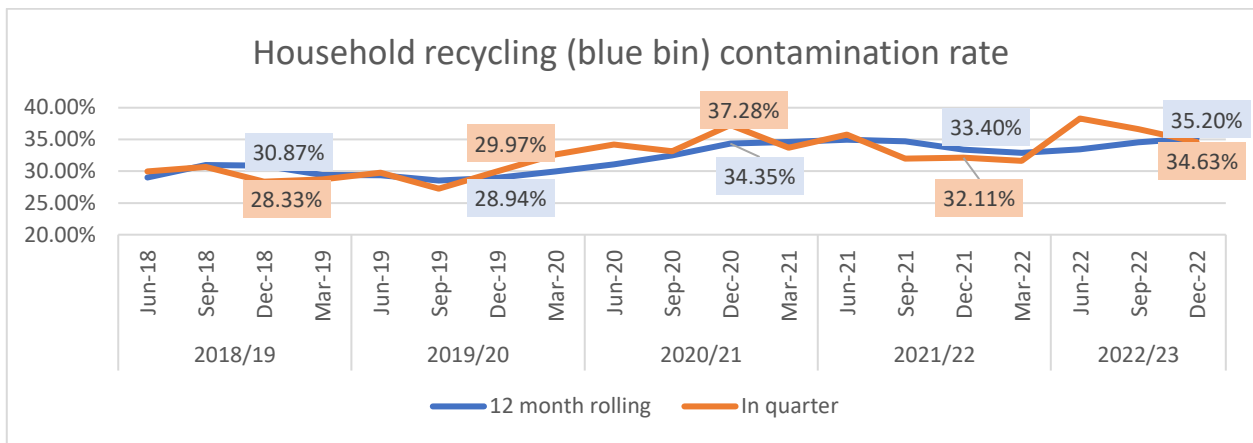
### Contamination of Recyclate Waste

38 During quarter four, we produced a [YouTube video](#) in support of the 'What Goes Where' campaign. Campaign action includes renewing bin stickers, rejecting / removing contaminated bins, door knocking and advising residents. 10,755 contamination notices were issued in the last 12 months, 39% more than the same period the previous year.

39 Looking at quarterly data, and following targeted action, the rate of contamination has fallen from 38.3% (June 2022) to 34.63% (December 2022).

40 However, looking at a rolling 12 month period, the contamination rate over the 12 months ending 31 December 2022 increased from the previous year (35.2% from 33.4%). This is due to higher contamination rates earlier in the year before the campaign started. The pre-covid contamination rate was 32.6%.

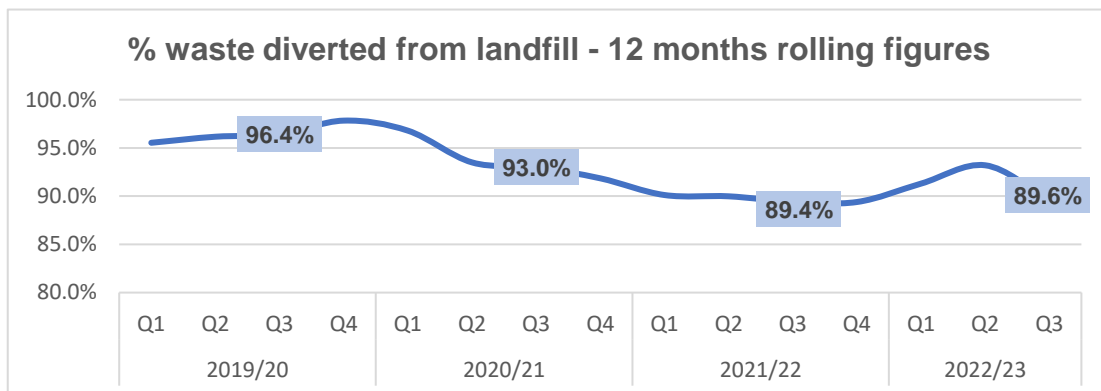
Contamination Rate	12 months ending			
	Dec 22	Sep 22	Jun 22	Mar 22
12 month rolling year	35.2%	34.5%	33.5%	32.9%
Quarterly	34.6%	36.6%	38.3%	31.6%



## 2.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

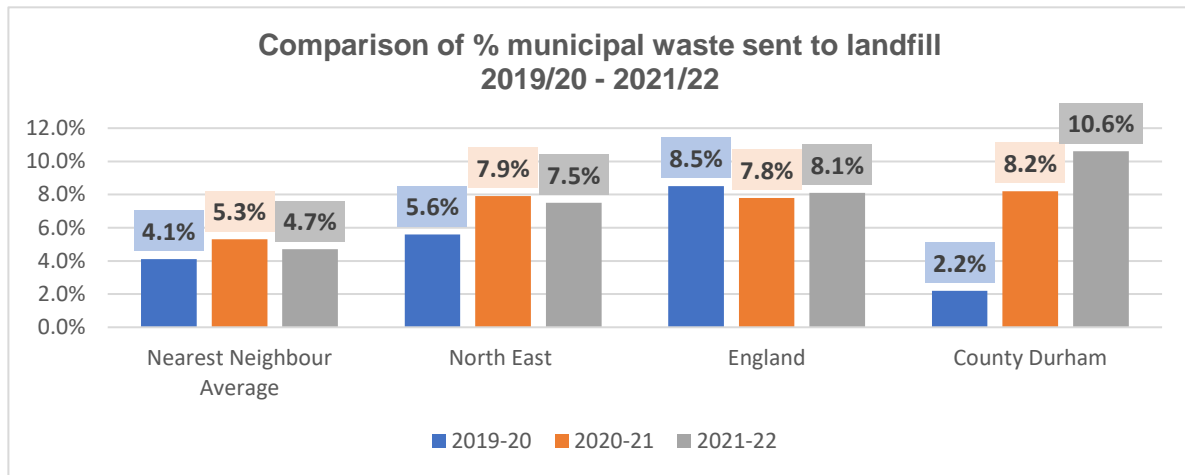
### Waste Diverted from Landfill

41 Performance was impacted by both planned and unplanned maintenance issues at the energy recovery facility. The planned maintenance period overran, resulting in two of the lines being out of commission at the same time. Issues were compounded by issues with the alternative facilities: one was closing for renovation, and one had unplanned maintenance issues affecting the amount of waste that could be



processed. As a result, the diversion rate for the 12 months ending December 2022 was 89.6% against the target of 95%. This is 3.6pp lower than the previous reporting period (93.2%) and in line with the same period 12 months ago (89.4%). Almost 18,000 fewer tonnes (-6.5%) of municipal waste was collected and disposed of during this period (255,699 tonnes, January-December 2022).

42 The latest benchmarking data (2021/22) shows our performance in relation to the proportion of municipal waste sent to landfill to be weaker than our regional neighbours, statistical neighbours and the England average. The increased volume of waste throughout the pandemic resulted in capacity issues at the energy from waste plants across the region. This is the main reason for the increase to landfill in County Durham. The impact on each local authority was dependent upon a combination of factors including contractual arrangements, and their waste policies and priorities.



## Tree Planting

43 Difficulties have been encountered with weather conditions and the availability of previously identified land some of which has now been earmarked for other purposes which has impacted on our efforts to plant 140,000 trees by the end of 2024. 12,586 trees and whips have been planted in 2022/23, taking the total to 53,000 trees planted to date.

## 2.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note

### Resources and Waste Strategy 2018

44 An announcement from DEFRA on the recycling consistency agenda, including a Government proposal to introduce separate weekly food waste collections is expected imminently. If it is agreed, local authorities would need to put in the required infrastructure by March 2025. An announcement on new burdens funding to support this change by central government is also awaited.

## 3.0 Our People: National, Regional & Local Picture

45 During 2022/23, we received almost 20,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of nearly 2,000 on 2021/22. The Children Services Portal was launched in October 2022, and

this has also had just over 1,000 forms submitted. The partner led early help assessment, child and family plan and making requests for additional early help all require use of the Children Services Portal.

- 46 Over the same period, almost 4,800 statutory children’s social care referrals were received, a slight reduction on last year. The rolling annual rate per 10,000 children (468, n=4,775) is lower than in our benchmarks (England: 538, Statutory Neighbours: 608 and North East: 644).
- 47 Rates of children in need, children on child protection plans and children in care per 10,000 children population remain higher than national averages but below our regional and statistical neighbours.

	2022/23	2021/22		
	County Durham	England	Statistical Neighbours	North East
Children in need	381	334	445	471
Children on a child protection plan	53	42	62	63
Children in care	105	70	107	110

- 48 During 2022/23, 24,437 referrals were received by the Adult Social Care service. While the number of referrals per month have largely been stable since June 2021, a reduction in number was experienced in quarter three. Data for quarter four, however, indicates that referral numbers have increased back to previous levels. Further investigation is being undertaken around the compositions of these referrals to help increase our understanding of ‘front door’ demand.

### 3.1 Council Activity: Going Well

#### Adult Social Care

- 49 During 2022/23, 24,437 referrals were received by the Adult Social Care service. While the number of referrals per month have largely been stable since June 2021, a reduction in number was experienced in quarter three. Data for quarter four, however, indicates that referral numbers have increased back to previous levels. Further investigation is being undertaken around the compositions of these referrals to help increase our understanding of ‘front door’ demand.
- 50 The percentage of older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services (88.3% in the latest quarter) remains high. However, it has reduced since quarter three (92.9%) and is broadly in line with performance at the same time last year (88.7%). Current performance remains above our target of 84% and regional and national benchmarking. Latest data for the number of people discharged into reablement demonstrates a continued decline. A review of reablement services taking place later this year will consider factors such

as staff turnover and recruitment and the consequent reduced capacity of the commissioned service provider.

## **Children's Social Care**

- 51 Referral rates per 10,000 0-17 year olds have reduced slightly and remain below benchmarks. Improved practice over the last few years has led to better performance in key areas such as our re-referral rate, which has reduced from 28% and in the top 20 highest in the country in 2019/20 to 17% in 2022/23 and this is now consistently below our national (22%), regional (21%) and statistical neighbours (20%). This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 52 The national transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) continues with 59 of our children in care having a UASC status; this will further increase over the rest of the year, as we take UASC into the care of the council in line with national Home Office targets.
- 53 Despite increasing caseload pressures, our social workers continue to see children in line with statutory timescales through regular performance monitoring and our managers have oversight of children's cases. Latest data to March 2023 shows 87% of children open to our Families First Teams on the day had been seen within the last four weeks. For children with a child protection plan, 96% had a visit and were seen in the last four weeks.
- 54 We continue to see an increasing trend in children in care (n=1,071), and whilst this is high for County Durham the rate of 105 per 10,000 0-17 population remains lower than in our regional and statistical neighbours. We continue to experience placement pressures and are focusing on increasing capacity within our in-house children's homes, recruiting more foster carers, and working with children and their families to prevent them entering care.
- 55 As we haven't seen an increase following COVID-19 like some of our neighbouring local authorities, a multi-agency audit is ongoing, led by the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, to assure ourselves that we are receiving the right referrals at the right time from our partner organisations.
- 56 While caseload and capacity issues remain a key concern, we are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect to will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months.
- 57 Our long-term investment in supporting social work qualification programmes has brought us six Step Up to Social Work participants who are already with us as family workers, and are expected to be in social work posts in May and six social work apprentices who are completing their programme and are expected to commence in social work posts in late summer/autumn. We are building on this by working within

our regional partnership to recruit up to ten further Step Up to Social Work participants who will qualify in spring 2025. We have also changed our model for allow us to support apprentices and are on track to recruit 20 social work trainees who will be able to support our teams as they train from the autumn, qualifying as social workers in autumn 2026. The programme has exceeded all expectations, with 41,859 advert views, 564 people booked onto/attended briefings and 420 applicants. Shortlisting is now underway.

- 58 The introduction of a £2,000 welcome payment for newly qualified social workers in March 2023 made our offer more competitive in the region and increased the number of applicants for roles. This year 32 applications were received (approximately double the number we received in a similar recruitment process the previous year). Following the interview process a further 15 newly qualified social worker are expected to commence in late summer/autumn. Although this will fill gaps in some our teams who have been struggling, we have not yet managed to find the number of newly qualified social workers we would have liked to, and a further recruitment exercise is expected to commence at the end of May.
- 59 All of our development and recruitment activity targeting newly qualified social workers is currently expected to bring us 41 new social workers, more than double the number we were able to recruit last financial year.
- 60 We continue to recruit very actively to a range of permanent posts and are finding that social media promotion is the most useful way to increase the number of potential applicants we reach. We have advertised posts in our Children in Care teams through a contract with a social media specialist. The advert had a very wide reach with 51,704 video views but led to only one candidate of the calibre we need. We have learned from the process and are now planning adverts for our Families First and ASET teams.

### **Stronger Families Programme**

- 61 During the 12 months ending 31 March, 1,384 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme. Of these, 1,286 attained significant and sustained outcomes, and 98 maintained continuous employment. We have already surpassed our annual national target of 760 families turned around.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

- 62 While admissions under the Mental Health Act for assessment (Section 2) or treatment (Section 3) continue to be higher than pre-pandemic (155 detentions in quarter four 2019/20 compared to 194 detentions in the latest quarter), there is an overall reduction over the last 12 months.
- 63 The Mental Health Strategic Partnership was reviewed in quarter three and the workstreams within this area (children and young people, suicide prevention and

resilient communities) have refocused their priorities, taken from their respective delivery plans. The Local Government Association has reviewed the Suicide Prevention Alliance delivery plan and has commended the work on vulnerable groups and high-risk locations.

## **Housing Solutions**

- 64 During quarter four, we helped 3,806 households in relation to housing issues, 95 more than quarter three (+15%) and 148 more than the same period last year (+4%). Just over half of contacts related to housing advice and homelessness following being asked to leave by family and friends (12% of contacts) or the loss of their private rented tenancy (10% of contacts). Other contact included general tenancy advice, empty homes and regeneration and home improvement.
- 65 1,141 households were helped to stay in their home this quarter, 162 more than quarter three (+14%). More early intervention work and more Disabled Facilities Grants have contributed to this.
- 66 226 households were helped to move to alternative accommodation, comparable with last quarter. Of these 34% (76) moved into supported accommodation, 32% (73) into social housing, and 27% (62) moved into the private rented sector; with the remainder into other types of accommodation.
- 67 The time taken to achieve positive outcomes continues to impact on some cases that would ordinarily be prevented from homeless within 56 days moving into relief stage. Move-on options are also limited, and a review is underway to improve access into the private rented and social housing sectors.

## **Leisure Centres**

- 68 Improved visitor numbers this quarter (812,455) are 17% (139,968) higher than quarter three and on par with the quarterly target of 814,219. Although anticipated as this is one of our busier periods; free swimming during February half term, the return of large events such as dance and gymnastic competitions at Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre and the temporary closure of Darlington Dolphin Centre have also contributed.

## **3.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention**

### **Adult Social Care**

- 69 Initial assessments for those referred to Adult Social Care should be completed within a 28-day period to understand their appropriate needs. Over the last year, around 500 Care Act assessments were completed by the service each quarter. Over this period, timeliness of completion has reduced (from 53.8% in quarter one to

51.1% in quarter four). Latest data on timeliness is also a reduction on the same period last year (57.8%).

- 70 Work is ongoing to improve practice guidance, recording methodologies and data held on the AzeusCare case management system. A roll-out of new mobile IT equipment will support staff to ensure that completed assessments are updated on the system in a timely manner.
- 71 In quarter four, the rate of adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care exceeded the Better Care Fund (BCF) target for the first time in three years. The latest rate of 685.6 per 100,000 is the highest seen since 2019/20 (pre-COVID) when the rate was 757.3 per 100,000. This latest, provisional, remains lower than latest regional benchmarks (738.6) but higher than national levels (538.5). We are undertaking a data quality to enable a greater understanding of the number of people entering permanent care to get an understanding of this changes.
- 72 In November 2022, we reviewed our recording methodology to ensure that all appropriate information is entered onto the case management system. We are now reviewing previous data to enable a greater understanding of the number of people entering permanent care and to ensure a consistent approach to the recording of information.
- 73 Annual reviews of the care needs of adult social care service users are undertaken to ensure that their care packages meet current need. Latest data demonstrates that the proportion of adult social care service users receiving a review within 12 months of their previous review or assessment continues to remain low at 60.4%. While performance has increased slightly across the last 12 months, the latest quarterly performance (60.4%) is a reduction for the same period last year (65.0%). Additional resource has been provided by the service to create separate reviewing teams in both Older People and Learning Disability services, with the aim of tackling the issue of overdue reviews and enabling all service users to receive an appropriate review of their care needs. Additionally, a risk assessment model is being developed to ensure that those cases with highest needs are reviewed in a timely manner.
- 74 At the start of the adult safeguarding process, individuals are asked about their expectations and, once the process is completed, if these expectations have been met. The percentage of individuals achieving their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process has decreased over the last 12 months and was 91.8% in quarter four. This is lower than both the regional (97.5%) and England (95.4%) averages for 2021/22. We have revised the recording methodology for 2022/23 in line with safeguarding adults' best practice and are reviewing data and data quality to provide assurance in reported performance. In addition, a wider review of governance is being undertaken, focusing on areas of concern and good practice, as



well as delivering systems training or practice improvement to ensure that risk is well managed across the service.

## **Children's Social Care**

- 73 More children are being supported in statutory safeguarding services resulting in some of our children's social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers having higher caseloads than we would like. More than one in three have a high caseload, over 25 cases, but there are 12 FTE fewer case holders than the same period last year.
- 74 Caseload pressures arise from an increasing number of vacancies for children's social work practitioners. This is a national issue with most English councils struggling to recruit and retain their workforce. In Durham there were 12 FTE fewer case holders this quarter compared to the same period last year, and at the end of March, 62 social work vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 18.3%, the highest recorded since monitoring began in 2018, lower than the latest national vacancy rate of 20%, also the highest recorded. We are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect to will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months but caseloads are likely to remain a challenge in this period.

