



## Local Government Act 1972

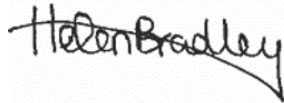
**I Hereby Give You Notice** that an **Ordinary Meeting** of the **Durham County Council** will be held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 26 June 2024** at **10.00 am** to transact the following business:-

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024 (Pages 3 - 12)
2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
3. Chair's Announcements
4. Leader's Report
5. Questions from the Public
6. Petitions
  - Save Leazes Footbridge, Durham City
7. Report from the Cabinet (Pages 13 - 24)
8. Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-2029 - Report of Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 25 - 70)
9. Publication of Members Addresses - Report of Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (Pages 71 - 90)
10. Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2023/24 - Report of Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (Pages 91 - 102)

11. Questions from Members

**And** pursuant to the provisions of the above-named act, **I Hereby Summon You** to attend the said meeting

Dated this 18th day of June 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Helen Bradley  
Director of Legal and Democratic Services

**To: All Members of the County Council**

## Durham County Council

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 22 May 2024** at **10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

### **Councillor J Nicholson in the Chair**

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, C Bihari, J Blakey, D Boyes, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, J Chaplow, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, J Clark, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, K Earley, J Elmer, K Fantarrow, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, D Haney, A Hanson, P Heaviside, T Henderson, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvets, J Howey, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, D McKenna, M McKeon, S McMahan, J Miller, B Moist, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, J Scurfield, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, G Smith, T Smith, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, P Taylor, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, J Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Binney, I Cochrane, K Hawley, D Howarth and C Varty

### **1 To elect a Chair for the ensuing year**

**Moved** by Councillor A Shield, **Seconded** by Councillor M Wilkes and

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor J Nicholson be elected to the Office of Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor J Nicholson subscribed the Statutory Declaration accepting the Office.

**Councillor J Nicholson in the Chair**

## **2 Presentation to Retiring Chair**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

## **3 To elect a Vice-Chair for the ensuing year**

**Moved** by Councillor R Bell, **Seconded** by Councillor J Shuttleworth that Councillor P Jopling be elected Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

## **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2024 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **5 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

## **6 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Councillor June Clark, the recently elected Member for the Horden Division. June had served on the County Council previously from 2013 to 2021.

The Chair reminded Members that photographs would be taken throughout the course of meeting and that the Council photo would be taken in the council chamber at the conclusion of the meeting.

The Chair was pleased to announce that the Chair's charities for the forthcoming year would be the Tiny Lives and Friends Together (Crook).

The Chair reminded all Members of their obligations under the Code of Conduct and asked that all Members address each other in the correct manner during meetings and show respect at all times.

## **7 Leaders Announcement of Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members**

Councillor Hopgood, Leader of the Council, informed Council that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members would remain unchanged from 2023/24.

## **8 Annual Review of the Constitution**

The Council considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the Constitution, as updated following the annual review, for adoption by the Council.

**Moved** by Councillor A Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor C Marshall and

**Resolved:**

That the proposed changes to the Constitution be approved, to take immediate effect and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services make arrangements for the publication of the amended Constitution on the Council's website.

**9 Appointment of Council Bodies and allocation of seats to Political Groups under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding the appointment of Council Bodies and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups under Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor R Bell and

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

**10 To appoint Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the following Committees**

**Moved** by Councillor T Duffy, **Seconded** by Councillor E Mavin that the list of nominations for Chair's and Vice-Chair be approved.

	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Vice-Chair</b>
Appeals and Complaints Committee	Councillor T Duffy	Councillor E Mavin
Audit Committee	Councillor A Watson	Councillor L Fenwick
Chief Officer Appointments Committee	Councillor A Hopgood	Councillor R Bell
Highways Committee	Councillor R Ormerod	Councillor G Hutchinson
General Licensing and Registration Committee	Councillor L Brown	Councillor R Potts
Statutory Licensing Committee	Councillor D Brown	Councillor J Griffiths Councillor L Mavin
General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee's	Councillor D Brown (1) Councillor I McLean (2) Councillor J Blakey (3)	
Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee	Councillor D Brown (1) Councillor L Mavin (2) Councillor C Hampson (3)	

Standards Committee	Councillor K Rooney	Councillor T Stubbs
County Planning Committee	Councillor G Richardson	Councillor A Bell
Area Planning Committee (North)	Councillor E Peake	Councillor W Stelling
Area Planning Committee (Central and East)	Councillor D Freeman	Councillor D Oliver
Area Planning Committee (South and West)	Councillor J Quinn	Councillor A Savory
<b>Pension Fund Committee</b>	Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd	Councillor M Stead
<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>	Councillor M Simmons	Councillor M Walton
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committees</b>		
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board	Councillor R Crute	Councillor C Lines
Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee	Councillor V Andrews	Councillor M Johnson
Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee	Councillor A Reed	Councillor C Hunt
Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee	Councillor P Heaviside	Councillor J Charlton
Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	Councillor B Coult	Councillor J Elmer
Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee	Councillor S Zair	Councillor A Surtees

An **Amendment** to the list was **Moved** by Councillor P Sexton that Councillor B Moist be nominated for the position as Chair of Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor K Fantarrow **Seconded** the Amendment.

A request for a named vote was requested. Having secured the required number of Members' to request for a named vote, the names voting for and against the amendment were as follows:

**For the Amendment**

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, A Bell, C Bihari, D Boyes, J Chaplow, R Charlton-Lainé, J Clark, R Crute, S Deinali, K Earley, K Fantarrow, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, A Hanson, S Henig, J Higgins, L Hovvels, M Johnson, C Kay, B Kellett, R Manchester, C Marshall, D McKenna, M McKeon, S McMahan, J Miller, B Moist, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, P Pringle, J Purvis, S Quinn, J Scurfield, P Sexton, K Shaw, G

Smith, T Smith, A Surtees, P Taylor, S Townsend, E Waldock, J Watson, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke.

### **Against the Amendment**

Councillors M Abley, R Bell, C Bell, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, T Duffy, J Elmer, D Freeman, D Haney, P Heaviside, T Henderson, L Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, J Howey, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Lines, L Maddison, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, P Molloy, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, J Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, M Stead, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes and S Zair.

There were no abstentions.

The Amendment was **lost**.

Upon a further vote being taken it was

### **Resolved**

That the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committee's and Sub-Committee's as circulated be agreed.

## **11 Appointments to Joint and Other Bodies 2024/25**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought to agree the appointments process of Members to Joint and Other Bodies (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Leader of the Council **Moved** Recommendations 3 (a-d) and (f-h), **Seconded** by the Deputy Leader.

The Leader of the Council referred to Recommendation (c) and informed Council it was not proposed to appoint any additional Trustees to the Charter Trust as referred to in Paragraph 4 of Appendix 3.

The Leader of the Council **Moved** Recommendation 3 (e) and nominated Councillor A Watson as Chair of the County Council's Audit Committee to serve on the Joint Audit Committee. **Seconded** by the Deputy Leader.

## **Resolved:**

That:

- (a) the allocation of seats on the County Durham Fire and Rescue Authority as detailed in Appendix 2 be agreed;
- (b) the allocation of seats to the Business Durham Advisory Board as set out in paragraph 4(b) to the report be agreed;
- (c) the allocation of seats on the Charter Trust as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed;
- (d) the allocation of seats on the Police and Crime Panel as detailed in Appendix 4 be agreed;
- (e) that the Chair of the Audit Committee is nominated to serve on the Joint Audit Committee to assist the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, and Chief Constable, noting the nomination is subject to approval of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner be agreed;
- (f) the current arrangements for the North East Combined Authority, and the North East Combined Authority and authorise the Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s) to make appointments once the specifics of the determination of allocation to political groupings were advised to the council by the NECA secretariat.
- (g) authorise the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s), be authorised to make appointments to the other outside bodies to which the Council are invited to nominate, in accordance with the following criteria:-
  - (i) identify those organisations whose purpose is aligned to a specific Cabinet Portfolio, and nominate Members accordingly.
  - (ii) identify local outside bodies from each electoral division and allocate those to local members. If there are more seats on an outside body than local members then the political balance would be applied. For those local bodies which are strategic in nature representation by a specific Cabinet Portfolio would be appropriate.
  - (iii) If a consensus on the allocation of seats to Members within the electoral division cannot be reached, should the division be represented by Members from different parties and agreement cannot be reached, the party with the largest



proportion of seats on the Council would be allocated the seat.

- (iv) the bodies which are not local to a particular electoral division, for example, those with a County or Regional remit, appointments be made in accordance with the overall political proportionality of the Council, except in the case of bodies providing services in one particular locality, in such circumstances the membership would be from that locality.
  
- (h) authorise the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s), be authorised to make any changes to memberships of the main outside bodies/ joint bodies approved by Council, which may become necessary during the course of 2024/25.

## **12 Appointment of Independent Members to the Audit Committee**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought approval on the appointment of co-opted Members to the Audit Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director of Resources outlined the appointments process that had been undertaken. Following the conclusion of the recruitment process the recommendations were for the Council to approve the appointment of three independent members to the Audit Committee, an increase of one, to provide increased resilience and ensure that as far as possible, at least two independent members would be in attendance at meetings of the Audit Committee.

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor A Watson, confirmed both he and the Vice Chair, Councillor Fenwick had been fully involved in the recruitment process. Councillor Watson welcomed the input from the current independent members. Both Clive Robinson and Ian Rudd had served the Audit Committee with great distinction and contributed to the robust challenges and discussions, helping ensure that the councils internal controls, risk and financial governance arrangements were as they should be. He placed on record his thanks to both for their service to the Audit Committee over many years. Councillor Watson confirmed that there had been five candidates who had expressed an interest in the positions and following the interviews it was clear that there were three outstanding candidates. He went on to say that understandably, diaries did not always permit the two independent members to attend all meetings and in consultation with the Corporate Director and the Chief Internal Auditor, he fully supported increasing the appointments to three independent members.

In addition to the reappointment of Clive and Ian, Councillor Watson was confident that Francis Barnish would be a great addition to the Audit Committee and subject to Council endorsing these appointments he looked forward to working with all three members.

Councillor L Fenwick placed on record her thanks to Clive and Ian for their contributions to the Audit Committee and supported the recommendations.

In relation to increasing the Independent Members numbers to three, Councillor Fenwick explained that this would provide a greater likelihood that at least two Independent Members would be in attendance at all Audit Committee meetings, ensuring that we complied with best practice. Councillor Fenwick was sure that Francis Barnish would bring a lot to the Committee.

In seconding the recommendations, Councillor Fenwick placed on record her thanks to Tracy Henderson, Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager who provided support with the appointment process.

**Moved** by Councillor A Watson, **Seconded** by Councillor L Fenwick and

**Resolved:**

- a) To formally record its thanks to Clive Robinson and Ian Rudd for their service to date as co-opted Independent Members to the Audit Committee since 2018.
- (b) To increase the co-opted Audit Committee membership from two to three members with effect from 1 May 2024.
- (c) Subject to the outcome of the Audit Committee meeting on 20 May 2024, to reappoint Clive Robinson and Ian Rudd and also appoint Francis Barnish as a new co-opted Independent Member to the Audit Committee with effect from 1 May 2024 with all three appointments being for a fixed term of three years.

### **13 Statement of Returning Officer - Horden by-election**

The Council noted the Statement of the County Returning Officer which showed the name of the person elected to the Horden Electoral Division on 2 May 2024 (for copy see file of Minutes

## **14 Dates of Ordinary Council meetings for 2024/25**

### **Resolved**

That the dates of Ordinary meetings of the Council for 2024/25 be agreed as follows:

Wednesday 26 June 2024  
Wednesday 17 July 2024  
Wednesday 25 September 2024  
Wednesday 23 October 2024  
Wednesday 11 December 2024  
Wednesday 22 January 2025  
Wednesday 19 February 2025 (Budget and Council Tax Setting)  
Wednesday 26 March 2025

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**County Council**

**26 June 2024**

**Report from the Cabinet**



**Electoral division(s) affected:**

All

**Purpose of the Report**

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meetings held on 13 January, 17 April, 15 May and 4 June 2024 to enable Members to ask related questions by no later than midday 3 working days before the day of the meeting

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**13 March 2024**

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REG/2024/002

Item 2 - Corporate Enforcement Policy - Key Decision: NCC/2024/001

Item 3 - Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 – Period to 31 December 2023 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP (13) savings

Item 4 - Public Space Protection Order – Durham City

Item 5 - New Business Units South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland

Item 6 - Tree Management Policy and Inspections Review

**17 April 2024**

Item 7 - Annual Review of the Constitution

Item 8 - Durham County Council becoming signatories to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment

Item 9 - Health Protection Assurance Annual Report

## **15 May 2024**

Item 10 - Workforce Strategy 2024-2027

Item 11 - Shopfront Design Guide, Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment, Biodiversity and Non-designated Heritage Asset Supplementary Planning Documents

## **4 June 2024**

Item 12 - North East Devolution – Combined Authority Borrowing Powers - Key Decision: CEO/2024/001

Item 13 - Early Help Strategy 2024-2026

Item 14 - Update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025

## **1. Spennymoor – Long Term Plan for Towns - Key Decision: REG/2024/002**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the Government's Long Term Plan for Towns programme which was announced in October 2023 and sought to target funding to 55 towns across England including Spennymoor.

