

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 18 December 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor B Moist (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Surtees, A Batey, R Crute, D Freeman, P Heaviside, G Hutchinson, C Lines, K Shaw, M Stead and A Sterling

Co-opted Members:

Mrs R Morris and Mr E Simons

Also Present:

Councillor M Wilkes

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Binney, M Currah and J Miller.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the Special meeting on 6 October, Special Joint meeting on 3 November and meeting on 6 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair referred to item 6 of the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 and advised that during the meeting it was agreed that the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth would meet with Councillor B Moist and Councillor A Surtees to discuss information that was requested at the meeting. It was noted that a meeting date with the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth would be requested.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

6 Draft County Durham Housing Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an overview of the consultation on the Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper and set out the content of the draft County Durham Housing Strategy (for copy of report, draft County Durham Housing Strategy and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

The Committee were provided with a detailed presentation that focused on:-

- An introduction which included detail of the consultation undertaken, the preparation of a feedback report for the consultation and confirmation that the feedback from the consultation had informed the development of the draft strategy;
- Overview and Scrutiny Workshop comments and responses;
- Housing Strategy Vision;
- Housing Strategy Principles;
- Housing Strategy Priorities;
- Next Steps which included confirmation of the consultation period and the production of a delivery plan.

Graeme Smith, Housing Development Manager provided Members with the background to the County Durham Housing Strategy and explained the two-stage consultation process confirming that the first stage of consultation had been undertaken from the 26 June to the 18 August 2023 and focused on the Principles and Priorities Paper, the first stage in the preparation of the housing strategy. This was presented as the 'Housing Conversation' with engagement taking place with residents and stakeholders to get their views. Included within this first stage of consultation was a workshop for all Overview and Scrutiny members. He continued that this stage of consultation had included: presentations to AAPs, the County Durham Association of Local Councils and the County Durham Partnership Groups; a rural housing event; various online consultation events; social media campaign and various group surveys. He confirmed that the comments made during this consultation stage had been set out in a separate feedback report which had been provided to members for this meeting and where possible have been used to inform the draft housing strategy.

He referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop on the 10 July 2023 and the comments made by members and confirmed that those comments made by members had mirrored many of the comments from the wider Housing Conversation and highlighted how interesting and useful the comments had been particularly when developing the draft strategy. The Housing Development Manager then took members through several slides in the presentation detailing the comments made by members during the Overview and Scrutiny workshop and how they have been responded to within the strategy.

In relation to the Housing Strategy Vision, the Housing Development Manager confirmed that the consultation had determined that there was overwhelming support for the vision and highlighted the links within the vision to economic growth, health and wellbeing.

Concerning the Principles within the draft strategy it was highlighted that they have evolved through the consultation process and that they are still subject to consultation at this stage. The Housing Development Manager explained that the draft strategy contains seven principles that establish the foundation and rationale underpinning decisions and actions to deliver the vision.

In relation to the Priorities within the draft strategy, the Housing Development Manager commented that the purpose of the strategy is to set the context as to how the Council and partners will meet various housing challenges in the county and that the draft strategy includes five priorities for action, the key areas of intent.

In relation to next step, Graeme highlighted that consultation on the draft strategy is currently underway and that it closed on the 18 December and that following the consultation a second modified draft strategy will be produced reflecting the comments received during the consultation process from residents and stakeholders. In relation to the preparation of the delivery plan and monitoring he confirmed that the service will be including in the second draft of the strategy an element of delivery, showing how they will intend to deliver for a limited period of six months to a year. It was noted that the strategy would be adopted spring/summer 2024.

Mrs R Morris raised concerns with regards to the delivery plan and asked for clarity as to how actions within the strategy would be delivered. She commented that some of the issues identified within the strategy were more prevalent in some areas of the County and highlighted the need for the delivery plan to clearly identify performance in relation to the individual actions. The Housing Development Manager confirmed that the delivery plan would be structured around the priorities for intervention and actions would sit within the priorities identified, however there were other ongoing activities not related to the priorities that would also sit within the delivery plan. He confirmed that the strategy was a non-spatial document and provided an example of tackling empty homes across the County. However, in relation to certain priorities there would be a spatial element and made reference to second homes which was

an issue in rural parts of the County. He added that performance in relation to the actions identified in the delivery plan would be monitored and reported on an annual basis.