## **Special Education Needs and Disability Services (SEND)**

- 75 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments have significantly increased over the last few years - a trend which is also evidenced nationally. In 2022/23, the service received 948 requests for an EHCP, 14% higher than in 2021/22 and 71% higher than the same period last year, and more than prior to COVID (554 in 2019/20).
- 76 Pressure is compounded by high levels of demand in partner organisations, such as health services which are a key part of the assessment process. Although we have invested in and restructured our SEND Casework Teams and Educational Psychologists, there is a national shortage for this specialist role.
- 77 More requests for EHCP assessments is affecting our ability to meet the 20-week statutory timescale, with none completed within timescale in the year to date. The service has 602 open assessments, 194 of which are already outside of the 20-week timescale. Work has begun to investigate this further and establish where the delays are occurring in the system.

## **Gym & Swim Members**

- 78 Despite leisure centre visitor numbers increasing this quarter, both gym and swim memberships failed to hit target, with 17,787 (-17%, -3,084) and 1,590 (-5%, -75), respectively. It is proving difficult to hit targets given the financial climate and

increased competition from private sector gym providers across the county. Continued transformation works at Abbey Leisure Centre, Peterlee and Seaham have also had an impact on memberships.

- 79 The key performance challenge going forward is to reduce membership churn by minimising cancellations. Simpler pricing structures and amplified marketing campaigns will be implemented to support this.

## **Smoking**

- 80 Latest data (quarter three, 2022/23) shows the proportion of women smoking at time of delivery has reduced over the last six months to 12.7%, which is lower than for the same period last year. The latest rate, however, continues to be higher than both the regional and national averages and remains a cause for concern.
- 81 An incentive scheme supporting pregnant women to stop smoking was launched in February 2023. The scheme offered vouchers, alongside behavioural support. The County Durham Tobacco Dependency in Pregnancy Steering Group is considering the sustainability of this scheme, now that funding has ended.

## **3.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note**

### **Healthy Weight and Physical Activity**

- 82 The County Durham Physical Activity Strategy is under development and will be considered at the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) in July 2023. Our Public Health team is also undertaking a review of approaches to healthy weight in County Durham, results of which will be discussed at the HWB in September 2023.

### **Health Squad**

- 83 Funding from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (£453,000 per year over three years) is being used to develop a 'Health Squad' model. The Programme Board was initiated in March 2023 and aims to support those residents who may be at risk of cardiovascular disease, identified as part of the Health Check programme. It will also deliver outreach physical and mental health 'MOTs' to vulnerable groups including substance misusers, rough sleepers and those who live in non-assessed accommodation and independent housing providers.

### **Rough Sleepers / Vulnerable People Initiatives**

- 84 County Durham Lettings Agency (CDLA) has now purchased and repaired 70 properties, 28 of which were in 2022/23. These will be used for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping / homelessness. Those excluded from Durham Key

Options (DKO) register are the primary group housed, allowing them to show changes in behaviours to be able to submit successful appeals. In 2022/23 CDLA has supported 10 successful DKO appeals and successfully moved 17 into DKO properties which is higher than anticipated as we were successful in appealing and moving on a number of longer term tenants.

- 85 Work to convert Shildon People's Centre into four self-contained flats, which is aimed at rough sleepers and/or those at risk of homelessness local to the Shildon area, is now complete and tenanted.
- 86 Since commencement of the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AEFO) scheme in August 2021, 86 private rented sector tenancies have been secured, 36 above target (50). Of this, 77% of tenancies have been sustained. AEFO for 2023-25 has now commenced and two additional officers will be recruited.

## 4.0 Our Communities: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 87 Durham is one of 16 police force areas selected to participate in a [two-year trailblazer project aimed at delivering the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour \(ASB\) Action Plan](#). The project's main focus will be the roll out of a new Immediate Justice service, where perpetrators of ASB will be made to repair the damage they inflict, and greater 'hotspot' policing and enforcement (funded by the Home Office). The plan will also crack down on illegal drugs, ban nitrous oxide and expand the use of drug testing on arrest.

## 4.1 Council Activity: Going Well

### Housing Delivery

- 88 1,250 net homes have been completed during 2022/23. Although 5% (-58) below target of 1,308, a number of large sites have just completed and yet to be recorded. There was also an unusually high number of demolitions in quarter three of this year. A number of large new sites have recently commenced with completions expected in the first six months of 2023/24.

### Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- 89 ASB continues to be defined through three strands: environmental<sup>15</sup> ASB (70% of the total), nuisance<sup>16</sup> (26%) and personal<sup>17</sup> (4%).

<sup>15</sup> Criminal damage/vandalism/graffiti, environmental cleanliness (e.g., litter, dog-fouling, fly-tipping (both public and private land), abandoned shopping trolleys, discarded drug paraphernalia), abandoned cars, pollution (smoke, light, smells)

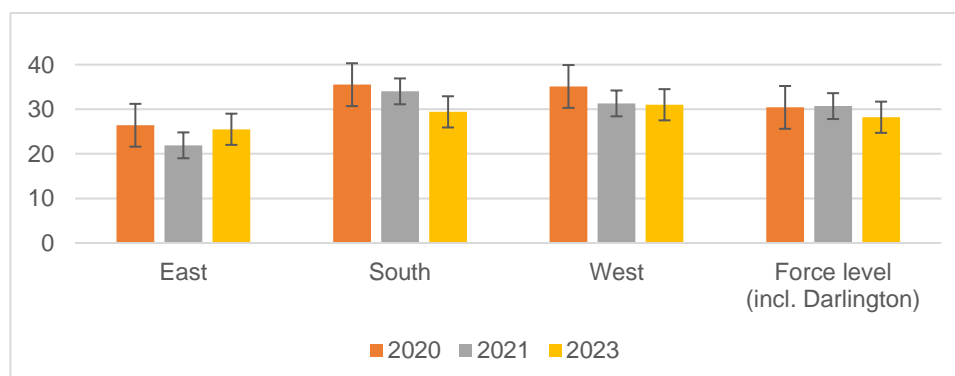
<sup>16</sup> Noise, rowdy behaviour, nuisance behaviour, drug/substance misuse/dealing, stray animals, deliberate fires, vehicle nuisance

<sup>17</sup> Intimidation, harassment, abuse

- 90 Reports of ASB reduced by 15% during the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, compared to the same period last year. Although all strands showed decreases, deeper analysis has highlighted increases across specific ASB types which are being masked by larger falls elsewhere. These types are criminal damage, noise and deliberate fires.
- 91 These three areas have been identified as priorities by the ASB Strategic Group, alongside fly-tipping which, although decreasing, remains the most frequently reported ASB type. Over the last quarter, there has been a noticeable decrease in reports of deliberate fires (67% reduction on the same period last year) and a more modest decrease in relation to criminal damage (4% fewer). Reports of noise has remained static (-0.4% fewer).
- 92 The data is a combination of data from the council, the police, fire service and Believe Housing. Following a change in national recording rules in September, the police have changed how some types of ASB are recorded. Some personal ASB is now recorded as a crime of Harassment (section 2 only) and some nuisance ASB is now recorded as a public order offence.
- 93 Following this change, the overall volume of police reported ASB reduced, with corresponding increases across harassment and public order. Previous data cannot be retrospectively changed so it appears that there has been a decrease in police recorded ASB. We are working to incorporate both harassment and public order crimes into our data set so we can monitor the situation more effectively.
- 94 During quarter four, Durham Police was selected to participate in a [two-year trailblazer project aimed at delivering the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour \(ASB\) Action Plan](#). Further detail will be included in future reports.

### Public confidence that the Police and Local Authorities are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter to them

- 95 Data from the most recent survey shows a smaller proportion of respondents agree that the police and local authority are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter to them. However, the rate is an estimate from a sample survey and as it is within the estimated confidence intervals of +/-3.5pp it is possible the decrease is due to random sample variation.



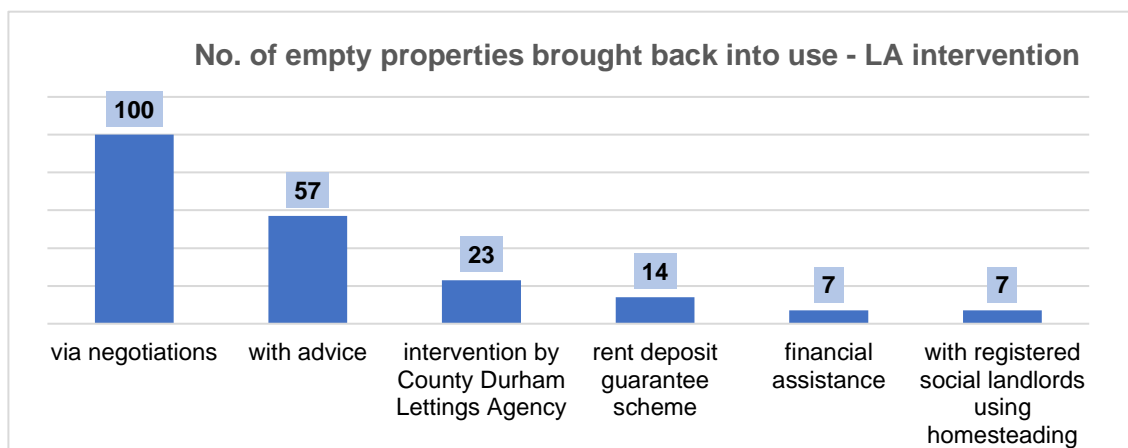
- 96 East, South and West are the three police localities that make up County Durham. With the exception of the East in 2021, there has been no significant difference between each of these areas over the last three years.
- 97 The latest survey also asked residents, 'What do you feel is the single, biggest issue, negatively impacting on your local community at this time?'. The main themes identified at force level were ASB, youth-related ASB and drug-related ASB. However, the top three issues identified as having the greatest negative impact on individuals were speeding and driver related ASB, general negative view of the police and police behaviour and off-road bikes.

### Housing of Ukrainian refugees

- 98 As part of the national 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, 507 of the 606 people who had established contact with our residents have arrived in County Durham. Links were made with 299 sponsors and to date 235 sponsors have had guests arrive.

### Empty properties

- 99 During 2022/23, 208 empty properties were brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention, exceeding the annual target of 200.



### Selective Licensing Scheme

- 100 The scheme was launched in April, and to date, 8,226 (28%) of the 29,000 (approx.) eligible private sector properties are now fully licensed. Applications have been received and are being processed for a further 1,527 properties. Work is underway to compare 2021 census data against the 2020 modelling data, areas of low compliance will be targeted by the enforcement team.

### Businesses supported and jobs created through regeneration projects

- 101 During 2022/23, we engaged with 245 new retail businesses, 166 FTE jobs were created through projects (above target 94), and 95 businesses were supported, above target (58):

- 57 by Towns & Villages Programme

- 19 businesses were supported by Targeted Business Improvement funding
- 8 via Property Reuse Scheme
- 6 from Conservation Area Grant Scheme
- 5 via Seaham Townscape Heritage Programme.

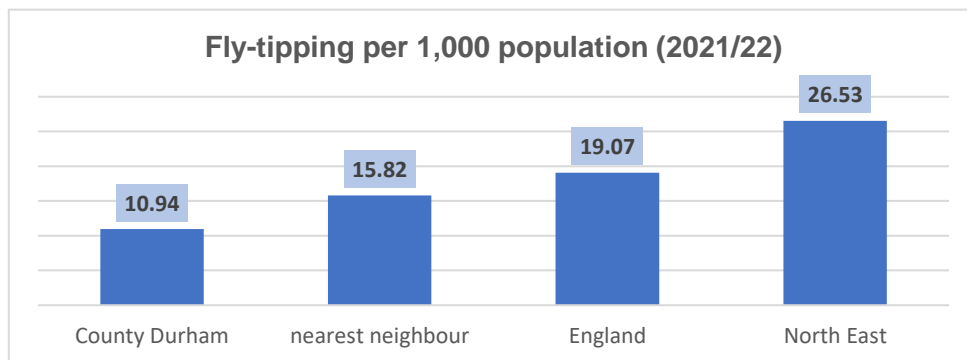
102 Over the last 12 months, by supporting businesses through the Property Reuse Scheme, 1,690m<sup>2</sup> of business space was brought back into use in Bishop Auckland as part of Future Highstreet Fund. As a result of interest free loans and targeted business improvement grant support, 24 problem commercial and vacant properties were reinstated into productive use.

### Fly-tipping

103 Latest fly-tipping data shows that 5,614 incidents were resolved during 2022/23. This is the lowest volume in our history and around a third lower than a few years ago, driven by proactive action against perpetrators. In the last 12 months there were:

- 20 prosecutions
- 5 vehicles seized
- 46 fixed penalty notices issued for fly-tipping offences
- 2,615 further investigations of incidents.

104 Latest benchmarking data shows that County Durham is performing strongly against our comparator groups. Continued efforts in raising awareness, education, and enforcement are supporting the reduction in incidents.



105 The current rate of fly-tipping per 1,000 population is 10.77 a slight improvement on last year (10.94).

### Community Action Teams (CAT) and Community Safety Teams

106 Following community engagement and partner intelligence in response to issues of anti-social behaviour in Coundon and Leeholme, the CAT were able to focus their work on dealing with rubbish accumulations on streets, waste grounds and in gardens; dog fouling; anti-social behaviour and smoke nuisance. Our response included:

- 79 notices were issued against 25 different issues/properties
- 35 Community protection warnings and notices together with 5 fixed penalty notices were issued for fly-tipping and dog fouling incidents
- Fire safety and smoke nuisance advice was provided to over 120 residents and businesses
- 8 empty properties were brought back into use
- Other actions undertaken included community litter picks and visits to 3 local schools to raise awareness of fire safety, anti-social behaviour and environmental improvements initiatives.

- 107 In January, the follow-up review of the Easington Colliery CAT project was undertaken. A number of issues were identified around rubbish accumulations, open to access properties, drainage complaints and defective properties identified, resulting in section 106 legal notices being issued on 38 issues/properties.
- 108 Our community safety teams have been in local communities addressing residents' concerns about access to derelict buildings, carrying out work to limit access of off-road bikes to footpaths. Liaised with residents on a number of issues including loan sharks, financial and general support available to address the cost of living crisis. We also liaised with our partners on reports of adult exploitation and reports of fires and criminal damage, and target hardening of areas to prevent nuisance vehicles causing damage to green spaces and to prevent unauthorised encampments.

### **Street cleansing surveys – litter and detritus (November - February)**

- 109 Our latest cleanliness surveys show that we have met our targets for litter and detritus with 5.8% of surveyed areas not meeting the standard in relation to litter and 11.4% not meeting the standard for detritus (targets of 6% and 12% respectively). Over each year there are 3 surveys undertaken across different areas of the County the average of the 2022/23 surveys was 4.83% for litter and 8.99% for detritus. Hot spot areas for litter are industrial and warehousing areas which also includes retail parks, rural roads and other highways. Hot spot areas for detritus are housing areas with a higher proportion of on-street parking and other highways.
- 110 The methodology for collecting the cleanliness survey data is changing from April 2023. Surveys will follow an Association for Public Sector Excellence methodology and will allow us to benchmark against other local authorities.

### **Big Spring Clean**

- 111 During the Big Spring Clean (20 February to early April 2023), there were more than 250 litter picking events with six open days in targeted locations. More than 1,500 pieces of litter picking equipment were issued to volunteers who collected 3,000 bags of litter over a combined 4,600 hours.

## 4.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

### Street cleansing surveys – dog fouling (November - February)

112 In our latest cleanliness survey 1.6% of surveyed areas did not meet the standard in relation to dog fouling, the target for dog fouling cleanliness is less than 1%. Over each year there are 3 surveys undertaken across different areas of the County the average of the 2022/23 surveys was 1.18%. Hot spot areas for dog fouling are recreation areas and other highways<sup>18</sup>. We are responding with targeted patrols in the known problem areas and the revising of [The Public Space Protection Order for dog ownership](#) which is expected to come into force at the end of May 2023.

### Highways and Footways Maintenance

113 During quarter four, operational resourcing issues and an unusually high influx of requests in the period caused the proportion of recorded Category 1 highway defects that were repaired within 24 hours (88%) to drop below target (90%). Previous to this the target has been consistently achieved.

## 4.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note

### ASB in Selective Licensing Areas (in effect from 1 April 2022)

114 The rate of anti-social behaviour incidents (per 10,000 population) within selective licensing designated areas<sup>19</sup> was 170 for the period October to December 2022. This is 32% below the target of 224 incidents; and is 67% lower (-114 incidents) than the previous reporting period (July-September 2022). The main reason for the decrease is a reclassification of some police reported ASB incidents to crimes. We are reviewing the baseline position to agree a solution for comparable back data.

### Council Homes Programme

115 The Council Homes Programme remains on hold following the capital review. We are reviewing the financial model as rising inflation is impacting construction costs, and increased interest rates have impacted the financial model due to increased borrowing costs. Additionally, the allocated sites present viability challenges owing to their scale and topography that introduces additional costs. An updated business case, including an updated financial model, is scheduled to go to Cabinet in July, where it will be recommended to recommence the programme.

<sup>18</sup> Roads that are not main or rural roads

<sup>19</sup> This is a specific sub-set of ASB. It differs in that it does not contain stray dogs, stray horses, abandoned shopping trolleys, graffiti, criminal damage or pollution. It is also limited to council, fire and police data whereas overall reports of ASB contain some housing association data.