The report included details of the further guidance received in December 2023 together with the proposals for developing a Town Board and the development of a town plan. In October 2023, the Government announced a £1.1 billion programme to assist with the regeneration of 55 towns across the United Kingdom (UK) through the new Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) programme.

Spennymoor was identified as one of the beneficiaries of the programme and is set to access £20 million of government funding over the next 10 years.

### **Decision**

We endorsed the process of seeking a chair for the Town Board through open recruitment and delegated approval of the submission of the Vision and Town Investment Plan to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Economy and Partnerships and Resources, Investments and Assets.

## **2. Corporate Enforcement Policy - Key Decision: NCC/2024/001**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which sought approval to adopt the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy from 1 April 2024 following internal review and wider public and partner consultation. The report also sought approval to grant delegated authority to relevant Corporate Directors in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to review and amend the Corporate Enforcement Policy as appropriate as and when required in the future.

### **Decision**

We noted the contents of the report and the final Corporate Enforcement Policy which accompanied the report as Appendix 2.

We agreed to formally adopt the Corporate Enforcement Policy from 1 April 2024, subject to any further amendments and delegated authority to relevant Corporate Directors in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic

Services to review and amend the Corporate Enforcement Policy as appropriate as and when required.

### **3. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 – Period to 31 December 2023 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP (13) savings**

We noted the following:

- a) the council's overall forecast financial position for 2023/24 and the continuing uncertainty associated with the outturn forecast resulting from the significant inflationary and demand led cost pressures;
- b) performance against the various prudential indicators agreed by Council in February 2023;
- c) the forecast use of earmarked reserves in year;
- d) the forecast 2023/24 cash limit underspend of £2.479 million (net of CYPS) alongside the forecast contribution of £4.336 million to general reserves resulting in a forecast overall net council underspend in 2023/24 of £6.815 million;
- e) the net unavoidable inflationary pressures which are forecast to be managed from the General Reserve;
- f) that all reserves will be reviewed to ensure sufficient sums are available in the ERVR and MTFP Support Reserve to support the MTFP going forward;
- g) the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools forecast outturn position;
- h) the position on the capital programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- i) the amount of savings delivered to 31 December 2023 against the 2023/24 targets and the total savings that will have been delivered since 2011.

#### **Decision**

We agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' and transfers to and from general contingencies as set out in the report and approved the revenue and capital budget adjustments outlined in the report.



#### **4. Public Space Protection Order – Durham City**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood and Climate Change which provided an overview of the powers, benefits and risks available under a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The report sought agreement to undertake a public consultation on the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to help control begging, urinating or defecating and the use of intoxicating substances. A further report will be presented for further consideration following the outcome of the consultation exercise to determine whether to introduce a PSPO in Durham City.

##### **Decision**

We agreed that a full public consultation exercise be undertaken to gather evidence relating to the activities and behaviours to determine the need for a PSPO in Durham City and gauge the level of public support and opinion on the merits of introducing a new PSPO in Durham City. We also agreed to seek views on whether any other behaviours and activities should be included in a PSPO for Durham City.

We agreed to delegate the finalisation of the consultation proposals and the management of the consultation process itself to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways.

#### **5. New Business Units South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to progress the development of speculative business units on land owned by the Council at South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland, as part of the Stronger Towns Programme.

##### **Decision**

We agreed to progress the scheme of new business units, apply for all statutory approvals, and go out to competitive tender for a construction partner.

We also provided delegated authority to the Corporate Directors of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets, to enter into the construction contract should it be achievable within the Council funding envelope set out within the report.

## **6. Tree Management Policy and Inspections Review**

We considered proposed revisions to the corporate Tree Management Policy which sets out the approach to managing trees in the Council's ownership, or under its management, as well as trees in private ownership that pose a safety risk to the public. The policy has proved to be a useful document since its introduction in 2014, providing information to the public on tree-related matters and helping to provide a consistent approach to dealing with customer enquiries. It was programmed for review in July 2023 and that review has now been completed.

The amendments made do not fundamentally change many of the elements of the previous policy and particularly those dealing with service requests which were the focus of interest in the 2013 public consultation. The main changes have been made in the areas of tree risk management and tree inspection procedures.

### **Decision**

We noted the content of the report and endorsed the revised Tree Management Policy and proposed tree inspection procedures.

We also noted that a review of budgets and resources would be carried out to help ensure that safety works are adequately resourced and prioritised. Further reports are to be submitted to Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Management Team and Corporate Property Board outlining the results of the inspection regime and potential resource implications.

We agreed to an internal audit of the revised tree risk management strategy after 12 months of complete implementation.

## **7. Annual Review of the Constitution**

We considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the Annual Review of the Constitution. The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities operating executive arrangements to prepare and keep up to date a document (their Constitution) which contains a copy of the authority's standing orders, a copy of the authority's code of conduct for its members and coopted members, such information as the Secretary of State may direct, and such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate. A table summarising the proposed changes was included at Appendix 15 to the report.

## **Decision**

We approved the delegation of executive powers as set out in the proposed amendments to the officer scheme of delegation at paragraphs 20 – 40 of the report and recommended that Council agree to the proposed revisions to the Constitution at its meeting on 22 May 2024.

## **8. MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health in Durham County Council becoming signatories to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment. We recognise that good mental health is fundamental to functioning well, it enables individuals to cope with the normal stressors of life, work productively, maintain healthy relationships, actively participate in the community, and reach their potential.

The commitment is a roadmap to achieving better mental health outcomes for employees. It comprises a set of six key standards and supporting actions that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their people. The Commitment's ambition is to encourage employers of all sizes to join this national movement and improve standards of mental health care among the workforce.

The key standards are:

- prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity;
- proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes;
- promote an open culture around mental health;
- increase organisational confidence and capability;
- provide mental health tools and support;
- increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.

## **Decision**

We noted the contents of the report and agreed that Durham County Council becomes a signatory to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment. We would encourage other organisations to become signatories to the commitment.

## **9. Health Protection Assurance Annual Report**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which presented the Health Protection Assurance Annual Report.

The protection of the health of the population is one of the five mandated responsibilities given to local authorities as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Director of Public Health (DPH) for County Durham is responsible under legislation for the discharge of the local authority's public health functions. It is critical that the DPH receives assurance in relation to the health protection functions of screening; immunisation; outbreaks and communicable disease management; strategic regulation interventions and preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies.

The health protection functions delivered by a range of organisations in County Durham continue to demonstrate good overall performance. Good communication exists between the commissioners of the various programmes and the DPH; remedial and corrective interventions are instigated when necessary. Escalation procedures are in place in the event the DPH needs to raise concerns.

There remained areas for improvement and increased assurance. These recommendations were listed in full in the Health Protection Assurance Annual Report.

### **Decision**

We noted that the report provided broad assurance that effective processes are in place for each of the key strands of health protection activity and support the areas for improvement and further assurance, particularly the school-aged immunisation service contract and sexual health contract. We note that both of these contracts were priority areas of work for improvement, development and assurance.

## **10. Workforce Strategy 2024-2027**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources regarding the Workforce Strategy for 2024-2027. The purpose of a Workforce Strategy is to ensure organisations plan and prepare their workforce to deliver on strategic priorities and prepare for changes and challenges ahead.

A well-defined Workforce Strategy helps optimise productivity, adapt to changing conditions, and support long-term improvement. The Strategy will enable the Council to continue to deliver Council Plan priorities, as the

organisation becomes smaller, with reduced resources by optimising the workforce resource that we do have, ensuring we have the right people in the right roles doing the right thing with appropriate levels of skills and competence to address the challenges of today as well as tomorrow. The refreshed Workforce Strategy had been designed to support the delivery of Durham County Council's Council Plan which sets out the vision and long-term ambitions for the county.

## **Decision**

We approved the adoption of the refreshed Workforce Strategy.

## **11. Shopfront Design Guide, Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment, Biodiversity and Non-designated Heritage Asset Supplementary Planning Documents**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to commence consultation on four Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These are the second draft of the Shopfront Design Guide SPD and Energy Efficiency, Renewables, and the Historic Environment SPD, and the first draft of the Biodiversity SPD and Non-designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) SPD. All four documents supported the County Durham Plan (CDP) adopted in October 2020.

## **Decision**

We agreed that the:

- i. second draft of the Shopfront Design Guide SPD as detailed in Appendix 2 and the Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment SPD as detailed in Appendix 3 for consultation from 3 June to 14 July 2024;
- ii. power to make minor modifications and adopt the documents following consultation, be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships. If significant changes were required, it would need to be considered by Cabinet for adoption; and
- iii. first draft of the Biodiversity SPD as detailed in Appendix 4 and the NDHA SPD as detailed in Appendix 5 for consultation from 3 June 2024 to 14 July 2024.

## **12. North East Devolution – Combined Authority Borrowing Powers - Key Decision: CEO/2024/001**

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought consent to the making of regulations by central government to provide the new mayoral combined authority, NECA, with borrowing powers in line with the devolution deal and the scheme which was subject to public consultation.

In order for NECA to be able to support its functions, it was envisaged that the combined authority would have borrowing powers. The North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 made provision for borrowing powers in relation to NECA's transport functions. However, borrowing powers for other functions must be dealt with by separate Regulations.

The report sought agreement in principle to consent to the making of the Regulations and delegated authority for the Chief Executive to provide that consent when requested to do so by the Secretary of State.

### **Decision**

We agreed in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the Regulations and duly authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent to the Secretary of State when requested.

## **13. Early Help Strategy 2024-2026**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and Chair of Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board which presented the updated Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 for endorsement.

The review of the current Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help commenced in 2023 and involved a range of stakeholders.

The newly titled County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 was based on evidence about the needs and wants of children and their families living in County Durham and from what partners across the early help system feel collectively they can achieve.

### **Decision**

We noted the work on developing the new Early Help Strategy and endorsed County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26.

## **14. Update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025**

We received an update on the developments of the corporate asset management since the approval of the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023-2025 in April 2023.

The update set out priorities for further improvements which would inform the development of the next iteration of the CAMP to be presented in 2025.

### **Decision**

We noted the changes in the estate metrics contained in paragraphs 16-22 of the Cabinet report and the plan to revisit these for the 2025 CAMP. We also noted the improvements achieved and the progress that had been made on the actions identified in the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 since its approval in April 2023, along with the areas for continued development which will be presented to Cabinet in 2025.

### **Background Papers**

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - 13 March 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 17 April 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 15 May 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 4 June 2024](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,  
Leader of the Council  
18 June 2024

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## County Council

26 June 2024

Safe Durham Partnership Strategy

2024-2029



### Report of Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Durham County Council

### Councillor John Shuttleworth, Cabinet Portfolio for Rural Communities and Highways

#### Electoral divisions affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the County Council with the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy (SDPS) 2024-29 following public consultation. The final plan is attached as Appendix 2.

#### Executive summary

- 2 Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the responsible authorities (commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP)) in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area.
- 3 Under the Police and Justice Act 2006, CSPs are duty-bound to 'provide evidence-based data to support CSPs in their planning and duties'. It is a statutory obligation for CSPs to produce or procure an annual localised Strategic Assessment providing a strategic evidence base that identifies future priorities for the partnership.
- 4 In County Durham, the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) which has the responsibility for delivering the SDP Strategy, which is informed by Durham Insight as our strategic assessment.
- 5 The streamlined SDP Strategy outlines the SDP ambition, that '**Durham is a county where everyone can feel and be safe**'.
- 6 The Safe Durham Partnership Strategy has the following "umbrella themes" which recognise the work done by the whole community safety partnership arena. These themes are then broken down into an area of focus and areas of assurance.

- **Anti-social behaviour and crime which disrupts our communities.**
  - Area of focus: anti-social behaviour
  - Areas of assurance: reducing reoffending, road safety
- **Hate crime and building community cohesion.**
  - Area of focus: hate crime
  - Area of assurance: counter terrorism
- **Sexual violence and other violent crime**
  - Area of focus: sexual violence
  - Areas of assurance: serious violence, domestic abuse, combatting drugs and alcohol, organised crime

7 For each area of focus there are specific goals we want to achieve:

- **Anti-social behaviour**
  - Increased public confidence to report ASB.
  - A coordinated and efficient multi-agency partnership approach to ASB.
  - Effective pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.
- **Hate crime**
  - A clear understanding among communities that hate crime should be reported and will not be tolerated.
  - Cohesive communities which embrace diversity.
  - Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.
- **Sexual violence**
  - Increased trust and confidence to report sexual offences.
  - Improved feelings of safety around the nighttime economy, and reductions in violent crime within the nighttime economy.
  - Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.