Councillor K Shaw referred to homes for the elderly and disabled and commented on the 10% benchmark for this type of development, which was only a starting point and highlighted that this percentage was not being delivered. The demand for housing for the elderly and disabled would continue to grow, with the current and future demand so great that the actions identified within the strategy and the delivery plan would not meet the need for this type of housing across the County. He commented that the Housing Strategy needs to identify a higher percentage figure to match the need for this type of housing.

He was concerned that registered providers were building new market cost housing, using land which had been transferred from local authority control as part of the LSVTs which had been identified to be used for the development of social housing and as a result this was reducing the number of affordable homes available within the County.

Councillor K Shaw also had concerns with the number of family homes within Durham City that were being transferred into Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for use as student accommodation which reduced the ability for local residents to access family housing. There was a need to establish future demand for student accommodation within Durham City and to monitor the impact on the mix of housing available within the City by working closely with the University, particularly identifying the potential for bespoke student accommodation developments on land in the University's ownership.

He concluded by highlighting the need to restrict and monitor the increase in charities purchasing multiple properties within a particular area for use by clients with complex needs and support requirements as this had a significant impact on the local community in relation to house prices and the ability for homeowners to sell their properties.

The Housing Development Manager responded that the 10% figure for the development of homes for the elderly was revolutionary when it was incorporated within the County Durham Plan and explained the struggle with regards to implementation with developers. It was anticipated that once mainstream developers see the demand in communities, more bungalows would be developed on sites within the County. It was noted that the 2019 strategy had been absorbed into the mindset of the wider housing delivery context. He added that registered providers were delivering bungalows through affordable homes schemes which was a positive step and were also adapting existing stock based on the future needs for 2035 through the County Durham Plan.

In relation to affordable homes, The Housing Development Manager confirmed that where it was specified that affordable homes had to be delivered, registered providers had to deliver affordable homes. In relation to the concerns regarding the use of land transferred to registered providers for social housing as part of the LSVT, being used to build new market cost housing, he would liaise with colleagues in Corporate Property and Land and query whether there were any restrictions placed on the use of the land when it was transferred.

Responding to the comment regarding HMO's, the Housing Development Manager advised that there were allocations in the County Durham Plan with new numbers being directed towards university estates with new HMO's restricted on the basis of concentrations. In relation to the issue of charities buying up properties in particular areas of the county, this was not identified as an issue when the County Durham Plan was developed, however, he confirmed that the Service Grouping would look at the strategy and the delivery plan to see what could be done to tackle the issue.

Councillor K Shaw praised the work of the team in relation to housing delivery across the County. He raised concerns that there was no longer DCC Members representation on the Boards of Registered Housing Providers operating within the County, which was a major issue in terms of accountability and highlighted that the issue needed to be addressed going forward.

The Chair made reference to the point raised by Councillor K Shaw regarding Registered Social Housing Providers building new market cost housing on land which had been transferred from local authority control as part of LSVTs, with the land intended to be used for social housing. He asked that the Vice-Chair and himself have a copy of the response provided by the Service Grouping. In relation to the lack of Members representation on Housing Providers Boards, he commented that there was a need to monitor and audit the level of service that Housing Providers were delivering.

Councillor P Heaviside queried the measures that would be taken to improve energy efficiency in new homes and existing homes within the County. The Housing Development Manager advised that Government had introduced a range of energy efficiency measures for developers in relation to new builds and the requirements were now included within building regulations. He highlighted that such measures in relation to new developments included the removal from gas usage to alternative energy sources such as Air Source Heat Pumps. He added that Registered Providers in the County were looking to decarbonise their existing stock, however incentives would need to be available to encourage both private landlords and private owners to introduce these measures.