## 5.0 Our Council: National, Regional and Local Picture

- 116 Our low tax raising capacity continues to place pressure on our budgets. If core spending power ‘per dwelling’ across the county was raised by £167 to the England average of £2,360, the council would receive an additional £42 million each year.
- 117 Budget pressures of around £79 million are expected during 2023/24. This is due to factors such as the 9.7% uplift in the National Living Wage, energy costs, pay awards, high levels of inflation and higher demand across social care services.
- 118 Pressures will be partly financed by the additional £57 million received from the provisional Local Government Settlement and from council tax and tax base increases, with the remainder split £12 million from savings and by utilising £10 million from the MTFP Support Reserve.
- 119 Despite this challenging financial environment, the 2023/24 budget includes:
- support for low-income households through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme
  - maximisation of health and social care funds for the benefit of vulnerable clients
  - significant investment in capital expenditure with a £770 million capital programme, the most ambitious the council has ever agreed.
- 120 Attracting employees remains challenging with local and national skills shortages continuing to drive competition for skilled workers amongst organisations.

## 5.1 Council Activity: Going Well

### Attendance Management

- 121 The latest sickness absence rate is 11.43 days per full-time equivalent (FTE). The most frequently reported reasons for sickness remain mental health and fatigue (32%), musculo-skeletal injury (20%) and infections (14%). This is in line with previous reports.
- 122 The number of days lost to ‘mental health and fatigue’ was 5% higher (+1,200 days) higher than the pre-pandemic level, mainly driven by increases in anxiety disorders, depression, non-work related stress, fatigue and exhaustion.
- 123 The number of days lost to ‘infections (incl. cold and flu)’ was more than double the pre-pandemic level, mainly due to absence caused by COVID-19 (+6,386 days) and long-COVID (+475 days). 57% of days lost to infections was due COVID-19.
- 124 Overall, eight percent of sickness recorded in the 12 months ending 31 March was COVID-related (7,266 days) – this equates to 0.93 days per full-time equivalent.

125 During quarter two, two service teams (Business Services and Care Connect) participated in a pilot which automated the Attendance Management Interview (AMI) process. During quarter four, we gathered feedback from managers who engaged in the process. As feedback showed the pilot process worked well, we are moving to a phased roll-out across the organisation. Once the phased roll out is underway, we will focus on developing a similar approach in relation to the Return-to-Work interview form.

### Staff Well-being Survey<sup>20</sup>

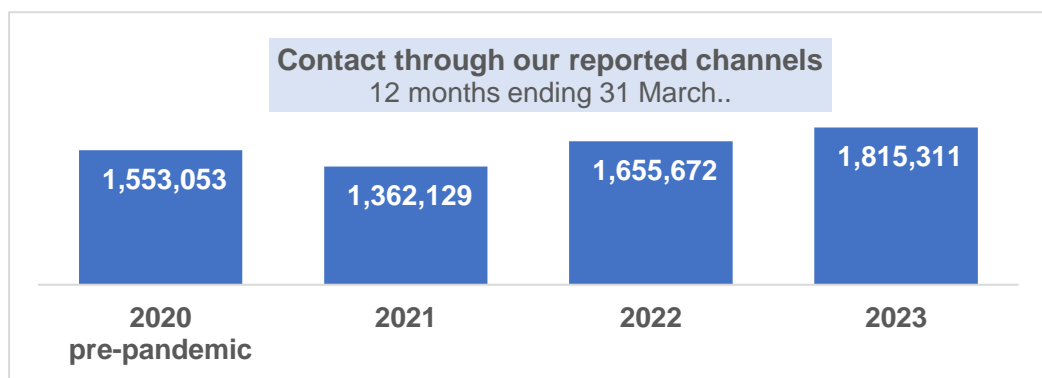
126 Our well-being survey, conducted to collect the views of our staff on workplace well-being issues including mental health, engagement, and communications, is now complete. An initial analysis of the responses has been carried out and the findings are broadly positive. Of those responding the survey:

- 91% know what was expected of them in their role.
- 83% have sufficient information to work effectively.
- 81% have had access to training and development opportunities at work
- 70% feel free to express their views to managers.
- 73% would speak highly of the council outside of work.

127 The survey also included a set of 35 questions recommended by the Health and Safety Executive around workforce mental health and well-being. These questions were grouped into seven areas which are comparable with other organisations. The council was assessed as being in the top 20% for six areas: demands, manager support, peer support, relationships, role, and change. The final area, control, was assessed as above average.

### Contact through our reported channels<sup>21</sup>

128 Overall contact through our reported channels has been increasing for several years and currently stands at 1.8 million.



<sup>20</sup> Undertaken between 10 October and 7 November 2022. 3,052 responses were received, representing almost 36% of employees

<sup>21</sup> Through our ACD telephone system, Customer Access Points, Do-It-Online, webchat, e-mail to customer services, social media

- 129 However, most of the increase is artificial<sup>22</sup>, caused by the transfer of existing telephone lines to our automatic call distribution (ACD) system<sup>23</sup>.
- 130 However, we estimate that overall contact has increased and is around 5% higher than the pre-pandemic volume, with an additional 55,000 calls, mainly driven by increases across council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 131 Most contact (79%) is non-digital, driven by the continuing popularity of the telephone. Face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has been declining in recent years and is now around two-thirds of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs<sup>24</sup>.
- 132 Digital contact has been increasing in popularity and now accounts for 21% of all contact. This compares to 15% pre-pandemic. This increase has largely been driven by behavioural change due to process changes implemented during the pandemic (more service requests made available through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This change is also reflected by more customers registering to use our digital tools.

## **Performance Standards**

- 133 78 of the 196 service request types can be assessed against a performance standard. This equates to 68% of service requests recorded in our CRM system during quarter four – of these, 80% met their performance standard.
- 134 23 service request types (around 30%) met their performance standard for more than 80% of requests. This included: assisted bin collection (99%); public rights of way (92%); road or footpath obstruction (85%) and street lighting (83%).

## **Customer Satisfaction<sup>25</sup>**

- 135 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery which is in line with previous reports. The following are examples of services which attained an overall satisfaction rating of more than 94%: birth, death or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).

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<sup>22</sup> As we can't migrate past data, the transferred lines create artificial increases in call volume

<sup>23</sup> Telephone calls are received either through our ACD system, which routes calls to groups of agents on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension non-ACD. Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics. When we transfer non-ACD lines into the ACD system, there is no past data. Consequently, it appears that call volume has increased.

<sup>24</sup> Barnard Castle, Chester le Street, Consett and Stanley

<sup>25</sup> We have linked a satisfaction survey to 127 service request types and our CRM automatically e-mails a survey to the customer when the service request is closed.

136 We also collect satisfaction data relating to specific elements of our process, and during the 12 months ending the 31 March 2023,

- 92% found it easy to contact the right service
- 87% were provided with clear information
- 78% were informed of how long it would take to complete the task
- 97% felt their request was handled knowledgeably and effectively handled
- 86% were satisfied with our handling of the initial contact
- 72% were kept informed of progress
- 82% were satisfied with the time to complete the task
- 94% felt they were treated with dignity and respect.

## **Learning and Development**

137 Our revised learning and development offer will not only meet current training needs but will prepare our employees for future challenges. Its main objective is to create a culture of continuous learning, with employees empowered to learn proactively in bite-sized chunks as and when required. Although learning will mostly be provided remotely through digital solutions and access to learning resources available 'on demand', informal learning will take on a bigger role supported by social learning and cross-team training.

138 We also intend to add additional training opportunities to our 2023/24 programme. New additions to the programme include mandatory PREVENT awareness, functional skills, digitised Customer Services training and a range of equalities courses (e.g., deaf awareness, gender re-assignment). We will also strengthen the approach to both health and safety, and mental health/well-being.

139 During quarter three, in response to our survey which assessed the digital skills and confidence levels of our staff, we started strengthening our digital skills offer. The offer builds on existing support e.g., Microsoft 365 Learning Resources App, courses available through the Durham Learning and Development System, Digital Champions and funded ICT qualifications, and will include a range of other training/support e.g., additional courses delivered in-house and through Microsoft, 'Ask the Expert' community forum and digital showcases/drop in sessions.

140 We are continuing to develop the Council's new Digital Strategy and could identify additional activity to support digital skill development for employees and our communities.

## **Apprenticeships** (programme / levy started May 2017).

141 A critical strand of our learning and development model is utilising apprenticeships to facilitate learning.

- 142 To date, £11 million of levy funding has enabled more than 1,500 employees to enrol on an apprenticeship. However, we have been unable to use all our levy funds within the mandatory 24 months of being deposited in our account so just over £1.2 million of our fund has expired (almost 11%). We have put in place an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Policy, to increase apprenticeship uptake across local businesses, and since 1 April (when it went live) we have received seven levy transfer requests with a combined cost of £136,500. We are currently reviewing these applications.
- 143 We launched our annual campaign to recruit apprentices during National Apprenticeship Week in February, with a range of activity to promote and market apprenticeship opportunities across the council. The retention rate for apprentices joining the council has increased to 73% (was previously static at 71%).

## 5.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

### Gender Pay Gap<sup>26</sup>

- 144 Although the median Gender Pay Gap for women worsened in 2022 compared to 2021, the mean improved.

	mean <sup>27</sup> hourly rate of pay		median <sup>28</sup> hourly rate of pay	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Women	£14.91	£15.35	£12.94	£13.44
Men	£15.19	£15.36	£13.46	£14.25
difference	-£0.28	-£0.01	-£0.52	-£0.81
	-1.85%	-0.07%	-3.87%	-5.68%
	Improving		Deteriorating	
Reason for change	There has been an increase in male employees in lower salary bands. This has been driven by apprenticeships (there are twice as many male apprentices than female).		37% of the workforce is male yet they hold 54% of the council's most senior posts. So proportionally, male employees are paid at higher salary points whilst female employees (who make up 63% of the workforce) are	

<sup>26</sup> The gender pay gap shows the difference in average pay between men and women in the workforce. It is not the same as equal pay which is defined as pay differences between gender when carrying out jobs of equal value. Figures as at 31 March 2022. [Durham County Council Gender Pay Gap report 2022](#)

<sup>27</sup> The mean hourly rate is the average hourly wage across the entire organisation, so the mean gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between women's mean hourly wage and men's mean hourly wage.

<sup>28</sup> The median hourly rate is calculated by ranking all employees from the highest paid to the lowest paid, and taking the hourly wage of the person in the middle; so the median gender pay gap is the difference between women's median hourly wage (the middle-paid woman) and men's median hourly wage (the middle-paid man).

		disproportionately paid less (make up 77% of the four lowest paid grades).
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- 145 The council continues to reduce the barriers experienced by women in the workplace with family friendly policies, staff networks, hybrid working patterns, and jobs open to part-time working or job share.
- 146 Longer term improvement through the workforce strategy includes expanding and developing the apprenticeship programme (including attracting more women into traditionally male dominated roles), staff networks and coaching frameworks. Also, implementing policies which improve health and wellbeing – for example supporting those experiencing the menopause or affected the domestic abuse and gender based violence.
- 147 In addition, the 2022 pay award should help reduce the gender pay gap by increasing the salaries of those on lower pay points by a higher percentage than those on higher pay points (analysis was completed before the pay award was implemented).

### **Recruitment and Retention** (identified as a strategic risk)

- 148 Attracting employees remains challenging and we continue to focus on this area. During quarter four, 22% of all advertised vacancies were a 're-ad', and 24% of leavers had less than two years' service.
- 149 We are continuing to strengthen and modernise our strategic approach to recruitment. Our project plan remains on track with key actions grouped under the following themes: candidate attraction; process improvements; onboarding and induction; learning and development for managers; engagement and retention; and equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 150 We are maximising talent reach and attraction. Recruitment advertising has been extended through social media and partner agencies such as Indeed, and we are progressing our work to enhance the council's Glassdoor and LinkedIn profiles. We will launch a new starters survey in April 2023 to gather feedback on the recruitment process.
- 151 We continue to review overall employee benefits. A new car salary sacrifice scheme was launched in January and we are starting the procurement process for a benefits platform.
- 152 We are enhancing the council's jobs and careers webpages. Dedicated pages for each service will contain information about council services, jobs, careers and working at the council. A dedicated jobs and careers Facebook page is also being progressed for implementation in quarter two.

153 Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) are an integral part of manager-employee engagement, alongside one-to-ones, supervisions, and team meetings. 103 leaders (100%) have completed the current cycle in line with deadlines.

### **Performance Standards**

154 21 service request types (27%) met their performance standard for fewer than 50% of requests. This included: rubbish in gardens and yards (49%); road signs (42%) and grass cutting, shrubs and flower beds (40%).

### **Customer Satisfaction<sup>29</sup>**

155 Although satisfaction with overall service delivery averages 81% across all service areas, the rate varies across the specific service areas. For example, the following services attained less than 70% satisfaction: complaints (47%); tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%); generic enquiries (63%).

156 The main driver for dissatisfaction with service delivery remains timeliness (of both acknowledgment and response), insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned.

157 We also collect satisfaction data relating to specific elements of our process, and during the 12 months ending the 31 March 2023, the lowest satisfaction rate related to being kept informed of progress (72%). Further analysis of this area shows dissatisfaction related to three specific service areas.

- Not returning for a missed bin within three working days (our performance standard) and not informing the customer as to the reason why or when a re-scheduled collection would take place
- Not keeping customers with open complaints informed of progress
- Not giving customers an explanation and a re-scheduled collection date when we miss their bulky collection.

## **5.3 Council Activity: Other Areas to Note**

### **Data and Insight / Business Intelligence Project**

158 This major project continued during quarter four. Having prioritised interactive data dashboards for social care (adult and children's), we are expecting those new reports to go live in the system during quarter one.

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<sup>29</sup> We have linked a satisfaction survey to 127 service request types and our CRM automatically e-mails a survey to the customer when the service request is closed.





## 6.0 Data Tables

### Key to Symbols

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	S	Performance is the same as national or north east	↓	lower than comparable period

*NB: oldest data in left column*

### 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](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

# Our Economy

Page 16

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 level of GVA per filled job in line with national levels by 2035	£46,245 (2020)	Tracker -	£46,036 ✓	£46,245 ○	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	No
Increase the employment rate for 16-64-year-olds in line with national levels by 2035 <i>Confidence intervals +/-3.2pp</i>	72.2% (Jan 22-Dec 22)	Tracker -	71.1% ✓	71.1% ✓	S	S	→	→	→	→	Yes
Increase the overall disability employment rate / close the gap <i>Confidence intervals +/-6.9pp</i>	41.9% (Jan 22-Dec 22)	Tracker -	48.5% ✓	47.4% ✓	x	S	→	→	→	→	Yes
FTE jobs created through regeneration schemes (Jan – Mar 23)	26	39 x	-	-	-	-	n/a	↑	↓	↓	Yes
No. of registrations to employability programmes (Oct-Dec 22)	226	Tracker -	159 ✓	256 x	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of participants on employability programmes progressed into employment / education or training (Oct-Dec 22)	112	Tracker -	108 ✓	92 ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Increase the proportion of residents with higher level skills in line with national levels by 2035 (2021)	32.4%	Tracker -	31.6% ✓	31.6% ✓			→	↓	↑	→	No
Narrow the gap between no. of private sector employments per 10,000 pop'n within County Durham and England (2021)	2,877	Tracker -	2,651 ✓	2,651 ✓	x	x	↓	↑	↓	↑	No
Narrow the gap between no. of private sector business per 10,000 pop'n within County Durham and England (2022)	274	Tracker -	271 ✓	263 ✓			→	↑	↑	↑	No
Gross jobs created / safeguarded as a result of Business Durham activity (Jan-Mar 23)	647	375 ✓	1,269 x	1,001 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	Yes
No. of businesses supported by Business Durham (engagements) (Jan-Mar 23)	261	250 ✓	571 x	204 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↑	Yes

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 Business Durham floor space that is occupied	90.07% (Jan-Mar 23)	85% ✓	98.5% x	86.4% ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
No. of new businesses supported by CED Team	85 (Jan-Mar 23)	30 ✓	67 ✓	41 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
No. of inward investments secured	7 (Jan-Mar 23)	6 ✓	7 ○	4 ✓	-	-	→	→	↑	↑	Yes
Amount of investments secured for companies	£915,409 (Jan-Mar 23)	£1,250,000 x	£3,584,705 x	-	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Increase employment land approved and delivered by 300 hectares (Ha) by 2035	5.51Ha (2021/22)	15.8Ha x	36.69Ha x	17.29Ha x	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	No
Increase the number of organisations involved in the Better Health at Work Award	75 (March 23)	Tracker -	87 x	75 ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Attract 11.96 million visitors to the county in 2021 (5% increase on 2020)	15.77m (2021)	11.96m ✓	11.39m ✓	11.39m ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	£826.6m (2021)	£608.4m ✓	£506.7m ✓	£506.7m ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	10,063 (2021)	8,153 ✓	6,794 ✓	6,794 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Increase the proportion of visitor attractions which are served by public transport (against 2019 baseline)	67% (Dec 2022)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	Yes
No. of tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham	230 (2022)	Tracker -	236 x	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No