8 The Partnership gives due consideration to the other plans and strategies in place across the wider County Durham Partnership and its member organisations.

9 The priorities within the plan will remain in place for five years with periodic reviews. The SDP will remain agile, flexible, and responsive to emerging need.

- 10 The Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-29 was agreed at the Safe Durham Partnership Board on the 20 May 2024.

**Recommendation (s)**

- 11 The County Council is recommended to:
- (a) Note the content of the report.
  - (b) Agree to adopt the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-29.

## Background

- 12 A Safe Durham Partnership development session took place in July 2023 to look at the Partnership's priority areas and development of the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy.
- 13 There was agreement that the SDP should be focused on areas where the Partnership can make a difference and the strategy should have fewer areas of focus which are clear to the SDP, its partners, and communities.
- 14 Further consultation has taken place with the Safe Durham Partnership Board, and a multi-agency Strategy Development Group was put in place to develop the draft Safe Durham Partnership Strategy.
- 15 Community Safety Partnerships provide hyper-localised strategies tailored to the needs of their communities. They work on the principle that no single agency can address all drivers of crime and antisocial behaviour, and that effective partnership working is vital to ensuring safer communities.
- 16 The Safe Durham Partnership has a duty to meet our statutory obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a lot of changes have been made to statutory duties and/or guidance in recent years or are planned in the course of this strategy.
- 17 Government guidance and legislation places some other groups on a statutory footing, and they function effectively with oversight from the SDP. For example, the Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership now has statutory responsibilities to deliver on the National Combatting Drugs Outcomes.
- 18 To account for the changing landscape, SDP priorities consist of three 'umbrella themes' which cover work done by the whole community safety partnership arena. These themes are then broken down into:
  - **Areas of focus:** The SDP will champion the areas that need further focus or development. There may be a specific local need or issue to tackle, potential impact from national or international events or actions, or the SDP may be the key governance arrangement or most appropriate forum. Areas of focus will be agile, flexible, and responsive.
  - **Areas of assurance:** The SDP will provide ongoing oversight and receive regular assurance for the existing partnership arrangements already in place for these areas.

- 19 The SDP recognises the impact of wider factors on its priority themes and works closely with partners to address the underlying contributing factors including health, substance misuse, housing, employment and poverty.
- 20 The Partnership gives due consideration to the other plans and strategies in place across the wider County Durham Partnership and its member organisations.
- 21 The key consideration for SDP focus is where the SDP can add value.

### **Safe Durham Partnership Strategy development**

- 22 Work has taken place on the SDP Strategy 2024-2029 through a strategy development group (comprising representatives from Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Office of the PCC, Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, VCS, Probation Service, and Area Action Partnerships) to ensure that the SDP Strategy is fit for purpose and reflects the work being undertaken in partnership by organisations across the county.
- 23 The SDP Strategy is a high-level strategy that is simple and easy to understand by all (professionals and residents), which outlines the priority areas and the commitment to how we will work together across the system.

### **Consultation**

- 24 Public consultation via the Durham County Council website took place between 18 March 2024 and 14 April 2024. In addition, a presentation was given to the County Durham Youth Council and to the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 25 The Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the SDPS at their meeting on 16 April 2024. Members agreed that anti-social behaviour continues to be an issue of great concern for local communities; they welcomed the focus on hate crime as an emerging area as communities become more diverse, and members noted the high number of violence and sexual violence offences in the County. They welcomed the three focused priorities and recognised the importance of achieving the specific goals.
- 26 The benefits of a partnership model to tackle the three priorities was recognised by members with several referring to successful partnership projects in their divisions, including working with the community and voluntary sector. Members commented on private and registered social landlords and the role they could have in a partnership forum to help

tackle anti-social behaviour. They were pleased to hear that social landlords are included as partners to develop and deliver actions.

- 27 The County Durham Youth Council received a presentation on the strategy at their meeting on 23 March. The strategy was then shared with the wider youth council members. 57 young people on the youth council made comments and gave feedback on the strategy, which was collated and shared as a formal response.
- 28 The Youth Council supported the approach of fewer priorities so that more time and resources can be spent on the most important issues that impact our communities.
- 29 In relation to anti-social behaviour, they agreed this is a major concern for young people across the county.
- 30 Members of the Youth Council were pleased hate crime has been highlighted as an issue, as this impacts the lives of many young people in County Durham. They are aware of the Hate Hurts campaigning material used to raise awareness and the importance of reporting Hate crime, with them referencing the bus shelter advertising around the County but wanted assurance that more activity would be taking place in the future. The Hate Crime Action Group will be responsible for ensuring this activity takes place as part their role in developing a delivery plan to combat this issue.
- 31 The Youth Council noted that sexual and violent crime is an increasing problem in the UK, and they felt it was becoming more visible in County Durham, and fully supported that this needs to be prioritised.
- 32 The Youth Council highlighted a need for appropriate justice and deterrents as well as support to families of both perpetrators and victims across all three priority areas, which mirrors the approach taken within the strategy.
- 33 Some comments included **“The topics are well thought out and cover a broad range of issues in only a few priorities.”** and **“I wish all the partners we worked with produced 15-page documents instead of bazillions of pages. Good shout.”**
- 34 There were nine responses to the public consultation with a mixture of representation from members of the public, community groups and organisations. All responses were generally positive in relation to the focus on streamlined priorities.

- 35 Partners are supportive of the approach of focussed priorities with wider assurance, taken forward with a flexible, agile approach to emerging issues. They are keen to move the agenda forward together.
- 36 There was acknowledgement of the challenges of measuring success, particularly in measuring public confidence. For example, an increase in reports may evidence an increase in confidence to report or an actual increase in the issue. To prevent any conflicts in performance measures all partners agreed those KPIs identified in the strategy during the strategy development process.
- 37 Within the feedback from members of the public, examples of how they were impacted by these issues within their local area were provided.
- 38 There was a proposal to reduce the duration of the strategy from five to four years to align with the Council Plan and the Police and Crime Plan. It was agreed to keep the current strategy to five years to enable the Police and Crime Plan to inform the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy. Following this, it is proposed to reduce the timescale of further iterations of the strategy to four years in order to align strategies moving forward, whilst allowing a year to ensure the refreshed Council Plan and the Police and Crime Plan are able to inform future strategy development.

### **Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-29 ambition and priorities**

- 39 The streamlined SDP Strategy outlines the SDP Boards ambition, that **‘Durham is a county where everyone can feel and be safe’**.
- 40 The Safe Durham Partnership Strategy has the following “umbrella themes” which recognise the work done by the whole community safety partnership arena. These themes are then broken down into an area of focus and areas of assurance. For the areas of focus the SDP will dedicate regular themed Board meetings to these issues, and work with the delivery groups to focus efforts and target resources in these areas. For the areas of assurance, the SDP will provide ongoing oversight and receive regular assurance from the well-established groups already in place to address these areas:
- **Anti-Social behaviour and crime which disrupts our communities.**
    - Area of focus: anti-social behaviour
    - Areas of assurance: reducing reoffending, road safety
  - **Hate crime and building community cohesion.**
    - Area of focus: hate crime
    - Area of assurance: counter terrorism

- **Sexual violence and other violent crime.**
  - Area of focus: sexual violence
  - Areas of assurance: serious violence, domestic abuse, combatting drugs and alcohol, organised crime

41 Unlike previous Safe Durham Partnership Plans, this is a sleeker and easier to digest strategy which will concentrate on our approach to tackling the issues and where we as a partnership can influence and direct resources and funding.

42 For each area of focus there are specific goals we want to achieve:

- **Anti-Social Behaviour**
  - Increased public confidence to report ASB.
  - A coordinated and efficient multi-agency partnership approach to ASB.
  - Effective pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.
- **Hate Crime**
  - A clear understanding among communities that hate crime should be reported and will not be tolerated.
  - Cohesive communities which embrace diversity.
  - Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.
- **Sexual Violence**
  - Increased trust and confidence to report sexual offences.
  - Improved feelings of safety around the nighttime economy, and reductions in violent crime within the nighttime economy.
  - Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.

### **Delivery plans**

43 Leadership in each of the three SDP priorities will be through one of the existing formally established subgroups, each of which will lead on a high-level delivery plan:

**(a) Anti-social behaviour: Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Group**

**(b) Hate crime: Hate Crime Action Group**



## **(c) Sexual violence: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**

### **Executive Group**

- 44 These groups will support the SDP Strategy by outlining how we will take work forward utilising our agreed ways of working with provision for ongoing monitoring by the Safe Durham Partnership:
- (a) Empowering communities
  - (b) Being asset focused
  - (c) Building resilience
  - (d) Working better together
  - (e) Sharing decision making
  - (f) Doing with not to
- 45 It is important to note that these groups are established subgroups of the SDP and already provide annual updates, including key performance indicators to the Board, as part of the cyclical work programme. Delivery plans will be reviewed to ensure they align to the SDP Strategy and measurable outcomes will be developed and agreed by subgroups.
- 46 These groups are at different stages of addressing these issues; the ASB Delivery Group has recently agreed a new Strategy and developed a delivery plan which has been agreed at the SDP.
- 47 In order to ensure we are tackling ASB in the most effective way we will explore the potential tools and powers available to all partners. For example, the proposal to implement a PSPO (Public Space Protection Order) within Durham City centre that would seek to control behaviours including begging, urinating in the street and use of intoxicating substances. Public consultations on such measures are undertaken to ensure the views of the community are taken into account when implementing these orders.
- 48 The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group is a well-established partnership that the SDP will be asking to increase its focus on the Sexual Violence aspects of its agenda.
- 49 The VCS chair of the current Hate Crime Action Group has stood down, and work has been taking place to identify a new chair who can steer the group at a strategic level in order to take forward the approach identified within the new strategy. There is a commitment from the

Police to chair the group, and a chair has been identified. Work is currently taking place to develop terms of reference, work plans and membership for the group to take the work forward.

## **Equality impact assessment**

- 50 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken alongside the development of the strategy which attached as Appendix 3.

## **Conclusion**

- 51 The development of the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy has been led by a partnership group. The strategy has been informed by Durham Insight, which acts as the Strategic Needs Assessment, and provides the evidence base from which the priorities have been developed.
- 52 The Partnership gives due consideration to the other plans and strategies in place across the wider County Durham Partnership and its member organisations.
- 53 The SDP Strategy is a high-level strategy that is simple and easy to understand by all (professionals and residents), which outlines the priority areas and the commitment to how we will work together across the system.
- 54 The strategy will be published on the County Durham Partnership website.

## **Background papers**

- None

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to prepare a partnership plan, setting out the CSP's priorities.

### **Finance**

Ongoing pressure on the public services will challenge all agencies to consider how best to ensure effective services are delivered in the most efficient way. Delivery plans will be developed to support the delivery of the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

Details of consultation are provided in the report.

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

A full Equality Impact Assessment is being carried out alongside the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy.

### **Climate Change**

There are no climate change implications.

### **Human Rights**

There are no adverse implications.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Crime and disorder is the main focus of the report under the Safe Durham Partnership.

### **Staffing**

There are no staffing implications.

### **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications.

### **Risk**

There are no risk implications.

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## **Appendix 2: Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-2029**

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Attached as a separate document.

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## **Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment**

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Attached as a separate document.

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# Safe Durham Partnership Strategy

2024-2029



Better for everyone

**Ambition:** Durham is a county where everyone can feel and be safe.



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# Foreword

It is with pleasure that we introduce the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy for 2024-29. The community safety landscape has seen lots of legislative and guidance changes since Community Safety Partnerships were established more than twenty years ago and we are proud of the well established and emerging partnership groups we have in place in the County.

In developing this strategy, the Safe Durham Partnership has reflected upon its governance role, areas where it provides an assurance mechanism for other statutory groups and areas where it can add most value. We will continue to provide oversight and escalation for the key areas set out in this strategy, whilst focusing on our priorities of anti-social behaviour, hate crime and sexual violence. These priorities have been chosen because they are important to our residents, because of the significant harm they cause to victims, or because of the potential impact of national or international events; and they are areas where the strengths of the Safe Durham Partnership can make a real difference locally.

You will therefore see a sleeker and easier to digest strategy which will concentrate on our approach to tackling the issues and where we as a partnership can influence and direct resources and funding in order to achieve our ambition that:

## **Durham is a county where everyone can feel and be safe.**

It is important to acknowledge that data and insight tell us County Durham is a safe place to live. At the same time, we must be mindful that the increased cost of living can put strain on our relationships and pressures on our budgets, and that escalating global conflict can increase community tensions.

The Safe Durham Partnership is committed to County Durham's Approach to Wellbeing, listening to our communities, tailoring our approaches to their specific needs and utilising their unique assets. We will work together to build resilience so that people are less likely to engage in criminal activity and build confidence so that people are more likely to report it.