The Chair commented that when he had received the report and draft strategy that he had raised concerns with regards to the lack of delivery within the draft strategy. He understood that that the strategy was planned to go to cabinet in June 2024 and that the delivery plan would follow six months later, therefore there would be a delay

in relation to the delivery of the priorities identified within the strategy. He was concerned that some of the priorities within the strategy would not be achieved. He added that the strategy needed to be a Council Housing Strategy and for there to be clear accountability in relation to the delivery of priorities. He referenced the need for all homes to be accessible and highlighted that homes needed to be brought back into use and timescales, enforcement and accountability needed to be identified. He referred to the delivery of 500 council homes and commented that there is a need to identify how this will be delivered and continued that in relation to the number of homes to be delivered annually. He queried if there was the required number of sites within the county. He commented on the need for empathy within the strategy and highlighted the need for appropriate processes to be in place when issues were not handled correctly. He asked that a second draft of the strategy come back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the draft delivery plan, prior to both being considered by Cabinet in June.

The Housing Development Manager advised that the approach to the development of the strategy had been outlined in the presentation and that the strategy would be developed and agreed, with the delivery plan subsequently developed. However, following comments from Members the Service Grouping would provide an element of delivery in the second draft of the strategy. He highlighted that it would not be a full delivery plan at this stage and that the plan would need to be flexible to respond to change and commented that the delivery plan would be reviewed throughout the life of the strategy. He confirmed that the strategy was a DCC strategy and the delivery plan, once developed would identify accountability. It was intended that Registered Social Housing Providers and stakeholders would work with DCC to deliver the priorities within the strategy. He referred to principle five and accountability for bringing empty homes back into use and advised that he would look at the wording to make it stronger and add output detail. With reference to the number of homes to be delivered within the county, he confirmed that the County Durham Plan had identified 25,000 homes to be delivered up to 2035 and confirmed that land was allocated within the County Durham Plan for the development of homes with no barriers to those sites. He added that he would liaise with Overview and Scrutiny Officers with regards to the timeline for the second draft of the strategy to be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

Councillor A Surtees was aware of areas of land held by DCC and highlighted the need for DCC to review land that they hold that could be released for development if there was local demand for housing in a particular area and encouraged partnership working and development collaboration to address local community's needs. She continued by highlighting the need for the Council New Homes Building Programme to include the delivery of bungalows.

Councillor C Lines welcomed the opportunity to see the second draft of the strategy which would include an element of delivery and appreciated that the strategy had to be developed first. He added that he would like to see the strategy and the resulting

delivery plan highlight digital connectivity as a requirement and target hard to reach and rural areas within the County as this was a fundamental issue which needs to be tackled. The Housing Development Manager confirmed that he would look to broaden the technology aspect to include digital connectivity in rural areas and energy efficiency within the strategy.

Councillor R Crute suggested that an additional recommendation needed to be included to ensure that the revised draft County Durham Housing Strategy including the delivery plan will be considered by Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet in June 2024.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report and presentation be noted;
- (ii) That the revised draft County Durham Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan be considered by the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet in June 2024.

7 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

Marie Smith, Housing Manager provided Members with a detailed presentation that focused on the background to the draft strategy; key points in relation to the draft strategy including how it differs from the existing strategy; detail of the four priorities within the strategy; detail of the consultation process; next steps including confirmation that a delivery plan would be produced and case studies showing various pathways for residents presenting to the service.

The Housing Manager confirmed that it is a statutory requirement for the authority to have a strategy in place and that an in-depth review had been carried out from April 2019-October 2022 of homelessness and rough sleeping across County Durham to form an evidence base which had been used to inform the draft strategy. She continued by informing members that a consultation had taken place with partners and members of the public earlier in the year on the proposed priorities for inclusion in the strategy.

She continued by highlighting that the strategy differs from the existing strategy as it has been informed by a more detailed evidence base than previously covering ten cohorts, looking at the issues for each cohort and identifying any gaps in the service offer. It was confirmed that around 7,500 people contact the housing service each

year claiming homelessness, it is then determined as to whether the authority owe them a duty. It was confirmed that more people are contacting the service sooner and therefore the service is strengthening its intervention support and that of the initial 7,500 contacting the service 2,500 are accepted as being homeless in line with the requirements of the legislation. The main reasons for homeless within the county are, end of private rented tenancy, domestic abuse and parent/friend no longer willing to provide accommodation.