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					
No. of people attending cultural events / programme events	96,745 (2022)	Tracker -	185,132 <sup>2</sup> x	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	↓	Yes
No. of people attending council owned cultural venues (Killhope, DLI & town halls)	35,231 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	-	-	-	-	new PI	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Average number of tickets sold per cinema and theatre screening/performance during the quarter	61 (Jan-Mar 23)	TBC	56 ✓	74 x	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
No. of library members <sup>30</sup>	215,398 (Apr-Jun 22)	Tracker -	229,793 x	233,904 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	No
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓	96.1% x			→	↑	↓	↑	No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions <sup>31</sup>	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x	65% ○			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
Improve the average grade of achievement of all our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (in line with 2030 ambitions)	new PI	5 by 2030	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	94.7% (March 2023)	above N / NE ○	94.6% ✓	85.6% ✓			↑	↓	↑	↑	Yes
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (March 2023)	Tracker -	8.5% x	6.8% ✓			↑	↓	↓	↑	Yes

<sup>30</sup> PI on hold

<sup>31</sup> Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place

<sup>2</sup> 2021 figures include Lumiere visitors

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					
Number of council owned/managed heritage assets classed as 'at risk'	3 (2022)	Tracker -	3 ○	2 x	-	-	→	→	↓	→	No
Reduce the number of heritage assets 'at risk' that are categorised as 'Priority A' and/or in 'very bad condition'	6 (2022)	Tracker -	7 ✓	8 ✓	-	-	→	→	↑	↑	No
No. of households receiving energy advice from Managing Money Better (MMB) Initiative	70 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	154 x	209 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	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					
County Durham to become net zero by 2045	57 (2020)	Tracker -	54 ✓	54 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↑	No
Reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 (reduction from 1990 baseline)	57% (2021/22)	Tracker -	58% ○	51% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	No
Work towards Durham City Air Quality Management Area NO2 levels being below the govt threshold of 40µg/m3	65% (2021)	100% x	96% x	96% x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	No
Plant a minimum of 140,000 trees by 2024	12,586 (2022/23)	Tracker -	40,414	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	Yes
% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	37.5% (Jan - Dec 22)	Tracker -	38.0% ○	41.1% x			↑	→	↓	↓	Yes
Increase the proportion of waste diverted from landfill to at least 95%	89.6% (Jan - Dec 22)	95% x	89.4% ✓	97.8% x			→	↑	↑	↓	Yes

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					
Contamination rate (%)	35.2% (Jan - Dec 22)	Tracker -	33.4% x	29.95% x	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Raise cycling and walking levels in County Durham in line with national levels by 2035	67.7% (2020/21)	Tracker -	68% ○	68% ○			↑	↓	↑	↓	No
% overall satisfaction with cycle routes & facilities (confidence intervals +/-4pp)	52% (2022)	Tracker -	54% ✓	-			-	→	→	→	No

## Our People

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					
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development (reported as academic year)	64.5% (2021/22)	Tracker -	N/A	-			↓	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	86.5% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	x	✓	↑	↑	↑	n/a	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	94.3% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	✓	✓					Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	75.3% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	x	✓					Yes
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,366 (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	4,065 -	3,496 -	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes

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						
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	105 [1,071] (at 31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	96 [Mar 22]	-	-	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	381 [3,885] (at 31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	386 [Mar 23]			-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of Children Looked After placed within 20 miles of their home address	85% (at 31 Mar 22)	Tracker -	87% [2020/21] ○	89% x	✓	✓	↓	↓	→	↑		No
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	1,384 (Apr 22-Mar 23)	760 [2022/23] ✓	693 ✓	311 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑		Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight <sup>32</sup> <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	Not reported	74.6% ○	○	○	-	-	-	→		No
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	59.2% (2021/22)	79% x	Not reported	61.5% ○	○	○	-	-	-	→		No
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x	20.2pp ✓	-	x	↑	↑	↓	↑		No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	12.7% (Oct-Dec 22)	0% x	14.0% ✓	16.3% ✓	x	x	↑	↑	↓	↓		Yes
% of smoking prevalence in adults (aged 18+) <sup>33</sup>	16.2% (2021)	5.0% x	16.5% ✓	17.0% ✓	x	x	↑	↑	↓	↓		No

<sup>32</sup> National Child Measurement Programme ceased March 2020 when schools closed due to the pandemic, therefore, north east and nearest neighbour comparators should be treated with caution due to missing data from some LAs. Whilst the data for the academic year 2020/21 has been published, local authority data is not available as only a 10% sample of data was recorded.

<sup>33</sup> Smoking prevalence: prior to COVID-19 this was collected via face-to-face interviews. In 2020, this moved to telephone interviews resulting in a potential bias in the sample and meaning that results were not comparable with previous years. To allow comparability the ONS have updated the weighting methodology to remove the effect of the mode change.

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 self-reported wellbeing (by reducing the proportion of people reporting a low happiness score) <i>Confidence intervals +/-2.4pp</i>	11.0% (2021/22)	Tracker -	8.8% ○	10.9% ○	x	x	→	→	→	→	No
Reduce the overall suicide rate (per 100,000 population)	15.8% (2019-21)	Tracker -	14.3% x	14.3% x	x	x	↑	↑	↑	↑	No
No. of admissions under the Mental Health Act	194 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	180	155	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Healthy life expectancy at birth – female	59.9 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	58.3 years ✓	-	x	✓	↓	↓	↓	↑	No
Healthy life expectancy at 65 – female	10.2 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	9.0 years ✓	-	x	✓	↓	↑	↑	↑	No
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at birth – female	4.0 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	5.2 years ✓	-	-	✓	↑	↑	↓	↓	No
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at 65 – female	1.1 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	2.1 years ✓	-	-	✓	↑	↓	↓	↓	No
Healthy life expectancy at birth – male	58.8 years (2018-20)	Tracker --	59.6 years ○	-	x	x	↓	↑	↑	↓	No
Healthy life expectancy at 65 – male	7.7 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	8.3 years x	-	x	x	↓	↑	↓	↓	No
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at birth – male	4.3 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	3.6 years x	-	-	x	↑	↓	↓	↑	No
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at 65 – male	2.8 years (2018-20)	Tracker -	2.3 years x	-	-	x	↑	↓	↑	↑	No



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					
No. of people attending Leisure Centres	812,455 (Jan-March 23)	814,219 ○	812,154 ○	814,219 ○	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of gym & swim members	19,377 (Jan-March 23)	22,387 x	18,784 ✓	18,013 ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
% of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months	60.4% (Apr 22-Mar 23)	Tracker -	65.0% x	87.8% x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	Yes
% of individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process	91.8% (Apr 22-Mar 23)	Tracker -	<sup>34</sup> 92.6% ○	94.9% x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Increase the satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support <i>Confidence intervals +/-4.3pp</i>	64.5% (2021/22)	Tracker -	69.6% ○	69.6% ○	✓	x	→	→	→	→	No
Increase the satisfaction of carers with the support and services they receive <i>Confidence intervals +/-5.1pp</i>	40.8% (2021/22)	Tracker -	51.2% x	51.2% x	✓	x	n/a	↓	↑	↓	No
Increase % of hospital discharges receiving reablement	2.2% (2021/22)	Tracker -	2.7% x	3.8% x	x	x	↑	↓	↓	↓	No
Increase % of older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services	88.3% (Jan-Dec 22)	84.0% ✓	88.7% ○	85.8% ✓	✓	✓	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
Increase the average age whereby people are able to remain living independently in their own home	84.2 years (Apr 22-Mar 23)	Tracker -	84.4 years ○	84.2 years ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↓	→	Yes
Adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care	685.6 (Apr 22 – Mar 23)	644.2 x	626.4 x	757.3 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↑	Yes

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 % of people aged 65+ with aids and assistive technologies in their homes	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
No. of Care Connect customers	11,021 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	11,315 x	12,015 x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Increase no. homes approved meeting accessible and adaptable standards by 5,613 by 2035	510 (2021/22)	400 ✓	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Deliver at least 600 homes suitable for older persons by 2035	245 (2021/22)	43 ✓	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
No. of Chapter Homes houses built which are for Older Persons	0 (Jan-Mar 23)	TBC	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	↓	→	↓	Yes
No. of Chapter Homes houses built which meet M4(2) standard	0 (Jan-Mar 23)	TBC	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	↓	→	↓	Yes
No. of Council houses built which are for Older Persons <sup>35</sup>	0 (Oct-Dec 22)	TBC	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	↓	→	No
No. of Council houses built which meet M4(2) standard <sup>26</sup>	0 (Oct-Dec 22)	TBC	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	↓	→	No
No. of households accessing the Housing Solutions Service	3,806 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	3,594 ✓	3,361 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of households helped to stay in their home	1,141 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of households helped to move to alternative accommodation	226 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	239 x	243 x	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↑	Yes

<sup>35</sup> PI on hold

## 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					
Respondents who agree that police and local authorities are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter to them <i>(confidence intervals +/-3.5pp)</i>	28.2%  (2023)	Tracker  -	30.7% (2021)  ■	30.4% (2020)  ■	-	-	→	n/a	n/a	→	Yes
Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	27.5  (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker  -	23.6  x	24.3  x	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
Rate of theft offences per 1,000 population	6.6  (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker  -	5.8  x	6.6  ■	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
Proportion of all offenders who re-offend in a 12 month period (%)	30.6%  (Apr-Jun 19)	Tracker  -	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
Proven re-offending by young people (who offend) in a 12 month period (%)	33.5%  (2019/20)	Tracker  -	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10 to 17 (per 100,000 population aged 10 to 17)	147  (Oct 20-Sep 21)	Tracker  -	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
% of violent crime incidents which were alcohol related	33.3%  (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker  -	32.2%  ■	31.7%  ■	-	-	→	↑	→	→	Yes
No. of alcohol seizures	194  (Apr-Jun 2018)	Tracker  -	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
% of successful completions of those in alcohol treatment	31.1%  (Feb 22-Jan 23)	Tracker  -	37.8%  x	27.3%  ✓	-	✓	↑	→	→	↓	Yes
% of successful completions of those in drug treatment – opiates	5.3%  (Feb 22-Jan 23)	Tracker  -	6.3%  ✓	5.9%  ■	-	✓	→	→	→	↓	Yes

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 successful completions of those in drug treatment – non-opiates	32.2% (Feb 22-Jan 23)	Tracker -	35.5% x	29% ✓	-	✓	↑	↓	→	↓	Yes
Reports of anti-social behaviour	51,504 (Apr 22-Mar-23)	Tracker -	60,854 ✓	36,127 x	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
Reports of environmental anti-social behaviour	35,931 (Apr 22-Mar-23)	Tracker -	41,834 ✓	20,606 x	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
Reports of nuisance anti-social behaviour	13,356 (Apr 22-Mar-23)	Tracker -	15,840 ✓	13,612 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Reports of personal anti-social behaviour	2,217 (Apr 22-Mar-23)	Tracker -	3,180 ✓	1,909 x	-	-	↓	↓	→	↓	Yes
% anti-social behaviour incidents which were alcohol related	7.1% (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	10.5% ✓	13.7% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
No. of ASB enforcement action taken	6,077 2022/23	Tracker -	4,651 ✓	2,636 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of Harbour <sup>36</sup> clients feeling more confident in themselves on case closure	87% (Oct-Dec 22)	Tracker -	81% ✓	-	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	No
% of Harbour <sup>36</sup> clients feeling their quality of life has improved on case closure	83% (Oct-Dec 22)	Tracker -	76% ✓	-	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	No
% of children and young people completing an intervention with Harbour <sup>36</sup> and reporting feeling safer	84% (Oct-Dec 22)	Tracker -	84% ■	-	-	-	→	↑	↓	→	No

<sup>36</sup> Harbour - a specialist domestic abuse service that helps people living in County Durham. Harbour provides support to both victims of domestic abuse and perpetrators of abuse

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					
Children and young people reviewed as at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	45 (Oct-Dec 22)	Tracker -	n/a	n/a	-	-	↑	↓	n/a	n/a	No
No. of business supported through regeneration projects	19 (Jan-Mar 23)	20 ■	new PI	new PI	-	-	n/a	↑	↓	↓	Yes
Increase occupancy rate of all town centres to above national levels by 2035	46% (2022/23)	Tracker -	46% ■	62% x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	→	No
Public satisfaction with ease of access <i>(confidence intervals +/-4pp)</i>	73% (2022)	Tracker -	77% ✓	-	-	-	→	→	→		No
Maintain levels of satisfaction with bus operators at a minimum of 92% <i>(confidence intervals +/-4pp)</i>	92% (2019)	92% ✓	91% ✓	92% ✓	-	-					No
Increase the % of households (within a 5 mile or 15 mile radius) which can access key service locations using public transport	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Increase the % of County Durham residents who can access employment sites by public transport	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
% of A roads where maintenance is recommended	3.7% (2022)	Tracker -	3.0% ✓	3.0% ✓			↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of B roads where maintenance is recommended	3.3% (2022)	Tracker -	3.1% ✓	3.3% ■			↓	→	↓	↓	Yes
% of C roads where maintenance is recommended	3.5% (2022)	Tracker -	2.3% ✓	2.3% ✓			↓	→	↓	↑	Yes
% of unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	25.0% (2022)	Tracker -	22.8% ✓	21.3% ✓			→	↑	↑	↑	Yes

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					
Bridge Stock Condition – Principal Roads	82.0% (2020)	Tracker -	81.1% ✓	81.1% ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	No
% of recorded Category 1 highway defects repaired within 24 hours	88% (Jan-Mar 22)	90% x	98% x	98% x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Maintain a downward trend in the amount of Highways Maintenance Backlog	£171.2m (2020)	Tracker -	£172.6m ✓	£171.2m ■	-	-					No
Aim to increase levels of public satisfaction with highways maintenance above the national average. (confidence intervals +/-4pp)	47% (2022)	Tracker -	50% ✓	46% ✓	-	-	-	→	→	→	No
No. of people KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities	6 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	4 x	5 x	-	-	→	→	→	↑	Yes
No. of people KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of seriously injured	26 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	51 ✓	41 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of children KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities	0 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	1 ✓	0 ■	-	-	↓	→	→	→	Yes
No. of children KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of seriously injured	2 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	7 ✓	4 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	→	→	Yes
Increase net delivery of affordable homes to contribute to meeting identified need of 12,540 by 2035	536 (2021/22)	836 x	478 ✓	628 x	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↑	No
No. of Council houses built <sup>37</sup>	0 (Oct-Dec 22)	TBC	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	↓	→	No

<sup>37</sup> PI on hold

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					
No. of Chapter Homes properties sold	8 (Jan-March 23)	Tracker -	5 ✓	-	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
Increase net delivery of new housing by 19,620 units by 2035	202 (Jan-Mar 23)	327 x	353 x	431 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Bring 200 empty homes back into use per year as a result of local authority intervention	31 (Jan-Mar 23)	50 x	37 x	48 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Achieve 100% licensing of private rented sector properties covered by the Selective Licensing Scheme by 2027	28% (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
No. of fully licensed private rented sector properties in the selective licensed areas	8,226 (Jan-Mar)	Tracker -	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
Reduce ASB rates (per 10,000 population) within the Selective Licensing Scheme areas by 10% (against the 2021 baseline)	170 (Oct-Dec 22)	224.27 x	249.19 x	new PI	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Return the number of fly-tipping incidents to at least pre-COVID levels by 2035	5,614 (2022/23)	6,548 ✓	5,645 ✓	6,548 ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - detritus	11.37% (Nov 22 – Feb 23)	12% ✓	10.07% x	13.4% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	Yes
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - litter	5.78% (Nov 22 – Feb 23)	6% ✓	4.74% x	6.6% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↑	Yes
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - dog fouling	1.58% (Nov 22 – Feb 23)	1% x	1.68% ✓	1.6% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↑	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					
MTFP targets achieved	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Audit opinion (Q – qualified / UQ – unqualified)	UQ (draft) (31 Mar 22)	UQ ✓	UQ ○	UQ ○	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	→	No
% of council tax collected	95.9% (2022/23)	95.5% ✓	95.5% ✓	96.4% ○	-	-	-	-	-	↑	Yes
% of business rates collected	98.4% (2022/23)	98.4% ✓	98.4% ✓	98.2% ✓	-	-	-	-	-	→	Yes
No. of new council tax reduction claims processed	3,763 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	3,359 -	4,254 -	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↑	Yes
% of new council tax reduction claims processed within 14 days of all information being received	92.3% (Jan-Mar 23)	85% ✓	57.1% ✓	94.8% x	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↓	Yes
Time to process new council tax reduction claims	16.9 days (Jan-Mar 23)	21 days ✓	41.8 days ✓	13.7 days x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↑	Yes
Time to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction	4.9 days (Jan-Mar 23)	9 days ✓	4.8 days ○	5.7 days ✓	-	-	↓	↓	↓	→	Yes
No. of change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims processed	40,791 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	37,387	39,128	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	Yes
No. of new housing benefit claims processed	775 (Jan-Mar 23)	Tracker -	623	650	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↑	Yes
% of new housing benefit claims processed within 14 days of all information being received	81.3% (Jan-Mar 23)	85% x	50.2% ✓	94.6% x	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes



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					
Time to process new housing benefit claims (days)	18.2 days (Jan-Mar 23)	21 days ✓	49 days ✓	10.9 days x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↑	Yes
No. of change of circumstances for housing benefit claims	28,496 (Oct-Dec 22)	Tracker -	30,988 -	36,594 -	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↑	Yes
Time to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims	2.7 days (Jan-Mar 23)	9 days ✓	11.6 days ✓	2.5 days ○	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes
Days / shifts lost to sickness absence per FTE Time Equivalent (excluding schools)	11.43 days (2022/23)	Tracker -	11.59 days ○	10.87 days x	-	-	↑	↓	→	↓	Yes
Days / shifts lost to sickness absence per FTE - excluding COVID-19 related (excluding schools)	10.5 days (2022/23)	Tracker -	10.3 days ○	10.87 days ✓	-	-	↑	↑	→	↓	Yes
No. of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme - new posts	296 (31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	256 ✓	258 ✓	-	-	↑	→	↑	↑	Yes
No. of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme - existing staff upskilling	324 (31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	252 ✓	196 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↑	Yes
% of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme	4.1% (31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	2.3% ✓	1.4% ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of employees aged over 50 years	42.8% (31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	43.0% -	42.1% -	-	-	↓	↑	→	↑	Yes
Employee turnover	9.3% (2022/23)	Tracker -	9.0% -	7.2% -	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of CRM service requests received which were self-serve	69% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% ○	49% ✓	-	-	↑	→	↑	↓	Yes