**Alan Patrickson**

Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership  
Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change,  
Durham County Council



**Councillor John Shuttleworth**

Vice Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership  
Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways,  
Durham County Council

## Our priorities

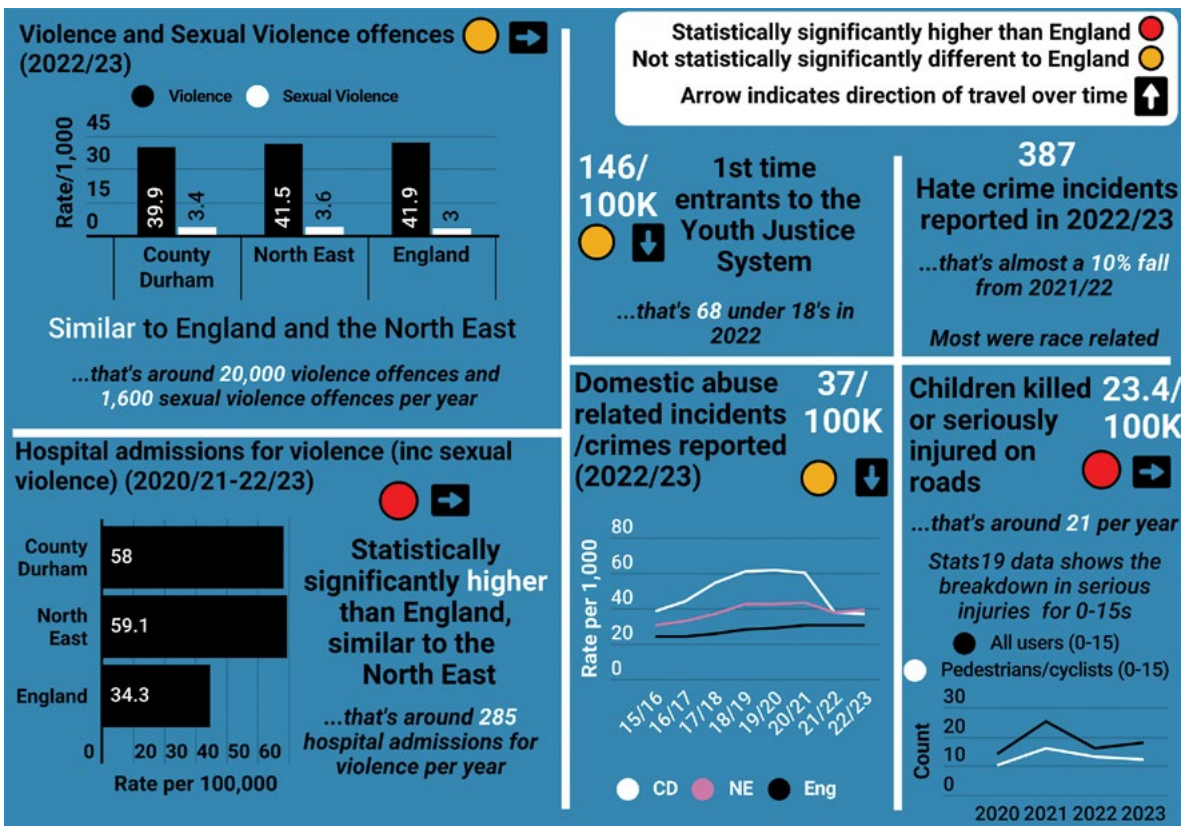
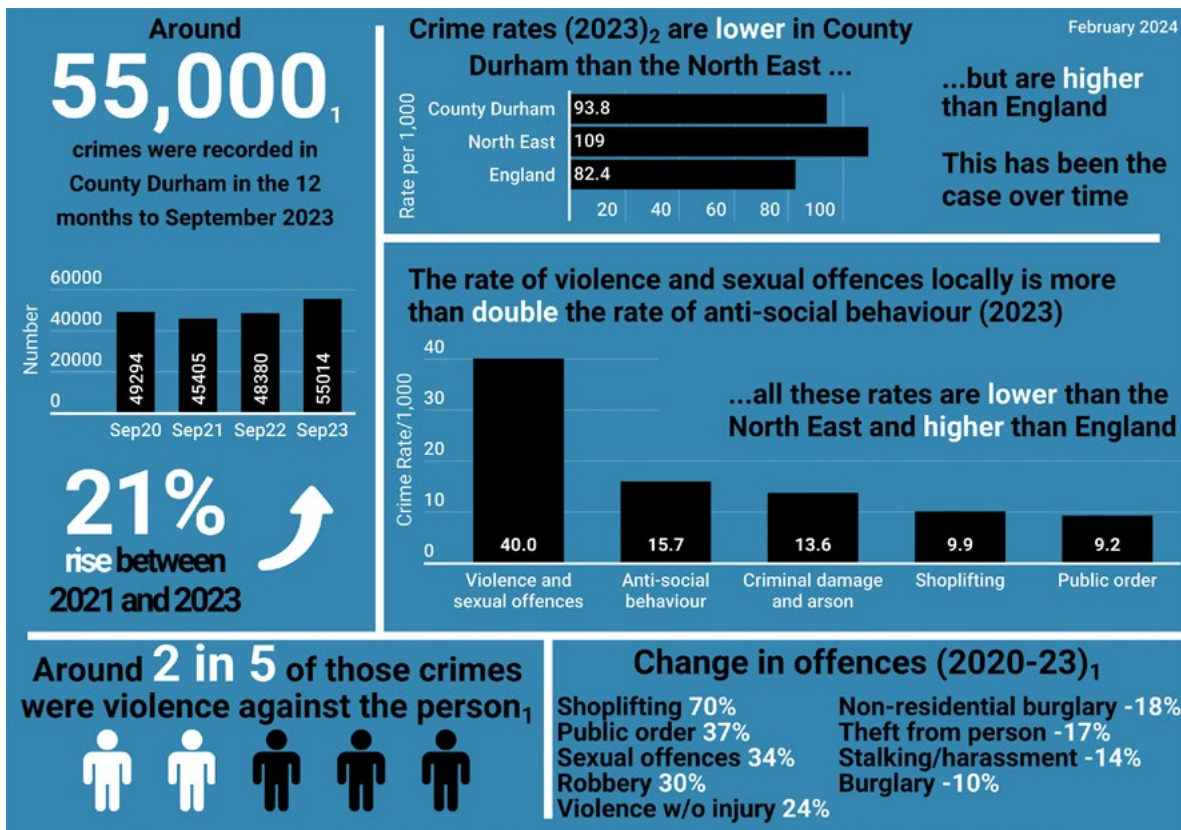
1. Anti-social behaviour and crime which disrupts our communities
2. Hate crime and building community cohesion
3. Sexual violence and other violent crime

## Agreed ways of working

- **Empowering communities**  
Working with communities to help them feel confident in reporting crime and enabling them to feel safe in their local area.
- **Being asset focused**  
Acknowledging the different needs of communities and the potential of their assets to help reduce crime and disorder.
- **Building resilience**  
Helping the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities to build their future resilience and prevent their engagement in criminal activity.
- **Working better together**  
Working better across sectors to help avoid duplication in investment and activities, and ensure impacts are measured to build the evidence-base for what works.
- **Sharing decision making**  
Designing services and initiatives with people who need them to break the intergenerational cycle of criminal activity whilst improving mental and physical health outcomes.
- **Doing with not to**  
Making our interventions empowering and centred around children, adults and older people, and the place where they live.

In producing this strategy, we have considered evidence from Durham Insight (as our Strategic Assessment) alongside, local expertise, insight, horizon scanning, and the voice of our communities captured through various ongoing consultation and feedback mechanisms from all partners. The Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) is committed to ensuring key leads in partner organisations deliver on the commitments they have made in this strategy.

# An overview of crime and community safety in County Durham



**Notes**

1: Crime in England & Wales, year ending September 2023 - Community Safety Partnership tables. ONS.  
2: Data.police.uk via Crime and Community Insight, Durham Insight.

## Role of the Safe Durham Partnership

Local authorities have a statutory duty to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce reoffending. In County Durham the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.

More about the SDP is available on the [County Durham Partnership website](#).

## Changing landscape for Community Safety Partnerships

Community Safety Partnerships provide hyper-localised strategies tailored to the needs of their communities. They work on the principle that no single agency can address all drivers of crime and antisocial behaviour, and that effective partnership working is vital to ensuring safer communities.

The Safe Durham Partnership has a duty to meet our statutory obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a lot of changes have been made to statutory duties and/or guidance in recent years or are planned in the course of this strategy.

Government guidance and legislation places some other groups on a statutory footing, and they function effectively with oversight from the SDP. For example, the Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership now has statutory responsibilities to deliver on the National Combatting Drugs Outcomes.

With this in mind, the SDP priorities consist of three 'umbrella themes' which cover work done by the whole community safety partnership arena across the County. These themes are then broken down into:

- **Areas of focus:** The SDP will champion the areas that need further focus or development. There may be a specific local need or issue to tackle, potential impact from national or international events or actions, or the SDP may be the key governance arrangement or most appropriate forum. Areas of focus will be agile, flexible, and responsive.
- **Areas of assurance:** The SDP will provide ongoing oversight and receive regular assurance for the existing partnership arrangements already in place for these areas.

**The key consideration for SDP focus is where the SDP can add value, work with the delivery groups to focus efforts and target resources in these areas.**

**The SDP recognises the impact of wider factors on its priority themes and works closely with partners to address the underlying contributing factors including health, substance misuse, housing, employment and poverty.**

**The Partnership gives due consideration to the other plans and strategies in place across the wider [County Durham Partnership](#) and its member organisations.**



# Safe Durham Partnership Strategy - identified priorities 2024

1. **Anti-social behaviour and crime which disrupts our communities**  
 Area of focus: anti-social behaviour  
 Areas of assurance: reducing reoffending, road safety
2. **Hate crime and building community cohesion**  
 Area of focus: hate crime  
 Area of assurance: counter terrorism
3. **Sexual violence and other violent crime**  
 Area of focus: sexual violence  
 Areas of assurance: serious violence, domestic abuse, combatting drugs and alcohol, organised crime

Leadership in each of the three priority areas will be through one of the existing formally established sub-groups, each of which will lead on a high-level delivery plan.



# Priority 1. Anti-social behaviour and crime which disrupts our communities

## Why this is a priority

Being and feeling safe both in our homes and within the wider community impacts on both our emotional and physical wellbeing and enables us to live productive lives. It also directly impacts on our personal resilience as well as the overall resilience, confidence, and cohesion of our communities.

Public perception and understanding of the definition of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are varied, but ASB and crimes which disrupt our neighbourhoods and communities is the number one community safety priority for residents across the county. There are multiple reporting routes across the spectrum and the SDP can add value as the strategic forum in which the involved agencies come together.

ASB can have a massive impact on those who are subjected to it, and it is more prevalent in our more deprived areas, where its impact is greatest. ASB can be a precursor to more serious crime and we think that tackling ASB will greatly benefit our prevention work across the community safety landscape.

We want people to have pride in their areas, to feel safe in their own home and have optimism for the future. Victims of anti-social behaviour have told us they want to see improved reporting routes; better communication with them about the progress of investigations; improved criminal justice processes; and for services to undertake victim impact assessments.

## What we want to achieve

- Increased public confidence to report ASB
- A coordinated and efficient multi-agency partnership approach to ASB
- Effective pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators



## Case Study

### Off road motorcycle nuisance in Lancaster Hill and Westmorland Rise, Peterlee

Believe Housing and the Police received a large number of reports of off-road motorbikes churning up large grassed areas and covering homes in mud in Lancaster Hill and Westmorland Rise in Peterlee.

The bikes were accessing the area from a number of points including the A19. The residents in the area were very intimidated by these people wearing masks racing around and tearing up grassed areas, splattering mud all over houses and vehicles.

Door knocks and leaflet drops were carried out in the area by the Police, Local Authority Community Safety Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens as well as local housing officers from Believe. Residents were asked about the issues in order to gather further information and intelligence. Residents were also given contact details and information on Operation Endurance, the partnership approach to tackling off road motorcycle nuisance through patrols, physical defences and enforcement. The residents were encouraged to report information that was useful to identifying the bikes and offenders, such as colour and make of the bike, clothing of rider etc.

Believe Housing was involved as some of its tenants were affected by this type of behaviour. One lady had her bungalow intentionally covered in mud from the bikes.

A site visit was carried out and funding was allocated from the Safer Streets fund to install metal hoop barriers at appropriate key access points.

We returned to the lady in the bungalow to explain what action had been taken, and she was happy with the update.

From the information received from the community, the Police made three motorcycle seizures which were believed to have been involved in these incidents. Subsequently no more incidents were reported due to physical defences and vehicle seizures.



## Priority 2. Hate crime and building community cohesion

### Why this is a priority

Community cohesion is defined by a range of social factors which can vary from one neighbourhood to another. It empowers local people and sustains neighbourhoods. With the pressures on public resources and rapid population change, community cohesion may be affected. We need to closely monitor this and support our communities through these challenges.