The Housing Manager continued by highlighting that the Service has seen a large increase in the number of people requiring early advice to prevent a crisis situation, and that there has also been an increase in the number of people with complex needs accessing the service. In addition, access to some tenures can be more difficult for certain cohorts and there are pressures on temporary accommodation currently available.

In relation to the priorities of the draft strategy, the Housing Manager confirmed that conversations are ongoing to provide an explanation of what will be achieved in the first twelve months and that the service will come back to a future committee and confirm how they have performed in relation to the actions identified in the delivery plan.

In relation to next steps, the Housing Manager confirmed that the seven-week consultation period runs to the 18 December 2023, the second draft of the strategy will go to Cabinet in June, that a homelessness Forum will be established that will be led by Durham County Council and will focus on performance in relation to the delivery plan and it was confirmed that a delivery plan will be developed.

Councillor A Batey commented that the current approach to providing support was very much digital based with a lack of face-to-face contact and there was concern about clients having access to the necessary technology to enable them to access the required support. She continued by suggesting that there was a need to identify more opportunities for support to be provided via face-to-face contact with clients, particularly in view of the recent review of Durham County Council's Customer Access Point provision. Marie Smith, Housing Manager advised that work was taking place to make it as easy as possible to access current support via the Durham County Council website and contact on a face-to-face basis was available at various centres throughout the County.

Christopher Hepworth, Housing Manager added that work was ongoing exploring available office accommodation and whether staff were currently based at the appropriate locations. He continued that there were currently two dedicated Visiting Officers with more preventative face-to-face work being undertaken and that the team were heavily reliant on partners to refer clients to the support provision available.

Councillor A Batey felt there was a need to ensure that young people were aware of the support available both from a perspective that they may need to access the support but also so they could promote what support was available within their local communities. She suggested that information on available support be provided in schools and colleges throughout the County and that colleagues within the Housing Solutions Service may want to visit both schools and colleges to provide details of available support. Marie Smith, Housing Manager advised that in relation to preventative work undertaken, the team worked with Children Services and Schools, to promote the type of support currently available and confirmed that working with schools would be included within the resulting delivery plan.

Councillor C Lines commented on the significant increase in people contacting the service with complex needs and queried what additional pressure this placed on the service. Marie Smith, Housing Manager advised that there had been an increase of 13% in relation to people presenting with complex needs and confirmed that Officers had a list specifying what constituted complex needs. She added that the service work closely with partners such as Public Health when it is identified that those needs include domestic abuse, drug and alcohol dependency and noted that often individuals would present to the service six to seven times and the service would work with them each time to get the support that they require.

Councillor A Surtees referred to points raised by Councillor Batey and Councillor Lines and commented that reasons causing homelessness needed to be monitored and recorded as there was a cohort of people who were affected by the 'Cost of Living Crisis' that would require support. She added that the increase in the mortgage rate and general rise in living costs would create more homelessness in the future. She highlighted the need to continually promote the support available and suggested that information in relation to available support should be available generically in community venues throughout the County.

The Chair was concerned that people without electricity/broadband would not have access to the support network that was available online and highlighted that many people were vulnerable and required face-to-face contact and empathy which could not be provided via e-mail. He suggested that hubs to provide the necessary support be explored. In addition, he felt the strategy needed to be flexible to be able to respond to change and highlighted the need for a delivery plan to be developed to identify how the actions within the strategy would be delivered. The Chair then asked to meet Officers outside the meeting with regards to provision/schemes within the Chester-le-Street area.

Councillor K Shaw commented that the service had been one of the six best performing authorities in relation to responding to homelessness and had won the Local Authority of the Year awards in 2021, however the authority were now in the position of underperforming and were below regional and national performance figures and queried the reasons behind the change. Marie Smith, Housing Manager advised that the service dealt with high and complex caseloads which were

resource intensive, and Officers were working hard towards turning current performance around. She added that the changes with regards to how performance statistics were recorded was also a factor.