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 respondents satisfied with overall service delivery with services requested through the CRM	81% (2022/23)	Tracker -	82% ○	81% ✓	-	-	↑	→	→	↓	Yes
% FOI and EIR requests responded to within 20 working days	74% (Jan-Mar 23)	95% x	83% x	86% x	-	-	↑	→	↑	↓	Yes

## Appendix 3: Direction of Travel Comparisons

		Direction of Travel (12 months previous)				Direction of Travel (pre-COVID)			
		Not available	Improving	Static	Deteriorating	Not available	Improving	Static	Deteriorating
Performance to Target	No target set - tracker	36	42	18	23	52	32	12	23
	Meeting or exceeding target	2	16	4	5	2	19	3	3
	Within 2% of target	1		1		1		1	
	More than 2% behind target	3	5		9	3	3	2	9

No target set – tracker (improving)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Increase the level of GVA per filled job in line with national levels by 2035	Static
Increase the employment rate for 16-64-year-olds in line with national levels by 2035	Improving
Increase the overall disability employment rate / close the gap	Improving
No. of registrations to employability programmes	Deteriorating
No. of participants on employability programmes progressed into employment / education or training	Improving
Increase the proportion of residents with higher level skills in line with national levels by 2035	Improving
Narrow the gap between no. of private sector business per 10,000 pop'n within County Durham and England	Improving
Narrow the gap between no. of private sector employments per 10,000 pop'n within County Durham and England	Improving
Average number of tickets sold per cinema and theatre screening/performance during the quarter	Deteriorating
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	Deteriorating
Reduce the number of heritage assets 'at risk' that are categorised as 'Priority A' and/or in 'very bad condition'	Improving
County Durham to become net zero by 2045	Improving
Overall satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities (%)	Not available
Healthy life expectancy at birth – female	Not available
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at birth – female	Not available

No target set – tracker (improving)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Healthy life expectancy at 65 – female	Not available
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at 65 – female	Not available
No. of households accessing the Housing Solutions Service	Improving
% of successful completions of those in drug treatment – opiates	Static
Reports of anti-social behaviour	Deteriorating
Reports of environmental anti-social behaviour	Deteriorating
Reports of nuisance anti-social behaviour	Improving
Reports of personal anti-social behaviour	Deteriorating
% of anti-social behaviour incidents which were alcohol related	Improving
No. of ASB enforcement action taken	Improving
Public satisfaction with ease of access	Not available
% of A roads where maintenance is recommended	Improving
% of B roads where maintenance is recommended	Static
% of C roads where maintenance is recommended	Improving
% of unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	Improving
Bridge Stock Condition – Principal Roads	Improving
Maintain a downward trend in the amount of Highways Maintenance Backlog	Static
Aim to increase levels of public satisfaction with highways maintenance above the national average.	Improving
No. of people KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of seriously injured	Improving
No. of children KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities	Improving
No. of children KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of seriously injured	Static
No. of Chapter Homes properties sold	Not available
No. of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme - new posts	Improving
No. of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme - existing staff upskilling	Improving
% of employees enrolled on the apprenticeship programme	Improving
% of Harbour clients feeling their quality of life has improved on case closure	Not available
% of Harbour clients feeling more confident in themselves on case closure	Not available

No target set – tracker (static)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Number of council owned/managed heritage assets classed as 'at risk'	Deteriorating
Reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030	Improving
% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	Deteriorating
Raise cycling and walking levels in County Durham in line with national levels by 2035	Static
% of Children Looked After placed within 20 miles of their home address	Deteriorating
Increase self-reported wellbeing (by reducing the proportion of people reporting a low happiness score)	Static
Healthy life expectancy at birth – male	Not available
% of individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process	Deteriorating
Increase the satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support	Static
Increase the average age whereby people are able to remain living independently in their own home	Improving
Respondents who agree that police and local authorities are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter to them	Static
% of violent crime incidents which were alcohol related	Static
Increase occupancy rate of all town centres to above national levels by 2035	Deteriorating
% of CRM service requests received which were self-serve	Improving
% of respondents satisfied with overall service delivery with services requested through the CRM	Improving
Days / shifts lost to sickness absence per FTE Time Equivalent (excluding schools)	Deteriorating
Days / shifts lost to sickness absence per FTE - excluding COVID-19 related	Improving
% of children and young people completing an intervention with Harbour and reporting feeling safer	Not available

No target set – tracker (deteriorating)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Increase the number of organisations involved in the Better Health at Work Award	Improving
No. of tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham	Not available
No. of people attending cultural events / programme events	Not available
No. of library members	Deteriorating
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions*	Static

No target set – tracker (deteriorating)	Compared to Pre-COVID
No. of households receiving energy advice from Managing Money Better (MMB) Initiative	Deteriorating
Contamination rate (%)	Deteriorating
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	Improving
Reduce the overall suicide rate (per 100,000 population)	Deteriorating
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at birth – male	Not available
Healthy life expectancy at 65 – male	Not available
Reduce the gap between County Durham and England for healthy life expectancy at 65 – male	Not available
% of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months	Deteriorating
Increase the satisfaction of carers with the support and services they receive	Deteriorating
Increase % of hospital discharges receiving reablement	Deteriorating
No. of Care Connect customers	Deteriorating
No. of households helped to move to alternative accommodation	Deteriorating
Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	Deteriorating
Rate of theft per 1,000 population	Static
% of successful completions of those in alcohol treatment	Improving
% of successful completions of those in drug treatment – non-opiates	Improving
No. of people KSI in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities	Deteriorating
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	Improving

Meeting target (improving)	Compared to Pre-COVID
No. of new businesses supported by CED Team	Improving
Attract 11.96 million visitors to the county in 2021 (5% increase on 2020)	Improving
Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	Improving
No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	Improving
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	Improving
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	Improving

Meeting target (improving)	Compared to Pre-COVID
% of smoking prevalence in adults (aged 18+)	Improving
Maintain levels of satisfaction with bus operators at a minimum of 92%	Improving
Return the number of fly-tipping incidents to at least pre-COVID levels by 2035	Improving
% of council tax collected	Static
% of business rates collected	Improving
% of new council tax reduction claims processed within 14 days of all information being received	Deteriorating
Time to process new council tax reduction claims	Deteriorating
Time to process new housing benefit claims (days)	Deteriorating
Time to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims	Static
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	Improving

Meeting target (static)	Compared to Pre-COVID
No. of inward investments secured	Improving
Increase % of older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services	Improving
Audit opinion (Q – qualified / UQ – unqualified)	Static
Time to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction	Improving

Meeting target (deteriorating)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Gross jobs created / safeguarded as a result of Business Durham activity	Improving
No. of businesses supported by Business Durham (engagements)	Improving
% of Business Durham floor space that is occupied	Improving
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - detritus	Improving
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness – litter	Improving

Meeting target (not available)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Increase no. homes approved meeting accessible and adaptable standards by 5,613 by 2035	Not available

Deliver at least 600 homes suitable for older persons by 2035	Not available
Within 2% of target (static)	Compared to Pre-COVID
No. of people attending Leisure Centres	Static
Within 2% of target (not available)	Compared to Pre-COVID
No. of business supported through regeneration projects	Not available
More than 2% behind target (improving)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Increase the proportion of waste diverted from landfill to at least 95%	Deteriorating
No. of gym & swim members	Improving
Increase net delivery of affordable homes to contribute to meeting identified need of 12,540 by 2035	Deteriorating
% of land which falls below unacceptable levels of cleanliness - dog fouling	Improving
% of new housing benefit claims processed within 14 days of all information being received	Deteriorating
More than 2% behind target (deteriorating)	Compared to Pre-COVID
Amount of investments secured for companies	Not available
Increase employment land approved and delivered by 300 hectares (Ha) by 2035	Deteriorating
Work towards Durham City Air Quality Management Area NO2 levels being below the govt threshold of 40µg/m3	Deteriorating
Adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care	Improving
% of recorded Category 1 highway defects repaired within 24 hours	Deteriorating
Increase net delivery of new housing by 19,620 units by 2035	Deteriorating
Bring 200 empty homes back into use per year as a result of local authority intervention	Deteriorating
Reduce ASB rates (per 10,000 population) within the Selective Licensing Scheme areas by 10%	Not available
% FOI and EIR requests responded to within 20 working days	Deteriorating



More than 2% behind target (not available)	Compared to Pre-COVID
FTE jobs created through regeneration schemes	Not available
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight	Static
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight	Static

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**16 June 2023**

**Customer Feedback Report,  
Quarter Four, 2022/23**



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

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital and  
Customer Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present an overview of the wide range of information collected from our customers that describe their experiences of using our services.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter four 2022/23, January to March 2023.

**Executive summary**

- 3 Information, such as our customers' satisfaction / dissatisfaction with and general experiences of the services and support we provide, is an important resource for improving customer service and aligning our actions with customer need.
- 4 This report covers a range of feedback and performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages under three summary sections of going well, areas which require attention and using feedback to inform learning.

**Context**

- 5 2022/23 has continued to be a challenging period with COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis all impacted on our residents, our businesses, and the council.

- 6 The cost-of-living crisis has steadily worsened over the last 12 months and high inflation, currently at 10.1%<sup>1</sup>, has largely been driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills. This is driving demand for services which support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis, as well as services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.
- 7 We are continuing to receive more contact from households seeking financial assistance, with a continuing high volume of applications for Welfare Assistance. Applications to both elements of our scheme increased during 2022/23, although the increase in claims for Daily Living Expenses<sup>2</sup> was more significant (10,812 this year, compared to 4,875 last year) than the increase in claims for Settlement Grants<sup>3</sup> (1,576 claims this year, compared to 1,310 last year).
- 8 We continue to support residents through the crisis with various initiatives and funds, including our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, food and fun initiatives, food surplus activity and 'cutting the cost of the school day' initiative.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 9 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and cost-of-living on the councils' performance.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to March 2023. Indicative [modelled consumer price inflation estimates](#) suggest that the CPI rate would have last been higher in October 1981, where the estimate for the annual inflation rate was 11.2%.

<sup>2</sup> helps people whose circumstances change unexpectedly and who do not have access to money. It provides help with daily living expenses (for up to seven days) – includes food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).

<sup>3</sup> helps people stay in their home, or move back into housing, after living in supported or unsettled accommodation, e.g., when leaving care or having been made homeless. It includes help towards beds and/or bedding, furniture, white goods (for example, cooker, fridge, washing machine), kitchen equipment, floor coverings, curtains, removal costs.

## Background

- 10 Successful organisations listen and respond to their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback. This can then be used to inform learning and continuous improvement across services.

## Analysis of Customer Feedback

### Going well

- 11 Customer contacts through our reported channels<sup>4</sup> continue to reflect the impact of transferring telephone lines to our automated call distribution system. However, we estimate there has been a ‘true’ increase in customer contact of around 5%, with an additional 55,000 calls, mainly driven by increases across council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 12 The increase in digital contact from 15% of all contact before the pandemic to 21% has largely been driven by behavioural change because of process changes implemented during the pandemic (the introduction of service requests through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This is broadly in line with the situation at quarter three.
- 13 In addition, more customers are signing up to digital accounts. Compared to pre-pandemic: an extra 44,000 have do-it-online accounts (up 34%), an additional 55,941 have open portal system accounts (up 165%) and a further 47,724 receive council tax bills via e-mail (up 132%).
- 14 As we have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through delivery of our digital programme, face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has continued to decline and is now around two-thirds of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs<sup>5</sup>. This is subject to a MTFP (13) saving proposal that was factored into the budget forecasts for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The outcome of the consultation is due to be presented to Cabinet for consideration in July.
- 15 Although service demand has increased in recent years, corporate complaints have remained relatively static. The number received averages around 2,500 each year, the percentage upheld is consistent –

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<sup>4</sup> contacts received through the ACD, face to face through our CAPs, do-it-online, webchat, social media and email.

<sup>5</sup> Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley

at around 62%, and the main cause for complaint continues to be missed collections (around 15% of complaints).

- 16 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery<sup>6</sup> which is in line with previous reports. The following are examples of services which attained an overall satisfaction rating of more than 94%: birth, death, or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).
- 17 95% of visitors to our theatres and cinemas who responded to our survey, rated their 'whole experience' as 'good' or 'very good'. High levels of satisfaction were experienced in all venues, and across all areas except food and drink facilities. This is consistent with previous reports.
- 18 During quarter four, we continued to progress initiatives that will enhance the customer experience. Our Chatbot project (to reduce avoidable contact and provide digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website) and our pilot scheme to improve location accuracy using what3words, were both launched. We also tested customer satisfaction surveys via text message at the end of telephone calls and incorporating real time information within the telephony voice recognition system – a full launch is scheduled for quarter one 23/24.

### **Areas which require attention**

- 19 40% of service request types (78 of 196), equating to around 68% of service requests, can be assessed against a performance standard. Although 80% met the performance standard during quarter four, 21 service areas (equating to 10,816 service requests or 12%) did not in more than half of cases.
- 20 Although, on average, 81% of respondents to our CRM satisfaction survey were satisfied with service delivery, some service areas attained lower rates, e.g., complaints (47%), tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%), generic enquiries (63%).
- 21 The main drivers for dissatisfaction remain timeliness, insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned. Dissatisfaction with progress updates related to three specific areas: returning for a missed bin, complaints, and actions following a missed bulky waste collection.
- 22 Although we are responding to a greater proportion of first stage complaints within the performance standard (77% compared to 67% for the same period last year), we have identified that if the responses were

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<sup>6</sup> Services requested through the CRM

timelier or more comprehensive overall, up to 29% fewer complaints would have escalated to independent investigation. We continue to work with service areas to resolve this issue.

- 23 The report in Appendix 2 provides the detailed update on Customer Feedback during quarter four 2022/23 and the actions put into place as a result.

### **Using feedback to inform learning**

- 24 During quarter four, we continued with our data analytics project which will provide interactive dashboards and combine data to give new insights about our residents and service users. Social care (adult and children) has been prioritised and we expect those new reports to go live in the system during quarter one.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- Previous Customer Feedback reports presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report.

### **Consultation**

None.

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

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.



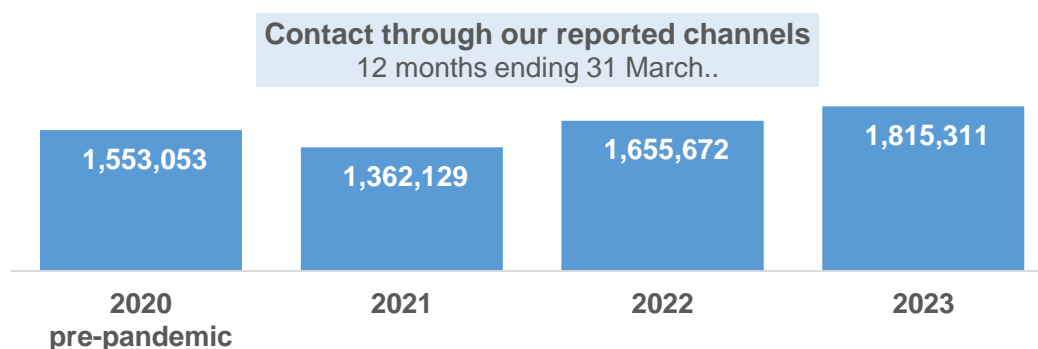


# Durham County Council Customer Feedback Report Quarter Four, 2022/23



## Contact through our reported channels<sup>7</sup>

- 1 Overall contact through our reported channels has been increasing for several years. During the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, we received more than 1.8 million contacts.



- 2 Although most of the increase is artificial<sup>8</sup>, caused by the transfer of existing telephone lines to our automatic call distribution (ACD) system<sup>9</sup>, we estimate overall contact to be around 5% higher than the pre-pandemic volume (+55,000 contacts). The increase has mainly been driven by more contacts in relation to council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 3 Most contact (79%) is non-digital, driven by the continuing popularity of the telephone. Face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has been declining in recent years and is now around a third of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs<sup>10</sup>.
- 4 However, digital contact is increasing in popularity and now accounts for 21% of all contact, compared to 15% pre-pandemic. This increase has largely been driven by behavioural change due to process changes implemented during the pandemic (more service requests made available through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This change is also reflected by more customers registering to use our digital tools.

<sup>7</sup> Through our ACD telephone system, Customer Access Points, Do-It-Online, webchat, e-mail to customer services, social media

<sup>8</sup> As we can't migrate past data, the transferred lines create artificial increases in call volume

<sup>9</sup> Telephone calls are received either through our ACD system, which routes calls to groups of agents on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension non-ACD. Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics. When we transfer non-ACD lines into the ACD system, there is no past data. Consequently, it appears that call volume has increased.