There is real strength in our communities, brought to the fore during the recent Covid-19 crisis, storms, flooding and power outages, where we have seen fantastic examples of resilience and cohesion, throughout the county. We must build on this sense of belonging and purpose, to improve community cohesion so that people are safe and free from the fear of crime.

In April 2022 the Government mandated all councils to be involved in the dispersal programme for asylum seekers, which will further influence the diversity of our population and increase the need for us to prioritise community cohesion. Increasing global conflict could potentially change the make up of our communities or increase tensions locally.

Hate crimes have a profound effect on both individuals and communities causing emotional distress, fear and a sense of vulnerability among targeted groups. These incidents can lead to a breakdown in community cohesion and create a climate of intolerance. In addition to the immediate harm experienced by victims, hate crimes contribute to long term social and psychological consequences, increasing the capacity required within our victim services to support those who experience this type of crime.

From reports, hate crime is evident across many areas of County Durham with a concentration in Durham City due to the diverse student population. From local intelligence, we know that the majority of hate crime reports are racial in nature, with the Black and Pakistani communities most commonly targeted. However, we also know that hate crime is under reported, and we must do more to demonstrate how seriously this type of offence is taken and encourage reporting from members of all protected groups such as people with a disability, religion, or those from the LGBTQI+ community.

If hate crime is not tackled and dealt with swiftly in our society then this could lead to an increase in confidence from extremist groups to get a foothold in our communities, being able to spread their ideologies and targeting those who are vulnerable.

### What we want to achieve

- A clear understanding among communities that hate crime will not be tolerated and should be reported
- Cohesive communities which embrace diversity
- Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators



## Case Study

### Humankind LGBTQI+ services

For young people in County Durham, Humankind LGBTQI+ services offer friendly, practical support around gender identity and/or sexual orientation. The support offer includes one to one sessions, as well as the opportunity to meet other LGBTQI+ young people, engage in fun activities, learn new skills and get relevant advice and guidance on a range of bespoke topics affecting the happiness and mental health of LGBTQI+ young people.

Young people in the last reporting year have mostly been accessing the service to get help, support and advice on barriers and issues relating to coming out. This has included family support sessions, practical health advice, as well as offering young people a range of tools and resources. Other popular services include emotional resilience and wellbeing services as well as the lively peer support groups, offering tailored activity sessions as well as informal get togethers.

There are a number of young people each year who access Humankind for discrimination and bullying support. This could be because of a one-off or repeated incidences. Both are very upsetting and support for the young person and the family is invaluable.

As a result of the discrimination work with the young people involved in Humankind, there have been occasions when staff from Humankind have approached other community groups and venues following a referral from a young person and these groups have responded in a positive way, making practical changes where possible, changing policies and procedures as well as forwarding communications to members about being inclusive and tolerating of everybody.

In this way, the work of Humankind further supports ongoing work to keep young people safe in County Durham and promotes inclusivity, community cohesion and contributes towards reducing hate crimes.



# Priority 3. Sexual violence and other violent crime

## Why this is a priority

Violence and sexual offences are one of our most prevalent crime types. Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) are statistically significantly higher than England (similar to the North East).

Violent crime is among the most serious offending and whilst serious violent crime rates are below the national average in our area the harm caused to victims of violent crime is great, potentially life changing or life threatening.

The Serious Violence Reduction Partnership (SVRP) has developed a local evidence-based strategy to address these issues, the more serious of which are more prevalent in densely populated urban areas such as Durham City Centre, and the SDP will work with the SVRP for assurance and escalation purposes. The Serious Violence Reduction Strategy specifically focusses on four main areas, those under 18 who are involved in or at risk of being drawn into serious violence, violence within the night-time economy, dealing with those aged between 18-35 involved in serious violence, and reducing domestic abuse related violence where a knife or a sharp instrument are involved.

The Government's (refreshed) Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy<sup>1</sup> published in July 2021 sets out the actions the Government will take to increase support for victims/survivors, bring perpetrators to justice, and, ultimately, reduce violence against women and girls. In February 2023 the Home Secretary included VAWG within the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) which recognises VAWG as a national threat alongside terrorism and serious and organised crime. It is acknowledged therefore, that there is a need for greater coordination and collaboration between emergency services and local partners to tackle the threat.

1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 children and 1 in 18 men have experienced sexual violence. The Office of National Statistics have shown that there were 2,267 sexual offences recorded by Durham Constabulary from April to December 2022.

The SDP will focus efforts and target resources as required towards the Sexual Violence aspects of the work led by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG).

## What we want to achieve

- Increased trust and confidence to report sexual offences
- Improved feelings of safety around the nighttime economy, and reductions in violent crime within the nighttime economy
- Pathways and support that meet the needs of victims and perpetrators

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy)

## Case Study

### Durham City Night Hub

The Durham City Night Hub was operational from February 2022 following a successful application for funding to the Home Office under the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) initiative. Since then, the Hub has been operational every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday between the hours of 8pm and 3am. The Hub is based at St Nics Church in the marketplace in the city, and has been supported by a number of partners.

The overarching aim of the Hub was to provide a safe refuge, support, and guardianship to women but by the nature of the work of the Safer Streets Officers that work in the hub, it also provides services and support and assistance to anyone in a position of fear, distress and vulnerability. The operation of the Hub was one of four measures included in the VAWG funding application. The other three initiatives included the appointment of a co-ordinator, bystander training to licensed premises, and the creation of a recognisable brand and marketing campaign.

Since the Hub's introduction it has gone from strength-to-strength and has proven to be a valuable addition to ensure the safety of the public in the night-time economy. The staff assist in bringing together a variety of different partners who work in collaboration with local individuals.

A total of 2,441 incidents were logged by the Hub from February 2022 to December 2023, which included numerous safeguarding and welfare issues as well as reports of criminal activity and community safety. In relation to sexual violence there were 29 reports of sexual offences and 53 queries of spiking.

The funding for the VAWG bid was committed to the end of March 2023 and since that time various funding has been received from Safer Streets national funding, the Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, the City Parish Council, Durham University, Durham AAP as well as Durham County Council. Recently a further funding proposal to the Serious Violence Fund of £50,000 has been approved to ensure its continuation for another year, however long-term funding for the project is still being explored.





# How the SDP will take this work forward

The SDP will continue to provide a partnership space for assurance and escalation across the community safety landscape, holding others to account, supporting partners with specific issues, identifying gaps or emerging issues and advocating for our local communities.

The SDP will use its assurance functions to ensure that some key actions and approaches are being applied across the community safety agenda, including:

- Working with, supporting, and listening to feedback from victims of crime and ASB
- Applying prevention and early intervention approaches that reduce the number of people becoming victims in the first place, and prevent escalation of crime and ASB
- Increasing public confidence to encourage people to report crime and ASB, and so that people feel safer in their community
- Improving connectivity and partnership working to include working with others in County Durham and beyond, pooling resources and co-commissioning, and joining up data and intelligence

The SDP will focus on those areas where it can add most value; ASB, hate crime, and sexual violence; shining a light and encouraging joined-up action in those areas and will continue to be agile, flexible and responsive to need.



## Measures of success

We have developed a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress towards achieving our ambition. Leadership in each of the three focus areas will be through one of the existing formally established subgroups, each of which will lead on a high-level delivery plan which will include the development of a performance framework. In addition to this, the SDP will continue to receive assurance and escalation updates from all relevant groups within the priority framework, which will include performance information.

### Safe Durham Partnership areas of focus key performance indicators (KPIs)

- Reports of ASB per 10,000 people
- Deliberate fires per 10,000 population
- Hate incidents reported to police per 10,000 population
- % who feel unsafe to some extent walking in the neighbourhood
- Dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime issues by local council and police
- % victims who reported feeling safer because of support from Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS)
- Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence)

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### Safe Durham Partnership areas of assurance key performance indicators (KPIs)

- Crime rate per 1,000 population
- Theft offences per 1,000 population
- Road traffic collisions
- Domestic abuse incidents reported to police
- % Harbour clients who feel optimistic about the future on case closure
- % of offenders reoffending in the last 12 months
- % of offenders reoffending in the last 2 years
- Juvenile first-time entrants to the criminal justice system per 100,000 of 10–17-year-olds
- % of successful completions of treatment programmes
- Violent Crime incidents which were alcohol related



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**Telephone: 03000 260 000**

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

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# Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

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. Completion of this template allows us to provide a written record of our equality analysis and demonstrate due regard. It must be used as part of decision making processes with relevance to equality.

Please contact [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk) for any necessary support.

## Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Partnerships
<b>Lead Officer name and job title</b>	Julie Bradbrook, Interim Strategic Manager - Partnerships
<b>Subject of the impact assessment</b>	Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-2029
<b>Full Council date</b>	26 June 2024
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>EIA Start Date</b>	January 2024
<b>EIA Review Date</b>	To be reviewed in line with the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy (2024-2029)

## Subject of the Impact Assessment

<p>Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice which is the subject of this impact assessment.</p>
<p>Local authorities have a statutory duty to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce reoffending. In County Durham the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.</p> <p>The Safe Durham Partnership has a duty to meet our statutory obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a lot of changes have been made to statutory duties and/or guidance in recent years or are planned in the course of this strategy.</p> <p>Government guidance and legislation places some other groups on a statutory footing, and they function effectively with oversight from the SDP.</p>

The SDP has committed to the Approach to Wellbeing, which encompasses these ways of working with communities and those most in need. In producing this strategy, we have considered evidence from Durham Insight, which is utilised as the strategic assessment, alongside the voice of our communities captured through various ongoing consultation and feedback mechanisms from all partners.

With this in mind, the SDP priorities consist of three 'umbrella themes' which cover work done by the whole community safety partnership arena across the County. These themes are then broken down into:

- **Areas of focus:** The SDP will champion the areas that need further focus or development. There may be a specific local need or issue to tackle, potential impact from national or international events or actions, or the SDP may be the key governance arrangement or most appropriate forum. Areas of focus will be agile, flexible, and responsive.
- **Areas of assurance:** The SDP will provide ongoing oversight and receive regular assurance for the existing partnership arrangements already in place for these areas.

The SDP recognises the impact of wider factors on its priority themes and works closely with partners to address the underlying contributing factors including health, substance misuse, housing, employment and poverty.

The Partnership gives due consideration to the other plans and strategies in place across the wider County Durham Partnership and its member organisations.

The key consideration for SDP focus is where the SDP can add value.

Safe Durham Partnership Strategy - identified priorities 2024

### **Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime which disrupts our Communities**

- Areas of focus: anti-social behaviour
- Areas of assurance: reducing reoffending, road safety

### **Hate Crime and Building Community Cohesion**

- Areas of focus: hate crime
- Areas of assurance: counter terrorism

### **Sexual Violence and other Violent Crime:**

- Areas of focus: sexual violence
- Areas of assurance: serious violence, domestic abuse, combatting drugs and alcohol, organised crime

Leadership in each of the three priority areas will be through one of the existing formally established sub-groups, each of which will lead on a high-level delivery plan.



Who are the main people impacted and/or stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users, community representatives):

General public / Elected Members / Partners

Community individuals and groups (including voluntary organisations) – community safety can affect everybody including local residents, those working, educated in or visiting the borough, and businesses. The risk and potential risk for victimisation, or becoming involved in offending, can vary by crime problem (i.e., burglary, violent crime), location, socio-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability for example.

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Gender reassignment	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	N
Race	N	Y
Religion or Belief	N	Y
Sex	N	Y
Sexual orientation	N	Y

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause discrimination or negative impact. Record full details and any mitigating actions in section 2 of this assessment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

The SDP Strategy is the statutory strategy for reducing crime and disorder, reducing the harm caused by substance misuse, reducing anti-social behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the environment and reduce re-offending. It therefore does not have any potential to cause negative impact.

Please provide **brief** details of positive impact. How will this policy/proposal 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?

The strategy is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations (amended) 2011. The Safe Durham Partnership is required to make arrangements for obtaining the views of persons and bodies who live or work in the area about the levels and patterns of crime and disorder and substance misuse in the area; and the matters which should be prioritised for the area. So far as is reasonable, the Safe Durham Partnership must consult with persons who appear to represent the interests of as many different groups or persons within the area as is reasonable; and persons who appear to the strategy group to represent the interests of those groups or persons within the area likely to be particularly affected by the implementation of the partnership strategy.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your data analysis and any findings?

Please **outline** any data you have and/or proposed sources (e.g. service user or census data, research findings). Highlight any data gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record your detailed analysis, in relation to the impacted protected characteristics, in section 2 of this assessment.