Christopher Hepworth, Housing Manager explained that the way data was recorded had changed since the Homeless Reduction Act and various welfare reform changes. Previously Durham County Council had recorded Discretionary Housing Payments which were classed as preventions. The service no longer administer these payments and therefore they no longer feature in the performance information. He added that the team had a quick turnover of staff with a large percentage of Housing Officers working with the team less than 12 months. It was noted that the team were in a better place, staff vacancies had now been filled, with the team having two visiting officers and new software had been installed to reduce the administrative burden, therefore performance would improve.

Councillor P Heaviside commented that a percentage of people presenting as homeless were ex-offenders and he understood that ex-offenders were unable to seek accommodation via Registered Social Housing Providers for ten years and, therefore had to seek accommodation via the private sector. He asked whether it would be possible to work with Social Housing Providers in the County to look at each case on an individual basis. Marie Smith, Housing Manager advised that two initiatives had been funded by Government to provide accommodation to ex-offenders which had proven to be very successful. Officers were having discussions with Social Housing Providers in the County and noted that one of the Housing Providers was very keen to pilot a scheme to provide accommodation to ex-offenders.

Resolved:

- (i) That feedback in relation to the draft strategy be shared with the Service Grouping to further revise the draft strategy and to develop a delivery plan for inclusion within the strategy;
- (ii) That the revised draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 including the delivery plan be considered by the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet in June 2024.

8 Supported Housing Improvement Programme / Non-Commissioned Supported Accommodation

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) working with non-commissioned supported housing providers across County Durham (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

Callum Aitchison, Supported Housing Project Co-ordinator provided Members with a detailed presentation that focused on providing background to the programme including why the programme was established with detail of the response to the challenges linked to the non-commissioned supported housing sector; context for County Durham, SHIP Funding, Objectives and Outputs of the scheme including detail of reviews and inspections undertaken with initial findings; and the strategic approach to supported accommodation being used across the county.

The Supported Housing Project Co-ordinator explained that there is no regulator of non-commissioned supported accommodation which means that providers can set up without the approval of the Local Authority with providers often setting up for commercial gain, often buying cheap properties in deprived locations with the issue highlighted in a BBC Panorama documentary in August 2021. He highlighted that supported housing accommodates the most vulnerable people, that are eligible for the higher rate of housing benefit and that nationally and regionally there have been increased reports of poor-quality accommodation.

He continued that the supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 had been introduced to respond to the challenges linked to the non-commissioned supported housing sector and confirmed that this act had come into force in August 2023 and confirmed that further consultation will take place early in 2024, including in relation to draft regulations developed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department for Work and Pensions. In relation to supported housing providers in County Durham, the Supported Housing Project Co-ordinator confirmed that we have 19 providers with 522 units providing transitional/short term supported accommodation for approximately 650 people. He confirmed that this is a growing sector in the county with the clients often having multiple needs. In relation to providers in the county, a lot of the properties tend to be located in the east and centre of the county.

In relation to the funding of the SHIP, the Supported Housing Project Co-ordinator confirmed that Government had made available a £20m funding pot to help tackle poor quality supported housing and improve the support and accommodation available, with Durham awarded £578,795 to implement the SHIP in March 2025. This funding had allowed the recruitment of staff to form a multi-disciplinary team of six staff to carryout property checks and to speak to tenants to determine the support being delivered. He confirmed that the team works closely with colleagues from Adult and Social Care.

In relation to the SHIP objectives it was highlighted that the programme would ensure the correct level of care and refer to the appropriate support agencies, provide value for money and ensure that providers are not submitting higher claims, support the upskilling of the providers workforce and work in collaboration to produce a Supported Accommodation Charter which providers would have to sign up to ensure that they meet the minimum standards required.

The Supported Housing Project Manager continued that the SHIP Delivery Plan included initial meetings with the 19 providers in the county, property inspections, reviews with tenants to ensure that they are getting the necessary support and care, feedback report with recommendations to the provider together with an action plan to tackle any issues identified, re-inspections and spot checks, an escalation process to be undertaken with partners with the last resort reducing or withdrawing the payment of housing benefit.