<sup>10</sup> Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley

Account		Pre-pandemic volume	12 months ending 31 March		Change since pre-pandemic	
			2022	2023		
Do-it-online (CRM)		129,876	158,763	174,288	+44,412	+34%
Revenues & Benefits	Open Portal	33,876	70,980	89,817	+55,941	+165%
	Council tax e-bills	36,193	64,398	83,917	+47,724	+132%

## Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and charges (12 months ending 31 March)

<b>27</b> objections to our decisions (-10)	<b>43</b> dissatisfied with fees and charges (-6)	<b>101</b> comments about policies / procedures (+16)
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- 5 The objections to our decisions covered a variety of topics. The most frequent topic was dissatisfaction with road closures. However, there were also objections to our decisions to turn down the customer's application for welfare assistance, blue badges, or bus passes. Two objections were received that related to the planning decision concerning the police radio mast at Aykley Heads.
- 6 In relation to dissatisfaction with fees and charges, 60% related to one of three services: replacement bins (10), leisure centres (10) or council tax (six).
- 7 More than three quarters of the comments received expressed dissatisfaction with our waste policies and procedures (79 comments). The comments were distributed between our kerbside collection policies (e.g., side waste or contamination) and procedures at our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) (e.g., the type of vehicle that can use the HWRCs).

## Performance Standards

- 8 78 of 196 service request types can be assessed against a performance standard. This equates to 68% of service requests recorded in our CRM system during quarter four – of these, 80% met their performance standard.
- 9 23 service request types (around 30%) met their performance standard for more than 80% of requests. This included: assisted bin collection (99%); public rights of way (92%); road or footpath obstruction (85%) and street lighting (83%).

- 10 However, 21 service request types (27%) met the performance standard for fewer than 50% of requests. This included: rubbish in gardens and yards (49%); road signs (42%) and grass cutting, shrubs and flower beds (40%).

### **Customer suggestions**

- 11 Whilst we receive and review all suggestions, most have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development. Many cannot be implemented, for example changes to traffic light sequences or road layouts, as they would have knock-on effects elsewhere.
- 12 A small sample of customer suggestions received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix three.

### **Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback**

- 13 Although most compliments relate to satisfaction with service provision, we continue to receive praise specific to the actions of our staff.
- 14 In relation to our star rating system<sup>11</sup>, just over 91% of respondents (72,866) rated the service as three star or above. Almost nine percent of respondents rated the service as less than three star (6,889).
- 15 A small sample of the compliments and star rating feedback received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix four and five.

### **Customer satisfaction through the CRM<sup>12</sup>**

- 16 Although 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery, which is in line with previous reports, the rate varies across service requests.
- 17 Service requests attaining a satisfaction rating of at least 90% include: birth, death, or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).
- 18 Service requests attaining an overall satisfaction rating of less than 70% include: complaints (47%); tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%); generic enquiries (63%).

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<sup>11</sup> initial contact and the online experience

<sup>12</sup> Customer satisfaction surveys are automatically e-mailed to the customer when their service request is closed within the CRM. The response rate has improved over the last two years and is currently around 5.3% of service requests. As the results are taken from a sample survey, we are carrying out further work to determine if the results are statistically relevant.

19 The main driver for dissatisfaction with overall service delivery remains timeliness (of both acknowledgment and response), insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned.

20 We also collect satisfaction data relating to specific elements of our process, and during the 12 months ending the 31 March 2023:

- 92% found it easy to contact the right service
- 87% were provided with clear information
- 78% were informed of how long it would take to complete the task
- 97% felt their request was handled knowledgeably and effectively handled
- 86% were satisfied with our handling of the initial contact
- 72% were kept informed of progress.
- 82% were satisfied with the time to complete the task
- 94% felt they were treated with dignity and respect.

21 The lowest satisfaction rate related to being kept informed of progress. Further analysis shows dissatisfaction relating to three specific service areas.

- Not returning for a missed bin within three working days (our performance standard) and not informing the customer as to the reason or when a re-scheduled collection would take place.
- Not keeping customers with open complaints informed of progress.
- Not giving customers an explanation and a re-scheduled collection date when we miss their bulky collection.

### **Customer satisfaction theatres and cinemas: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, and Empire<sup>13</sup>**

22 Across the three venues, respondents rated the following as ‘good’ or ‘very good’:

	Overall	Gala	Bishop Auckland	Empire
Ticket booking experience	95%	95%	94%	94%
Staff welcome	94%	94%	97%	94%
Food and drink facilities	69%	66%	87%	79%
Quality of event	95%	95%	94%	96%
Value for money	96%	96%	94%	96%

<sup>13</sup> January to March 2023

Whole Experience	95%	95%	97%	95%
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23 High levels of satisfaction were experienced in all venues, across all areas except food and drink facilities. This is consistent with previous reports.

### Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations

24 301 requests were received during quarter four, a third more (+75) than the same period last year. We responded to 74% of requests within 20 working days, lower than the target of 95%.

### Priority Correspondence

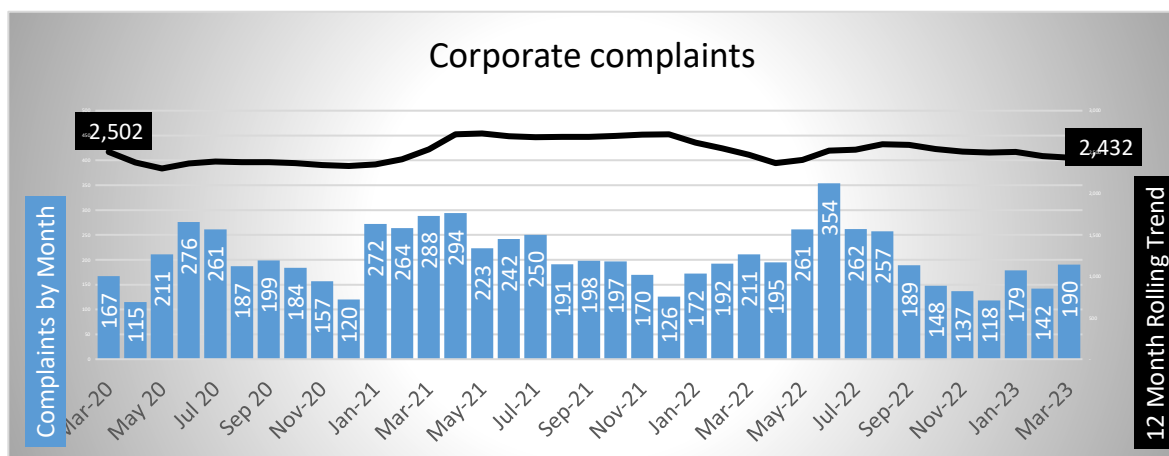
25 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, we received 2,282 items of priority correspondence and responded to 65% (1,487) within the performance standard.

26 The main topics during quarter four were enquiries relating to housing and planning – homelessness and strategic planning, council tax - assessment and awards, and litter/fly-tipping.

### Complaints<sup>14</sup>

#### Corporate Complaints

27 Corporate complaints have remained relatively static in recent years. The number received averages around 2,500 each year, the percentage upheld is consistent – at around 62%, and the main specific cause for complaint continues to be missed collections (around 18% of complaints).



<sup>14</sup> statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints

- 28 During quarter four, around one third of complaints were from customers dissatisfied with the quality of the service we provided. Half of these complaints originated from the frontline services of refuse and recycling (mainly not returning bins to the bin collection point), culture and sport (e.g., cleanliness of the leisure centres, access to swimming lessons), highways maintenance (e.g., general maintenance activities, traffic calming measures) and neighbourhood wardens (most related to the quality of service from the pest control team).
- 29 18% of complaints related to missed bins and of these 80% were upheld. However, this is not considered to be a cause for concern as it equates to fewer than 0.0003% of bins scheduled for collection or one complaint for every 35,000 bins.

### **Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation**

- 30 During quarter four, 77% of independent investigations were responded to within the performance standard, compared to 67% the same period last year.
- 31 However, analysis suggests that up to 29% of complaints escalated to independent investigation could have been avoided if there had been a timelier or more comprehensive update from the service at the first stage response.
- 32 We are continuing to provide training to service teams to improve the quality of first stage responses and reduce the number of complaints escalated. Our ongoing complaints review will help streamline, improve, and enhance the process.
- 33 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigation during quarter four are included in Appendix six.

### **Statutory Complaints: Adult Health Services (AHS)**

- 34 Of the 96 complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 March 2023: 36.5% related to older people/physical disabilities/sensory impairment (35 complaints), 33% to the team dealing with financial assessments/charging (32 complaints) and 16.5% to learning disabilities/mental health/substance misuse (16 complaints).

- 35 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (31 complaints), lack of communication or information (26 complaints) and lack of service/denied service (21 complaints).
- 36 During quarter four, in response to complaints received, we reiterated the importance of making potential users aware of charges for residential care at the time of a needs assessment, and provided training to ensure the addresses of service users were updated when placed in permanent residential care.

### **Statutory Complaints: Children & Young People's Services (CYPS)**

- 37 46 statutory complaints were received over the reporting period, 26% more than the same period last year. Of these, 24% were upheld and 22% partially upheld.
- 38 23 complaints (50%) related to the Families First teams (responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child, and family assessments in cases of parental dispute), 15 complaints (33%) related to teams involved with Children in our care, and 6 complaints (13%) to the Children and Disabilities team. One complaint (2%) related to the Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation team and one complaint (2%) to the Emergency Duty Team.
- 39 Statutory complaints for CYPS are complex and up to three reasons can be recorded for each. Of the 46 complaints, 27 involved communication issues, 14 involved staff behaviour and 12 involved a disagreement.
- 40 During quarter four, in response to complaints received, we reiterated the need to evidence posting dates when sending documents without 'proof of posting'; ensured social workers know how to signpost parents and carers who want to make a complaint; ensured parents are informed in a timely manner if the child's case is closed; and updated the procedure relating to looked after young people who go missing from foster care, requesting carers follow up with a call to the Emergency Duty Team if they do not receive any communication from a social worker after raising the alert.

### **Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)**

- 41 Four of the 26 decisions delivered during quarter four were upheld (15%). Details are included in Appendix seven. Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).



## **Recent developments that enhance the customer experience**

- 42 We are continuing with our data analytics project which will provide interactive dashboards and combine data at a person level to give new insights about our residents and service users. Having prioritised interactive data dashboards for social care (adult and children's), we are expecting those new reports to go live in the system during quarter one.
- 43 A pilot scheme exploring the potential of increasing customer location accuracy using what3words went live across the fly-tipping process in March 2023. The pilot will be fully evaluated in the summer and an update provided at quarter three.
- 44 The Chatbot project, aimed at reducing avoidable contact and providing digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website, continued to progress during quarter four. The project will be launched in April 2023 and evaluated six months later.
- 45 Work to unlock additional functionality within the Eckoh telephony voice recognition system also progressed during quarter four. The telephony interaction customer satisfaction survey was tested, and its launch scheduled for quarter one 2023/24. We will use the survey data to improve the customer experience.

## Appendix 3: Sample of suggestions received during quarter four, 2022/23

**Suggestion:** extend the time that customers can book a Christmas tree collection

**Our Response:** Bookings are open for nearly 4 weeks (from around 12 December to Twelfth Night). We are unable to extend the booking window as it would result in residents waiting more than a month for their tree to be collected. This year, we collected more than 4,500 trees during three weeks in January.

**Suggestion:** reduce membership fees at our leisure centres

**Our Response:** We are currently reviewing our memberships and prices. Any changes will be communicated to customers later this year.

**Suggestion:** allow customers the option of a smaller wheeled bin

**Our Response:** In the past we have offered smaller bins to residents who could manage to pull this out themselves as an alternative to assisted collection. However, since the introduction of alternate weekly collections there has been little demand for a smaller bin.

**Suggestion:** start the garden waste collections sooner.

**Our Response:** We balance the cost of the service (more collections would result in a higher charge) and the amount of garden waste produced (more limited over the winter months).

**Suggestion:** Remove the temporary heavy metal fencing at Baths Bridge (believed to be a COVID measure)

**Our Response:** The fencing is not a COVID measure. The concrete footbridge is showing signs of cracking in the main beams and abutments so is no longer able to operate at full capacity. The temporary fencing is to reduce pedestrian footfall/loading and allow the bridge to remain open. We are working on a scheme to resolve the issue.

**Suggestion:** increase the size of the writing on the signage of the car park in Festival Walk in Spennymoor.

**Our Response:** The sign is designed to a standard size (replicated across all of the car parks we maintain). We have considered if we could reduce the mounting height or reposition the sign to another location to improve readability. However, this is not possible.

**Suggestion:** Can the Gala offer more substantial food choices before performances (only snacks are available).

**Our Response:** Staffing and maintenance issues at Gala café over the last few months has, at times, resulted in a reduced menu. We are currently reviewing our offer.

**Suggestion:** Programmes should be on sale at interval and end of performance, not just prior to show (Gala theatre)

**Our Response:** Programmes are on sale during the interval. There is not a huge demand for programmes post show but they are available to purchase from Front of House staff.

**Suggestion:** develop a mechanism for informing members of leisure centres when the pool is closed due to unforeseen circumstances

**Our Response:** We currently provide information via our website, Facebook and our leisure hub. However, we are developing our App to provide an automated response notification.

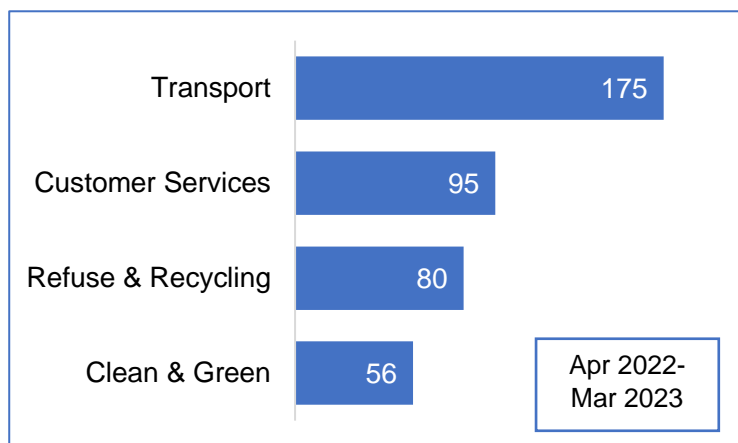
**Suggestion:** extend the opening hours of the football pitches at Consett leisure centre

**Our Response:** Our shared agreement with Consett Academy means we are unable to access the pitch until 5.30pm. However, during school holidays and weekends (and when the pitch is available), children it is available for £1.50 per hour per child.

**Suggestion:** Could the Gala Theatre have a sensory break out room so those with Autism can take breaks from performances when it becomes overwhelming.

**Our Response:** A break out space is available – the details of this are included in the social story for relaxed performances but we will look into additional signage to make this clearer.

## Appendix 4: Sample of compliments received during quarter four, 2022/23



Might I compliment everyone involved in the resurfacing works to the track between Pity Me front street and Newton Hall. It is a much needed improvement to a well used track and the workmen have made a grand job of it.

My mother and I just want to thank you for your help, support and advice during this awful time. Both of us really appreciate all you have done.

A big thank you to all the workers that came and cleaned all the mud off the pavements in Murton. They even cleaned the bus shelter. Fantastic job

I would like to compliment the guys who litter pick/empty bins every week in this village. Without them we would be buried under a mountain of rubbish.

I have recently received some fabulous support from your Welfare Rights team in relation to my elderly dad's finances after an unfortunate change in his circumstances last year

The crew members that emptied my bin this morning were very friendly and had a lovely manner about them. They were smiling and extremely respectful.

I have been in the Consett office 3 times this year and the girls are most helpful and friendly and do a brilliant job nothing is too much trouble thank you

Just wanted to say a big thank you to the winter maintenance/highways team for so promptly gritting and maintaining the local footpaths, as well as the main road, in advance of further icy/snowy weather. Its appreciated by all us local residents.

Clean and Green team cleared some dog fouling behind the back streets of Aged Miners Homes in Willington this morning and cleansed the area. Customer would like to thank them as they did a prompt and amazing job.

Just wanted to say a big thank you to the building control team for prompt action in picking up my request and then going out and resolving the issue with a nearby roof.

I'd like to compliment the park keepers at Wharton Park, Durham. I have regularly walked dogs through the park in recent years and I see the same two park keepers who are doing a tremendous job, year round, keeping the park in superb order.

Wanted to pass on my thanks for the lovely service provided by the Blue Badge Team for helping with my replacement BB. There kindness was very much appreciated.

Caller would like to compliment DCC staff who painted the road markings outside of Lanchester School as it has made a big difference in the safety in the area. Looks a lot tidier and safer for people crossing the road. He said it has made a grand difference - first class

Thank you so much, the council tax team have all gone above and beyond, and have always been so understanding, I really appreciate all your understanding and support.

would like to express her gratitude to all staff that dealt with the equipment collection, as her father has just passed away, staff were lovely and very empathetic and the care that they showed was greatly appreciated.

thanking the team for collecting the fly tipped waste and very quick service for this

wanted to thank back office for their speedy response with her request for the bin assist.

call from customer who wanted to give thanks to the team who went out "super quick" and repaired the pot holes in the road where customer lives.