- National statistics, research and best practice
- [Joint strategic needs assessment \(JSNA\)](#)
- [Durham Insight](#)
- [Durham Police, Crime Plan 21-24](#)
- [Youth Justice Plan 23-24](#)
- [Police Performance | Durham Police & Crime Commissioner \(durham-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)
- CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile) 2023-24 (RESTRICTED DOCUMENT)
- [SDP ASB Strategy 21-25](#)
- [Violence against women and girls - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

- [Growing Up in County Durham Strategy \(countydurhampartnership.co.uk\)](http://countydurhampartnership.co.uk)
- Student Voice Survey 2022

### Screening Summary

On the basis of the information provided in this equality impact screening (section 1), are you proceeding to a full impact assessment (sections 2&3 of this template)?	Please confirm Yes
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### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:  Juie Bradbrook, Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships	Date:
Equality representative sign off (where required):  Mary Gallagher, Equality and Diversity Team Leader	Date:

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to sections two and three.

If not proceeding to full assessment, please ensure your screening record is **attached to any relevant decision-making records or reports**, retain a copy for update where necessary, and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

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

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details of 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 and advancement of equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions, including any necessary mitigating actions to ensure fair treatment.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to age?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>This strategy will have a positive impact for young people.</p>	<p><b>Youth Justice Plan 2023-24</b></p> <p>Between Oct 2016-Sep 2017 and Jan 2022-Dec 2022, we have achieved a 53.7% reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system, from a rate of 322 per 100,000 10-17 year olds to 146.</p> <p>The latest available locally sourced data shows 85 young people entering the Youth Justice System in 2022/23 at a rate of 184 per 100 000 10-17 year olds. This is an increase but will be affected by the covid lockdowns/recovery.</p> <p>Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data (July 2020 – June 2021 cohort) shows a re-offending rate of 36.6% which is an 1.5% reduction compared to the previous year. This is similar to the average Northeast rate of 31.7% and the England rate of 31%.</p> <p>The rate of reoffending can fluctuate due to the significant decreases, year to year, in the size of the cohort of young</p>	

	<p>people, but also shows that the trend is a reduction in reoffending rates overtime.</p> <p><b><u>Summary of findings from the student voice survey.</u></b></p> <p>This survey will inform the development of plans and services across County Durham and is designed to positively impact upon pupils as services can be directed to support where particular issues come to light.</p> <p>The survey has been designed in conjunction with children and young people and includes questions of a range of topics that could provide insight for this strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social wellbeing</li> <li>• Mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Behaviour and safety</li> <li>• Online safety</li> <li>• Health and physical wellbeing</li> <li>• Physical activity</li> <li>• Community wellbeing</li> <li>• Access to community facilities</li> </ul> <p>The overarching themes relating to ASB for both the Primary age group and Secondary age group were:</p> <p>Primary</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quarter (22%) say that there are times in school when they don't always feel safe.</li> </ul> <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A third (30%) said they don't always feel safe either in school or outside.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Summary of findings the Growing up in County Durham Strategy consultation.</u></b></p> <p>During March / April 2022, children, young people and parents / carers were asked to take part in an initial engagement exercise ahead of developing the new children, young people and families strategy.</p> <p>Within these boundaries, there were two elements to the exercise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To tell us what words or phrases they would like to see included in a statement of ambition for all the county's CYP&amp;F for Growing Up in County Durham?</li> <li>2. We also asked them a series of questions to help us identify what their aspirations and priorities are, what issues and challenges they are facing and where relevant, what they think of the services they receive?</li> </ol> <p>Out of the emerging themes the following were relevant to the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy:</p> <p>Safety / trust:</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being safe at home</li> <li>• Safe places to play and learn</li> <li>• Gaining independence</li> <li>• Bullying / peer pressures</li> <li>• Diversionary activities</li> <li>• ASB</li> <li>• Drugs</li> <li>• Crime</li> <li>• Improved safety in public areas e.g.CCTV</li> <li>• More child friendly places / venues</li> <li>• Parent / child relationships</li> <li>• Getting in with the wrong crowd</li> <li>• Risk taking behaviour</li> </ul> <p>Access to facilities, programmes and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More accessible opportunities</li> <li>• Time of day</li> <li>• Access to technology</li> <li>• Waiting times</li> <li>• Clubs</li> <li>• Listen to what CYP want</li> <li>• Transport, affordability</li> <li>• Location – too far away</li> <li>• Not knowing about what's available</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to out of school activities/ leisure</li> <li>• Access to exercise facilities</li> <li>• More free or subsidised fares / entrance fees.</li> </ul> <p>Environment and climate change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Litter</li> </ul> <p>Worries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment e.g. litter</li> <li>• Socialisation</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Increase in crime / ASB locally</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Bullying.</li> </ul>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to disability?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>This strategy will have a positive impact in relation to disabled people, particularly tackling hate crime.</p> <p>It will ensure that victims are confident to report, and that once reported, the hate element is recognised so that support and safeguarding can be provided.</p>	<p>Hate Crime is an area of focus within the Safe Durham Partnership Strategy and work is led by a Joint Hate Crime Action Group, which is a multi-agency group that drives improvements in engagement, enforcement and partnership working to reduce the impact of hate crime in our area.</p> <p><a href="http://InstantAtlasDurham-HateCrime.durhaminsight.info">InstantAtlas Durham – Hate Crime (durhaminsight.info)</a></p>	



	<a href="https://durhaminsight.info">Hate Incidents and Hate Crime fact sheet (durhaminsight.info)</a>  <a href="https://www.gov.uk">Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Gender reassignment</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to gender reassignment?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
As per disability section.	As per disability section.	As per disability section.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A	N/A	N/A

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A	N/A	N/A

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race</b>
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sexual orientation?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
As per disability section.	As per disability section.	As per disability section.

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings; a summary of any positive and/or negative impacts across the protected characteristics, links to the involvement of different groups and/or public consultation, mitigations and conclusions made.

Community safety can affect everybody including local residents, those working, educated in or visiting the county, and businesses. The risk and potential risk for victimisation, or becoming involved in offending, can vary by crime problem (i.e., burglary, violent crime), location, socio-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.

The Safe Durham Partnership Strategy ambition is that “Durham is a county where everyone can feel and be safe” with a focus on the following priorities:

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime which disrupts our Communities
- Hate Crime and Building Community Cohesion
- Sexual Violence and other Violent Crime

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

There is real strength in our communities, brought to the fore during the recent Covid-19 crisis, storms, flooding and power outages, where we have seen fantastic examples of resilience and cohesion, throughout the county. This strategy will build on this sense of belonging and purpose, to improve community cohesion so that people are safe and free from the fear of crime.

### Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Public consultation	Partnerships	18.3.24 to 14.4.24	SDPS 2024-29
Make appropriate amendments to the strategy based on consultation feedback.	Partnerships	From 14.4.24 to 13.5.24	SDPS 2024-29

### Review and connected assessments

Are there any additional or connected equality impact assessments that need to be undertaken? (If yes, provide details)	No
When will this assessment be reviewed?  Please also insert this date at the front of the template	2029

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:  Julie Bradbrook, Interim Strategic Manager - Partnerships	Date:  May 2024
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Equality representative sign off (where required): Mary Gallagher, Equality and Diversity Team Leader	Date:
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## Report of Corporate Management Team

Helen Bradley, Director of Legal & Democratic Services

### Electoral division(s) affected:

All

### Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Council of the outcome of the consultation with all members regarding the Council's approach to publishing Members home addresses on their Register of Interests and consider recommendations from the Standards Committee.

### Executive summary

2. It is a requirement under section 30 of the Localism Act 2011 for Members and Co-opted Members of an authority to disclose any disclosable pecuniary interest to the Monitoring Officer within their register of interests.
3. Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 makes provision for a disclosable pecuniary interest to be withheld from a member's register of interests if the Member and Monitoring Officer consider the interest to be sensitive.
4. There have been a number of recommendations to and calls for the Government to amend the legislation so that Members are no longer required to publicly declare their home address, but the position remains unchanged.
5. Following an increase in the number of councillors facing abuse and intimidation, the Minister for Local Government wrote to Monitoring Officers urging them to treat requests for an interest to be treated as sensitive sympathetically.
6. Durham County Councillors have recently been consulted on whether to maintain the existing arrangements in relation to the declaration of home addresses or whether to adopt an "opt-in" or "blanket" approach.
7. It was agreed that all County Councillors would be consulted on three options: to maintain the status quo; treat all members home addresses

as sensitive. This report summarises the consultation responses and makes further recommendations for the Standards Committee to consider.

### **Recommendation(s)**

8. Council is recommended to:
  - (a) Consider the responses to the Member consultation and feedback from the Standards Committee on 7 June 2024; and
  - (b) Agree that all Members' home addresses will be treated as sensitive and only the electoral division in which they live will be published unless a Member opts to have their home address published.



## **Background**

9. Section 30 of The Localism Act 2011 (“the Act”) sets out the requirement for all members and co-opted members to register any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) with the Monitoring Officer.
10. The Localism Act 2011 is supplemented by The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (“The Regulations”) which set out the interests which constitute DPIs for the purposes of the Act.
11. Under the Regulations, land is defined as
  - (a) “any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority”
12. The most common interest in land, which is required to be registered is a Member’s home address. Unless the interest is considered to be sensitive, the home address (and any other interests in land) will be published on the members register of interests on the Council website.

## **Sensitive Interests**

13. Section 32 of the Act allows a Member, at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, to have the details of a DPI removed from their register of interests if the interest is considered as “sensitive”.
14. The Act considers an interest to be sensitive if:
  - (a) “the nature of the interest is such that the member or co-opted member, and the authority’s Monitoring Officer, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation”
15. If an interest is identified as sensitive, the Act require that the register reflects that the member does have an interest under the relevant sections, but details of the interest are withheld. The Act allows for the clarification on the member’s register that their interest is withheld under section 32 of the Act.

## **Intimidation in Public Life: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life**

16. Following a call from evidence by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) published a report in 2017 which makes a number of recommendations to reflect the scale and intensity of intimidation in public life.

17. The report made two recommendations which concern the publication of member addresses:
  - (a) The government should bring forward legislation to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper. Returning Officers should not disclose the home addresses of those attending an election count.  
  
And;
  - (b) Local Authority Monitoring Officers should ensure that members required to declare pecuniary interests are aware of the sensitive interests provisions in the Localism Act 2011.
18. In a response to the report, the Prime Minister wrote that the Government agree with both recommendations concerning the publication of member addresses.
19. In 2018, the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 were amended so that candidates are able to request that their home address is not published on the ballot paper.
20. No amendments were made to The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2011. However, when the then Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government wrote to local authorities to advise them of the changes to the rules for election candidates, they reminded them of the provision for interests to be treated as sensitive under the Localism Act 2011.

### **Local Government Ethical Standards, A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life**

21. In January 2019, the CSPL published a further report, which reviewed the effectiveness of the Standards arrangements in Local Government at the time of publication, particularly due to the changes made by the Localism Act 2011.
22. The review covered all Local Authorities in England and as a result the report made 26 recommendations aimed at the LGA, the Government, Local Authorities and Political Groups.
23. Recommendation 2 in the report concerns the publication of member addresses:
  - (a) **Recommendation 2:** The government should ensure that candidates standing for or accepting public office are not required publicly to disclose their home address. The Relevant Authorities

(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 should be amended to clarify that a councillor does not need to register their home address on an authority's register of interests.

24. The report found, based on evidence gathered, that whilst the intimidation of councillors is less widespread than that of MPs, when it does occur the severity and distressing are equal to that experienced by MPs.
25. The report notes that unlike MPs and Parliamentary Candidates, councillors' addresses are often made public on their register of interests. The report notes that due to the nature of local democracy, local councillors will often live in the local area. Within their call for evidence, there were responses which support the assertion that councillors have a greater fear of being subject to physical intimidation due to their awareness of their high profile in the local community.

### **Debate Not Hate; The impact of abuse on local democracy.**

26. The Local Government Association (LGA)'s Debate Not Hate campaign was launched in 2022 and aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation.
27. The campaign is currently a standing item on the agenda of the Council's Standard's Committee allowing them to remain informed of any developments in the campaign and take appropriate action.
28. The Debate Not Hate; The impact of abuse on local democracy report contains the findings from the LGA call for evidence of abuse and intimidation of councillors, and the recommendations of the LGA in response to these findings.
29. The call for evidence found that threats were a consistent theme which ran throughout the responses and these threats were seen as being more serious due to the availability of councillors' addresses online.
30. The report suggests that it may be better for local authorities to move towards an 'opt-in' system which would make the default position for councillors' home addresses to be treated as a sensitive interest and would require councillors to expressly request that their address is published should they wish it to be made public.
31. The report made the following recommendations in response to concerns about the availability of councillors' addresses:

- (a) **Recommendation 4:** *The Government should prioritise legislation to put it beyond doubt that councillors can withhold their home address from the public register of pecuniary interests.*

And;

- (b) **Recommendation 5:** *The LGA should work with political parties, election and democratic officers, and organisations responsible for guidance to raise awareness of the options currently available and promote the practice of keeping home addresses private during the election process and once elected.*

32. Responses gathered during the LGA's call for evidence highlighted significant concerns about the availability of personal information online, and thus how easily online abuse could translate to physical harm.
33. On 18 March 2024, the Minister for Local Government wrote to all Chief Executives in response to recent concerns from elected members about intimidation in public life. The Minister wanted to ensure that all councillors and elected mayors are aware of the sensitive provisions in Section 32 of the Act. He requested that Chief Executives bring the contents of the letter to the attention of all Councillors and the Monitoring Officer. The letter stated that the Government encourages Monitoring Officers to look sympathetically at accommodating requests for withholding home addresses from published versions of the register of interests where there are legitimate concerns of violence or intimidation.
34. On 3 April 2024, the LGA called on the Government to introduce legislation that would allow a council to proactively withhold Councillors' home addresses from the public as soon as is possible. It is understood that the LGA are also requesting that the Government indemnify Monitoring Officers in relation to requests to treat interests as sensitively, which they have considered sympathetically.