With reference to SHIP outputs, it was confirmed that in relation to reviews completed the current figure was 115 with 71 property inspections undertaken. In relation to current initial findings, they included a lack of tailored support, bed blocking with high numbers staying for four years plus, low staffing numbers with sometimes one and a half staff members to cover 30 properties, a lack of skilled support staff which results in staff not knowing how to make referrals and how to access partner agencies.

The Chair left the meeting, **Councillor A Surtees in the Chair**

Councillor A Batey was reassured to see established links with emergency services and asked how embedded the linkages were in the process and used the example of the fire service registering vulnerable households while undertaking home fire safety checks. She asked for clarification as to who would do referrals. The Project Co-ordinator advised that Housing Provider linkages with emergency services were already established, and they worked closely with the Fire Safety Community Manager. He confirmed that landlords take referrals directly from tenants as they would be aware of tenants needs and confirmed that support sessions were provided.

Councillor A Surtees commented that the programme was much needed and was not surprised by the findings. She highlighted low staffing numbers in some cases with one and a half staff to cover 30 properties which was not acceptable, however she was encouraged by the approach being adopted. She noted that the report and presentation had not touched upon the community disruption often caused by providers not delivering the support required by their tenants. She then highlighted that charities could claim funding to operate supported housing schemes, however Registered Providers do not currently have access to this funding. Councillor A Surtees concluded by suggesting that an update report come back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow Members to review the progress of the programme and its findings. The Project Co-ordinator advised that Registered Providers could set up a charitable arm which would then allow them to access this funding and that this was currently being looked at by some providers.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted;
- (ii) That a further update report is considered by the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the 2024/25 work programme.

9 Quarter Two Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth which provided details of the forecast outturn position for quarter 2 revenue and capital for Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) as at 30 September 2023 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Councillor D Freeman referred to the £1.793 million Leisure Centre income shortfall covered corporately from central contingencies and queried why this was not included in the budget. The Finance Manager explained that £1 million shortfall was related to post Covid reduced footfall which was planned to be addressed in the Medium Term Financial Plan next year. He added that £793,000 was in relation to the Leisure Transformation Programme as centres were being developed there were periods of closures and loss of income, therefore this would be picked up corporately so it would not impact on the service.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

10 Quarter Two 2023/24 Performance Management Report

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive Officer which provided an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Gemma Wilkinson, Strategy Team Leader presented the report and provided a summary of the main messages regarding performance for the Service Grouping, noting progress to date and areas that were being addressed.

Councillor R Crute referred to households prevented from homelessness and helped to stay in their home in the Housing Vulnerable People KPI data tables on page 277, and queried how the data was being recorded as the overall assessment and direction of travel indicator showed positive, however the figures were below the national and regional and were below the previous 12 month figures and suggested that they should be shown as red in the Rag rating. The Strategy Team Leader advised that she would take a closer look at the indicators and feedback to Councillor Crute.

Mrs R Morris commented that she understood that running a bus company was a business and if the service was not being used it would be removed, however she was concerned that services were lifelines for many elderly people in remote areas and queried if the Service Grouping was addressing this and what actions were

being taken to maintain bus services in rural communities. The Strategy Team Leader advised that she would take this question back to the service for a response.

Councillor C Lines referred to the multi-modal day ticket and queried when the uptake data would be available. He noted that the lack of bus services to connect to other modes of transport was an issue for the County. Councillor A Batey added that there would be a data lag due to the bus strikes and that it would probably be some time before realistic data could be captured with potentially a true analysis not being available until late spring. The Strategy Team Leader confirmed that the scheme is a regional scheme and advised that she would forward to members any available data.

Responding to a query from Councillor M Stead regarding the Selective Licensing Scheme, the Strategy Team Leader confirmed that 37% of private sector properties were now fully licenced, however 63% of properties covered by the scheme were not registered.

Resolved:

That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge be noted.

11 Minutes from the County Durham Economic Partnership Board

The Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board held on 26 October 2023 were noted for information.

12 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Members that arrangements had been made for a Special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on the 12 January to consider Masterplans and the Council New Homes Building Programme.