## Appendix 5: Sample of comments received with the star ratings during quarter four, 2022/23

5★ - Road or footpath – “good supportive system”	1★ - Waste permit – “Applied yesterday for a permit but nothing has arrived”	5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “very convenient and easy to navigate service”
3★ - Waste Permit – “apparently I get 12 permits, but can only download 1 at a time. I seem to have to repeat the application for each permit”		
3★ - Customer document submission – “awkward”	4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “Apple Pay would make it a little easier and more secure, rather than manually entering card details”	2★ - Bin (new, replacement, repair) – “Applied for recycling box a few times and never received it. Have to keep applying which can be annoying”
4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “although registered for do-it-online, I had to enter my details multiple times”		1★ - Waste Permit – “always have to reset password”
5★ - Council Tax (change of payment method) – “it was easy to set up”	5★ - Customer document submission – “simple process”	5★ - Replacement bus pass – “easy and efficient”
		1★ - Taxis (apply for an operator licence) – “crashed at the payment section after too long inputting all the information”
2★ - Birth, death or marriage certificates - “Bit slow”	4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “bit long winded, otherwise OK”	2★ - Bin not emptied – “can we report a missed bin collection before 5pm. Only being able to report after 5pm is poor service to customers who find it better to report as soon as the bin is missed”
5★ - Street lighting – “being able to use map to identify faulty light is very good”	5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “effortless process”	
5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “all very clear. But pages seem quite slow to load which makes me nervous something has gone wrong halfway through the transaction”	3★ - Missing or incorrect address – “checking address or changing very difficult”	
3★ - Road or footpath – “enable multiple potholes in different locations to be identified”	1★ - warm homes - “can’t actually write anywhere on the form what you are actually requesting information about”	5★ - Bollards – “everything worked well”
		1★ - road or footpath - “no response from previous online submissions”
3★ - Anti-Social Behaviour – “not allowed on this form to upload CCTV footage”	5★ - Bulky waste, white goods collection – “everything was straightforward”	2★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “entered my details on at least 5 separate occasions before they were accepted”
		3★ - Drainage or flooding - “not able to choose an address for location”

## Appendix 6: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint Upheld	Our Response
<p>The customer is unhappy that their bins have been missed on multiple occasions.</p>	<p>We have apologised to the customer for the issues experienced.</p> <p>The customer's property was designated a 'priority address' to ensure the bins were collected, and the issue has been resolved.</p>
<p>The customer is unhappy that their refuse and recycling bins were missed over a three-week period and that they were not able to escalate/discuss this matter with a senior manager.</p>	<p>The bin crew is now fully aware of the location of the bins, and the Area Supervisor has monitored the last two collections.</p> <p>Although no fault found in the actions of the Customer Services Assistant (CSA), the issue could have been handled better if it had been referred to a Team coach. Relevant feedback has been provided to the CSA.</p>

Complaint partially upheld	Our Response
<p>The customer was prevented from using their trailer to dispose of waste at a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) even though they had used it previously.</p>	<p>No fault in how the council decided to restrict vehicle types and size including trailers, this is a policy decision for the council to make.</p> <p>However, it would have been reasonable for the council to have provided additional publicity around this to ensure the public were aware and therefore remove the need for a complaint about what you felt was a policy change rather than a strengthening of the existing wording by adding clarity to them.</p>
<p>The customer was prevented from using their trailer to dispose of their excess garden waste at a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) even though they had used it previously.</p>	<p>No fault in how the council decided to restrict vehicle types and size including trailers, this is a policy decision for the council to make.</p> <p>However, it would have been reasonable for the council to have provided additional publicity around this to ensure the public were aware and therefore remove the need for a complaint about what you felt was a policy change rather than a strengthening of the existing wording by adding clarity to them.</p>

Complaint partially upheld	Our Response
<p>The complainant feels the council has failed in its duty of care with regards to an offer of interim accommodation.</p>	<p>No fault was found in the actions of the officer who allocated the accommodation (it was deemed to be the most suitable for their priority need at that time). However, there was a delay in the referral process. We have apologised and offered a financial remedy of £100. In addition, all operational staff have been reminded of the importance of following protocol.</p>
<p>The customer is dissatisfied with our earlier response to their complaint in relation to a party wall.</p>	<p>We have apologised to the customer for not providing a more detailed/thorough response. Additional information has now been provided, and we have agreed to update customer regularly about progress.</p>
<p>Customer is dissatisfied to have only received a 50% refund for their pest control appointment. They claim they did not hear the Pest Control Officer (PCO) knock and query why the PCO did not telephone or look around the property.</p>	<p>No fault was found with the actions of the pest control team, and it is clear on the pest control booking form that if no one answers the door, then a 50% refund is applicable. However, the customer's complaint was logged incorrectly, and this caused an unnecessary delay in the complaint being actioned. We have apologised and feedback/additional training will be provided to the officers involved.</p>
<p>The complainant feels we administered their late mother's council tax accounts in an insensitive manner.</p>	<p>No fault was found with the actions taken. However, we have apologised to the customer for the delay in answering the initial inquiries and registering the complaint.</p>
<p>The complainant is dissatisfied with our previous response to their report of land encroachment.</p>	<p>Although no fault was found in the process undertaken, we apologised for the length of time the matter has been ongoing without a full response being provided.</p>

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## Appendix 7: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

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Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>The Council was at fault for the delay in providing information about care charges and carrying out a financial assessment. This resulted in a large and unexpected care bill and the complainant's mother was unable to make an informed decision about her care.</p>	<p>Apologise for the delay in explaining the associated care charges and write-off the care charges from November 2021 to mid-February 2022.</p> <p>Our hospital based social workers to provide clear information about the potential for future care charges when patients are discharged into residential care from hospital.</p> <p>Provide a factsheet on charging for residential care when carrying out needs assessments, so people are made aware of the potential charges as soon as possible.</p>
<p>There is fault with the Council's actions in respect of the complainant's child's special educational needs. The council failed to provide adequate full-time education when they were unable to attend school, delayed carrying out an adequate social care assessment or provide social support to enable a successful transition to college, and failed to communicate properly with the complainant throughout this period.</p>	<p>Pay the complainant a total of £1,250 (£500 for the delays in the social care assessment, £500 to be used for the benefit of the child's educational and social progress, and £250 for the complainant's time and trouble in pursuing the complaint.</p> <p>Review the monitoring of alternative educational provision to ensure it regularly assesses the provision remains suitable.</p>
<p>The complainant is unhappy that the council said her mother would not have to pay for her stay in a care home. Yet a financial assessment was completed a year later which charged her mother retrospectively.</p>	<p>Apologise to the customer for the distress caused and write off the charges until the date of the financial assessment.</p> <p>Provide information leaflets on charging at the earliest opportunity, even where a financial assessment has been delayed.</p>
<p>The complainants are unhappy about the council's decision to stop Special Guardianship (SG) Allowance payments in respect of a relative. The Council's decision to stop the payment was in line with its policy. However, the appeal panel's report is flawed and does not show how the panel considered relevant evidence the complainants submitted.</p>	<p>To hold a new appeal review with a fresh panel to remedy the uncertainty caused.</p> <p>To pay £509.81 to customer for an underpayment of SG allowance during 2019.</p>

## Data Tables

### Key to Symbols

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*

### 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

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

The North East figure 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](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)



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					
No. of contacts through reported channels		1,815,311 (2022/23)	Tracker -	1,655,672	1,553,173	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of contact through reported digital channels		21% (2022/23)	Tracker -	25%	15%	-	-	→	↓	↓	↓	Yes
% of contact received through reported non-digital channels		79% (2022/23)	Tracker -	75%	85%	-	-	→	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of CRM requests meeting performance standard		80% (2022/23)	Tracker -	72% ✓	n/a	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of respondents who were satisfied with overall service delivery (CRM)		81% (2022/23)	Tracker -	82% ■	81% ✓	-	-	→	→	↑	↓	Yes
% of customers who request a service via an online form who give a rating of 4 or 5 stars		91% (2022/23)	Tracker -	85% ✓	n/a	-	-	↓	→	↑	↑	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Adult and Health Services	No. received	96 (2022/23)	75 x	78 x	84 x	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
	% within performance standard	100% (2022/23)	Tracker -	100% ✓	100% ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	54% (2022/23)	Tracker -	62% ✓	44% ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Children and Young People's Service	No. received	46 (2022/23)	46 ✓	34 ✓	100 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
	% within performance standard	72% (2022/23)	Tracker -	77% x	76% x	-	-	↑	→	↑	↓	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	47% (2022/23)	Tracker -	59% ✓	33% x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	Yes

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					
No. of corporate complaints	2,432 (2022/23)	Tracker -	2,466 ✓	2,502 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
Ratio of corporate complaints to service requests	0.006 (2022/23)	Tracker -	0.006 ■	0.007 ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
No. of independent investigations	189 (2022/23)	Tracker -	206	192	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of complaints submitted to Ombudsman	73 (2022/23)	Tracker -	69 x	91 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of complaints responded to within performance standard	71% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% ■	85% x	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
% of corporate complaints investigated which were upheld	62% (2022/23)	Tracker -	64% ✓	62% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	→	→	Yes
No. of priority correspondence received	2,282 (2022/23)	Tracker -	1,962	n/a	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of priority correspondence responded to within performance standard	65% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% x	n/a	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
% of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days	74% (Jan-Mar 23)	95% x	83% x	86% x	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↓	Yes
% of CRM service requests which were self-serve	69% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% ■	49% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of compliments	662 (2022/23)	Tracker -	770 -	688 -	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↓	Yes
No. of suggestions	453 (2022/23)	Tracker -	532 -	546 -	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**16 June 2023**

**Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report  
2022/23**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2022/23 for comment and approval prior to submission to the County Council meeting in September 2023. The report is attached at Appendix 2.

**Executive summary**

In accordance with Article 5 paragraph 5.03 (d) of the Council's Constitution, COSMB is required to report annually to the County Council on its work with recommendations for its future work programme.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 COSMB is recommended to:
  - (a) Consider and comment on the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2022/23.
  - (b) Agree that the report be submitted to the County Council meeting in September 2023.

**Background**

- 3 Each year the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report is prepared to provide information on activity by both COSMB and the five thematic

Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programmes. This work programme activity includes in-depth and light touch reviews, monitoring of performance management and budgetary reporting.

- 4 This report reflects the work undertaken by all overview and scrutiny committee members throughout 2022/23. A six month update of scrutiny activity will be submitted to the County Council in January 2024.
- 5 The Annual Report also includes detail on the statutory scrutiny roles with health and crime and disorder.

### Background papers

- None

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<b>Contact:</b>	Helen Lynch	Tel: 03000 269732
	Stephen Gwilym	Tel: 03000 268140

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

None

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

None

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**Appendix 2: Annual report 2022/23** (attached as a separate item)

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# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/2023

# Introduction

During my first year as chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) I urged all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to demonstrate a commitment to inputting into key areas of policy development. I have been impressed with the wide range of member involvement in developing council policies and strategies and there are several examples of this work across all Committees which are included within this annual report.

The Council continues to operate in a period of financial uncertainty and the development of the 2023/24 budget and the medium-term financial plan (MTFP13) saw an extended role for the COSMB and thematic scrutiny committees in considering options for efficiencies and income generation opportunities within their service areas to support the budget. This “deeper dive” into the County Council’s budgets led to a number of recommendations put forward by scrutiny to the Cabinet in February 2023.

We continue to be committed to the key principle of openness and transparency within the scrutiny function. In order to enhance these principles and provide an opportunity for the voice of local communities to be reflected and amplified in the work of Scrutiny, we undertook an extensive refresh of the non-statutory non-voting co-opted representation on the committees in May and June 2022. We received over 40 expressions of interest in these key roles and following a series of interviews, we successfully appointed to all of the positions across the 5 thematic OSCs. The successful applicants received a comprehensive induction setting out the functions of scrutiny and their roles in supporting the work of the committees and I am delighted with the input of the co-optees since their appointment.

I would like to thank everybody who has been involved in supporting and assisting the overview and scrutiny process during the past year including members officers partners and the scrutiny team themselves in delivering another extensive series of work programmes.

**Councillor Craig Martin**

**Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**



# Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

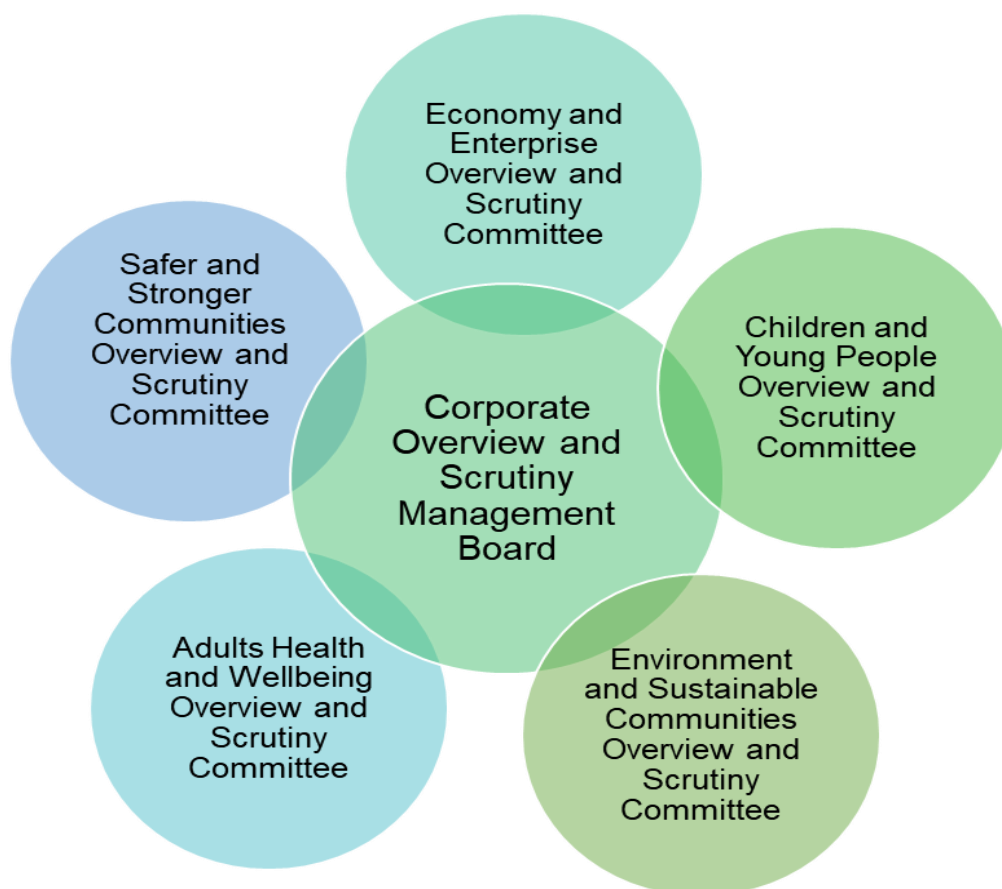
Scrutiny provides a valuable tool to scrutinise how we deliver our services and to drive improvement. We are supported by a dedicated scrutiny team and senior and specialist officers across the council. We have developed a strong scrutiny culture which adds value to the work of the council.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## Co-optees and engagement

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

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

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

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

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

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

We undertake a full refresh of our co-opted members every four years and the latest refresh was undertaken in May and June 2022. The new cohort of co-optees appointed to the OSCs included some experienced co-optees who have served for a number of years, complemented by new appointees who all bring a range of skills, professional competencies and lived experience to ensure that the voice of the public is given an opportunity to be promoted and listened to.

Anyone who would like to express an interest is requested to contact the Scrutiny Team.

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

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

Since the COVID 19 Pandemic the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees have not returned to focussed review activity but have rather concentrated on their respective roles in shaping and informing Council and partnership policy through workshop activity and formal consultation mechanisms. Examples of this include:-

- The Inclusive Economic Strategy – E&E OSC
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 – ESC OSC
- The Ecological Emergency Response Plan – ESC OSC
- Library Transformation – ESC OSC and E&E OSC
- County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy – CYP OSC
- Contextualised Safeguarding – CYP OSC
- Safe Durham Partnership Anti-social Behaviour Strategy – SSC OSC
- County Durham Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan – SSC OSC
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – CYP OSC and AWH OSC
- Quality Accounts for County Durham and Darlington NHS FT; Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT and North East Ambulance Service NHSFT – AWH OSC
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25 – AWH OSC
- Oral Health Promotion Strategy 2023 – AWH OSC
- Home to School Transport Services – CYP OSC

As part of the Council's approach to developing its Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 TO 2026/27 and associated budget proposals the COSMB, Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC and Children and Young Peoples' OSCs have undertaken bespoke review activity examining the potential for identifying and recommending efficiency savings and opportunities for increased income generation for the budget spending within their remits. Several working group meetings were held, the findings of which were reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2023 as part of the MTFP and Budget setting process.