### **Current position for Durham County Council**

35. Historically in Durham, there were very few requests for interests to be treated as sensitive and/or instances in which interests were agreed to be sensitive by the Monitoring Officer. However, in recent years there has been a notable increase in the number of requests. This is linked to the increase in abuse and intimidation that Members face.
36. If a Member reports experiencing abuse or intimidation, consideration is given to treating their home address as a sensitive issue as a precaution. All requests to treat interests as sensitive are considered sympathetically by the Monitoring Officer.

37. In the last four years, 17 Members (13.5%) have reported incidents of abuse, harassment or intimidation to Member Services. At present, 24 Councillors (19%) have interests treated as sensitive, 14 of which (11%) relate to home addresses.

## **Approaches of other Local Authorities**

### ***West Sussex County Council***

38. In response to the increasing number of members at West Sussex County Council who asked for their home addresses to be withheld on their register of interests, the Council considered alternative arrangements to address these concerns.
39. Prior to the May 2021 elections West Sussex changed their approach from the assumption that addresses should be published, to instead asking members to explicitly opt in or opt out of having their addresses published.
40. West Sussex reported that following this election, 32 members (out of 70) opted to have their addresses published, and 38 chose not to. The members at the Council are able to update their preference at any time, and by November 2021 they noted that the number of members choosing to withhold their address had risen to 39.
41. A further report was put to West Sussex Council's Governance Committee in February 2022, which recommended that no changes be made to the Council's approach to publishing member addresses.
42. However, in response to the report, Members proposed the default position be amended so that members' addresses are not published unless specifically requested. Members proposed this approach due to concerns which they had in light of LGA research demonstrating a growing level of intimidation.
43. At this meeting it was resolved that the default position be amended so that members' addresses are not published unless specifically requested, and that the Council's Member Development Group considers options to include the area in which a member lives for the purpose of transparency.

### ***Trafford Council***

44. Following a recommendation of their Standards Committee in December 2021, Trafford Council commenced a consultation period to gather the opinions of their members as to whether member addresses should be publicly available.
45. The consultation results showed support for the removal of members' addresses from their published register of interests. Trafford's Standards Committee recommended that a report should be taken to Council with the recommendation that a blanket policy be applied whereby all Members' addresses are treated as sensitive interests and not made publicly available.
46. The report taken to Council highlighted the Standards Committee's concern that disclosure of the residential property could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.
47. At its meeting in October 2022, the Council agreed the recommendation from the Standards Committee not to publish member addresses.

### ***Amber Valley Borough Council***

48. In October 2021, following the murder of Sir David Amess MP, and advice given to the Council by the Derbyshire Police Counter Terrorism Advisor, the Monitoring Officer of Amber Valley Borough Council issued a letter regarding Sensitive Pecuniary Interests of Councillors.
49. The Monitoring Officer considered if member addresses should be considered sensitive and decided that all members' home addresses should be removed from their public register of interests, subject to the member confirming that they wished for their address to be removed.
50. The Land section of the members' register reads:
  - (a) "A disclosable pecuniary interest has been registered but is considered sensitive under Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 and has not been published."

### **North East Councils**

51. Enquiries have also been made with the Councils in the North East but a limited response was received. It is understood that South Tyneside Council apply a blanket approach to treat all home addresses as sensitive. Northumberland's Standards Committee considered the issue following a consultation exercise with all Members and decided

that addresses would continue to be treated as sensitive on a case by case basis.

## Options

52. Constitution Working Group considered the issue in January 2024 following which, all Members were consulted on the options set out below:

(a) **Status Quo**

The current arrangements for the publication of member addresses remain unchanged. Members' home addresses will continue to be published as a default position unless they request for their address to be classified as a sensitive interest under section 32 of the Localism Act 2011.

(b) **Treat all members home addresses as sensitive**

Apply a blanket policy where all members' addresses will be treated as a sensitive interest under section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 and will be withheld from their published register of interests.

(c) **Adopt an opt-in approach**

Move to an "opt-in" system whereby all member's addresses will be withheld under section 32 of the Localism Act as the default, but should they wish, a Member can request that their address be published on their register of interests.

53. On 26 February 2024, members were asked to complete the survey, which is attached at Appendix 2 by 17 April. This deadline for completion was extended to 26 April 2024 in order to maximise the number of responses received.

## Summary of Responses

54. In total, 109 (86.5%) responses were received. This is believed to be the highest number of responses received to a Member survey, which is perhaps indicative of the strength of views on the issue.

Option	Respondents
Status Quo	22
Treat all members home addresses as sensitive	28
Adopt an opt-in approach	59

<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>
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55. 22 respondents expressed a preference for option a, to retain the current arrangement (20%).
56. There was limited support option b, with 28 respondents (26%) indicating a preference that all Members' home addresses should be treated as sensitive.
57. Just over half of all respondents (54%) expressed a preference to move to an opt-in system (option c) whereby all member's addresses would be withheld as the default. A Member would be able to request that their home address be published on their register of interests.

## Comments

58. Comments were also invited as part of the survey. These are summarised below.

### (a) **Status Quo**

- (i) *In the interests of transparency people should know where their elected representatives live. Removal of an address remains an option for those that encounter issues.*
- (ii) *Remaining with the status quo means that all interests are fully declared and transparent.*
- (iii) *In circumstances where a member owns multiple properties it is less transparent to have the information redacted and would make it more difficult for residents to judge whether a conflict of interests exists.*
- (iv) *A lot of members addresses have been published on the ballot paper anyway therefore many local residents will already know where they live.*
- (v) *There are already provisions to have the address and other information redacted with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer- although there is at least one example where this exemption seems to have been applied to every entry on the form - it is difficult for residents to decide whether a conflict may exist when sections such as "bodies of a public nature" or "Bodies directed to a charitable purpose" are redacted.*
- (vi) *no issues with the home address being published.*



- (vii) *any person elected must be contactable and should divulge their address and contact details, or not stand for election.*
  - (viii) *I prefer my constituents to know where I live because I feel this is a deciding factor when voting for a councillor to represent the area. I feel that a local person is better placed to represent the local people. Being knowledgeable about one's own area and knowing the people too is paramount to ensuring the appropriate needs, wishes and wants of the community are identified and actioned.*
  - (ix) *I have no qualms about residents calling at my home address if they feel they have an issue that requires urgent attention - I prefer to be there for my constituents as much as I possibly can be whether contact is made by email, phone, text message or by attending my address.*
  - (x) *If issues came to light whereby there was a problem with publishing my home address, then I would seek advice from others within the organisation.*
- (b) **Treat all members home addresses as sensitive**
- (i) *a blanket policy covers everyone and there can be no argument, or anyone made to feel guilty if it goes against the county councillors wishes.*
  - (ii) *a blanket policy would best protect all members and their families from unwanted harassment - MPs already have this protection, a common sense approach which should be adopted especially given the high rise in harassment of politicians of all parties and levels of governance. An opt in approach could place a burden/ stigma on members that they may be less committed to their ward division if they do not publish information.*
  - (iii) *I think the fairest and safest is to have a blanket approach. The opt in approach is open to members being intimidated by members of the public to show their address. The blanket approach takes it out of the hands of individual members.*
  - (iv) *The current political climate means that security is a priority.*
  - (v) *Given past experiences myself and other members have experienced it should be a blanket policy as you never know when things will happen.*

- (vi) *Let us not make it easy for Councillors to be targeted at home.*
- (vii) *This is something that was recently discussed at a Standards Committee meeting, and I understand there is a move nationally to prevent addresses of Councillors being published. I personally see no reason for, and no benefits to having private addresses published.*
- (viii) *From recent personal problems I think all members personal addresses should be withheld.*
- (ix) *Blanket Policy as we do from time to time get unwanted visitors to our homes.*
- (x) *My address was published after my election. Seven days afterwards I was subjected to political hate mail in the post sent to myself and my neighbours. Interventions were required by the Police and Special Force and my home added to a watch list. The perpetrator obtained my home address from Durham County Council website. I therefore feel that all members addresses should be withheld from publication for their own safety. I also feel that in the interests of GDPR type legislations, sensitive information such as addresses should not be made public.*
- (xi) *This provides the only consistent approach. There is potential that with an “opt in” approach Members could feel pressured to opt in if other Members in the Ward have “opted in” This could be despite feeling intimidated. Stating “address within / outside the Division” confirms local connections of Member without proving address.*
- (xii) *Addresses should not be published and could lead to worry of threats, intimidation and violence.*
- (xiii) *My interests are classed as sensitive owing to employment by a family member. A blanket removal would stop any perceived prejudice against councillors who are forced to remove their home details.*

(c) **Opt-in approach**

- (i) *Opt-in approach allows Members’ the choice*
- (ii) *The default position should be one that looks after the member and we should not assume consent to publish a*

*private address. A blanket policy that prevents a member from having a choice would be too far.*

- (iii) While not unduly worried myself, my family are conscious that it only takes one individual to do something very dangerous.*
- (iv) This is an increasing worry for Councillors. Increased public unrest and allegations has resulted in fellow Councillors removing their details for the safety of their families. I do not want to increase the risk to my family so agree with the opt in approach.*
- (v) Thank you for consulting this issue.*
- (vi) I do not have my home address advertised for personal reasons and would support the opt-in approach.*
- (vii) I would like my address to be kept private. I would feel safer given the work commitments of my family and the amount of time spent at home on my own.*
- (viii) The professions or former professions of some members can, on occasions, mean they are targeted by groups or individuals. It should be up to the member to publish their address.*
- (ix) opt-in is the best option.*
- (x) I have witnessed an increase in online threats to individual councillors, and on that basis support the default position to withhold our home address from publication.*
- (xi) In small, close-knit communities, a majority of residents know where a Member resides but other family members should not have to accept the default position.*
- (xii) Happy to have my address in the public domain but understand why others wouldn't want it.*
- (xiii) Due to my profession, I am uncomfortable with in disclosing my home address.*
- (xiv) Members should be able to determine whether their home addresses is published.*
- (xv) I had to have my address removed due to serious concerns following a decision made at Committee.*

- (xvi) *All Members face different challenges, both face to face and on social media, some of which can be intimidating. Every Member should be given the personal choice before their home address is shared.*
- (xvii) *I believe residents are entitled to know a home address should they wish to contact us directly but do recognise the benefit of opt in approach should anyone be uncomfortable with wider publication of address. This is becoming more beneficial due to the direct targeting of Cllrs particularly via social media, so having a home address listed in such circumstances could make some more vulnerable. However, in my personal circumstances many residents know where I live due to living in the same place for 35yrs hence mine currently still appearing. We must be mindful of protecting other family members living at the same address who do not chose to be politically motivated.*

59. The survey results demonstrate that there are mixed views amongst Members with the majority preferring an opt-in approach. It is notable that those who are supportive of the opt-in or blanket approach reference their own personal experiences and/or concerns.
60. Constitution Working Group considered the outcome of the consultation on 10 May 2024. It noted the high number of responses from Members and the clear preference for adopting an “opt-in” approach. The Group considered that the matter should be referred to Standards Committee for consideration.
61. Standards Committee considered the survey responses and the options available to the Council on 7 June 2024. The Committee agreed to recommend to Council that all home addresses are treated as sensitive unless Members opt to have it published. However, the Committee were keen to ensure that under the proposed default position, Members would still be able to demonstrate a link to their local area. They therefore resolved that the register should still reference the division in which they live. This is possible but the register would also need to reflect that the actual address is withheld under section 32 of the Localism Act 2011.
62. Council is therefore invited to consider the survey responses and whether they wish to agree to change the approach as recommended by Standards Committee. If a change of approach were to be agreed, only home addresses would be treated as sensitive. Other interests in land would be published in the usual way unless there are grounds to

treat them as sensitive. These would need to be considered separately in accordance with existing arrangements.