# Planned Overview and Scrutiny in 2022/23

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

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

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

A summary of the key issues for the 2023/24 Work Programme is below:

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

- Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting
- Welfare Reform and Poverty
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Performance and budget outturn
- Customer Feedback
- North East LA 7 Devolution Deal
- The County Durham Pound
- General Fund and Capital Final Outturn
- County Durham Partnership Update
- Digital Inclusion
- Community Engagement (AAP) Review

## Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Housing Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Selective Licensing Scheme
- Council New Housing Build Programme
- Promotion of the Tourism offer
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Regeneration of Town and Villages
- Support to business sector
- Masterplans
- Regional and Local Transport Policy and Delivery
- Strategic Sites in the County
- Funding – UKSPF and County Durham UKSPF Investment Plan

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Child Poverty
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Home to School Transport Proposals Feedback
- Best Start in Life
- Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- CAMHS – Waiting Times
- Elective Home Education Update
- Support for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- Support for Young Carers
- SEND and Alternative Provision response to Government
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Third Party Payments Overview
- Pre-Birth Programme
- Support for Children and Families on the Edge of Care

## Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Air Quality in County Durham
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- Ecological Emergency Action Plan
- Water Courses in the County
- Fly Tipping
- Strategic Waste Management
- Fuel Poverty
- Highway, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- DCC's Allotments Policy
- Leisure Transformation Programme
- Physical Activity Strategy
- DCC's Woodland Management
- Tree Management Policy
- Bereavement Services
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project
- Work of the County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy

## Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Safe Durham Partnership Priorities Refresh
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Delivery Plan
- Horden Together Project update and evaluation
- Civil Contingencies and the Storm Arwen Action Plan update
- Off Road Bikes and Vehicles
- Reducing Re-offending
- Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Probation Services
- Counter Terrorism
- Open Water Safety
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
- Road Safety

- Modern Slavery
- Hate Crime

#### Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- NHS Statutory Consultations/Legislation plans
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Systems and Partnerships
- Health and Social Care Integration
- CQC Adult Social Care Assurance Framework;
- Shotley Bridge Community hospital
- Public health funding and services/campaigns
- NHS Foundation Trust performance and Oversight –
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
  - North East Ambulance Services NHS FT

# Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 2022/23



Cllr Craig Martin  
Chair



Cllr Chris Lines  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- MTFP (13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn 2021/22
- Council Plan 2022-26
- Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Resources Budget Outturn reports
- DCC Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment
- Poverty Strategy and Action Plan
- Customer Feedback - Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions
- County Durham Partnership
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22
- County Durham Pound Project
- Customer Relationship Management Project
- Digital Inclusion Project
- Community Engagement (AAP) Review
- Adult and Health Services Annual Statutory Representations 2021/22
- Updates on Petitions
- Notice of Key Decisions

# Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Patricia Jopling  
Chair



Cllr Joanne Howey  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- Draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25
- Winter Planning and the work of the Local Accident and Emergency Delivery Board 2022/23
- Shotley Bridge Community Hospital
- COVID-19 Transition Plan
- Health Protection Annual Assurance
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys CQC Inspection Update
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys CQC Inspection – Inpatient Wards for Adult patients with a learning disability or autism
- NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2021/22 responses and 2022/23 priorities for
  - North East Ambulance Service NHS FT
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- Proposed Oral Health Promotion Strategy for County Durham
- County Durham GP Appointments and access
- Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022
- Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2022
- Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2022
- North East Ambulance Service NHS FT – CQC Inspection Report and Improvement Action Plan
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn



# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Anne Reed  
Chair



Cllr James Cosslett  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- Children, Young People and Families Partnership
- Best Start in life priorities update
- Support for Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training
- School Funding
- Home to School Transport Services Consultation
- Early Years Services
- Reducing Parental Conflict in County Durham
- Schools' OFSTED Update and Educational Attainment
- Response to the Government's Children's Social Care Review
- Relationship Based Social Work Practice
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Update
- Children's Adolescent Mental Health Service waiting times
- Sufficiency Strategy
- The Pause Programme
- OFSTED ILACS Inspection Durham 2022
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Child Poverty in County Durham
- Growing up in County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Ken Robson  
Chair



Cllr Andrew Jackson  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- The County Durham Economic Partnership
- County Durham Employment Land and Strategic Sites
- Cabinet Member Roles in attracting and supporting Investors to County Durham and input into UK Shared Prosperity Fund Bids
- Skills Delivery and supporting the Inclusive Economic Strategy
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- County Durham's visitor economy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy – The Big Econ-versation feedback
- Draft Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan process
- Housing update including key strategic housing roles, working with Registered Social Providers; selective licensing and empty homes
- Regional and Local Transport: Policy and Delivery
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
  
- Informal Awareness session on:
  - Empty Homes

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Bev Coult  
Chair



Cllr Jonathan Elmer  
Vice chair

Environment and  
Sustainable  
Communities Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee (ESC OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- Allotment Improvement Programme
- Ecological Emergency Update and Action Plan
- Management of DCC land for Biodiversity
- Fly-tipping
- Strategic Overview of Resources and Waste Management Services
- Regional and Local Transport: Policy and Delivery
- Community Action Team
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Air Quality Management in County Durham
- Fuel Poverty
- Bereavement Services
- Library Provision
- Single Use Plastics
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Joyce Charlton  
Chair



Cllr Phil Heaviside  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- County Durham Youth Justice Service
- Exploitation – Children and Adults
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Open Water Safety
- Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group
- Home Fire Safety
- Horden Together Update
- Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) and Safer Streets 4 Programme
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group Annual Report
- Community Protection Service
- Public Protection Service
- Road Safety
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Group updates
- Probation Service
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Community Risk Management Plan
- Informal Awareness sessions on:
  - Arson Suppression Group
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Powers and Interventions
  - Exploitation
  - Empty Properties and ASB
  - ASB Performance Dashboard

# Regional Scrutiny

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

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

## North East Combined Authority scrutiny arrangements

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

NECA has three broad areas of focus:

- Transport
- Employability and Inclusion
- Economic Development and Regeneration

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

Durham County Council is represented on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Jonathan Elmer the Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Kevin Shaw. Councillors Ken Robson, Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Stacey Deinali are the nominated substitute members.

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

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

Further details on NECA can be found at [www.northeastca.gov.uk](http://www.northeastca.gov.uk).

## Regional Health Scrutiny

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

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

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

## Sub Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Overview and Scrutiny Team

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

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

Michael Turnbull, Interim Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Diane Close, Clare Luery and Ann Whitton - Overview and Scrutiny Officers.

Scrutiny office: 03000 265978

Email: [scrutiny@durham.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@durham.gov.uk)

Website: [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

## Key contacts:

Adults, Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Stephen Gwilym Tel: 03000 268140 [stephen.gwilym@durham.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.gwilym@durham.gov.uk)

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Ann Whitton Tel: 03000 268143 [ann.whitton@durham.gov.uk](mailto:ann.whitton@durham.gov.uk)

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

Stephen Gwilym Tel: 03000 268140 [stephen.gwilym@durham.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.gwilym@durham.gov.uk)

Economy and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Diane Close Tel: 03000 268141 [diane.close@durham.gov.uk](mailto:diane.close@durham.gov.uk)

Environment and Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Ann Whitton/Diane Close [ann.whitton@durham.gov.uk](mailto:ann.whitton@durham.gov.uk) &  
[diane.close@durham.gov.uk](mailto:diane.close@durham.gov.uk)

Safer Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Clare Luery Tel: 03000 265978 [clare.luery@durham.gov.uk](mailto:clare.luery@durham.gov.uk)

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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**16 June 2023**

**Refresh of the Work  
Programme 2023/24 for the  
Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the updated work programme for 2023/2024.

**Executive summary**

- 2 COSMB review their work programme each year to reflect the objectives and associated outcomes and actions identified within the Council Plan and in the context of the County Durham Vision 2035.
- 3 The proposed COSMB work programme has been framed around the shared County Durham Vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions of 'more and better jobs', 'long and independent lives' and 'connected communities'. COSMB's work programme also reflects the fourth ambition which captures our corporate initiatives and the ambition to be an excellent council.
- 4 The proposed work programme also reflects the refreshed Council Plan adopted by the County Council at its meeting on 22 February 2023.

**Recommendations**

- 5 COSMB is recommended to:
  - a) Receive and comment on the proposed COSMB work programme for 2023/24

- b) Agree the COSMB work programme for 2023/2024 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.

## **Background**

- 6 COSMB has a strong focus on the MTFP and service improvement and this will continue in 2023/24. The Board will also contribute to policy development where it can add value and insight.
- 7 The current overview and scrutiny committees work programmes are informed by:
  - Council Plan
  - Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions
  - County Durham Vision for 2035
  - Partnership plans and strategies
  - Performance and budgetary control data
  - Changes in government legislation
  - Local priorities
- 8 The County Durham Partnership agreed a Vision for County Durham 2035 which sets out our strategic direction and what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years. It was developed with partner organisations and the public. It is structured around three broad ambitions for the people of County Durham.
  - More and better jobs
  - People live long and independent lives
  - Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 9 Each ambition contains a number of objectives together with some council specific objectives. Following the refresh of the Council Plan in April 2022 and February 2023, it is now structured around five objectives which capture the three ambitions:
  - Our Economy
  - Our People
  - Our Communities
  - Our Environment
  - Our Council

## **Council Plan 2023 - 2027**

- 10 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document for the county council. It details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035 together with its own ambitious agenda. It provides a summary for

members, partners and the public of our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that we will undertake to help achieve these priorities. The Plan will now be refreshed each year to reflect the integration of corporate and financial planning.

- 11 Both the Vision for County Durham and the Council Plan are structured around the three ambitions with an additional ambition of an excellent council. The excellent council ambition captures the corporate initiatives the council has identified and wants to undertake to achieve the ambitions within the vision:
- a) Our resources will be managed effectively
  - b) Create a workforce for the future
  - c) Design our services with service users
  - d) Use data and technology more effectively
  - e) We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

### **Current Work Programme**

- 12 During 2022/2023, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has undertaken review work on the Budget and MTFP process and examined proposals for the Council's HQ alternative options and the Review of DCC Community Engagement (AAPs).
- 13 Overview activity included
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
  - Customer Feedback report
  - Poverty Strategy and Action Plan updates
  - Overview of County Durham Partnership work
  - The County Durham Pound Project
  - The Digital Inclusion project
  - Adult and Health Services Annual Statutory Representations 2021/22
  - The Customer Relationship Management Project
  - Petitions
  - Notice of Key Decisions
- 14 Budgetary and performance monitoring:
- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for the Resources service grouping.
  - Quarterly corporate performance monitoring overview for the whole Council.

## **Areas for consideration in the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme**

- 15 COSMB are asked to agree the proposed work programme for next year and consider areas for further progress updates and review topics in light of the refreshed Council Plan and the Vision for County Durham 2035.
- 16 Scrutiny work programmes are designed to be flexible and can respond to items which arise during the year which require scrutiny input.
- 17 Appendix 2 of this report sets out a draft work programme for consideration.

### **Background papers**

- [Council Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27](#)
- [County Durham Vision 2035](#)

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**Contact:** Helen Lynch

Tel :03000 269732

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

None

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme is an important element of the Council's governance and risk management arrangements.

### **Procurement**

None

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## **Appendix 2: COSMB Work Programme**

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Attached as a separate document.

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<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23</b> Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)</p> <p>Lead officer: Helen Lynch Key service contact: Michael Turnbull</p> <p>Strategic Oversight of Council Plan 2023-27 and its priorities with specific responsibility for the Our Council priority.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A systematic six monthly review of progress against recommendations/action plan</li> </ul> <p>Scrutiny/Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth review/light touch review</li> </ul> <p>Overview/progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on an issue; opportunity to comment, shape, influence, progress with a scrutiny review</li> </ul> <p>Performance/Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing quarterly monitoring performance reports/budgets</li> </ul>
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Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
<b>O/S Review</b>					
<b>Scrutiny/Working Group (light touch / in-depth review)</b>					
Budget and MTFP process	1 Sept/23 Oct 2023  15 Feb 2023	Report to COSMB	Jeff Garfoot	To enable scrutiny members to comment and feed into the MTFP and budget setting process	To look at any issues and or reviews linked to achieving savings within the MTFP  Update reports considered by COSMB
<b>Overview/Progress</b>					

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
LA7 Devolution Deal Consultation Feedback and Next Steps	23 October 2023	Report to COSMB	Chief Executive	To update members on the LA7 Devolution Deal Consultation Feedback and Next Steps	Members information and comment
Community Engagement (AAP) Review – Next Steps	1 September 2023	Report to COSMB	Gordon Elliott	To advise members of Cabinet proposals for the Community Engagement (AAP) Review	Members Information
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and six monthly report to Council	16 June 2023 1 Dec 2023	Report to COSMB	Stephen Gwilym	Members to sign off the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and six monthly update before submission to Council.	Members' information, and circulated widely

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
Digital Strategy	16 June 2023	Report to COSMB	Marion Ingleby	To update members of the COSMB on the progress made against the Digital Strategy	Members Information
Digital solutions – supporting new ways of working/hybrid working, ensuring the workforce is fit for the future	1 September 2023	Report to COSMB	Vicki Murray  Alison Lazazzera  Marion Ingleby	To update members on corporate initiatives around digital solutions and customer transaction	Members' information
HQ and Accommodation Strategy	TBC	Report to COSMB	Susan Robinson	To update members on the HQ development and associated accommodation plans.	Members' information

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
Staff Wellbeing Survey	1 September 2023	Report to COSMB	Alison Lazizzera Kevin Lough	To advise members of the results of the Staff Wellbeing Survey and proposed actions.	Members Information
The County Durham Pound – update	23 October 2023	Report to COSMB	Darren Knowd	To update members on progress with the initiatives	Members' information
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act annual report	23 Oct 2023	Report to COSMB	TBC	To inform members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and to review the RIPA policy	Members' information and recommendations to Cabinet
Annual Representations report 2022/23	23 Oct 2023	Report to COSMB	Lesley Martin	To present key messages in relation to the management and handling of statutory representations for Children and Adults Social Services.	Members' information
Council Plan Refresh 2022 – 2026	1 December 2023	Report to COSMB	Steve Evans/Tom Gorman	To update members on the refresh of the Council Plan and the development of revised performance management reporting	Members' information
Council Investment and Shareholdings	TBC	Report to COSMB	Jeff Garfoot/Helen Lynch	To advise members of the Council's Investments and Shareholdings	Members Information
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) quarterly report	Quarter 4 2022/23 16 June 2023	Report to COSMB	TBC	To inform members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) on a quarterly basis.	Members' information

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
	Quarter 1 2023/24 23 Oct 2023  Quarter 2 1 Dec 2023  Quarter 3 15 Feb 2024				
Notice of Key Decisions	At each COSMB	Report to Committee	Jackie Graham	To keep members informed of any additions or amendments.	Members' information
<b>Performance/Budget</b>					
<b>Performance</b> Quarterly reporting to include Customer Feedback reporting	Q4 2022/23 16 June 2023  Q1 2023/24 23 October 2023  Q2 2023/24 1 December 2023 OR 15 February 2024  Q3 2023/24 8 Apr 2024	Report to COSMB	Steve Evans/Tom Gorman/Vicky Murray	To provide members with progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework including Customer Feedback information.	Standing item
<b>Budget Outturn Report</b> Quarterly reporting - Resources	Q4 2022/23 1 September 2023	Report to COSMB	Ed Thompson	To provide members with details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Resources service groupings	Standing item

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
Page 206 	Q1 2023/24 1 Sept 2022  Q2 2023/24 1 Dec 2023  Q3 2023/24 8 Apr 2024				
General Fund Revenue & Capital Final Outturn (Cabinet July 2023)	1 Sept 2023	Report to COSMB	Jeff Garfoot	To provide members with the final revenue and capital outturn for the General Fund and achievement of MTFP savings.	For members information
<b>Periodic updates</b>					
Poverty Action Strategy and Plan	2x Reports  Dates TBC	Report to COSMB	TBC	To keep members informed of the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county.	For information
County Durham Partnership update	23 October 2023  8 April 2024	Cabinet report to COSMB	Julie Bradbrook	To keep members informed of issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership and other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.	For information
Petitions updates Quarterly	16 June 2023 1 Sept 2023 1 Dec 2023 8 Apr 2024	Report to COSMB	Jackie Graham	To keep members informed of the status of petitions received by the Authority	For information



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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**16 June 2023**



**Update in relation to Petitions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Recommendation(s)**

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

**Background**

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

**Current Notice of Key Decisions**

- 6 Since the last update one new e-petitions has been submitted but was rejected as other procedures applied. Two e-petitions are currently ongoing and collecting signatures via the website.

- 7 One new paper petition has been submitted and awaiting a response from the service. A list giving details and current status of all active petitions is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation**

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

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

None.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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**Petition Table – Active Petitions**

**Appendix 2**

Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
Petition 433  Derelict and abandoned houses in Stanley  <b>E-Petition</b> Received 10.3.23 No. of signatures	REG	Petition asking the Council to put pressure on landlords and owners to bring back derelict/abandoned property back in to use.	E-Petition to run from 13.3.23 – 31.8.23
Petition 434  Front street Pelton Fell speed limit  <b>E-Petition</b> Received 17.3.23 No. of signatures	REG	Petition asking the Council to enforce a 30mph speed limit through the residential area, by either traffic calming measures or a speed camera.	E-Petition to run from 22.3.23 – 28.8.23
Petition 425  Save Leadgate Village  Received 11.5.23 No. of signatures 453	REG	Petition asking the Council to use emergency powers to resolve the disruption being caused at the crossroads at St. Ives Road and Durham Road as this is having a sever effect on local businesses and the community.	Awaiting response from service.

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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



**16 June 2023**

**Notice of Key Decisions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Recommendation(s)**

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

**Background**

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

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

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

- 7 The notice of key decisions that is attached to the report at Appendix 2, is the latest to be published prior to the papers for the Board being dispatched to members. The notice complies with the requirements for Cabinet to take key decisions at its meeting held on 7 June 2023. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 30 September 2023.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Finance**

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

### **Consultation**

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

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

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

### **Climate Change**

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

### **Human Rights**

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

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

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

### **Accommodation**

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

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

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

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## SECTION ONE - CORPORATE

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Input
CORP/R/23/01	12/07/23	Medium Term Financial Plan and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme		Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services Tel: 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of the MTFP through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings
CORP/R/23/06	12/07/23	Customer Access Point Service Offer Reduction Proposals	Medium Term Financial Plan(13) 2023/24 - 2026/27 taken to Cabinet 12 October 2022	Councillor Susan McDonnell Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services	A public consultation took place on the proposal between 22 January and 6 March 2023	Victoria Murray, Head of Transactional and Customer Services Tel: 03000 267707	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of the MTFP through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings
CORP/R/23/03	13/09/23	Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25		Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council		Victoria Murray, Head of Transactional and Customer Services Tel: 03000 267707	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of the MTFP through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings

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

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

**SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

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

**SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>	<b>Scrutiny Input</b>
REG/03/2023	14/06/23	Office Accommodation Strategy Update (exempt report)		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships		Susan Robinson, Head of Corporate Property and Land, Tel: 03000 267 332	Consideration of the Office Accommodation strategy has been included within the COSMB Work Programme for 2023/24

**SECTION FIVE - NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

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

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