63. In considering whether to change the approach, Council will need to be satisfied that the increase in abuse and intimidation reported by the LGA and by individual Councillors to the Monitoring Officer is sufficient basis to consider that the disclosure of home addresses could lead to members, co-opted Members or persons connected with them, being subject to violence or intimidation.
64. If the Council were to change its approach regarding the publication of addresses, it is possible that the Council and/or the Monitoring Officer could face a legal challenge on the basis that the legislation requires sensitive interests to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
65. However, the Monitoring Officer considers that the evidence presented by the LGA, the individual cases reported locally and the request from the Secretary of State to treat requests sensitively could be used to defend the treatment of all Members home addresses as sensitive.
66. Trafford and Amber Valley Borough Council appear to have introduced the change without legal challenge. Therefore, for the reasons set out the risk of legal challenge is considered to be low.

### **Background papers**

None

### **Other useful documents**

None

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### **Author(s)**

Helen Bradley

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

It is a requirement under section 30 of the Localism Act 2011 for a member or co-opted member of an authority to register any disclosable pecuniary interests with the Monitoring Officer.

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 specifies land as a disclosable pecuniary interest. Under these Regulations land is defined as “any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority”, which includes a Member’s home address.

Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 makes provision for withholding an interest from public inspection on a Member’s Register of Interest at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer should the publication of such interest be considered to place the Member at risk of violence or intimidation.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

All County Councillors have been consulted in relation to the Council’s approach to publication of Members addresses and the details are summarised in the report.

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

Ongoing work by the LGA and Committee for Standards in Public Life continues to highlight the increase of intimidation and harassment aimed at Councillors. This abuse is most prevalent online, but there are significant concerns that the availability of public information such as their addresses online places Councillors at an increased risk of physical abuse or violence.

**Staffing**

None

**Accommodation**

None

**Risk**

Any change in approach to the publication of Members addresses would be intended to minimise the risk of members being subject to such behaviour at their home addresses.

There is a risk that the Council/Monitoring Officer could be challenged in relation to a change in approach. However, for the reasons set out in the report, this risk is considered to be low.

**Procurement**

None.

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## Appendix 2: Survey

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## Member Consultation

# Publication of Members' Home Addresses on the Register of Interests

\* Required

### Options

The Monitoring Officer proposes that the Council adopt one of the following options:

#### **Status Quo**

The current arrangements for the publication of members' home addresses remain unchanged. Members' home addresses will continue to be published as a default position **unless** they request for their address to be classified as a sensitive interest under Section 32 Localism Act 2011.

#### **Blanket Policy**

Apply a blanket policy where all members' home addresses will be treated as a sensitive interest under section 32 Localism Act 2011 and be withheld from their published register of interests.

#### **Opt-in approach**

Move to an "opt-in" system whereby all members' home addresses be withheld under section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 as the default, but should they wish, a Member can request that their home address be published on their register of interests. This is the approach suggested to be most effective by the Debate Not Hate; The impact of abuse on local demo-

1. Please provide your name (Responses will not be attributed to individual Councillors) \*

2. Response \*

- Status Quo** - Continue to publish all Members' home addresses as the default position.
- Blanket Policy** - All Members' home addresses to be treated as a sensitive interest and withheld from publication.
- Opt-in approach** - All Members' home addresses to be treated as a sensitive interest and withheld from publication **unless** a member requests their address be published.

3. Comments

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26 June 2024

Annual Report of the Standards  
Committee 2023/24



## Report of Corporate Management Team

Helen Bradley, Director of Legal & Democratic Services

### Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an overview of the work of the Standards Committee during 2023/24 and to set out the future direction which the Committee intends to take during 2024/25.

### Executive summary

- 2 The Standards Committee has continued to promote the principles and values of good governance within the Council and across the County. The Members of the Standards Committee are committed and dedicated to ensuring that high standards of conduct are maintained by all local elected Members.
- 3 This report sets out the progress made by the Standards Committee in 2023/24 in respect of the code of conduct issues for the elected Members within County Durham.
- 4 The report also refers to the training provided to Members as well as the annual work programme of the Standards Committee, which helps it to achieve the objective of promoting and maintaining high standards.

### Recommendation(s)

- 5 County Council is recommended to note the report.

## **Background**

- 6 There is no legislative requirement for Standards Committees to produce an Annual Report. However, doing so is recognised as good practice. The report summarises the work undertaken by the Committee to assist the Council in discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.
- 7 The report also helps to publicise the work of the Committee generally and it is also a means for the Authority itself to monitor the Committee's work.
- 8 The report was considered at the Standards Committee on 7 June 2024 where it was resolved that it should be presented to Council on 26 June 2024.

## **Membership of the Standards Committee 2023/24**

- 9 For the period 2023/24, the Standards Committee comprised of 11 County Council Members and 2 Parish/Town Council Members as follows:

### **County Councillors**

- Councillor Joan Nicholson - Chair
- Councillor Kathryn Rooney - Vice Chair
- Councillor Jim Atkinson, Councillor Lesley Mavin, Councillor Elaine Peeke, Councillor Anita Savory, Councillor George Smith, Councillor Tracie Smith, Councillor Tony Stubbs, Councillor Fraser Tinsley and Councillor Chris Varty.

### **Parish and Town Council Representatives**

- Councillors Alan Doig (City of Durham Parish Council) and Chris Foote-Wood (Dene Valley Parish Council) were appointed as the new Parish co-opted members of the Committee by full Council on 29 March 2023.

## **Independent Persons**

- 10 For the period of 2023/24 the Independent Persons were as follows:
  - Alan Fletcher
  - Chris Hughill
  - Steve Winder
  - David Rogers

## **Role of the Standards Committee**

- 11 The Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in the Constitution as follows:
- (a) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;
  - (b) Assisting Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and where appropriate, the Planning Code of Practice;
  - (c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
  - (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Practice;
  - (e) advising, training or arranging to train Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice;
  - (f) granting dispensations to Members and Co-opted Members of the Council from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct and Planning Code of Practice in circumstances where this function has not been delegated to the Monitoring Officer;
  - (g) to approve the arrangements under which allegations of a failure to comply with Council's Code of Conduct for Members can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made, pursuant to section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011.
  - (h) To approve the appointment of at least one independent person to discharge the functions set out in section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.
  - (i) the assessment and/or referral for investigation of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members, if requested to undertake this function by the Monitoring Officer;
  - (j) the determination of allegations of misconduct on the part of Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and Parish and Town Council Members;

- (k) dealing with any alleged breach by a Member of a Council Protocol, in accordance with procedures approved by the Committee;
  - (l) overview of the Officers' Code of Conduct
  - (m) overview of the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations.
- 12 Each year the Standards Committee agrees a work programme, which reflects the Terms of Reference set out above.

### **Work for the Standards Committee during 2023/24**

- 13 During 2023/24 the Standards Committee met on four occasions and considered items contained within the work programme shown at Appendix 2.
- 14 The Committee has continued to receive regular reports in relation to standards and governance issues nationally. The Committee is also kept up to date with progress and developments in relation to the Local Governments Association's Debate Not Hate Campaign.
- 15 In addition to the standing items, the Committee also approved the Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints and recommended that Officers produce a Zero-Tolerance Approach to Abuse Policy in response to recommendations from the Local Government Association. This Policy will be presented to the Standards Committee in 2024/25 for consideration.
- 16 The work programme is intended to be flexible, and items can be added during the course of the year.

### **Recruitment of Independent Persons**

- 17 Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to appoint one or more Independent Persons to assist in the Standards process.
- 18 The Independent Persons:
- (a) Must be consulted by the Authority before it makes a finding as to whether a Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct or decide on action to be taken in respect of that Member.
  - (b) May be consulted by the Authority in respect of a Standards complaint at any other stage and they may be consulted by a Member or a co-opted member.
- 19 Following the annual meeting of Council on 24 May 2023, the Standards Committee is now responsible for the appointment of the Independent Persons. As such, at its meeting on 8 June 2023, the

Standards Committee appointed Chris Hughill, David Rogers and Steve Winder as the new Independent Persons.

- 20 At its meeting on 8 September 2023, the Committee agreed to extend the term of Alan Fletcher for an additional 2 years with effect from 22 September 2023.

### Code of Conduct Complaints

- 21 In 2012, following the implementation of the Localism Act 2011 and associated changes to the Standards regime, the Monitoring Officer was appointed as the 'Proper Officer' to receive complaints of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 22 The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority, after consultation with the Independent Person, if appropriate, to determine whether a complaint requires formal investigation. Wherever practicable, the Monitoring Officer seeks resolution of complaints without formal investigation, and she has discretion to refer decisions to a Standards Hearing where she feels that it is inappropriate for her to make the decision. The Standards Committee receives a quarterly report on the discharge of this function.
- 23 During 2023/24 the number of breakdown of complaints regarding breaches of the Code of Conduct was as follows:

Year	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023		1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	
Total no. of complaints received	71		55	
Source of Complaints	Councillors	30	Councillors	15
	Public	34	Public	31
	Parish/Town Council Employee	6	Parish/Town Council Employee	3
	Anonymous	1	County Council Employee	4
			Anonymous	1
			Pseudonym	1

Year	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
Complaints against including withdrawn and rejected	County Councillors 20 Town/ Parish Councillors 48 Dual-hatted 3	County Councillors 11 Town/ Parish Councillors 36 Dual-hatted 7 Other Authority 1
Independent Persons Involved	The Independent Person was consulted in 11 complaints by the Subject Members and consulted once by the Monitoring Officer or her representative.	The Independent Person was consulted in 5 complaints by the Subject Members and consulted in 11 complaints by the Monitoring Officer or her representative.
Outcomes	No Further Action 30 Local Resolution 12 Investigation 3 Standards Committee Hearing Panel 0 Withdrawn/Rejected 16 Ongoing 1	No Further Action 24 Local Resolution 6 Investigation 9 Standards Committee Hearing Panel 2 Withdrawn/Rejected 13 Ongoing 7

24 Fewer complaints were received in 2023/24 than in the previous year. There was also a decrease in the number of complaints where local resolution was recommended on the previous year and a similar trend was observed in respect of the complaints where the recommendation was no further action. However, the number of complaints referred to investigation was higher than in the previous year.



- 25 Members will recall that at the Committee meeting in September 2023, it was requested that a breakdown of costs of the Code of Conduct complaints be presented. A part year comparison was completed and presented at the Committee in December 2023. A full year comparison has been provided below.

Year	1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023	1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
<b>No. of hours spent on handling complaints</b>		
County Councillors	155.03	20.28
Parish/Town Councillors	404.54	305.48
<b>Internal costs of incurred</b>		
County Councillors	£15,557.74	£1192.32
Parish/Town Councillors	£44,495,35	£44,163,92
<b>External costs incurred</b>		
County Councillors	£0.00	£2000 <sup>1</sup>
Parish Councillors	£8,312	

## Training

- 26 On 6 July 2023, the Independent Person's attended an induction which was delivered by the Senior Lawyer for Commercial and Corporate Governance and the Governance Legal Officer.
- 27 Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) delivered training on the role of the Independent Person. Three out of four of the Independent Person's attended the training session held on 13 November 2023 and 16 February 2024.
- 28 On 8 December 2023 the deputy Monitoring Officer delivered training on the Member/Officer Protocol to a Town Councillor following a decision notice of the Standards Hearing Committee Panel.
- 29 The Monitoring Officer delivered induction training to two new Councillors elected in by-elections during the course of the year.

## Future work plan

- 30 The Standards Committee is asked to agree its work programme for 2024/25 which is shown at Appendix 3. In addition to the standing items, the Committee will be asked to consider items related to the

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<sup>1</sup> This is currently an estimated figure pending the work being completed.

Debate Not Hate Campaign such as the Zero-Tolerance to abuse policy and civility in public life. The Committee will also be asked to consider a draft Protocol on Member's use of Council Resources, the Council's approach to the publication of Members home addresses and a review of the Procedure for Member Code of Conduct complaints. As in previous years, the work programme will remain flexible to include any additional items which may arise during the course of the year.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council has a duty under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to ensure that arrangements are in place under which allegations relating to the Code of Conduct can be investigated and decisions can be made. The Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints ensures that this is complied with.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

None.

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

The Council has a legal obligation to ensure that documents which are published on its website are accessible in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints ensures compliance with this obligation.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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## Appendix 2: Work Programme 2023/24

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8 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Annual Report.</li><li>• Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints</li><li>• Appointment of Independent Persons to the Standards Committee</li></ul>
8 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Extension of the Term of the Independent Person</li></ul>
4 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li></ul>
7 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Review of work programme 2023/24 and future work programme – deferred to June 2024</li></ul>

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## Appendix 3: Work Programme 2024/25

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6 June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Civility in Public Life</li><li>• Protocol on Members Use of Council Resources</li><li>• Publication of Member Addresses</li><li>• Review of work programme 2023/24 and future work programme</li><li>• Annual Report.</li></ul>
6 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Zero Tolerance Approach to Abuse Policy.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li></ul>
4 December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Review of the 'Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints'.</li></ul>
6 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of national standards picture.</li><li>• Complaints update.</li><li>• Debate Not Hate Campaign.</li><li>• Review of work programme 2024/25 and future work programme.</li></ul>

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